

Use of Social Media for Political Participation by Youths in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigated the use of social media for political participation among youths in Oyo State, Nigeria; specifically, the types of social media used for political participation, the types of political activities social media are used for, as well as factors influencing the use of the media for political participation. Survey research design was adopted for the study. Data was collected through a questionnaire from 322 youths in three Nigerian universities. Findings reveal that social media was highly used by the youths for political participation. Facebook was the most used, followed by Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter and Yahoo Messenger respectively. Majorly, the youths used social media to participate in political advocacy, political campaigns, communicating with politicians, political discussions, monitoring and reporting electoral malpractices, public consultations, joining interest groups that engage in lobbying, blogging about political issues, and writing letters to public officials respectively. Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, subjective norms, and computer self-efficacy significantly influence the use of social media for political participation, which suggests that these factors could be considered when promoting the use of social media for political participation among youths. Given the growing popularity and penetration of social media and the way they influence peoples' lives, the empirical findings of this study add to understanding how and why social media use will function in motivating citizens to be involved in political activities.

Keywords: computer self-efficacy, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, political participation, social media use, Nigerian youths

1. Introduction

Social media have penetrated all levels of the information society and have catalysed the process of democratisation and political development. The media, a modern trend in information and knowledge dissemination, has taken communication beyond the limitations of the traditional way of communicating and socialising, making it an essential part of people's lives; affecting their social, political and economic activities. While some decades ago, the Internet was considered a news media, societies now turn to social media as sources of information. One of the major applications of social media is social networks, where millions of people are connected to utilise an open domain for interacting with others and socialising with all types of media such as text, voice, images, or

videos (Alquraan et al., 2017). The interactive nature of social media makes them fit to be used for many purposes such as job search, socialisation, education, entertainment, governance, political participation, among others. Hence, social media, as social instruments of communication, promote participation, connectedness, opportunity to disseminate information across geographical boundaries and the fostering of relationships and interactions among people. Commonly used social media are Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Imo, 2go, YouTube, Telegram and Flickr.

Social media technologies have engaged many Internet compliant individuals to build their lives around it. However, studies have shown the proliferation of the use of social media among the youths, who are considered to be more technology savvy than older adults. The term “youth” can be used to describe individuals from physical adolescents to those in their adulthood. Ahn (2011) explains that the youth identity presents those in their teens and their 20s as participants in a shared social experience that is dissimilar from that of other age or cultural groups, while Heaven and Tubridy (2007) describe the youth as a person whose identity and age falls between being children and adults. The United Nations (2011) defines youths as people between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive. The youths are critical to the existence, survival and socio-economic development of nations because they are young, energetic and able. Little wonder, they are associated with being referred to as ‘the leaders of tomorrow’ or the ‘future of the society’. According to the latest United Nations estimates of the world’s population in 2019, there are about 1.2 billion youths aged 15 to 24 years globally, or 16 per cent of the global population, accounting for one out of every six people worldwide (United Nations, 2019a, 2019b). It has been noted that, in some parts of the world, not only do the numbers of youths grow but so does their share of the population. In some countries, the growth of the youth population is outpacing the growth of the economy as more than one in three is a young person, (UNFPA State of the World Population, 2014). This brings to fore the importance of youths to nations development.

The second National Youth Policy Document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2009: p. 6) defines youth as comprising “all young males and females aged 18-35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.” The Nigerian government adopted this definition because the age range, 15-24, defined by the United Nations and others for statistical purposes, is too narrow for countries like Nigeria. The reason for this is that, in many countries in Africa, the male transition to adulthood, in terms of achieving the economic and social stability that comes with steady employment, may extend into the late twenties and mid-thirties. By this policy, the youths are defined as characterised by energy, enthusiasm, ambition, creativity and promise; and faced with high levels of socioeconomic uncertainty and volatility. They represent the most active, the most volatile, and yet the most vulnerable segment of Nigeria’s population. The policy also understood that this is a period in life when most young people are going through dramatic changes in their life circumstances as they move from childhood to adulthood, hence, they require social, economic and political support to realise their full potential.

Majorly, youths adopt social networking media for communication with friends, family members and the general public. As far back as 2010, Lenhart et al. (2010) reveal that about 72 per cent of American youths (age 18-29 years) used social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. Johnston et al. (2013) equally found that Facebook and Twitter were two social computing systems

that were popular among university students in Cape Town, South Africa, while Onah and Nche (2014) found that Nigerian youths were more disposed to social media technologies than other types of technologies. Supporting these claims are more recent studies, (e.g. Abodunrin, 2017; Ahmad *et al.*, 2019; Drašković *et al.*, 2017; Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari, 2016; Jamil (2018), Mahmud and Amin (2017) and Williams and Adesope, 2017), who have found that youths, especially students of higher institutions, are innovators, early adopters, as well as early majority adopters and users of social media for various activities. No wonder Wilson and Boldeman (2011), as well as Adaja and Ayodele (2013), describe youths as ICT natives and prolific users of social media. This assertion was corroborated by Nche (2012: 19), who states that “in the manner of a wildfire in harmattan, the phenomenon of social media (networking) has spread to all nooks and crannies of Nigeria, engulfing a large number of her youths and that social media usage has become so common among the youths, that it has become unfashionable for youths not to engage in at least one of the social networking sites.” Nnamonu (2013) sums it up by describing the Internet as the chief host of social media sites, while the youths are the most predominant clients.

Social media has multiple usage values; usage can be negative or positive, depending on users' intentions and purposes of using. However, in some cases, users fall victim of negative usage experiences beyond their control, such as bullying, extortion, hacking, trolling, propaganda, impersonation, etc. Even though some studies have found that the youths can use social media in many negative ways, such as exposure to pornographies, bullying and blackmailing; social media use can be centred on positive use, like education, entertainment, politics, brainstorming, and religious matters. One of the many uses of social media is that it supports the democratisation of knowledge and information, thereby making people both information producers and consumers. The ubiquitous access to social media has democratising effects as they offer citizens opportunities to engage and participate in political processes. Social media offers engagement in a medium that fits comfortably with peoples' mode of life and facilitates political participation of citizens by helping them monitor and influence government decisions. The growing popularity of social media has motivated scholars to explore the roles social media play in everyday life and democratic society; specifically, the role of the media in facilitating political participation and engagement.

Political participation means “citizens' involvement in the acts, events or activities that influence the selection of and/or the actions taken by political representatives” (Okoro and Nwafor, 2013: 33). It is the various mechanisms through which citizens express their political views and/or exercise their rights and influences on the political processes (Chatora 2012). Thus, it is a civic activity and a critical part of any democracy; an action taken by a citizen to influence the outcome of a political issue. Political participation could also be explained as a set of activities that citizens perform to influence government's structured policies or officials. Through political participation, citizens can elect political representatives, who make policies in favour of the citizens who are the ultimate beneficiaries of social programmes put in place by the representatives. Political participation also entails citizens' engagement in the discourse of socio-political and economic issues which serve as yardsticks for choosing would-be leaders. It may also include assessing the capabilities of the incumbencies and advocating ways of ameliorating societal ills for a more prosperous country. Political participation, therefore, includes such activities as political discourse, political campaigns, voter registration, voting, writing and signing of petitions, civil protests, public consultations, donating money

towards elections, joining interest groups that engage in lobbying, political advocacy, monitoring and reporting of cases of violation of the electoral process such as frauds, rigging, intimidation, violence, monetary inducements, underage voting, etc. (Abubakar, 2011; Gibson et al., 2005; Unwuchola et al., 2017).

The emergence of the Internet, which in turn gave birth to social networking sites, brought a paradigm shift in the electioneering process and radical transformation of the society where the populace is no longer passive in government activities; as the media provide new avenues for political engagement. The platforms have “exponentially multiplied the possibilities for the retrieval and dissemination of political information, thus affording any Internet user with a variety of supplemental access points to political information and activity that come at little cost in time, money and effort” (Breuer and Groshek, 2014: 165). No wonder Diamond (2010: 70) refers to social media as a “liberation technology that expands political, social and economic freedom.” Milakovich (2010) also presents social media as a tool for increased citizen participation in the political environment. Unlike the other mass media, social networking media provide two-way and even multi-way forms of communication channels (Diamond, 2010; Milakovich, 2010), which enhance the feedback process and encourage interaction among users. It is this interactive nature of social networking media that creates opportunities for citizens to participate in online electioneering processes which Medimorec et al. (2011) referred to as electronic participation (e-participation). Online political activities (e-participation) include writing emails to politicians, visiting politicians’ campaign websites, donating money online, electronic campaign, electronic voting and so forth.

The many benefits of using social media for political participation include granting citizens the opportunity to participate actively and get involved fully in the political discourse by adding their voices on issues posted on social media sites. The platforms also afford electorates a friendlier avenue of assessing candidates for political offices and promoting transparency in governance, thus, advancing the tenets of participatory democracy that sees the media as debate avenues which aid tremendously the actualisation of involvement in politics. Social media also offer a range of potentials for innovating governance and finding new ways of governing by creating an opportunity of listening to citizens’ opinion pool online, thereby setting ideas about citizenry needs including the possible reaction of people towards public decision-making processes. The platforms equally provide politicians with the opportunity to be informally free with the public as politicians can reach the masses to assess the political atmosphere even before venturing into the campaign. This connection helps politicians to appeal to citizens, communicate their humour, indicate their approachability, as well as accessibility to the public, thereby making them seem more personable and in constant contact with their supporters.

Even though the advent of social media in the political arena has drastically impacted the politicians and voters alike; the use of social media for political participation has its drawbacks. Misinformation, political harassment, rumours, fake news, propaganda and trolling are some of the problems of using social media for political participation. Besides, the topic of bots affecting the outcome of elections has recently become a mainstream topic during elections. Bots are used to leak fake news stories, spread dissension and create fake profiles on social media platforms that sow divide between people and political parties. Usage of social media for political participation also exacerbates the

problem of echo chambers, with everyone feeling the need to be on one side or the other. People only see contents and viewpoints they agree with when they scroll down their news feed, which makes it unlikely that voters will ever have to sincerely defend their political stance unless they actively seek people and media outlets with opposing political views. In addition, the use of social media for political participation also allows for foreign interference in elections.

The advantages associated with the use of social media, however, have made political leaders, all over the world adopt the platform to campaign during elections, solicit for votes, maintain closeness and transparency with citizens and mobilise citizens and candidates towards active participation in the political processes (Abdulrauf et al., 2015; Abubakar, 2012; Aharony, 2012; Ekwueme and Folarin, 2017; Unwuchola et al., 2017). This has been demonstrated in recent elections conducted in many countries. For instance, the report of the Pew Research Centre's Internet & American Life Project by Smith (2009) found that social media platforms such as blogs, social networking sites and video-sharing sites played a key role in the United States of America's 2008 elections as many people got information about candidates and campaigns through using the platforms. Not only did users get their news and campaign information from these media during the elections but they were also able to post their thoughts and comments, allowing them to play a more active role for citizens in the political process. Recognising these benefits, Nigerian politicians also embraced and exploited the media for political campaigns during the 2011 presidential elections. The 2011 general elections in Nigeria were, in fact, the first litmus test of the use of social media by political parties, political candidates and civil society organisations. The election was historic in the sense that it was the first time that social media facilitated political communication and participation. Since then, social media have been deployed in the electoral processes in Nigeria.

Studies have investigated the use of social media for political participation in Nigeria. Chinedu-Okeke and Obi (2016), for instance, explore the extent of South-eastern Nigeria electorates' involvement with social media for electioneering process and found that political campaigns through the social media had a significant effect on electorate's decision-making and participation in Nigeria's 2011 and 2015 elections. Similarly, Okoro and Santas (2017) appraise the utilisation of social media for political communication in the 2011 Nigerian presidential election to determine whether voters' choice of presidential candidates was influenced by their social media use. The results reveal that the majority of the respondents' choices of presidential candidates was influenced by the use of social media. Similarly, the respondents were of the opinion that the two selected presidential candidates were popular because they used social media in their political campaign. Ekwueme and Folarin (2017) examine the role of social media in the Nigerian 2015 presidential electioneering processes. Findings show that social media played a major role in mobilising people, creating awareness, as well as participation and circulation of information about candidates. Apuke and Tunca (2018) also examine the implications of social media usage in the electoral processes and campaigns in the Nigerian 2011 and 2015 general elections. Findings show that social media was employed due to its participatory nature and that social media was applied to influence the thoughts of many young people, increasing their political awareness. Thus, these studies establish that the voting patterns during the 2011 and 2015 elections were influenced by social media usage. Besides, in the 2015 elections, it was found that during the collation of results, social media was used to inform the public of the results in several states across the country, making it difficult for manipulations of results.

Also, Adegbola and Gearhart (2019) investigate the relationship between media use and political engagement across three countries - the United States, Kenya, and Nigeria, using a secondary analysis of a worldwide survey (N = 1,775) collected by Pew Research. Results identify differences in the effects of traditional and new media use on political engagement between countries and also found that media use was predictive of political engagement. Specifically, accessing news from social media and online news platforms was related to higher levels of political participation across the three countries. Thus, these studies have shown that social media have redefined methods of political communication in Nigeria, leading to a significant shift towards the utilisation of the technology in electoral processes. The integration of social media into the political realm in Nigeria, therefore, necessitates this research.

While there are several studies which have investigated the influence of social media on the political dimension of the society, few (e.g. Abdulrauf, 2016; Onyechi, 2018; Dagona et al., 2013) have explored the use for political participation among youths in Nigeria. The findings of Abdulrauf (2016) on cognitive engagement and online political participation on Facebook and Twitter among youths in Nigeria and Malaysia reveal that access to political information on Facebook and Twitter was one of the factors that influence online political participation of youths via Facebook and Twitter among the youths. Onyechi (2018) also found that Nigerian students who spent more time on social media participated in campaigns during elections, while Dagona et al. (2013) found a significant relationship between social media usage and political participation and mobilisation among Nigerian youths. These studies have been able to reveal increasing use of social media for political participation among youths; however, failing to identify the types of political activities social media are used to perform, as well as the factors influencing the use of social media for political participation.

The population of youths in Nigeria, according to the 2006 population census, reveals that the youths constituted about 36% of the total population. The 2017 Demographic Statistics Bulletin published by Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics in May 2018 report Nigeria's projected population as a youthful population. Thus, it can be said that a large proportion of the Nigerian population is made up of youths. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gives ample opportunities to youths to participate in politics as the minimum age for voting is 18 years. Studies have shown that, with the emergence of social media, the participation of youths in politics has increased because social media are veritable platforms of political socialisation that are used to attract young citizens to the processes. Thus, over the years, social media have become important sources of political participation for young people (Yamamoto, 2015), who are normally not attracted to politics and the platforms have become one of the best tools to assess the popularity of a political candidate among youths. Consequently, this study investigates the use of social media for political participation among youths in Nigeria. This study, thus, provides answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the various types of social media used for political participation by youths in Oyo state, Nigeria?
- 2) What are the types of political activities youths in Oyo state, Nigeria use social media to participate in?
- 3) What are the factors influencing the use of social media for political participation among the youths in Oyo State, Nigeria?

2. Research framework

Two theories provides the framework for this study: the theoretical extension of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM2) introduced by Venkatesh and Davis (2000) and the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Bandura (1986). Four variables - perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), subjective norms (SNs) and computer self-efficacy (CSE), were adapted from these theories to investigate their influence on the use of social media for political participation (USMPP) among youths in Oyo State, Nigeria. The TAM is generally referred to as the most influential, commonly employed and well-recognised theory in information systems because it is a well-established, powerful and parsimonious model for predicting user acceptance and has been widely applied by researchers to a diverse set of technologies and users (Adams et al., 1992; Davis et al., 1989; Benbasat and Barki, 2007; Venkatesh et al., 2003). The original TAM, a specific adaptation of the Theory of Reasoned Action was developed by Davis (1986) to explain why users adopt or reject an innovative information system. It offers a powerful explanation for user acceptance and usage behaviour of information technology. The TAM theorises that an individual's behavioural intention to adopt a system is determined by two beliefs (PU and PEOU) and that these two key independent variables determine behavioural intention to use and actual system use, with intention to use serving as a mediator of actual system use. PU is also seen as being directly impacted by PEOU, meaning that, all other things being equal, the easier the system is to use the more useful it can be. TAM includes the very important assumption that the behaviour is volitional (voluntary) or at the discretion of the user.

TAM2 extended the constructs of TAM and included additional determinants of the TAM's perceived usefulness and usage intention constructs. This model helps to understand how the effects of these determinants change with increasing user experience over time with the target system. TAM2 incorporates additional theoretical constructs spanning social influence processes and cognitive instrumental processes and explained that the additional constructs - social influence processes (subjective norm, voluntariness, and image) and cognitive instrumental processes (job relevance, output quality and result demonstrability) significantly influenced user acceptance. TAM2 performed well in both voluntary and mandatory environments. The TAM2 was found by Venkatesh and Davis (2000) to account for 40% - 60% of the variance in usefulness perceptions and 34%--52% of the variance in usage intentions. Thus, our research framework consists of some constructs (PU, PEOU and subjective norm) adapted from TAM2, while an additional construct, computer self-efficacy, was adopted from the SCT. The SCT is one of the most powerful theories of human behaviour theory (Bandura 1986), which has been applied to the context of computer utilisation (Compeau and Higgins, 1995; Compeau et al. 1999) and acceptance and use of information technology in general.

2.1. PU and use of social media for political participation

PU is a person's subjective perception of the usefulness of a system. It is defined as 'the degree to which a person believes that using a particular technology would enhance his or her job performance (Davis, 1989: 320). In this case, PU denotes the youths' perception of the usefulness of social media for political participation. According to Davis, PU is a strong correlate of user acceptance and use

of technology. Many other studies (e.g. Elkaseh et al., 2016; Dzandu et al, 2016; Kim and Sin, 2017; Sago, 2013; Shirazi, 2013; Sumida-Garcia and Costa-Silva, 2017) have found a significant relationship between PU and use of social media for various purposes. For instance, Sago (2013) found that the frequency of use of social media services is positively impacted by the level of perceived usefulness provided by social media services. Shirazi (2013) explored the role of social media in communication discourse in the Islamic Middle East and North African (MENA) countries and found that social media help citizens partake in conversations and mobilisation. It is envisaged that the perception of the usefulness of social media could influence their usage for political participation by youths in Oyo State, Nigeria; thus, the first hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between PU and the use of social media for political participation by youths in Oyo State, Nigeria.

2.2. PEOU and use of social media for political participation

Davis (1989) defined PEOU as “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort” (Davis, 1989: 320), which means that such system should be easy to use without stress. PEOU, in this study, depicts Nigerian youths’ perceptions of how easy social media are to learn and use, which may include ease of navigation, ease of using the media to communicate, response time, feedback mechanisms, among others. It is assumed that the more the youths are at ease with using social media to communicate and socialise, the higher likelihood for them to use the media to participate in politics, as many studies (e.g. Dzandu et al, 2016; Elkaseh et al., 2016; George et al., 2014) have confirmed. Thus, another hypothesis is proposed:

H2: There is a significant relationship between PEOU and use of social media for political participation by the youths.

2.3. SNs and use of social media for political participation

SNs is a person’s perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behaviour in question (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975: 302). These norms represent the expectations of other people regarding the performance of a particular behaviour. Thus, SNs represent how the youths are influenced to use social media for political participation by reference people such as families, friends, colleagues, classmates, neighbours, etc. Fishbein and Ajzen explain that intention originates from two determining factors; the first factor is personal and is reflected in one’s attitude, while the second factor is SNs, which reflects social influence. Given that SNs are strongly associated with behavioural intention and actual behaviour by many studies (e.g. Bataineh et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2011; Peslak et al., 2012; Taylor and Todd, 1995; Venkatesh and Davis, 2000), our research framework also suggests that SNs of Nigerian youths could influence their use of social media for political participation; hence, another hypothesis is proposed:

H3: There is a significant relationship between SNs of the youths and the use of social media for political participation.

2.4. Computer self-efficacy and use of social media for political participation

Self-efficacy is the judgment of one's ability to use technology (e.g. computer) to accomplish a particular job or task (Venkatesh et al., 2003: 432). Computer self-efficacy (CSE) has been a popular and important construct in information system research, which is based on the broader construct of self-efficacy. It is a key concept in SCT that has been found relevant in many information technology research settings. CSE represents the students' perceptions of their ability to use social media for political participation. Just like self-efficacy, it reflects individuals' beliefs in their abilities to organise and execute the courses of action needed to complete specific tasks successfully in a given context such as, in tasks involving computers (Compeau et al., 1999). Consistent with self-efficacy research, findings from various organisational settings and research in information systems have found CSE to be significantly associated with a wide range of cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural outcomes. CSE is found to be related to users' attitudes toward technology (Compeau et al., 1999), intentions to use technology (Hasan, 2007; John, 2013), and actual technology use (Sam et al., 2005; Schlebusch, 2018). Other studies such as Fabunmi and Awoyemi (2017), Karsten et al. (2012), Liebenberg et al. (2018), as well as Shank and Cotten (2014) have confirmed the influence of CSE on the acceptance and use of various ICT among youths across a wide range of settings and countries. Based on the foregoing, we can argue that youths who have high CSE would tend to use social media for political participation; the fourth hypothesis is then proposed:

H4: There is a significant relationship between CSE of the youths and the use of social media for political participation.

2.5. Demographic characteristics of youths and the use of social media for political participation

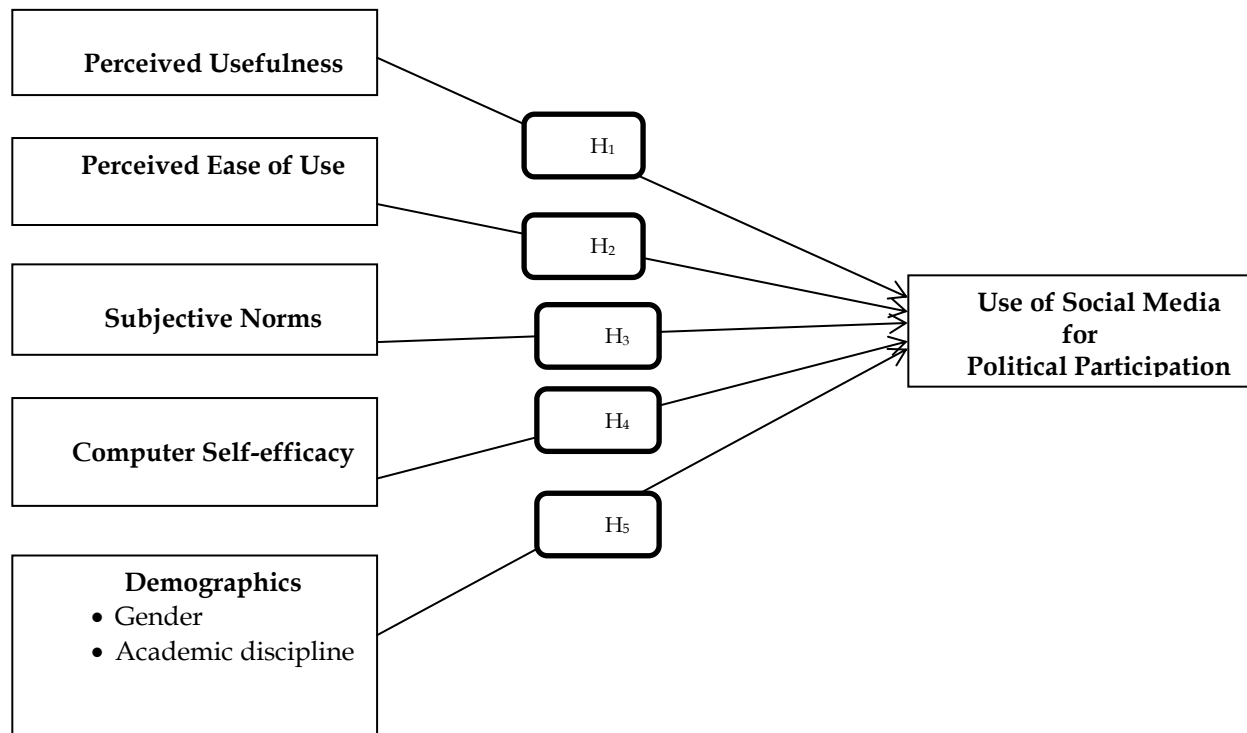
Demographic characteristics can be conceptualised as socioeconomic characteristics of a population expressed statistically, such as age, gender, educational level, income level, marital status, occupation, religion, etc. Several studies (e.g. Dzandu et al., 2016; Morris and Venkatesh 2000; Venkatesh and Morris 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2003) have investigated the influence of demographic variables on use of various technologies and found different results. This study also examined the influence of gender and academic discipline of the youths on their use of social media for political participation with the hope of finding if there would be a significant difference with the use of social media for political participation between male and female and among the various academic disciplines of the youths. On this basis, hypotheses 5a and 5b are postulated:

H5a: There is a significant difference between the gender of the youths and the use of social media for political participation.

H5b: There is a significant difference between the academic disciplines of the youths and the use of social media for political participation.

The conceptual framework, as presented in Figure 1, shows the relationship between the independent variables (perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, self-efficacy and subjective norms and demographic characteristics of youths) and use of social media for political participation (dependent variable).

Figure 1: The conceptual framework



3. Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The location of study is Oyo State, Southwestern, Nigeria. The population of the study consists of youths in three selected institutions [University of Ibadan (UI), Ladoke Akintola University (LAUTECH) and Ajayi Crowther University (ACU)], in accordance with university ownership in Nigeria. UI is a federal University, LAUTECH is a state university, while ACU is private. Students were chosen to represent the Nigerian youths because the majority of them fall within the definition of youths adopted for this study. Moreover, they are literate, prolific users of social media and are also politically active. The second National Youth Policy Document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2009) definition of youths was adopted as the study's working definition. Hence, undergraduates of these institutions, within the age bracket 18 to 35, were sampled. Four faculties were purposively selected from each of the universities to have a mix of youths with a Science and Humanities background. Disproportionate stratified random sampling was used to select the sample of 377 as shown in Table 1.

Questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first section collects data about the demographic characteristics of the youths. The second section elicits data about the type of social media the students use for political participation, the type of political information the students use social media to share, the frequency of use of social media for political participation, the benefits derived from using social media for political participation, the challenges in using social media for political participation, as well as the influence of the four variables (PU, PEOU, SNs, and CSE) on USMPP. The items used to measure the variables were measured on four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and

Strongly disagree (1). Measurement items were adapted from studies of Abdulrauf (2016), Compeau (1995), Dzandu et al. (2016), Ezema et al. (2015), Yang and DeHart (2016) and Venkatesh et al. (2003). PU, PEOU, CSE and USMPP have 5 measurement items, while SNs has four. Cross-check questions were incorporated into the questionnaire items to ascertain discrepancies in the answers. The instrument went through face and content validity, while the internal consistency and reliability were established, as all items went through a reliability test through the use of Cronbach's alpha to pick constructs with higher values of alpha, desirable to measure the variables. All items have high alphas except for that of SNs which is below the 0.7 threshold but considered good enough to measure the construct. The results of the reliability test are as presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Population of students at the three institutions based on selected faculties

Institution	Academic Disciplines	Population*	% Selected	Sample Size
UI	Arts	2902	1%	29
	Education	3286	1%	33
	Science	3543	1%	36
	Social Sciences	2635	1%	26
	Total	12,366	1%	124
LAUTECH	Environmental Sciences	1048	1%	11
	Engineering and Technology	3072	1%	31
	Management Sciences	1630	1%	16
	Pure and Applied Sciences	4714	1%	47
	Total	10,464	1%	105
ACU	Humanities	174	10%	18
	Management Sciences	359	10%	36
	Social Sciences	441	10%	44
	Natural Sciences	500	10%	50
	Total	1,474	10%	148
	Overall Total	24,304		377

Source: Academic planning unit of the institutions.

Table 2: Summary of alpha levels for the adopted and modified scales

Variables	Alpha levels	Number of Items
PU	0.782	5
PEOU	0.811	5
SNs	0.686	4
CSE	0.704	5
USMPP	0.799	5

Copies of the questionnaire were administrated at the faculties and departments of the respondents between August and October 2018. Each respondent was requested to fill the questionnaire immediately and return after filling. However, some could not fill immediately and were picked up later. Three hundred and seventy-seven copies of the questionnaire were administered, 335 copies were retrieved, out of which 322 copies were considered useable for data analysis, giving 85.4%

response rate. Table 3 shows the retrieval rate of the instrument at each of the institutions. Spearman rank correlation and one-way ANOVA were used to test the hypotheses.

Table 3: Copies of questionnaire retrieved

Institution	Number of Copies Distributed	Number of Copies Retrieved	Percentage
UI	124	96	29.8%
LAUTECH	105	96	29.8%
ACU	148	130	40.4%
Total	377	322	100.0

4. Findings

The findings of the research are presented in this section.

4.1. Respondents' distribution based on demographic characteristics

Table 4 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents. Males (56.2%) were more represented than females (43.8%). Youths in the age range 21-25 constituted the majority (58.1%), while those from the Science discipline were the most represented (35.4%). All the youths were using social media.

Table 4: Respondents' distribution based on demographic characteristics

Variables	Items	Institution			Total (Freq/%)
		UI (Freq/%)	LAUTECH (Freq/%)	ACU (Freq/%)	
Age	18-20	8(8.3%)	7(7.3%)	12(9.2%)	27(8.4%)
	21-25	47(49.9%)	64(66.7%)	76(58.5%)	187(58.1%)
	26-30	31(32.3%)	22(22.9%)	24(18.5%)	77(23.9%)
	31-35	10(10.4%)	3(3.1%)	18(13.8%)	31(9.6%)
Gender	Male	58(60.4%)	65(67.7%)	58(44.6%)	181(56.2%)
	Female	38(39.6%)	31(32.3%)	72(55.4%)	141(43.8%)
Academic disciplines	Arts	24(25.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	24(7.4%)
	Education	22(22.9%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	22(6.8%)
	Social Sciences	21(21.9%)	0(0.0%)	48(36.9%)	69(21.4%)
	Sciences	29(30.2%)	46(47.9%)	39(30.0%)	114(35.4%)
	Management Sciences	0(0.0%)	13(13.5%)	25(19.2%)	38(11.8%)
	Humanities	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	18(13.9%)	18(5.6%)
	Engineering and Technology	0(0.0%)	26(27.1.0%)	0(0.0%)	26(8.1%)
Social media use	Yes	96(100.0%)	96(100.0%)	130(100.0%)	322(100.0%)
	No	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)

4.2. Results of social media type used for political participation

Table 5 presents the results of the types of social media used for political participation. Facebook (98.8%) was the most used social media for political participation by the youths. This is followed by Whatsapp (93.8%), Instagram (60.2%), Twitter (55.3%), and Yahoo Messenger (50.9%) respectively. Other social media have less than 50% usage level.

Table 5: Distribution of social media type used for political participation

Social Media Type Used	Items	Institutions			Total (Freq/%)
		UI (Freq/%)	LAUTECH (Freq/%)	ACU (Freq/%)	
Tumblr	Used	1(1.0%)	45(46.9%)	47(36.2%)	93(28.9%)
	Not Used	95(99.0%)	51(53.1%)	83(63.8%)	229(71.1%)
Snapchat	Used	4(4.2%)	47(49.0%)	58(44.6%)	109(33.9%)
	Not Used	92(95.8%)	49(51.0%)	72(55.4%)	213(66.1%)
Pinterest	Used	4(4.2%)	48(50.0%)	55(42.3%)	107(33.2%)
	Not Used	92(95.8%)	48(50.0%)	75(57.7%)	215(66.8%)
Periscope	Used	2(2.1%)	45(46.9%)	51(39.2%)	98(30.4%)
	Not Used	94(97.9%)	51(53.1%)	79(60.8%)	224(69.6%)
Imo	Used	10(10.4%)	51(53.1%)	52(40.0%)	113(35.1%)
	Not Used	86(89.6%)	45(46.9%)	78(60.0%)	209(64.9%)
YouTube	Used	16(16.7%)	60(62.5%)	78(60.0%)	154(47.8%)
	Not Used	80(83.3%)	36(37.5%)	52(40.0%)	168(52.2%)
Google+	Used	23(24.0%)	54(56.2%)	74(56.9%)	151(46.9%)
	Not Used	73(76.0%)	42(43.8%)	56(43.1%)	171(53.1%)
Yahoo Messenger	Used	34(35.4%)	58(60.4%)	72(55.4%)	164(50.9%)
	Not Used	62(64.6%)	38(39.6%)	58(44.6%)	158(49.1%)
Instagram	Used	40(41.7%)	68(70.8%)	86(66.2%)	194(60.2%)
	Not Used	56(58.3%)	28(29.2%)	44(33.8%)	128(39.8%)
LinkedIn	Used	31(32.3%)	52(54.2%)	62(47.7%)	145(45.0%)
	Not Used	65(67.7%)	44(45.8%)	68(52.3%)	177(55.0%)
Twitter	Used	41(42.7%)	62(64.6%)	75(57.7%)	178(55.3%)
	Not Used	55(57.3%)	34(35.4%)	55(42.3%)	144(44.7%)
Whatsapp	Used	86(89.6%)	92(95.8%)	124(95.4%)	302(93.8%)
	Not Used	10(10.4%)	4(4.2%)	6(4.6%)	20(6.2%)
Facebook	Used	95(99.0%)	94(97.9%)	129 (99.2%)	318(98.8%)
	Not Used	1(1.0%)	2(2.1%)	1(0.8%)	4(1.2%)
Others (Telegram)	Used	15 (15.6%)	0	26(20%)	41(12.7%)
	Not Used	0	0	0	0

4.3. Results of types of political activities participated with social media

Table 6 shows the types of political activities the youths used social media to participate in.

Table 6: Distribution of types of political activities participated with social media

Political Activities*	Institutions			Total (Freq/%)
	UI (Freq/%)	LAUTECH H (Freq/%)	ACU (Freq/%)	
Political discussions	77(80.2%)	93(96.9%)	111(85.4%)	281(87.3%)
Political campaigns	86(89.6%)	91(94.8%)	119(91.5%)	296(91.9%)
Political advocacy	91(94.8%)	93(96.9%)	123(94.6%)	307(95.3%)
Voters' registration	22(22.9%)	34(35.4%)	47(36.1%)	103(32.0%)
Voting exercises	29(30.2%)	34(35.4%)	79(60.8%)	142(44.1%)
Writing and signing of petitions	12(12.5%)	28(29.2%)	48(36.9%)	88(27.3%)
Donating money towards election	3(3.1%)	0(0.0%)	15(11.5%)	18(5.6%)
Communicating with politicians	81(84.4%)	93(96.9%)	118(90.8%)	292(90.7%)
Writing letters to public officials	45(46.9%)	33(34.4%)	87(66.9%)	165(51.2%)
Joining interest groups that engage in lobbying	67(69.8%)	71(74.0%)	71(54.6%)	209(64.9%)
Public consultations	78(81.3%)	93(96.9%)	88(67.7%)	259(80.4%)
Blogging about political issues	51(53.1%)	67(69.8%)	91(70.0%)	209(64.9%)
Monitoring and reporting electoral malpractices such as frauds, rigging, intimidation, violence, monetary inducements, underage voting, etc.	88(91.7%)	70(72.9%)	116(89.2%)	274(85.1%)
Others (Please specify)	0	0	0	0

* Multiple choice question.

Majorly, the youths used social media to participate in political advocacy (95.3%), political campaign (91.9%), communicating with politicians (90.7%), political discussions (87.3%), monitoring and reporting electoral malpractices (85.1%), public consultations (80.4%), joining interest groups that engage in lobbying (64.9%), blogging about political issues (64.9%), and writing letters to public officials (51.2%).

4.4. Test of hypotheses

The pre-set level of significance for all hypotheses is 0.05. The hypotheses (denoted as H_0) were tested in the null forms, with the assumption that no significant relationship exists between the independent variables (PU, PEOU, SNs, CSE, Gender and Academic discipline) and the dependent variable (Use of social media for political participation). The alternative hypotheses assume that significant association or relationships exist. Thus, if the p-value (the significance of the test) exceeds the pre-set level (0.05), the null hypotheses will not be rejected, while the alternative hypotheses will be rejected. However, if the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypotheses are rejected, while the alternative hypotheses are not rejected. Spearman rank correlation was used to test hypotheses 1-4 and one-way ANOVA for hypothesis 5. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Spearman correlation results for the hypotheses.

Analysis	Null Hypotheses	Independent Variables	Results	
Spearman's rho	Ho1	PU	Correlation Coefficient	0.463**
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
			N	322
	Ho2	PEOU	Correlation Coefficient	0.425**
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
			N	322
	Ho3	SNs	Correlation Coefficient	0.411**
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
			N	322
	Ho4	CSE	Correlation Coefficient	0.400**
			Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
			N	322
Dependent Variable: USMPP				
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Table 7 shows a significant relationship between PU and use of social media for political participation among the youths at the three selected institutions ($p=0.000<0.05$) and also a moderate positive correlation coefficient of ($r=0.463$). Thus, null hypothesis 1 is rejected, while the alternate hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is a positive correlation and significant relationship between PU and the use of social media for political participation among the youths. The results also show that both variables (PU and use of social media for political participation) move in the same direction; an increase in perception of usefulness of social media would result into an increase in the use of social media for political participation by the youths. This result implies that the youths perceive that social media is useful for them to participate in politics.

Table 7 also reveals a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.425$) and a significant relationship ($p=0.000<0.05$) between PEOU and use of social media for political participation, thus null hypothesis 2 is rejected. The results also reveal that an increase in perception of ease of use of social media would cause a corresponding increase in the use of social media for political participation among the youths. The youths perceive social media easy to use and the more they have this perception, the more they use the media. The results for hypothesis 3 also show a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.411$) and a significant relationship ($p=0.000<0.05$) between SNs and the use of social media for political participation. These results show that for a unit increase in SNs, there will be an increase in the use of social media for political participation among the youths. The implication is that the opinion or influence of friends, colleagues, or families of the youths, made them use social media to participate in politics. The relationship between CSE and the use of social media for political participation was also found to be moderate and positively correlated ($r=0.400$) and significant ($p=0.000<0.05$). Hence, null hypothesis 4 is rejected and the alternate hypothesis not rejected. Thus, it implies that an increase in CSE of the youths would increase the use of social media for political participation.

One-way ANOVA was used to test for differences in the use of social media for political participation among the youths with respect to their gender and academic disciplines. The results for gender, as presented in Table 8a and 8b, show no significant mean difference between male and

female youths in their use of social media for political participation ($p=0.891>0.05$). This indicates that the use of social media for political participation does not differ based on the gender of the youths. Results in Table 8b also show that use of social media for political participation among the youths that fell within gender difference of male and female has no difference of mean (male = 8.8343; female = 8.7872) if compared. Thus, the gender of the youths has no significant relationship with their use of social media for political participation.

Table 8a: One-way ANOVA test for gender

ANOVA
USMPP

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.175	1	0.175	0.019	0.891
Within Groups	2972.645	320	9.290		
Total	2972.820	321			

Table 8b: One-way ANOVA test for gender

Descriptive
USMPP

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Male	181	8.8343	2.86844	0.21321	8.4135	9.2550	5.00	20.00
Female	141	8.7872	3.26411	0.27489	8.2438	9.3307	5.00	29.00
Total	322	8.8137	3.04321	0.16959	8.4800	9.1473	5.00	29.00

The results for the one-way ANOVA test for the academic disciplines of the youths are presented in Table 9a and 9b. No significant mean difference in the students' faculties concerning their use of social media for political participation ($p=0.602>0.05$) was also observed. This implies that the use of social media for political participation does not differ based on academic disciplines of youths at the three institutions.

Table 9a: One-way ANOVA test for academic disciplines

ANOVA
USMPP

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	51.027	7	7.290	0.783	0.602
Within Groups	2921.793	314	9.305		
Total	2972.820	321			

Table 9b: One-way ANOVA test for academic discipline

Descriptives
USMPP

Academic discipline	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Arts	24	8.8750	3.05475	0.62355	7.5851	10.1649	5.00	18.00
Education	22	8.0000	2.39046	0.50965	6.9401	9.0599	5.00	12.00
Social Sciences	69	8.7246	2.09961	0.25276	8.2203	9.2290	5.00	14.00
Sciences	114	8.9561	3.47784	0.32573	8.3108	9.6015	5.00	29.00
Management Science	38	8.3158	2.96926	0.48168	7.3398	9.2918	5.00	18.00
Humanities	18	9.7222	4.32238	1.01880	7.5728	11.8717	5.00	20.00
Engineering and Technology	26	8.7692	3.10236	0.60842	7.5162	10.0223	5.00	16.00
Environmental Sciences	11	9.7273	1.90215	0.57352	8.4494	11.0052	7.00	13.00
Total	322	8.8137	3.04321	0.16959	8.4800	9.1473	5.00	29.00

5. Discussion

This study found that Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter, Yahoo Messenger, Youtube and Google+ were the widely used social media for political participation by the youths. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies (e.g. Asogwa and Ojih, 2013; Ekwelem et al., 2012; Ezema et al., 2015; Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari, 2016; Johnston et al., 2013; Nwafor et al., 2012; Omotayo and Salami, 2018; and Yang and DeHart, 2016) who have confirmed that Nigerian youths are active users of social networking media. Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari (2016) found that science students of public universities in Southwest Nigeria used social media daily to remain up to date with trending events/news and to share knowledge. Johnston et al. (2013) also found that Facebook and Twitter were two social computing systems that have become increasingly popular among university students in Cape Town, South Africa and that Facebook was a more popular method for communication among the students. Supporting this claim is Wilson and Boldeman (2011), who posited that youths are ICT natives and prolific users of technologies. Our results, therefore, establish the fact that youths, especially students of higher institutions are prolific users of social media.

The youths also used social media to participate in various political activities, chiefly among which are political advocacy, political campaign, communicating with politicians, political discussions, monitoring and reporting electoral malpractices, public consultations, joining interest groups that engage in lobbying, blogging about political issues and writing letters to public officials. Since youths are prolific users of social media, it is easy for them to use it to also participate in political activities. Ahmad et al. (2019) have found that the younger generations (university students) are very active on social media to participate in online and offline political activities. Our findings are

also in line with the findings of Ezema et al. (2015), Jamil (2018), Mahmud and Amin (2017), Onyechi (2018) and Yamamoto (2015) who have found that the youths use social media to participate in both offline and online politics. Diamond and Plattner (2012) explains that social media enable citizens to report news, expose wrongdoing, express opinions, mobilise protest, monitor elections, scrutinise government, deepen participation and expand the horizons of freedom during elections, which help to strengthen the capacity of individuals, aid liberated communication and mobilisation, and reinforce civil society. These results are consistent with previous studies (e.g., Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2009; Valenzuela et al., 2012) showing that use of such social media has a positive influence on citizens' political participatory behaviors. As a space where citizens share information and discuss public affairs, social media serve as resources for engaging in political activities, playing positive roles and providing useful avenues to reinvigorate participatory democracy (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2011). Our study, therefore, establishes that youths in Oyo state, Nigeria engage with social media to participate in politics.

The test of hypotheses reveals that PU and PEOU have a positive correlation and significant relationship with the use of social media for political participation by the youths. These findings validate previous studies which have confirmed the significance of usefulness and ease of use in predicting ICT use. PU and PEOU, as widely popularised by Davis (1986), Davis et al. (1989), as well as numerous other studies (Dzandu et al., 2016; Elkaseh et al., 2016; Kim and Sin, 2017; George et al., 2014; Sago, 2013; Shirazi, 2013; Sumida-Garcia and Costa-Silva, 2017) are fundamental determinants of user acceptance and use of various ICT, social media inclusive. Thus, the more the benefits and ease of using social media as perceived by the youths, the greater the likelihood of using them to participate in politics. Since youths are generally technology savvy and the use of social media is simple, entertaining, clear and understandable and does not require a lot of mental effort, it is expected that the youths would not have difficulties in using social media to participate in politics as they use the media for other activities.

Our findings with respect to the influence of SNs on the use of social media for political participation support a significant body of theoretical and empirical studies (Bataineh et al., 2015; Hasbullah et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2011; Peslak et al., 2012) regarding the importance of the role of SNs on the use of social media and other technologies, directly or indirectly. Bataineh et al. (2015) for instance, found that that the strongest predictors, based on beta values, on both users' satisfaction and continuance intention to use social media is SNs. A person's SNs are determined by his or her perception that salient social referents think she/he should or should not perform a particular behaviour. Such a person is motivated to comply with the referents even if she/he does not favour the behaviour. The referents may be superiors (parents, bosses, teachers, opinion leaders, etc.) or peers (friends, classmates, colleagues, family, children, etc.). This implies that the opinions of people in the youths' social environment, as well as the importance attributed to the opinions of these people are influenced the youths' behavioral intention and actual usage of social media for political participation. Even though usage of social media is not compulsory in this setting, the SNs, peer-pressure or the youths' views of what their friends/families/mentors think they should do, actually encouraged their use of social media for political participation. Given the importance of normative perceptions in determining individuals' behaviours on social media, our finding indicates that the youths' networks and interactions on social media can be considered a norm-controlled behaviour

which influences the contents they post as well as their interactions within their social networks. Therefore, it is expected that the more the youths perceive behavioural expectations to use social media from these significant others, the more they feel the pressure or are likely to use the social media to participate in politics, in addition to some other activities they use social media to perform.

Many studies (e.g. Bandura, 1997; Heinz and Rice, 2009; Liebenberg et al., 2018; Shank and Cotton, 2014; and Sohl, 2014) have led credence to the fact that CSE plays a major role in intention and use of information technologies, as this study also found out. Sohl (2014), for instance, studied youth's political efficacy, sources, effects and potentials for political equality and found system efficacy as one of the factors influencing youths' political activities. Hence, the level of the CSE of the youths in this study goes a long way to influence their use of social media for political participation, as they also use it for some other activities.

Surprisingly, demographic variables (gender and academic discipline) have no significant influence on the use of social media for political participation. Hence, the use of social media for political participation by the youths does not differ based on their gender differences (male and female) and academic disciplines. Gender differences have been shown to exist in technology adoption contexts (Morris and Venkatesh 2000; Venkatesh and Morris 2000; Venkatesh et al., 2003). However, some empirical studies, within and outside the IT context (e.g., Ashmore, 1990; Dzandu et al., 2016; Eichinger et al., 1991; Twenge 1997) have shown that gender roles have a strong psychological basis and are relatively enduring, yet open to change over time. Gender effects may be driven by psychological phenomena embodied within socially-constructed gender roles. Non-significant influence of gender experienced in this study could be driven by cognitions related to gender roles (Lynott and McCandless 2000; Wong et al., 1985), which may not be so prominent among the youths because of their age range. Our findings could be interpreted to suggest that as the youths mature and assume gender roles and responsibilities, gender differences in how they perceive social media use for politics may increase. This implies that the oft-mentioned gender differences in the use of IT may be transitory, at least as they relate to a younger generation, raised and educated in the digital age. It was also envisaged that the academic disciplines of the youths could influence their use of social media for political participation, with the Arts/Humanities and Social science disciplines expected to be more involved in political participation than the core Science-based disciplines. However, the study found no significant relationship between the two variables. This shows that, the youths use social media to engage in political activities irrespective of their academic disciplines.

6. Conclusion

Given the growing popularity and penetration of social media and the way they influence peoples' private and public lives, this study adds to the understanding of how and why social media use functions in motivating citizens to engage in political activities. The study has been able to expand the current literature by explicating that youths in Oyo state, Nigeria use social media to participate in political processes. The study also concludes that PU, PEOU, SNs and CSE influence use of social media for political participation among youths in Oyo state, Nigeria. This suggests that these factors could be considered when promoting the use of social media among youths. This information could

assist social media developers and stakeholders in becoming well informed about the factors that need to be put into consideration when designing social media platforms that would be accepted and used by intended users. Thus, this study is justified to add value to the existing research in the areas of technology use; most especially, for political participation. The findings of the research certainly encourage future studies to expand understanding of how social media use influences citizens' political participation. The empirical findings of this study add to the body of knowledge on political participation.

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