

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND POLITICS OF VOICE IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION: CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

BY

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Abstract

Digital communication is handy and foster easy interaction among citizens. It avails citizens the platform to engage in meaningful conversation, debates on important topics and lend their voices on controversial issues affecting their well-being while calling on government officials on issue of good governance for the sustainability of the society. The study objectives seeks to analyze how digital communication fosters diverse voices that translates to physical youth political participation and examines factors that posed as hindrance to physical participation. The library research approach was employed. Findings showed that digital communication significantly enhances youth political engagement and civic participation. However, the misunderstanding of the decline in youth participation in election generally ascribed to the rise in the unconventional political engagement among youth is rather a paradigm shift in political engagement and not apolitical. the obvious gap between online and offline activism which explains the lack of physical political involvement in youth is heavily influenced by factors beyond youth control. Such factors includeThe study found that poor political awareness, political disillusionment, lack of access to political platforms, systemic corruption, misinformation, government censorship, low digital literacy, and socio-economic inequalities are major challenges hindering effective digital activism and inclusive youth mobilization across Nigeria's digital space. Political

mentorship, implementation of intervention, political support are among the measure that can encourage political participation among youth. This promote sustainable youth empowerment and inclusive national development.

Keywords: Digital Communication, Development, Youth Engagement, Politic of Voice, Political

Introduction

The intersection of youth engagement, digital communication, and political participation has significantly reshaped Nigeria's democratic landscape. Fueled by digital media platforms, serving as powerful tools for political awareness and mobilization, enabling young Nigerians to express their voices, challenge political systems, and demand accountability from leaders. Similarly, Dong, Wang, and Zhao (2020) emphasize that virtual communities foster political mobilization by providing avenues for participatory dialogue and advocacy. Kamau, S. C. (2017). Notes that digital platforms such as social networking sites (SNSs) have emerged as a platform with the potential to invigorate democracy and political engagement. It has made communication in digital space to be complex and participatory. Bieni V.E, M.N Okoro, B.N ChiweoboOnuoha-Blessing (2025) Corroborated that digital platforms significantly enhance Youth, Community engagement by improving participation, information access, collaborative decision-making.

In Nigeria, this digital transformation is redefining how youth interact with governance, as platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Threads, and Facebook are used to articulate socio-political concerns and drive collective action, reflecting the "politics of voice" through which digital communication empowers citizen especially young people to shape public opinion and influence policy. However, the digital space also presents challenges related to inclusivity, authenticity, and sustainable engagement. Ibeanu (2022) observes that despite Nigeria's vibrant digital youth culture, translating online activism into real-world political transformation remains limited. Aichholzer and Rose (2020) note that while new media technologies have bridged the information gap, disparities still exist between online activism and physical tangible political engagement. Similarly, Ibardeola, Mbanefo, and Uche (2022) and Haile (2024) showed that social media loyalty influences how youth organize around causes, yet such engagements risk becoming performative without institutional support or policy responsiveness.

The “politics of voice” in digital communication encapsulates the power dynamics that shape whose voices are amplified or silenced in online discourse. Digital platforms have democratized communication, allowing young citizens to bypass traditional gatekeepers of information and engage directly in political dialogue. Yet, as Aichholzer and Rose (2020) observe, a persistent gap exists between online activism and offline political engagement, indicating that while digital spaces amplify voices, they do not always translate to concrete political outcomes. Dong, Wang, and Zhao (2020) further emphasize that virtual communities foster political mobilization by providing interactive spaces for youth-driven advocacy and peer collaboration. In Nigeria, such communities have become catalysts for socio-political movements like EndSARS, which showcased the capacity of digital communication to galvanize youth participation in demanding justice and accountability (Nwankwo, 2021). The politics of voice thus extends beyond mere expression; it represents the struggle for visibility, recognition, and influence within both virtual and physical governance spaces.

Digital communication serves as the primary medium for modern civic engagement, it brought flexible interaction, thus, reshaping interaction across political processes. This view is corroborated by various scholars who highlighted that virtual communities are reshaping social interactions and political identities among African youth, fostering a sense of digital citizenship (Machin Suarez and Viscay Mantilla (2021) and Ibardeola, Mbanefo, and Uche (2022). Digital Communication Platforms help in the recognition and preservation of Cultural integrity as well as supporting modern Communication tools used in enhancement and its integration into different economic sectors such as Politics, Health-care, Culture and Tourism and etcetera. (Bieni V.E, Wogu J.O, &Nwokedi 2025).

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, youth engagement in political processes is expected to drive democratic growth and sustainable national development in Nigeria. Young people are supposed to have access to platforms that allow them to voice their concerns, participate in decision-making, and influence public policies that affect their future. However, the current situation reflects a different reality. Although many Nigerian youths are highly active on digital platforms, their involvement in formal political structures remains minimal. There is a growing gap between online activism and real-life political participation. Digital communication

provide avenue for young people to express opinions, mobilize around causes, and participate in virtual communities, yet there exist traceable factors that influences these efforts to translate into tangible influence force over government decisions or policy outcomes. While government and non-governmental have establish several initiatives to promote digital inclusion, civic education, and youth empowerment, the effectiveness of these interventions remains uncertain. The challenge lies in the weak connection between digital expression and actual governance participation. If this situation persists, youth digital engagement will remain fragmented, limited to online visibility without real developmental impact. This may lead to further political disillusionment, reduced civic participation, and the continued marginalization of young voices in national development. Therefore, there is a pressing need to examine how youth engagement and the politics of voice in digital communication influence Nigeria's developmental process and how these voices can be effectively harnessed for inclusive governance and sustainable progress.

Objective of the Study

The general aim of this study is to investigate how youth engagement and the politics of voice in digital communication influence Nigeria's national development. Specifically this study set:

1. To examine the extent to which youth engagement in digital communication contributes to political participation in Nigeria.
2. To investigate the key challenges hindering the effective translation of digital activism into physical political participation in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification: Youth Engagement, Digital Communication and Politics of Voice

Youth engagement refers to the active participation and involvement of young people in social, economic, and political processes that shape their communities and national development. It encompasses the inclusion of youth voices in decision-making, civic activities, and policy formulation aimed at promoting accountability and sustainable governance. According to Akinyetun (2021), youth engagement is essential for democratic consolidation, as it empowers the younger generation to influence governance and advocate for reforms that reflect their aspirations. Similarly, Ibeanu (2022) explains that meaningful youth participation bridges the gap between citizens and state institutions, fostering civic responsibility and public trust. In the context of Nigeria,

youth engagement is particularly vital due to the demographic significance of young people, who constitute a large percentage of the nation's population and possess immense potential to drive socio-political transformation.

Digital communication refers to the transmission and exchange of information through electronic and internet-based technologies, including social media, websites, and mobile applications. It facilitates interactive dialogue and real-time participation across local and global audiences. Dong, Wang, and Zhao (2020) define digital communication as a dynamic system that supports virtual communities and political mobilization, enabling individuals to share ideas and organize around common causes. Likewise, Machin Suarez and Viscay Mantilla (2021) highlight that digital spaces have redefined sociability and collective action, creating new avenues for participation and engagement beyond physical boundaries. In Nigeria, the proliferation of digital technologies has revolutionized how citizens, especially the youth, communicate with political institutions and express their demands for accountability. Digital communication often takes place in digital platform such as the various social media platforms (Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Tik Tok Threads etc. these platforms avails the young people to share ideas, produce and interact with other to cross fertilise resources and best measure to champion a concern. Because it is handy, and easy to operate and void of bureaucratic bottle neck, gatekeeping, Ekwueme & Governor (2019) noted that in a technological driven and saturated society, social media is seen as the most notable platform for information sharing and communication. Like never before, time and space boundaries have become narrower.

The concept of Politics of Voice refers to the ways individuals and groups use communication particularly through digital platforms to express opinions, challenge authority, and influence socio-political outcomes. It embodies the struggle for representation, recognition, and inclusion within public discourse. According to Bol (2024), the politics of voice involves the use of both indigenous and modern communicative systems to assert identity and power within political spaces. In digital environments, it captures how marginalized groups, especially youth, leverage online platforms to resist political exclusion and amplify their perspectives. Njuguna, Waweru, and Ochieng (2020) argue that digital communication has become a critical tool for negotiating power, as it enables real-time participation and reshapes how authority is contested in modern democracies. Thus, the politics of voice is not merely about speaking, but about being heard and having one's message influence decision-making.

Some of the key aspect of digital communication includes; activism and online mobilization of Netizen. Digital activism refers to the strategic use of digital tools and online platforms such as social media, blogs, and websites to advocate for social or political change. It involves leveraging technology to mobilize supporters, disseminate information, and challenge power structures. According to Mutsvairo (2016), digital activism has redefined civic participation in sub-Saharan Africa by transforming how citizens organize and demand accountability from their leaders. Similarly, Dong, Wang, and Zhao (2020) describe digital activism as a form of online mobilization that empowers individuals and groups to engage in advocacy and policy influence without relying solely on traditional institutions.

Online Youth Mobilization refers to the process by which young people use digital platforms to organize, coordinate, and participate in collective political or social actions. It involves using digital communication technologies to build networks, share information, and inspire participation in campaigns or movements. Ibardeola, Mbanefo, and Uche (2022) describe online mobilization as a powerful tool that fosters civic engagement across African democracies by connecting dispersed individuals into virtual communities of shared purpose. Likewise, Njuguna, Waweru, and Ochieng (2020) emphasize that digital communication enhances the ability of youth to mobilize quickly, amplify their voices, and create pressure for institutional change. In Nigeria, where a large proportion of the population is digitally connected, online youth mobilization has become a defining feature of modern political participation.

Nexus between Youth Engagement, Digital Communication and Politics of Voice

The relevance of youth engagement to this study lies in its connection to the evolving digital landscape that now serves as the primary medium for political expression and civic mobilization among young Nigerians. With the rise of social media platforms, youth engagement has transcended traditional political boundaries, allowing for greater inclusivity and immediacy in communication. Nwankwo (2021) observes that movements like EndSARS demonstrate how digital participation has amplified youth voices and reshaped the discourse on governance and accountability. Therefore, understanding youth engagement within digital spaces is central to analyzing how the politics of voice expressed through online platforms affects Nigeria's democratic development and policy outcomes.

Digital communication is very essential as it avail netizen an uncensored platform to share and receive messages, to this end, political messages. Digital communication serves as a catalyst for youth empowerment, political participation, and national development. Through platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, young Nigerians are now able to construct narratives, mobilize for social change, and influence public opinion on governance matters. Haile (2024) emphasizes that digital communication fosters social media loyalty, which in turn drives sustained civic engagement and collective action. However, as Mustapha and Omar (2020) caution, the digital divide and unequal access to technology pose challenges to inclusive participation. Hence, exploring digital communication within this study helps to reveal both the transformative power and limitations of online engagement in shaping Nigeria's developmental and democratic future.

In the Nigerian context, digital activism has become a critical form of expression for young people, particularly as they navigate limited access to conventional political channels and seek alternative spaces for civic engagement. The relevance of digital activism to this study lies in its role as a driving force behind youth engagement and the politics of voice in digital communication. Through online campaigns such as EndSARS, Not-Too-Young-To-Rule, and voter education initiatives, Nigerian youths have demonstrated the capacity of digital platforms to mobilize collective voice, and action that shapes national discourse.

Political Participation and National Development

Political participation refers to the various ways through which citizens engage in political processes, including voting, advocacy, policy dialogue, and activism aimed at influencing governance and decision-making. Aichholzer and Rose (2020) describe political participation as both conventional and unconventional actions that enable individuals to express their political preferences and hold leaders accountable. While government seems to recognize conventional practice to be constitutional and democratic, they often frown at the unconventional practice that citizen imbibe to communicate their needs to the government. According to (Farthing 2010) they describe young people who subscribe to such practices as the "apolitical harbingers of an incipient 'crisis of democracy' while simultaneously heralded as the authors of sophisticated new forms of politics, most notably within electronic realms". This unconventional practice such as demonstration and invasion of workplaces, engagement of protest, picketing, and boycotts are engagement mostly done and shared in digital platform to communicate a message.

The nature of youth political engagement can be describe as a two-edge sword, making a complex and complicated phenomenon to conceptualized. From literatures, the notion about youth political engagement is either a disengaged paradigm (passive) and engaged paradigm (active political in new forms) while this description may not best define the relationship between youth and political engagement, but tagging the youth to be radically apolitical, farthing argues that “a change in the very substance of the political agenda, its spheres and forms, is required”.

For Vite et al (2020) political participation includes “activities whose objectives are to incite some forms of voluntary political change or changes in behaviours targeted towards the general good of the society”. The attitude of youth making video of themselves and sharing it in platform for others to see were mechanism to fight social justice, resist inherited forms and search for new mechanisms for asserting their voice. Jenkin (2016) describe this approach as participatory politics.

Participatory politics might be described as that point where participatory culture meets political and civic participation, where political change is promoted through social and cultural mechanisms rather than through established political institutions, and where citizens see themselves as capable of expressing their political concerns— oft en through the production and circulation of media. Pg (2)

In the digital era, participation has expanded beyond traditional institutions to include online activism, social media campaigns, and digital mobilization. Dong, Wang, and Zhao (2020) highlight that virtual communities have become effective tools for political mobilization, allowing citizens, especially youth, to participate in shaping policy agendas and promoting transparency. Thus, political participation has evolved into a multidimensional process that combines offline engagement with digital interaction.

The reasons why youth participate in political process is yet to be widely investigated by scholars. Youth participation in politics is essential in democratic governance. Youth participation have certain influence in the existing political structure, process and perhaps governance. Vite et al (2020) note that, “the structure and amount of citizenship in political participation can have influence on the degree and quality of government and governance”. He further highlight the reasons for youth participation in modern day democracy to include;

- a. To change the structure of leadership and governance.
- b. To influence government policies and programmes.

- c. To participate in decision-making process.
- d. To solicit for leadership roles and representation.
- e. To agitate for development and social well-being.
- f. For political socialization.

To this end, youth political engagement have produce notable results in some regions and aspects of the society which explains the core features of what democracy represent. The rise of civil society organization and groups was formed to restructure the political structure of the country due to the failure of the past leadership policies that alienate the majority of her citizens. Government were forces to review the minimum wage of civil servants due to the activities of civil groups and activists such as, OmoyeleSowore, (The revolution), whistle blowers like the Social Economic Recovery and Accountability Project (SERAP) and Muslim Rights Concerns (MURIC), Labour and Civil Liberty Organizations and the agitation by Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) some of this group were active both online and offline, challenging government for a quality change in the social and economic uplifting of the masses. In terms of curb insecurity and insurgency that made the northern part of the country unlivable, a time where mass kidnapping prevailed, youth participation activities such as what scholars defines as unconventional political involvement was deployed. Protest, and demonstration was done to influence government decisions to deploy measure to rescue her citizen in captivity. Campaigne such as, the Bring-Back-Our-Girls by Obiageli Ezekwezi, Our-Mumu-Don-Do by Charles Oputa were efforts obviously engendered to change the status quo.

The slogan “the youth are the leaders of tomorrow” remains a mere saying in the Nigerian society where the youth are never given the opportunity to lead due to age and the social economic of the political process as most of the youth are poor. This lead to frustration among well-meaning Nigerian youth to confront the Muhammadu Buhari led government for a possible reform which lead to the establishment of the The-Not-Too-Young-To-Rule Bill in 2018 to reduce the age limit criteria to contest and ivy for a political position in Nigeria. For presidential position the reduction wasfrom 40 to 30; governor from 35 to 30; senator from 35 to 30; House of Representatives membership from 30 to 25 and State House of Assembly membership from 30 to 25. Lastly to add to the positive outcome of youth participation, the establishment of ministries such as the Niger-Delta Development Commission and the creation of the Ministry of Niger-Delta Development. Were a result of the agitation of The Ijaw Youth Movements (IYM), through the Kaiama declaration, the North East Development Commission efforts by the Arewa Consultative

Forum (ACF) youth wing, and the Northern Elders Forum. Other active voice whose agitations that led to this significant change includes activities of SERAP, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND), Niger-Delta Frontier Force (NDFF), The Ijaw Youth Movements (IYM), Ohanaeze Ndigbo youth wing, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) youth wing, the Afenifere, etc. while their actions may be pro-governance, the objective is to effect changes in the social, economic and political wellbeing of the people that in turn tilt towards national development.

National development refers to the holistic and sustained improvement of a nation's economic, social, political, and cultural well-being. It encompasses the creation of equitable opportunities, the promotion of human capital, and the establishment of institutions that foster growth and inclusion. According to Njuguna, Waweru, and Ochieng (2020), national development is not limited to economic progress but also involves active citizen participation, effective governance, and social justice. Ibeanu (2022) emphasizes that the engagement of young people in governance is critical to national development, as they represent the most dynamic and innovative segment of the population capable of driving transformative change. In Nigeria, however, persistent unemployment, weak governance structures, and political exclusion have constrained youth contributions to development, even as digital communication platforms open new spaces for participation and innovation.

In the context of this study, national development is the intersection with youth engagement and digital political expression. As Haile (2024) observes, youth participation through digital platforms contributes to civic awareness, accountability, and social reform—all essential drivers of national progress. Yet, Aichholzer and Rose (2020) caution that without translating online activism into institutional reform, such engagement risks remaining superficial, offering limited developmental outcomes. Therefore, this study situates national development as both an outcome and a measure of effective digital participation where the politics of voice and youth engagement in digital communication can either accelerate Nigeria's growth or deepen existing inequalities, depending on how inclusively these digital expressions are integrated into the broader governance and development frameworks.

Government and Non-Governmental Interventions

Among the responsibility of government especially political parties and aspirant is to mobilise the people/citizens for active and

contributive participation in politic, by extension governance. Government and non-governmental interventions refer to deliberate efforts by public authorities and civil society organizations to address social, political, or economic challenges and promote inclusive development. Government interventions are typically policy-driven and aimed at implementing programs, legislations, and institutional reforms for national progress, while non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play complementary roles in advocacy, capacity building, and community mobilization (Ojo & Yusuf, 2022). According to Adegboyega (2023), in democratic societies, effective collaboration between government agencies and NGOs enhances public accountability and civic engagement. NGOs often act as intermediaries between the government and citizens, amplifying marginalized voices and ensuring that youth concerns are represented in policymaking. In Nigeria, these interventions have increasingly shifted to digital spaces, where both governmental institutions and NGOs employ online tools to engage youths, promote voter education, and foster digital literacy.

The significance of these interventions lies in their impact on youth engagement and the politics of voice in Nigeria's digital communication landscape. Government and NGO-led digital initiatives such as online civic education campaigns, youth inclusion programs, and social media advocacy provide platforms for young people to participate in governance and development dialogue. As Adebayo and Ezeani (2024) observe, such interventions help bridge the gap between citizens and policymakers, fostering participatory democracy. However, Olowu (2023) cautions that the effectiveness of these interventions often depends on their inclusivity, technological reach, and resistance to political manipulation. Therefore, examining government and non-governmental interventions in digital communication is central to understanding how youth voices are mobilized or marginalized in Nigeria's quest for sustainable national development.

Empirical Review

Evidence in literature are discourse on youth engagement and politic of voice in digital communication and national development. Such studies is explore to give bases to this study.

The study of Agbim, Ede &Chukwu (2023) "Obidient" Movement on Twitter and the 2023 General Election: Youth Networks, Mobilisation and Electoral Behaviour. The study found that the sizeable number of population that the Obidient Movement was able to organize and mobilized significantly impacts on voter's behavior and has the potential to upheld the current political order and produce unexpected

outcomes in certain seats, or even at the federal level. Kamau (2017). Carried out a study Democratic engagement in the digital age: youth, social media and participatory politics in Kenya. The study investigated the relationship between social media use and political engagement among the youth in Kenya and found that reliance on SNSs is positively influences political participation; notwithstanding, this influence is limited, and though useful, it does not radically transform political engagement.

Ezeigbo (2024) carry out a study on Social Media and Youths' Participation in the 2023 General Elections: The study found a significant association between active social media political engagement and increased voter mobilization intentions, but also documented widespread exposure to misinformation. Similar to this finding is the study of Olanrewaju, Sanusi, Ajala&Oluwasanmi (2025) examined Social Media and Collective Mobilization and found that social media is essential for coordination, however, mistrust of offline institutions represent as a major brake on policy translation. Bieni V.E, C. Okpoko, (2025) "Influence of Social Media On the Growth of Online Media Businesses: A Study of Delta Uhuru&Shocknaija Media findings revealed that, Social Media significantly enhances audience engagement with increased interaction, content, revenue growth highlighted its effectiveness as a marketing tool. But, also opined that it has challenges such as unreliable internet connectivity and spread of misinformation

In the study of Ini (2021) the Role of Social Media in the Political Participation of Nigerian Youths: The Case of the #EndSARS Protest (SSRN) The study showed that social media facilitated rapid information sharing, emergency coordination (e.g., medics/legal support) and narrative framing that pressured media and some officials, but the study also documented that offline institutional responses were uneven and often repressive.

Mustapha (2020) embarked on Social Media Matter? Examining Social Media Use and Youth Political Participation during the 2019 Nigerian General Elections result showed that youths are substantially more active online than offline and that online activity is associated with increased political awareness but not necessarily higher offline participation—evidence of the “online/offline gap.” In another study, Mustapha (2022) examined Social Media Content Preferences and Political Participation among Nigerian Youths. Findings showed that not all online engagement is equally mobilizing, news and civic content have more impact than entertainment leading to recommendations for targeted civic content strategies and content-based literacy programmes. This

study offers precise quantitative evidence that the type of digital communication matters for converting youth engagement into political participation and policy awareness.

Across the globe, there is a rising concern about the declining public involvement in renowned democracy. What is evidence is that citizens especially the youth are deploying other means of political engagement. Scholars refers to it as unconventional culture. Sloam, J. (2014). *New voice, less equal: The civic and political engagement of young people in the United States and Europe*. The author affirm that though there exist a standpoint among scholars and policy makers on youth apolitical attitude, and that their engagement are often structured to favor highly educated and well-off citizens, however, he pointed that young people are not apathetic. Rather they have their own views and engage in “politics” (more broadly understood) in a wide variety of ways that have relevance to their everyday live. Another study carried out by Sloam, (2016). *Diversity and voice: The political participation of young people in the European Union*. draws data from the 15 old members state of the European union, the result showed that young people mostly involve in engagement that reflect a country’s civic-political culture. The United Kingdom standing out, while comparing between the youth and older adult population, there exist a large gap between the political engagement of young people and older adult.

In the study of Hngokchai (2025). *Youth Political Participation in the Digital Era: Trends, Drivers, and Democratic Implications*. The study focused on the current trends in youth political participation, identify key factors that drive such engagement, and assess the implications for democratic development. The findings showed that while traditional forms of political engagement such as voting remain essential, there is evidential shift to noticeable shift to digital forms of participation which avails the youth the opportunity to express opinions, build networks, and organize movements more effectively than ever before. This is due to the flexibility and immediacy the digital media offers

The study of Farthing (2010). *The politics of youthful anti-politics: representing the ‘issue’ of youth participation in politics*. Argue that while the relationship between youth political participation appear complex and complicated because they have been tagged to be passive- disengaged and lack political interest or active-engaged only in new forms of political process paint youth to be apolitical. Farthing suggested that one way to address the issue of youth inactiveness in politics is “a change in the very substance of the political agenda, its spheres and forms.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Participatory Communication Theory, propounded by Servaes (2022) and Melkote and Steeves (2021), emphasizes inclusive dialogue, collaboration, and the active involvement of individuals and communities in communication processes that influence social change and development. The theory rejects top-down models of information dissemination and instead promotes bottom-up communication that empowers marginalized groups to voice their perspectives, influence policy, and participate meaningfully in governance. Its relevance to the study of “Youth Engagement, Politics of Voice in Digital Communication and Its Implications on Nigeria’s Development” lies in its focus on participation, empowerment, and the democratization of communication spaces. Through digital communication platforms such as social media, Nigerian youths engage in political discourse, express opinions, and mobilize for social causes embodying the participatory ideals of the theory. This framework thus provides a valuable lens for examining how digital platforms can transform passive audiences into active political participants, enabling youth voices to shape governance and contribute to national development.

Contrary to the general notion that youth online political activism don’t directly translate to offline civic-political engagement. The study of Boulianne&Theocharis (2020) showed that youth digital use increases engagement in civic and political life and that these positive online activities have off-line consequences on participation. This explains a symbiotic relationship between online political activities with off-line political activities, which rule out the claims of slacktivism among youth. They have their own views and engage in “politics” (more broadly understood) in a wide variety of ways that have relevance to their everyday lives.

Method

The researcher employed the library research method where literatures (to include books, academic journals articles) of previous studies relating to youth engagement, politics of voice and digital communication were extensively and comprehensively examined. This approach avail the researcher to access and evaluate a wide range of scholarly resources, in order to gain valuable insights, theoretical foundations for the study and identify similar themes in order to that makes sense out of context .

Discussion

This study seek to provide insight on two objectives; to examine the extent to which youth engagement in digital communication contributes to political participation in Nigeria and identify key challenges hindering the effective translation of digital activism into physical political participation in Nigeria.

From literatures, digital platforms is a powerful tools for civic participation and political awareness. Digital communication enables youths to participate in governance processes, influence policy debates, and advocate for social and political change. This suggests that platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, and Instagram have broadened the political space for young Nigerians, fostering expression, mobilization, and engagement in governance matters. This finding is in line with the work of Olorunnisola and Martin (2023), who noted that social media have redefined participatory democracy by amplifying youth voices in the public sphere. Similarly, Ojebuyi and Chukwuma (2024) found that digital communication tools have enhanced youth political inclusion and civic consciousness across Africa. However, the studies have also showed a lower physical political participation, suggesting that while online activism is vibrant, it does not always translate into offline civic or electoral involvement. While this is evidence, the question are what are the factors that influences this reality? This leads to the second objective.

In identifying key challenges hindering the effective translation of digital activism into physical political participation in Nigeria. There are salient factors that serves as hindrance to digital activism and online mobilization. These challenges appears to be structural and interrelated in nature.

Political activism doesn't only involve voting but opportunity to ivy for political position and been voted for, this has constitutional backing. The reality in the Nigeria political structure and process posed what is believe to be mirage for the youth. Concerns such as social economic structure of politics, misinformation and government censorship appears to be the most critical constraint. These findings emphasize that infrastructural limitations and state control, undermine the credibility and impact of youth-led digital movements. Instances of mistrust of offline institution and the uneven and repressive attitude of government official and institution towards youth involvement also posed as hinderance (Oluwasanmi 2025, Ini 2021). Studies like Chinemerem (2025) further buttress the limitation of digital activisms to highlight issues such as vulnerable to state interference, corporate algorithms, and the fleeting nature of virality. It is worthy to note here that youth online activism are observed and monitored by some political

gladiators who maintain a strong online presence and who is backed up with executive power, strategies to truncate such effort when the ideology is anti-government. Furthermore, reasons why active online voice fails to translate to tangible participation is the absent of political will, the absence of official to support or provide equal grounds for the actualization of change posed as a major brake on policy translation.

There exist a gap between online and offline participation which is grave to democratic development. Scholars and political scientist have identified the rapid rise of unconventional forms of participation as the major reason for the high rate decline of youth participation in elections. Understanding that citizens have taken a new measure to exercise their democratic right, is not to be seen withdrawal. Jenkins (2016) says there has been a simultaneous diversification of the range, forms, and targets of political expression...citizens now have many more ways of expressing their grievances and complaints other than voting. (19).

Another reason worthy to note is the issue of political content. Online engagement may not translate to tangible physical participation due to the nature if messages (media content) used for online awareness and mobilization. For instance content that facilitate rapid information sharing and equip the youth with the right information and civil content will likely influence participation. This is where news and civic content plays a major role. To this end, the role of government and non-governmental organization (NGO) become key for democratic development.

Government and NGO interventions in promoting youth participation through digital platforms can be effective in addressing youth decline in political participation. It true that NGO-led digital literacy programs, and collaborations between government and civil society can significantly improve youth empowerment and civic engagement. However, for government digital initiatives and its measurable impacts of interventions in most cases appears relatively low this can be attributed to lack consistency, evaluation, and sustainability of such programmes in real terms. While government programme may appear realistic, suggesting the need for stronger coordination and long-term policy implementation. This aligns with the findings of Eze and Musa (2023), who emphasized the importance of government–civil society partnerships in promoting youth inclusion. Similarly, Nwachukwu and Ibrahim (2024) found that effective collaboration between NGOs and state agencies enhances digital literacy, civic engagement, and participatory governance among Nigerian youths.

From the foregoing, the study summarized thus; digital communication significantly enhances youth engagement and political

participation in Nigeria by providing platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, and Instagram for expression, mobilization, and policy advocacy, although online participation does not always translate into physical political involvement. The study found that poor political awareness, political disillusionment, lack of access to political platforms, systemic corruption, misinformation, government censorship, low digital literacy, and socio-economic inequalities are major challenges hindering effective digital activism and inclusive youth mobilization across Nigeria's digital space. Political mentorship, implementation of intervention, political support are among the measure that can encourage political participation among youth.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study established that digital communication plays a pivotal role in enhancing youth engagement and political participation in Nigeria by fostering awareness, advocacy, and inclusivity through social media and online platforms. However, despite its transformative potential, the effectiveness of digital activism is hindered by factors to include; an uneven political infrastructural process, and socio-economic challenges, censorship, systemic corruption, lack of political will access and support, low digital illiteracy non implementation of government intervention interplay in the political process in Nigeria. While both government and NGO interventions have contributed positively to empowering youths through digital literacy and civic inclusion, their impact remains moderate due to issues of sustainability and weak policy coordination. In conclusion, for digital activism to achieve its full potential, there is a need for improved digital infrastructure, stronger policy support, and sustained collaboration between government, civil society, and private sector actors to ensure meaningful and equitable youth participation in governance.

The study recommend; Youth organizations and policymakers should develop strategies that bridge the gap between online activism and offline political participation by encouraging youths to translate their digital engagement into active involvement in community and electoral processes through political mentorship. The government and private sector should understand the political shift among youth, provide a support ground for expression and equal participation, invest in promoting digital literacy training in view to combat misinformation, implement regulatory frameworks that reduce censorship and promoting equitable access to political platforms. This is to promote participatory culture in the political process.

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