

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 include 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. 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.