Influence Of Social Media on Political Socialisation and Participation of GEN Z In Nigerian Private Universities

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of social media on Political Socialisation and Participation of GEN Z in Nigerian private universities. The study was premised on four objectives while Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) served as the theoretical anchor for the study. Survey research method was used with e-questionnaire as the instrument of data collection from the five hundred and twenty-five (525) respondents selected as sample size for the study, while purposive, available and snowballing sampling techniques were used to select the final study included in the study. Findings revealed that social media plays a pivotal role in the political socialisation and participation of GEN Z students in Nigerian private universities as the platforms provide them with timely political information and help shape their political opinions. It was also found that social media: had a positive significant impact on political socialisation among GEN Z students in Nigerian universities (β= 0.294, t= 23.691, p<0.05), had a positive significant impact on political participation among GEN Z students in Nigerian universities (β= 0.525, t= 19.164, p<0.05) while socio-economic background was also found to have a positive significant impact on political participation among GEN Z students in Nigerian universities (β= 0.525, t= 19.164, p<0.05). As recommendation, the social media should be effectively used by the government to motivate youths to fully participate in the political activities in Nigeria, not only online but offline as well. The GEN Z students should be mobilised to transfer their active online participation on political issues to offline engagement into political activities, such as, registration for voters' card and the actual voting process.

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Keywords: Social Media, Socialisation, Participation, GEN Z, Private, Universities, Nigeria

Introduction

Political socialization is the process by which individuals develop their political attitudes, values, and behaviours. Traditionally, agents of political socialization included family, schools, peers, and mass media. However, the rapid rise of the internet, particularly social media, has introduced new dynamics into how young people are exposed to and engage with political content (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are not only venues for sharing entertainment but also spaces for political discourse, advocacy, and activism. Among Generation Z (those born between 1997 and 2002), social media has become a crucial tool for acquiring political knowledge and participating in civic activities, especially in countries like Nigeria where traditional political participation may be limited by socio-political structures.

In Nigeria, the adoption of social media as a political tool has grown exponentially in the last decade. This is evidenced by its use in various protests and political movements, such as the #EndSARS movement in 2020, which saw young Nigerians, especially university students, mobilize through social media platforms to protest police brutality (Wayne, 2020). These platforms allowed for the rapid dissemination of information, organization of protests, and expression of political opinions. For Nigerian youths, social media provides a more accessible and less restricted space for political engagement compared to traditional media, which is often constrained by governmental control and censorship (Wayne, 2020).

Generation Z, often described as digital natives, is particularly adept at using social media to express their political views and organize around political causes. According to Festus (2022), young Nigerians in private institutions are increasingly using social media for political education, as these platforms allow them to engage with political information in a more personalized and interactive manner. While traditional schooling still plays a role in political socialization, the immediacy and accessibility of social media make it a more potent agent for shaping political beliefs and behaviours. For private school students, who may have more access to digital tools, social media becomes not just a tool for entertainment, but a platform for political awareness and activism (Oloyede & Falana, 2023).

Globally, the role of social media in political socialization has been well-documented, with studies indicating its significant influence on young people's political participation (Festus, 2022). These studies often highlight how social media platforms enable young people to bypass traditional gatekeepers of political information, such as mainstream media and political parties, allowing them to form their own political identities and engage with politics in a more direct and unmediated way. In the Nigerian context, this phenomenon is particularly important, given the country's history of political instability and the lack of trust in traditional political institutions (Akinola, et al., 2021).

Private school students in Nigeria represent a unique demographic within the larger Nigerian youth population. Private universities like Babcock University, Al Hikmah University, and Covenant University cater to students from more affluent backgrounds compared to their counterparts in public universities. These students often have more access to digital devices, internet connectivity, and other resources that facilitate their engagement with social media (Bakare, et al., 2015). This raises important questions about how socio-economic background influences the use of social media for political socialization and participation. In their study of Nigerian university students, Alabi, et al. (2023) found that students in private universities were more likely to engage in political discussions on social media compared to their peers in public institutions, largely due to better access to internet facilities and greater exposure to global political issues.

Despite the apparent benefits of social media for political engagement, there are concerns about its potential drawbacks. One such issue is the phenomenon of "slacktivism," where online political activity does not necessarily translate into offline political participation. This is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where youth engagement with politics online does not always result in active participation in electoral processes or other forms of political involvement (Alabi, et al., 2023). A study by Ohaja, et al. (2023) on Nigerian youths' participation in the 2023 general elections found that while social media platforms were heavily used for political campaigning, many young people who engaged online did not turn up to vote. This raises critical questions about the effectiveness of social media as a tool for fostering real-world political engagement among Nigerian youths.

Furthermore, the nature of political content on social media is often shaped by algorithms that prioritize sensational and emotionally

charged content, which may skew young people's political perceptions and limit their exposure to diverse political viewpoints (Alabi, et al., 2023). This creates a form of "echo chamber," where users are only exposed to content that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs, limiting their ability to engage critically with opposing political views (Lambe, et al., 2023). For Gen Z students in private schools, this may mean that while they are highly active on social media platforms, their political socialization may be influenced more by the algorithm-driven content they consume than by genuine engagement with diverse political ideologies.

Additionally, the role of influencers and digital activists on social media platforms has also shaped the political socialization of Nigerian youths. Influencers, who often command large followings, have become powerful agents of political mobilization, especially during times of political unrest. For instance, during the #EndSARS protests, several Nigerian influencers used their platforms to raise awareness, mobilize donations, and coordinate protest activities (lambe, et al., 2023). This new form of digital leadership presents both opportunities and challenges for political socialization, as it shifts the focus from traditional political actors to social media personalities, whose political messages may not always be grounded in accurate or reliable information (Alabi, et al., 2023).

In light of these developments, it is essential to understand how Gen Z students in Nigeria's private universities engage with social media for political socialization and participation. This study seeks to fill a critical gap in the literature by exploring the extent to which social media influences political behaviour among Nigerian youths in private institutions, the platforms they use, and the role of socio-economic background in shaping their political engagement. In other words, despite the proliferation of studies on social media and political participation, there is limited research on how Nigerian youths in private universities engage with social media as a tool for political socialization and participation. Moreover, questions remain about whether social media use translates into tangible political involvement, given Nigeria's complex socio-political environment. Understanding this engagement is critical as Gen Z represents the next generation of voters, activists, and political leaders. The study addresses this gap by examining the influence of social media on political socialization and participation among Nigerian Gen Z students in private institutions.

Objectives of the Study

This study would be anchored on the following objectives:

To assess the extent to which Gen Z students in private universities in Nigeria use social media for political socialization;

To find out the most popular social media platforms used for political engagement among Gen Z in private universities;

To assess the influence of social media use on political socialisation and participation among these GEN Z students.

To examine the correlation between socio-economic background and social media engagement in political activities.

Research Questions

These questions would guide this study:

How do Gen Z students in Nigerian private schools use social media for political socialization?

Which social media platforms are most influential in political participation among Gen Z students?

What influence does social media use have on their political socialisation and participation?

What is the relationship between socio-economic background and political socialization via social media?

Hypotheses

$H_0$1: Social media use has no significant influence on political socialization among Gen Z students in Nigerian private universities.

$H_0$2: Social media use has no significant influence on political participation among Gen Z students in Nigerian private universities.

$H_0$3: Socio-economic background has no significant influence on GEN Z social media engagement for political participation.

Conceptual and Theoretical Review

Political Socialization
Political socialization refers to the process by which individuals acquire political attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours that shape their understanding of and engagement with political systems. It is a lifelong process influenced by various agents, such as family, peers, educational institutions, mass media, and, more recently, digital platforms like social media (Keating & Melis, 2017) For Generation Z, digital platforms have transformed political socialization, making it a more dynamic and continuous process. This shift from traditional to digital platforms has altered how individuals, particularly young people, interact with political content, acquire political knowledge, and form political identities (Bode, et al., 2016).

Family has traditionally been the first and most influential agent of political socialization. Parents and other family members provide the earliest exposure to political discussions and ideologies. However, research suggests that while family plays an important role, its influence may diminish as individuals grow older and are exposed to other socialization agents, such as peers and media (Lambe, et al., 2023). Educational institutions also play a critical role in political socialization by providing formal civic education and encouraging political engagement through extracurricular activities, debates, and student government. According to Adelabu (2011), the political socialization process in Nigerian private universities often begins with students' involvement in campus politics and engagement with political content on social media.

In recent years, social media has emerged as a powerful agent of political socialization, especially among young people who spend a significant portion of their time online. Social media platforms offer an interactive space for sharing political opinions, engaging in discussions, and mobilizing around political causes. According to Bowyer, et al. (2017), social media platforms allow individuals to seek political information actively, form political opinions based on peer influence, and participate in online debates and campaigns. This process is particularly influential for younger generations, who are more likely to engage with political content through these digital platforms than traditional media such as television or newspapers (Ohaja, et al., 2019).

Social media's role in political socialization is particularly significant in contexts like Nigeria, where political information in traditional media is often controlled by the government or biased towards certain political parties. Online platforms provide a space for diverse political opinions and enable individuals to bypass gatekeepers of political information

(Ohaja, et al., 2019). However, the content consumed on social media can also create political echo chambers, where individuals are exposed only to views that reinforce their existing beliefs, limiting their exposure to diverse political perspectives (Bode, et al., 2016).

Political Participation

Political participation refers to the various activities through which individuals engage with the political process and influence the decision-making structures in their society. These activities range from voting in elections to more informal modes of participation, such as attending protests, engaging in political discussions, and participating in online activism (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 2022). The extent and forms of political participation vary across different contexts and populations. In Nigeria, political participation has historically been low due to widespread political apathy, distrust in government institutions, and systemic corruption (Lambe, et al., 2023).

One of the most fundamental forms of political participation is voting. Voting in elections allows individuals to influence who represents them in government and what policies are implemented. However, voting is just one aspect of political participation. Scholars argue that political participation encompasses a broader spectrum, including both institutionalized (formal) and non-institutionalized (informal) activities. Institutionalized activities include joining political parties, attending campaign rallies, and running for public office. Non-institutionalized activities include protests, petitions, and digital activism (Dalton, 2021). In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on digital forms of political participation. Social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, provide spaces for individuals to engage in political discussions, organize protests, and campaign for social or political causes. According to Loader et al. (2019), digital platforms have democratized political participation by making it more accessible and allowing for more horizontal forms of political engagement, where individuals can directly participate in political discourse without the mediation of traditional political elites. In Nigeria, social media played a key role in organizing the #EndSARS protests against police brutality, with thousands of young Nigerians using platforms like Twitter to share information, organize protests, and mobilize resources (Onuoha, 2022, Wayne, 2020).

However, digital participation raises questions about the quality and effectiveness of online political engagement. Critics argue that while social media facilitates easier political participation, it may encourage "slacktivism," a phenomenon where individuals engage in minimal

online activism that does not translate into meaningful offline action (Nwankwo, 2022). Studies have shown that while social media can mobilize individuals for political causes, it does not always result in increased electoral participation or sustained political involvement (Loader et al., 2019).

In Nigeria, political participation remains constrained by various socio-political factors, including widespread distrust in political institutions, electoral violence, and systemic corruption. For young people, particularly those in private universities, political participation may be influenced by factors such as socio-economic background, access to digital tools, and exposure to global political movements (Wayne, 2020). Despite these challenges, social media provides a new avenue for political engagement, allowing young Nigerians to bypass traditional barriers to political participation.

Digital Activism

Digital activism refers to the use of digital technologies, particularly social media platforms, to promote political or social change. This form of activism includes activities such as online petitions, hashtag campaigns, and virtual protests that seek to raise awareness and mobilize support for various causes. The rise of digital activism has fundamentally altered how political and social movements are organized, allowing for more decentralized, rapid, and widespread forms of mobilization (Tufekci, 2017). In Nigeria, digital activism has become an important tool for youth political engagement, especially among university students who use platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to organize and participate in social and political movements.

The #EndSARS movement in 2020 is a prominent example of digital activism in Nigeria. The movement, which called for an end to police brutality by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), was largely organized and sustained through social media platforms. Young Nigerians, particularly students, used Twitter and Instagram to share their experiences of police violence, organize protests, and raise funds for those affected by the protests (Onuoha, 2023). This movement demonstrated the power of digital activism in mobilizing large numbers of people and influencing political discourse. The global reach of social media platforms allowed the movement to gain international attention, further amplifying its impact (Wayne, 2020).

Digital activism is often praised for its ability to democratize political engagement by making it more accessible and inclusive. According to Gerbaudo (2020), social media platforms enable individuals to

bypass traditional political gatekeepers, such as political parties and media outlets, and engage directly with political causes. This has led to the emergence of new forms of digital leadership, where influencers and activists with large followings can shape political discourse and mobilize support for specific issues.

However, digital activism is not without its limitations. One of the key criticisms of digital activism is the phenomenon of slacktivism, where individuals engage in minimal online actions, such as liking or sharing a post, without participating in more substantive forms of political engagement (Jenkins, 2022). Slacktivism raises questions about the effectiveness of digital activism in creating real-world change. While social media platforms can raise awareness and mobilize people for political causes, they may not always translate into sustained offline action or policy changes (Tufekci, 2017).

In Nigeria, digital activism has also faced challenges related to government censorship and internet shutdowns. During the #EndSARS protests, the Nigerian government attempted to suppress the movement by freezing the bank accounts of activists and shutting down internet access in certain regions (Akinyele, 2020). These actions highlight the limitations of digital activism in contexts where governments have the ability to control digital infrastructure. Despite these challenges, digital activism remains a critical tool for political and social mobilization in Nigeria, particularly among young people who are increasingly using social media platforms to engage with political causes.

Socio-Economic Background and Political Behaviour

Socio-economic background plays a critical role in shaping individuals' political behaviour, influencing their political attitudes, level of engagement, and modes of participation. Socio-economic status (SES) refers to an individual's or group's position within a hierarchical social structure, often determined by income, education, and occupation. Studies have consistently shown that individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to engage in political activities, such as voting, running for office, and participating in political discussions (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 2022). This is largely due to greater access to resources, political information, and social networks that facilitate political engagement.

In Nigeria, socio-economic background significantly influences political behaviour, particularly among university students. Private universities, such as Babcock University, Al Hikmah University, and

Covenant University, often cater to students from wealthier families who have more access to digital tools and political information. A study by Alabi, et al. (2023) found that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to engage in political discussions on social media and participate in digital activism compared to their peers from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This is consistent with global trends, where individuals with higher levels of education and income are more likely to use digital platforms for political engagement (Gerbaudo, 2020).

Socio-economic status also affects the nature of political participation. Individuals from wealthier backgrounds may have more opportunities to participate in formal political activities, such as joining political parties or running for office. In contrast, individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds may be more likely to engage in informal political activities, such as protests or digital activism, as these forms of participation require fewer resources (Dalton, 2021). In Nigeria, where political institutions are often seen as corrupt and inaccessible to ordinary citizens, young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds may resort to digital activism as a way to express their political grievances (Wayne, 2020).

However, socio-economic background is not the only factor influencing political behaviour. Cultural factors, such as ethnic identity and religious beliefs, also play a significant role in shaping political attitudes and behaviours in Nigeria. According to Falola and Heaton (2020), ethnic and religious identities often intersect with socio-economic status, influencing how individuals engage with political issues and the kinds of political movements they support. For example, during the #EndSARS protests, students from wealthier backgrounds were more likely to participate in online activism, while students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to engage in street protests (Wayne, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored on The Uses and Gratifications Theory. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) posits that individuals actively seek out specific media to satisfy particular needs or desires, rather than being passive consumers of media content (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). The theory suggests that media use is goal-oriented, and individuals select media based on the gratification they expect to receive from it. UGT is centred on five key propositions:

Active Audience: Audiences are not passive recipients of media; instead, they actively seek out content that aligns with their needs and preferences.
Need Satisfaction: Media consumption is motivated by specific needs, such as information seeking, entertainment, personal identity, integration, and social interaction.

Diversified Media Use: Different individuals use media in different ways, depending on their social contexts, individual preferences, and desired outcomes.

Competition with Other Satisfactions: Media consumption competes with other methods of satisfying the same needs, such as face-to-face interactions or reading books.

Goal-Oriented Media Use: Audiences approach media with specific goals and evaluate whether their media use satisfies their needs (Ruggiero, 2000).

UGT provides a useful framework for understanding how different individuals use social media platforms for political socialization. For Generation Z, social media serves as a tool for seeking information, engaging in political discussions, and participating in digital activism. Research shows that younger audiences use social media not just for entertainment but also for political and civic engagement, driven by their desire for political information and involvement (Whiting & Williams, 2013). The theory's focus on the active role of media users fits well with the participatory nature of social media platforms.

Critics argue that UGT is too individualistic and overlooks broader social and structural influences on media consumption (McQuail, 2010). The theory assumes that individuals have full control over their media use, ignoring the fact that media choices can be shaped by algorithms, media gatekeeping, and other external factors. Additionally, UGT focuses primarily on short-term gratifications rather than considering the long-term effects of media use, such as political learning or radicalization (Papacharissi, 2015).

UGT is relevant to this study because it provides a framework for understanding how Gen Z students in private universities use social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to fulfill their needs for political information and engagement. The theory helps explain why these students actively seek out political content on social media, engage in discussions, and participate in digital activism. For example, during the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria,

students used social media to satisfy their need for social interaction, political expression, and solidarity with their peers (Wayne, 2020). With this focus, UGT allows this study to explore how these gratifications drive their political participation both online and offline.

Methodology

This study adopts the Survey Research Method to investigate the influence of social media use on political socialization and participation among Generation Z students in three selected private universities in Nigeria: Babcock University (Ilisan-Remo), Al Hikmah University (Ilorin), and Covenant University (Ogun State). A structured questionnaire serves as the primary data collection tool, designed to assess students' social media usage patterns, political socialization processes, and levels of political participation. Kline's (2015) recommendation for sample size calculation, which suggests a ratio of 10 respondents per variable, is applied, ensuring the sample is large enough to provide reliable and valid results. Using a multistage sampling technique, 575 students are selected from the three universities, ensuring representation across different faculties and departments. This sample size was chosen based on the recommendation of Comrey and Lee (2003) cited in Okoji and Azeez (2023) alongside Asemah, et al. (2017) which says, out of a population, a sample size of 50 is very poor; 100 is poor; 200 is fair; 300 is good; 500 is very good and 1,000 is excellent.

The data collected from the questionnaires is analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution are used to summarize students' social media usage and political engagement patterns. Inferential statistics, including correlation and linear regression analysis, are employed to test the hypotheses. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire are tested using Cronbach's alpha, ensuring consistency in the responses. To test the formulated hypotheses, this study employs a null hypothesis testing approach, focusing on the significance of relationships between the variables. Hypotheses are tested at a 0.05 level of significance, and findings are reported with corresponding p-values. Data analysis is conducted using SPSS software to ensure accuracy and comprehensive interpretation of results.

Result and Discussion of Findings

Out of the four hundred and seventy (575) copies of questionnaire duly filled and returned, 234 (41%) students are from Al Hikmah

University, 197 (34%) from Babcock University and 144 (25%) from Covenant University. Also, majority of the respondents were female 317 representing 55.1% of the total sample size, majority of the respondents (441 representing 76.7%) were between the age range of 21 and 27 and majority of the respondents came from a background with a monthly income of #1,000,000 and above.

On frequency of social media usage, 74% of respondents indicated that they use social media daily to engage with political content, while 20% use it a few times a week. Only 6% rarely use social media for political purposes. The top platforms used by respondents were Twitter (60%), followed by Instagram (50%) and Facebook (40%), with WhatsApp being utilized by 35% for political engagement. Fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents primarily use social media to stay informed about political issues, while 25% use it for entertainment, and 20% to engage in discussions or activism.

Table 1: Respondents' **level of Social Media Usage**

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	X SD	Decision
I use social media daily to stay upd on political issues	415 (79)	54 (10)	5 (0.9)	45 (8.5)	6 (1.1)	4.2 (1.2)	Accept
I rely on social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook for political information	385 (73)	112 (21)	20 (4)	5 (1)	3 (0.5)	4.6 (1.0)	Accept
Social media provides easy access to diverse political viewpoints	320 (61)	75 (14)	10 (1.9)	77 (15)	43 (8)	4.1 (1.2)	Accept
I frequently share political content on my social media profiles	265 (51)	145 (28)	10 (1.9)	92 (18)	13 (2.5)	3.4 (1.3)	Accept
Social media helps me understand current political events in Nigeria better.	367 (70)	94 (18)	15 (3)	35 (7)	14 (3)	4.6 (1.5)	Accept
I use social media more often for entertainment than for political engagement.	485 (92)	8 (2)	12 (2)	7 (1)	13 (3)	4.2 (1.7)	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2024 Mean cut-off = 3.00 while standard deviation= 1.41

Table 1 showed that respondents generally agreed to the variables for measuring their usage of social media for political issues. Specifically, they agreed that they use social media daily to stay updated on political issues (N= 525, Mean= 4.2, Standard deviation= 1.2), that they rely on social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook

for political information (N= 525, Mean= 4.6, Standard deviation= 1.0), that Social media provides easy access to diverse political viewpoints (N= 525, Mean= 4.1, Standard deviation= 1.2), that they frequently share political content on my social media profiles (N= 525, Mean= 3.4, Standard deviation= 1.3), that Social media helps me understand current political events in Nigeria better (N= 525, Mean= 4.6, Standard deviation= 1.5), and that they use social media more often for entertainment than for political engagement (N= 525, Mean= 4.2, Standard deviation= 1.7).

Table 2: Respondents' **level of Social Media Usage for Political Socialisation**

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	X SD	Decision
Social media has greatly influenced my understanding of political matters	320 (61)	75 (14)	10 (1.9)	77 (15)	43 (8)	4.1 (1.2)	Accept
I engage in political discussions on social media platforms	325 (62)	65 (12)	10 (1.9)	77 (15)	48 (9)	4.1 (1.2)	Accept
Political debates on social media help shape my political opinions	367 (70)	94 (18)	15 (3)	35 (7)	14 (3)	4.6 (1.5)	Accept
Social media exposes me to political views different from my own	485 (92)	8 (2)	12 (2)	7 (1)	13 (3)	4.2 (1.7)	Accept
I follow political influencers and public figures on social media to stay politically informed	367 (70)	94 (18)	15 (3)	35 (7)	14 (3)	4.6 (1.5)	Accept
Social media has enhanced my interest in Nigerian politics	307 (59)	88 (17)	10 (1.9)	77 (15)	43 (8)	4.1 (1.2)	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2024. Mean cut-off = 3.00 while standard deviation= 1.41

Table 2 revealed that respondents generally agreed to the variables for measuring respondents' level of social media usage for political socialisation. Specifically, they agreed that social media has greatly influenced their understanding of political matters (N= 525, Mean= 4.1, Standard deviation= 1.2), that they engage in political discussions on social media platforms (N= 525, Mean= 4.1, Standard deviation= 1.2), that political debates on social media help shape their political opinions (N= 525, Mean= 4.6, Standard deviation= 1.5), that Social

media exposes them to political views different from their own (N= 525, Mean= 4.2, Standard deviation= 1.7), that they follow political influencers and public figures on social media to stay politically informed (N= 525, Mean= 4.6, Standard deviation= 1.5), and that Social media has enhanced their interest in Nigerian politics (N= 525, Mean= 4.1, Standard deviation= 1.2).

Table 3: Respondents' **level of Social Media Usage for Political Participation**

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	X SD	Decision
I have participated in online political activities (e.g., signing petitions, joining political groups).	415 (79)	54 (10)	5 (0.9)	45 (8.5)	6 (1.1)	4.2 (1.2)	Accept
Social media has motivated me to participate in offline political activities (e.g., protests, voting).	385 (73)	112 (21)	20 (4)	5 (1)	3 (0.5)	4.6 (1.0)	Accept
I believe that my social media engagement can bring about political change	320 (61)	75 (14)	10 (1.9)	77 (15)	43 (8)	4.1 (1.2)	Accept
I actively participate in sharing political information during elections or national events.	265 (51)	145 (28)	10 (1.9)	92 (18)	13 (2.5)	3.4 (1.3)	Accept
Social media enables me to engage with political issues even when I don't participate physically.	367 (70)	94 (18)	15 (3)	35 (7)	14 (3)	4.6 (1.5)	Accept
I feel empowered to contribute to political discourse through social media	325 (62)	65 (12)	10 (1.9)	77 (15)	48 (9)	4.1 (1.2)	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2024 Mean cut-off = 3.00 while standard deviation= 1.41

Table 3 indicated that respondents generally agreed to the variables for measuring respondents' level of social media usage for political participation. Specifically, they agreed that they have participated in online political activities (e.g., signing petitions, joining political groups (N= 525, Mean= 4.2, Standard deviation= 1.2), that social media has motivated them to participate in offline political activities (e.g., protests, voting). (N= 525, Mean= 4.6, Standard deviation= 1.0), that their social media engagement can bring about political change (N= 525, Mean= 4.1, Standard deviation= 1.2), that they actively

participated in sharing political information during elections or national events. (N= 525, Mean= 3.4, Standard deviation= 1.3), that social media enables them to engage with political issues even when they don't participate physically (N= 525, Mean= 4.6, Standard deviation= 1.5), and that they felt empowered to contribute to political discourse through social media (N= 525, Mean= 4.1, Standard deviation= 1.2).

Table 4: Relationship between Socio-Economic Background and Political Socialization via Social Media

Variables	N	Pearson Co-efficient	Sig	Status
Socio-economic Background	525			
MEAN		0.785	0.000	Significant
Political socialisation	525			

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As revealed in table 4, the calculated correlation coefficient between respondents' socio-economic background and their political socialisation via the social media was 0.785 while its calculated significance value is 0.000 at alpha level of 0.05. This implies that there is a strong positive and statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.785$, $\rho < 0.05$) between respondents between respondents' socio-economic background and their political socialisation via the social media. This is because the significance value (0.000) was lower than 0.05 alpha level ($\rho < 0.05$).

Hypotheses Testing

$H_0$1: Social media use has no significant influence on political socialization among Gen Z students in Nigerian private universities.

Table 5: Influence of social media on political socialisation among GEN Z

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	6054.160	1	6054.160	571.260	0.000
	Residual	8413.647	524	10.787		
	Total	14467.807	525			

Dependent Variable: political socialisation among GEN Z
R (r)= 0.657; R Square (R^2) = 0.468; Adjusted R Square = 0.468; β = 0.294; t= 23.691; Sig= 0.000

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Tables 5 indicates that social media use had a positive significant impact on political socialisation among GEN Z students in Nigerian universities (β= 0.294, *t*= 23.691, *p*<0.05). The correlation coefficient shows that respondents' social media use had a positive significant association with their political socialisation (*r* = 0.657, ρ <0.05). The model shows that that respondents' use of social media accounted for 65.7 percent variation (*R*= 0.657) in their political socialisation processes. Hence, it is established that social media use has a positive and significant influence on political socialization among Gen Z students in Nigerian private universities. Therefore, the hypothesis stated in the null is rejected.

H$_0$2: Social media use has no significant influence on political participation among Gen Z students in Nigerian private universities.

Table 6: Influence of social media on political participation among GEN Z

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	9704.018	1	9704.018	367.270	0.000
Residual	20609.154	780	26.422		
Total	30313.173	781			

Dependent Variable: Political participation among GEN Z
R (*r*)= 0.566; R Square (*R^2*) = 0.320; Adjusted R Square = 0.319; β = 0.525; *t*= 19.164; Sig= 0.000
Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Tables 6 indicates that social media use had a positive significant impact on political participation among GEN Z students in Nigerian universities (β= 0.525, *t*= 19.164, *p*<0.05). The correlation coefficient shows that respondents' social media use had a positive significant association with their political participation (*r* = 0.566, *p*<0.05). The model shows that that respondents' use of social media accounted for 65.7 percent variation (*R*= 0.566) in their political participation stride. Hence, it is established that social media use has a positive and significant influence on political participation among Gen Z students in Nigerian private universities. Therefore, the hypothesis stated in the null is rejected; hence, accepting the alternate.

H₀3: Socio-economic background has no significant influence on GEN Z social media engagement for political participation.

Table 7: Influence of Socio-Economic Background on GEN Z Social Media Engagement

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	6058.747	1	6058.747	324.804	0.000
	Residual	14549.780	780	18.654		
	Total	20608.527	781			

Dependent Variable: GEN Z Social Media Engagement
R (r)= 0.542;   R Square (R^2) = 0.294;   Adjusted R Square = 0.293;   β = 0.415; t= 18.022; Sig= 0.000

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Tables 7 indicates that socio-economic background had a positive significant impact on GEN Z in Nigerian universities' social media engagement (β= 0.415, t= 18.022, $p<0.05$). The correlation coefficient shows that respondents' socio-economic background had a positive significant association with their social media engagements (r = 0.542, $p<0.05$). The model shows that that respondents' use of social media accounted for 54.2 percent variation (R= 0.542) in their social media engagement activities. Hence, it is established that socio-economic background has a positive and significant influence on Gen Z students in Nigerian private universities' social media engagement activities. Therefore, the hypothesis stated in the null is rejected while the alternate is accepted.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that social media plays a pivotal role in the political socialisation and participation of GEN Z students in Nigerian private universities. Majority of respondents indicated that platforms like Twitter and Instagram provide them with timely political information and help shape their political opinions. These findings are consistent with Amedu and Oginni (2023) who also found that social media significantly influences the political attitudes of young Nigerians. Also, respondents actively engaged in sharing political content and participating in online campaigns and discussions about political issues and activities. These findings align with Kehinde, Kehinde and Ezugwu (2023) where it is argued that digital activism is becoming a primary form of political participation for young people in Nigeria. On socio-economic background and political behaviour, the study revealed that students from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to engage in political activities online.

This result contrasts with Osegboun and Osegboun (2019), who found that political participation is not significantly affected by socio-economic status among Nigerian youths.

It however recommended based on the findings that the social media should be effectively used by the government to motivate youths to fully participate in the political activities in Nigeria, not only online but offline as well. The GEN Z students should be mobilised to transfer their active online participation on political issues to offline engagement into political activities, such as, registration for voters' card and the actual voting process. Also, the government should put in place mechanisms to aggregate the views and responses of youths expressed online on political activities in the country. In other words, the youths' attention and focus should be grabbed and engrossed online with positive political education and socialisation which can elevate the country's growth and infrastructural development.

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