

**EVALUATION OF USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CRITICAL DEMOCRATIC
CITIZENSHIP IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA.**

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**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE COLLEGE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES,
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was duly carried out by Hassan Otinau, in the Department of Mass Communication, College of Postgraduate Studies, University of Benin, (UNIBEN), Benin City in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD) in Mass Communication.

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to the HOLY SPIRIT who 'arrested' me for Christ Jesus early morning of February 19, 2014. It was good HE came!!!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	x
Abstract	xi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1	Background to the Study	1
1.2	Statement of the Research Problem	9
1.3	Research Objectives	11
1.4	Research Questions	12
1.5	Hypotheses	12
1.6	Significance of the Study	12
1.7	Scope of the Study	14
1.8	Limitation of the Study	14
1.9	Operational Definition of Terms	15

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0	Introduction	18
2.1	Conceptual Review	18
2.1.1	The Concept of Governance	18

2.1.2	The Concept of Public Policy	25
2.1.3.	Political Agency	29
2.1.4	Critical Democratic Citizenship	30
2.1.5.	Social Media	33
2.2	Opinion Review	36
2.2.1	Dimensions of Political Discourse on Social Media	36
2.2.2.	Social Media Influencers as Gatekeepers and Agents of Polarization	40
2.2.3	Social Media Disinformation Warfare and Propaganda	46
2.2.4	Social Media and Governance	48
2.2.5	Social Media and Activism (“hashtag” Activism)	52
2.2.6	The Role of Social Media in Shaping Governance and Policy	57
2.2.7	Social Media and Critical Democratic Citizenship	58
2.2.8	The State of Governance in Nigeria	61
2.3	Empirical Review of Related Studies	68
2.3.1	Gaps in Research	95
2.4	Theoretical Frameworks	97
2.4.1	Uses and Gratification Theory	97
2.4.2	The theory of Deliberative Democracy	98
2.4.3	Networked Governance Theory	99
2.4.4	Critical Theory	100
2.5	Conceptual Framework	101
 CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		
3.0	Introduction	105

3.1	Research Design	105
3.2	Population of the Study	105
3.3	Sample Size	106
3.4	Sampling Technique	107
3.5	Instrument of Data Collection	107
3.6	Validity of Instrument	108
3.7	Reliability of Instrument	109
3.8	Method of Data Collection	110
3.9	Method of Data Analysis	111
3.10	Ethical Considerations	112
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS		
4.0	Introduction	113
4.1	Presentation of Data	113
4.2	Answers to Research Questions, Hypotheses and Discussion of Findings	145
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
5.1	Summary	170
5.2	Conclusion	171
5.3	Recommendations	172
5.4	Contribution to Knowledge	173
	REFERENCES	176
	APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE	194

LIST OF TABLES

<i>TABLE</i>	<i>TITLE</i>	<i>PAGE</i>
Table 4.1:	Sex	113
Table 4.2:	Age of Respondent	114
Table 4.3:	Educational Qualification of Respondents	114
Table 4.4:	Religion of Respondents	115
Table 4.5:	Occupation	115
Table 4.6:	Responses on the frequency of engagement with political and Governance Issues on Social Media	116
Table 4.7	Responses on Sources of Information for Governance and Political Issues	117
Table 4.8:	Responses on engagement with governance content on social media	119
Table 4.9	Responses on Platform Preference for Governance related issues on social media	120
Table 4.10	Responses on Content Verification for governance engagement	124
Table 4.11:	Responses on issues of Governance Discussed on Social Media	126
Table 4.12:	Responses on engagement with governance policies on Social Media	127
Table 4.13:	Responses on encouragement of others to participate in democratic processes	129
Table 4.14:	Responses on the relationship between Government performance and Critical democratic citizenship	131
Table 4.15:	Responses on Criticism of the Democratic process	133
Table 4.16	Aggregated responses on each indicator of Critical democratic citizenship	134
Table 4.17.1	Variables Entered/Removed ^b	137
Table 4.17.2	Model Summary	137
Table 4.17.3	ANOVA ^b	138
Table 4.17.4	Coefficients ^a	138

Table 4.18	Correlations between Frequency of engagement and Critical democratic Citizenship	141
Table 4.19.1	Variables Entered/Removed ^b	142
Table 4.19.2	Model Summary	143
Table 4.19.3	ANOVA ^b	143
Table 4.19.4	Coefficients ^a	143

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 Respondents who Prefer Facebook for Engagement on Governance	123
Figure 4.2 Respondents who Prefer Whatsapp for Engagement on Governance	123
Figure 4.3 Respondents who Prefer Instagram for Engagement on Governance	123
Figure 4.4 Respondents who Prefer Twitter for Engagement on Governance	124

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the use of social media for critical democratic citizenship among residents of Edo State, Nigeria. The study addressed the following research Objectives: Ascertain social media users' engagement with government policies in Edo state, determine the level of social media users' criticism of the democratic process, examine citizens Critical reflection on the political and economic systems in place on social media, evaluate how citizens have used the social media to call for social justice, ascertain the relationship between government performance and critical democratic citizenship.

Survey method was adopted, with a cross sectional design, using purposive sampling technique. A sample of 400 respondents was drawn from the estimated 960,000 Social media users in Edo State (Datareportal's Digital 2023 Report). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

The findings revealed that social media is widely used for political awareness, active engagement in discussions but activism remains limited. Respondents reported using social media daily to stay informed about political issues (Mean = 3.68, SD = 1.40), but active participation in discussions was less common (Mean = 3.02, SD = 1.23). WhatsApp emerged as the most preferred platform for political discussions (Mean = 3.46, SD = 1.28), while Instagram was the least preferred (Mean = 2.14, SD = 1.28). Users trust social media for government-related information (Mean = 3.97, SD = 1.44) but exercise caution in verifying content before sharing (Mean = 4.14, SD = 0.87). Demographic factors influenced social media engagement, with men and older individuals showing higher participation rates, while women and highly educated individuals exhibited lower levels of engagement. For instance, 68.8% of respondents were female, and 49.9% held postgraduate degrees, yet engagement among these groups was lower compared to their counterparts. A moderate positive correlation was found between social media engagement and critical democratic citizenship ($r = 0.461$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that active users are more likely to participate in democratic processes. However, despite recognizing the impact of government performance on civic engagement (Mean = 4.67, SD = 0.68), this awareness does not always translate into active participation. The study concluded that social media is a vital tool for political awareness in Edo State, but active engagement, criticism, and critical reflection remain limited. To address these gaps, the study recommends the implementation of educational programmes to promote responsible and critical engagement with political content and developing targeted initiatives to increase the participation of women and highly educated individuals in online political discourse.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The return of the Nigerian state to a republic in 1999 meant that the institutions of the state are subjected to a democratic political system in which citizens determine to a large extent the day to day governance of the Nigerian state (Fasakin, 2015). Critical democratic citizenship has been conceived as an active and reflective engagement in democratic processes, wherein citizens not only exercise their rights but also challenge injustices, inequalities, and exclusions within their societies (Burgh & Thornton, 2019). According to Westheimer and Kahne (2004), citizenship in a democratic society entails more than just being a passive observer; it requires citizens to be aware of social and political dynamics, to actively participate in addressing systemic challenges, and to collaborate with others in fostering inclusive and equitable communities.

Similarly, Biesta (2011:13) defines democratic citizenship as “learning democracy,” highlighting the role of education in cultivating citizens who are capable of engaging with political systems, questioning dominant narratives, and working towards social change. In other words, critical democratic citizenship is active political vigilance by citizens whose input can safeguard democracy. With the advent of social media, critical democratic citizenship has been transformed as citizens engage with democratic processes (Deibert, 2014). It offers new platforms for participation, dialogue, and activism, thereby influencing the dimensions of critical democratic citizenship. It is arguable that the countries with high levels of critical democratic citizenship have enduring institutions and positive governance

for their citizens while those with low levels of critical democratic citizenship have failing institutions and are susceptible to state capture.

There are dimensions of critical democratic citizenship. Critical democratic citizenship covers six dimensions; notably; Political agency, Critical reflection, Deliberation, Social justice, Civic responsibility, and Ethical engagement (Johnson & Morris, 2010; Gibson, 2020). Political agency refers to the capacity of individuals to influence political decision-making and public life. Unlike traditional conceptions of citizenship that view participation as limited to voting or following laws, critical democratic citizenship views participation as an ongoing, dynamic process where citizens actively engage in shaping public policies, advocating for marginalized groups, and contributing to democratic governance (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Political agency also emphasizes the importance of empowering marginalized and disenfranchised communities. As articulated by Young (2000), democratic citizenship should be inclusive and promote the voices of those often left out of formal political processes. For example, participatory budgeting and grassroots movements are avenues through which citizens exercise political agency, demonstrating the potential of collective action in addressing social inequities.

Critical reflection involves questioning and evaluating the social, political, and economic systems in place. Critical democratic citizens are expected to go beyond mere compliance with laws and institutions; they are encouraged to critically assess whether these institutions uphold principles of fairness, equality, and justice (Giroux, 2011). This reflective practice is central to the idea of democracy as an evolving process, wherein citizens constantly scrutinize power relations and strive for more inclusive and just systems. Deliberation, as a component of critical reflection, involves engaging in discussions and

debates with others to reach consensus or explore diverse perspectives. According to Gutmann and Thompson (2004), democratic deliberation requires individuals to be open to disagreement and to critically reflect on their own assumptions and biases. Through dialogue, citizens can develop a more nuanced understanding of complex social issues and work together to address them.

Social justice reflects the commitment to addressing structural inequalities and ensuring that all members of society have equal opportunities to participate in democratic processes. Fraser (2009) argues that democratic citizenship should include the recognition of marginalized groups, such as women, racial minorities, and people with disabilities, who face systemic barriers to participation. Furthermore, critical democratic citizenship advocates for redistributive justice, which aims to rectify economic and social disparities that undermine the democratic process. For example, addressing issues such as wealth inequality, access to education, and healthcare are crucial for creating a more equitable society where all citizens can fully engage in democratic life (Rawls, 1971).

Civic responsibility is the duty of citizens to act in ways that promote the common good and protect the rights of others. In critical democratic citizenship, civic responsibility is not limited to obeying the law; it involves taking ethical stands on issues that affect society and engaging in practices that support the well-being of all citizens (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). This includes advocating for policies that enhance social welfare, participating in community organizing, and contributing to efforts that seek to improve the quality of life for disadvantaged groups. Ethical engagement, as part of civic responsibility, requires citizens to approach political and social issues with a sense of moral integrity and care for others. This

dimension emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals within a democratic society and the need for collaborative efforts in addressing collective challenges.

Nations like Norway, Sweden, and Denmark are often ranked among the world's most democratic, with high levels of critical citizenship. Citizens in these countries not only participate in elections and also engage in the oversight of public policies, actively participate in civil society organizations, and collaborate with the government on issues such as welfare, health, and education (Lijphart, 1999; Andersen & Jensen, 2019). In contrast, countries with low levels of citizen engagement in democratic processes often suffer from weak institutions, leading to higher risks of state capture, corruption, and governance failures. In Venezuela, the decline of democratic engagement and the erosion of civil liberties under Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro are examples of how weak democratic participation can lead to state capture. The lack of critical engagement from citizens, combined with the government's centralization of power, has led to institutional decay, the undermining of democratic checks and balances, and widespread corruption. Venezuela's judiciary, electoral commission, and other institutions have been compromised, allowing the state to become susceptible to authoritarianism (Corrales & Penfold, 2015).

Social media has fundamentally transformed the way citizens engage with democratic processes. It offers new platforms for participation, dialogue, and activism, thereby influencing the dimensions of critical democratic citizenship. Social media can be a platform for political agency, critical reflection, deliberation, social justice, civic responsibility, and ethical engagement. Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become crucial tools for political engagement. They enable individuals to share information, mobilize support, and coordinate collective action rapidly. According to Loader and Mercea

(2011), social media facilitates "e-citizenship," where digital technologies empower citizens to participate actively in political processes beyond traditional methods. The role of social media in political agency is evident in movements like the Arab Spring and the Black Lives Matter protests. Howard and Hussain (2013) argue that social media was instrumental in organizing protests, disseminating information, and garnering international attention during the Arab Spring. Similarly, the Black Lives Matter movement utilized social media to highlight racial injustices and mobilize global support (Jackson, Bailey, & Welles, 2020).

The #EndSARS protests, which called for the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), became one of the most prominent examples of social media-driven activism in Nigeria. Platforms such as Twitter and Instagram were used to organize protests, spread awareness of human rights violations, and co-ordinate resources such as legal aid and medical assistance. Social media helped amplify the voices of marginalized groups who had experienced police violence, thereby fostering active civic engagement and participation (Adejunmobi, 2020). According to Adegbola and Gearhart (2019), social media has provided Nigerian citizens with greater access to political information and opportunities to mobilize rapidly, especially during moments of political unrest or injustice. This illustrates how political agency, a core aspect of critical democratic citizenship, has been furthered by social media.

Through platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, citizens actively engage with policymakers, scrutinize government actions, and demand transparency. This has given rise to citizen journalism in Nigeria, where individuals use platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp to document and expose government corruption and inefficiency. For example, during the 2019 general elections, citizens used social media to report electoral malpractice, violence,

and irregularities, ensuring that these issues were publicly addressed (Ojebode, 2019). This reflects the dimension of critical reflection where citizens evaluate the fairness of political systems and demand justice. The BudgIT initiative, which uses social media to promote transparency in government spending, is another example of how Nigerian citizens use digital tools to ensure accountability. Through Twitter and Facebook, BudgIT disseminates information on government budgets and spending patterns, encouraging Nigerians to participate in fiscal accountability and governance (Nwankwo & Obi, 2020). This kind of civic responsibility aligns with the ethical engagement required in critical democratic citizenship.

Globally, nations face diverse social issues that concern their populations. Nigeria, in particular, grapples with challenges such as electoral malpractice, terrorism, banditry, maladministration, police brutality, youth restiveness, and unemployment—problems that many attribute to the failures of the ruling class. In response to these challenges, citizens are compelled to demand that the government address their concerns. Elected and appointed officials are expected to represent the interests of the people, ensuring a well-ordered society in which citizens can take pride in their national identity. To achieve this, productive engagement of citizens, especially the youth, is essential for creating a peaceful and safer society. As Asemah, Hassan, and Jumbo (2022) suggest, meaningful youth engagement is crucial for national peace and stability.

Historically, Nigeria has faced numerous challenges since the era of colonial administration, which began in 1900 and lasted until independence in 1960. During the colonial period, Nigerian nationalists, particularly the educated elite, voiced their displeasure with the system through various means, such as newspaper articles, strikes, and protest

letters. Prominent figures like Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Ahmadu Bello, Obafemi Awolowo, and Herbert Macaulay used their influence and intellectual resources to demand freedom from British rule. A key demand of the nationalists was political independence for Nigeria.

In contemporary times, citizens have embraced new, more effective means of making their voices heard particularly through the use of social media. As Josiah and Abimiku (2022) note, the digital era has transformed the way citizens communicate with their governments, enabling them to hold leaders accountable more efficiently. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram provide rapid avenues for information dissemination and mobilization, far surpassing traditional media like newspapers, television, and radio. These platforms have become indispensable tools in fostering critical democratic citizenship, allowing citizens to critique government policies, expose societal ills, and campaign for reforms.

Ekhareafu (2022) highlights the declining influence of mainstream media in holding the government accountable, exemplified by the closure of African Independent Television (AIT) for allegedly airing biased and critical content. This increasing censorship has further elevated the role of social media in empowering citizens to challenge the government, especially when public officials fail in their duties. Critical democratic citizenship encourages citizens to question processes, propose solutions, and actively participate in shaping their nation's future. In Nigeria, the youth—who dominate social media platforms—have been particularly vocal in expressing their concerns and demanding accountability from the government.

However, the challenge often lies not in citizens' ability to communicate their demands but in the government's failure to act on them. Even under democratic governance, poor

leadership and selfish interests have led to widespread disillusionment among Nigerians, making the country a shadow of its potential. Instead of merely asking for jobs, citizens now demand an enabling environment in which they can thrive. Travel within Nigeria is fraught with danger, as kidnapping and ransom demands have become prevalent. In the face of these failures, citizens have no choice but to rise up and speak out.

Ekhareafu (2022), argues that the principles of democracy are being undermined by leaders who impose their personal views on governance, often ignoring the democratic will of the people. This disregard for democracy leads to crises, both in Nigeria and across Africa, where the rule of law is often ignored. The essence of democracy is to enforce laws impartially, without making concessions to those in power. Given the government's ineptitude, citizens increasingly turn to social media to express their dissatisfaction. Unfortunately, rather than engaging with these criticisms, the government often resorts to arresting, intimidating, and harassing social media users in an attempt to silence dissent. This violates the principles of free speech, a cornerstone of democratic governance. When governments act in the public interest, citizens have little reason to criticize them on social media. However, when leadership fails, citizens cannot remain silent. Social media, in this context, becomes an invaluable tool for drawing attention to government shortcomings.

Social media provides a powerful means for citizens to reach government officials easily, particularly in this era of globalization and the internet. For those who have not yet embraced social media, access to certain information may be limited, as traditional media often shy away from publishing content that could lead to government reprisals. Thus, social media has become an essential tool for Nigerian citizens to communicate with their government, advocate for change, and hold officials accountable. In a nation that is so

diverse and that is media rich, it is imperative that studies on the role of social media in deepening critical democratic citizenship is carried out to ascertain the issues of concern to citizens, the medium and ways of using social media in political engagement and the trends that can emerge from the use of social media in political participation. This research therefore analyses and evaluates Edo state residents use of social media for critical Democratic citizenship.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It is undeniable that social media has emerged as a force in political participation in Nigeria. Since 2011, social media platforms have become very important in political campaigns geared towards reaching the young voting public in various states in Nigeria. The 2011 elections marked a turning point, as politicians and political parties began to leverage platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp to engage with Nigeria's growing population of tech-savvy youth. Research by Okoro and Nwafor (2013) emphasizes that social media was widely used during the 2011 elections to mobilize voters, disseminate campaign messages, and foster political debate among the youth. These platforms allowed politicians to bypass traditional media gatekeepers, directly reaching young voters who are typically disengaged from conventional political processes. Additionally, as observed by Opeibi (2021), social media has provided an avenue for political participation that is inclusive and accessible, allowing young Nigerians to become more involved in campaigns, discussions, and grassroots movements. Notably, the #OccupyNigeria movement in 2012 and the #EndSARS protests in 2020 are examples of how social media has empowered young people to challenge the status quo, voice their political demands, and influence national discourse. By facilitating real-time interaction and enhancing political visibility, social media

has played a significant role in shaping the Nigerian political landscape, making it an indispensable tool for modern political campaigns. Social media has thus become a force and in the recent past, politicians have called for regulations of contents on social media as well as outright ban on social media platforms like Twitter during the Muhamadu Buhari administration (Elega, Mohammed & Oloyede, 2023)

With years of mis-governance in Nigeria, interests in the democratic processes have been waning among young people. Studies have shown that the lack of progress in addressing social and economic issues such as unemployment, poverty, and insecurity have fueled political apathy among young Nigerians. According to Adebayo and Ojo (2019), many young citizens feel disconnected from the political system, believing that their votes will not result in improved governance or better quality of life. Additionally, Okeke (2020) notes that the history of electoral malpractice and violence during elections has further dampened youth enthusiasm for engaging in democratic processes. This growing disillusionment reflects a broader crisis of confidence in Nigeria's political leadership, where systemic corruption and unfulfilled promises have made many young people skeptical of the potential for democratic institutions to deliver on their promises. Consequently, a significant portion of Nigeria's youth population remains disengaged from formal political activities, viewing governance as a space dominated by the ruling elite, with little room for their voices or interests to be heard.

However, there has been a rise in alternative forms of political participation, with social media emerging as a critical tool for young Nigerians to express their discontent, advocate for change, and mobilize against governmental shortcomings. The #EndSARS protests of 2020 exemplified how young people, although largely disillusioned with formal democratic structures, can harness digital platforms to demand accountability and push for

reforms. In the digital age, social media has emerged as a powerful platform for citizens to engage with governance and democratic processes. However, the extent to which social media users influence others to participate in democratic activities remains unclear. Furthermore, there is a need to explore the specific governance issues highlighted on these platforms and the level of criticism directed toward the democratic process. How do Edo state residents use Social media for critical democratic citizenship? Understanding how social media users engage with government policies and the relationship between government performance and critical democratic citizenship is crucial for determining the role of social media in fostering democratic participation.

1.3 Research Objectives

The aim of this study was to evaluate Edo state residents' use of social media for critical democratic citizenship.

Specifically, this study sought to:

1. ascertain social media users' engagement with government policies in Edo State, Nigeria.
2. determine the level of social media users' criticism of the democratic process in Edo State, Nigeria.
3. examine citizens' Critical reflection on the political and economic systems in place on social media in Edo State, Nigeria.
4. evaluate how citizens have used the social media to call for social justice in Edo State, Nigeria.

5. ascertain the relationship between government performance and critical democratic citizenship in Edo State, Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the citizens social media users' engagement with government policies in Edo State in Nigeria?
2. What is the level of social media users' criticism of the democratic process in Edo State, Nigeria?
3. To what extent do residents engage in citizens Critical reflection on the political and economic systems in place on social media in Edo State, Nigeria?
4. How do citizens use social media to call for social justice in Edo State, Nigeria?
5. What is the relationship between government performance and critical democratic citizenship in Edo State, Nigeria?

1.5 Hypotheses

1. HO: There is no significant difference in levels of Social media users' engagement with government policies by educational levels in Edo State, Nigeria.
2. HO: Social media users in Edo State do not engage in substantial criticism of the democratic process
3. HO: Edo State residents do not use social media platforms extensively for critical reflection on political and economic systems that impact on societal welfare.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Social media has become a crucial platform for political engagement and public discourse. Understanding how residents in Edo state use social media to engage with

democratic processes can offer insights into its role in shaping democratic practices and citizen participation.

Identifying the good governance issues discussed on social media will help assess the public's focus and concerns regarding governance. This can provide valuable information on public expectations and the effectiveness of governance communication. Analyzing how social media users engage with government policies can reveal the effectiveness of policy communication and the public's responsiveness. This helps in understanding how social media influences policy perception and advocacy.

Determining the level of criticism on social media helps gauge public dissatisfaction and areas where democratic processes may need improvement. This can guide policy makers in addressing issues that are important to citizens. Examining how social media users encourage participation can highlight the mechanisms and strategies employed to foster civic engagement. This insight is valuable for promoting active citizenship and improving democratic processes.

Evaluating the relationship between government performance and critical democratic citizenship provides a broader view of how government actions influence public perception and engagement. This can inform strategies for improving governance and citizen involvement.

For the academic community, this study enriches the literature on how digital platforms, especially social media, foster democratic engagement. It specifically sheds light on how residents of Edo state use social media as a tool for political agency, which is crucial for understanding the broader impact of social media on democracy in Africa. By evaluating social media users' engagement with government policies, the study provides valuable

insights into the evolving relationship between citizens and government in a digital age. It informs the academic discourse on e-governance and how citizens use online platforms to hold governments accountable. The study emphasizes the role of social media in fostering critical reflection on political and economic systems. This is significant for scholars exploring how online platforms enable or hinder critical democratic citizenship, especially in developing democracies like Nigeria. From a research methodology perspective, the study offers a model for analyzing online political engagement and citizen-led discourse, which can be replicated in other contexts or used as a comparative framework across different regions. In sum, this study significantly contributes to the academic exploration of social media's role in fostering critical democratic citizenship, with implications for digital democracy, governance, and social justice movements.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focuses specifically on residents in Edo state, Nigeria. This localized focus allows for a detailed understanding of the social media landscape and its impact within this specific context. The study examined discussions and engagements related to good governance, government policies, democratic processes, and citizen participation as expressed through social media platforms used by Edo State residents in 2024.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study has limitations that should be considered in this study.

The sample size of 400 participants, although sufficient for the chosen study, may not be representative of the entire population. Future studies could benefit from a larger and more diverse sample.

Also, the study was conducted in Edo State, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. The data was collected over a specific period (2025), which may not capture changes or trends that occur over a longer time frame.

Future studies could build upon this research by:

- Expanding the sample size and diversity: To increase the generalizability of the findings.
- Using mixed-methods approaches: To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon.
- Conducting longitudinal studies: To examine the dynamics of the relationships over time.

By acknowledging these limitations, this study provides a foundation for future research and highlights areas where further investigation is needed.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Click-through Rate (CTR): The frequency with which users click on links embedded within social media posts, showing deeper interest in the content.

Comments: The number and quality of user comments, representing active participation in discussions or feedback.

Critical Democratic Citizenship: Involves a set of interrelated dimensions that contribute to an individual's active engagement in democratic processes, especially in questioning authority, participating in public debate, and advocating for justice and social change. The key dimensions of critical democratic citizenship include; political Engagement and Participation, critical reflection and awareness, advocacy for Social Justice, deliberative Dialogue and Communication, solidarity and Collective Action and challenge to Authority and Power Structures.

Governance: As used in this study refers to democratic governance. It is the processes, systems, and practices through which societies are organized and managed. Its dimensions are accountability, transparency, Rule of Law, Participation, Effectiveness and Efficiency, Equity and Inclusiveness, Responsiveness, and Consensus Orientation

Hashtag Use: The number of times a specific hashtag is used in posts, showcasing engagement with a campaign or movement.

Likes/Reactions: The number of positive (or negative) responses to content, such as liking or reacting to posts on platforms like Facebook or Instagram.

Mentions: The frequency at which a user or topic is tagged or mentioned in posts by others, reflecting the level of community involvement.

Political Agency: Refers to the capacity of individuals to act in the political sphere, influencing decisions, policies, and social practices.

Public Policy: Refers to a deliberate course of action, typically initiated by government officials, aimed at addressing a specific societal issue.

Shares/Retweets: The extent to which users redistribute content within their networks, indicating support or interest in disseminating information.

Social Media Engagement: Refers to the measurable actions, interactions, and participation of users with content on social media platforms. It can include a variety of activities that reflect a user's level of involvement with posts, discussions, and communities online. For the purposes of research, social media engagement is often measured through specific metrics such as:

Social Media: Refers to a broad category of digital communication platforms that enable interaction, community-building, and content sharing among users.

Time Spent on Content: The duration a user spends viewing or interacting with a specific post or video, indicating engagement intensity.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

In line with the objectives raised, the review of literature is predicated on the research objectives of this study which is to analyze and evaluate Edo state residents' use of social media for critical democratic citizenship. The broad outline is as follows;

Conceptual Review

Opinion Review

Empirical Review of Related Studies

Theoretical Frameworks

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Governance

Governance refers to the processes, systems, and practices through which societies are organized and managed. It encompasses decision-making structures, the distribution of power and authority, the rule of law, accountability mechanisms, and the effectiveness of policies that guide societal outcomes (Fukuyama, 2013; Rotberg, 2014). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), governance is "the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs at all levels" (UNDP, 1997,1). This broad definition emphasizes governance not just as a matter of government but as a shared responsibility among the state, civil society, and the private sector. Examining the dimensions of governance is crucial because it allows for a deeper understanding of how various governance structures impact societal well-being. The multidimensional nature of

governance makes it critical to analyze its various components. Poor governance can lead to societal dysfunctions such as economic inequality, weak institutions, and political instability. Conversely, strong governance fosters sustainable development, social equity, and political legitimacy. Therefore, it is necessary to continuously evaluate and improve governance systems to ensure the well-being of society. Governance and democracy are closely related concepts, both essential for ensuring the effective management of societies. While governance refers to the systems and processes through which a society is organized and managed, democracy is a form of governance where power is vested in the hands of the people, typically exercised through free and fair elections.

The association between governance and democracy revolves around how democratic principles can shape governance processes and, in turn, how good governance strengthens democratic institutions. In a functional democracy, governance ensures that power is exercised in a manner that is accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the people. At the same time, democratic governance enables the protection of rights, promotes social justice, and fosters economic development, leading to a more stable and inclusive society (Beetham,1999; Held, 2006; Fukuyama,2013). Governance involves a complex set of processes, structures, and relationships that ensure proper management, decision-making, and accountability within organizations or states. The hallmarks of good governance centres around some related concepts like; accountability, transparency, rule of law, participation, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness, responsiveness, consensus orientation.

Accountability refers to the mechanisms through which those in positions of power are held responsible for their actions, ensuring that they answer to the stakeholders or public they serve. It ensures that decision-makers are subject to oversight, evaluation, and appropriate

consequences for their performance. Behn (2001), in *Rethinking Democratic Accountability*, emphasizes that accountability is crucial in governance as it aligns the interests of officials with those of the public. Bovens (2007), in his article *Analysing and Assessing Accountability: A Conceptual Framework*, provides a comprehensive exploration of accountability mechanisms in both public and private governance, describing its role in maintaining trust and ethical governance. Mulgan (2000) also argues that accountability is vital for democratic governance as it prevents the misuse of power and enhances transparency. Public institutions must publish annual reports that detail their activities and expenditures, as seen in Kaufmann, Kraay, and Zoido-Lobaton (1999).

Transparency involves the open dissemination of information about decisions, processes, and policies to the public. This dimension is critical for building trust between governments or organizations and their stakeholders, as it ensures that actions are visible, understandable, and accessible to all interested parties. Heald (2006), in *Transparency as an Instrumental Value*, provides an extensive discussion on how transparency contributes to reducing corruption and promoting accountability. The United Nations Development Programme (1997) emphasizes that transparency is a cornerstone of good governance, enabling stakeholders to monitor decisions and hold officials accountable. Transparent budgeting practices in Norway are a well-known example, where public access to government spending data enhances civic trust (Alt and Lassen, 2006).

Rule of Law refers to the principle that all members of society, including those in power, are subject to the same laws, which are fairly and consistently applied. This dimension ensures justice, legal fairness, and that governance operates within a clear legal framework. North, Wallis and Weingast (2009), in *Violence and Social Orders*, highlight

how the rule of law fosters long-term stability and governance by preventing the arbitrary exercise of power. Kaufmann et al. (2007), in their work *Governance Matters VI*, stress that the rule of law is essential for maintaining order, protecting individual rights, and ensuring that governance is legitimate and just. The rule of law in Germany is seen in its strong constitutional court, which ensures that both citizens and the government act within the legal framework (Zürn, 2000).

Participation involves the active involvement of citizens and stakeholders in decision-making processes. It is an essential dimension of governance that ensures inclusivity and responsiveness to the needs and preferences of the population. Scholars have offered numerous interpretations of political participation, each reflecting different aspects. Some definitions aim to cover all possible forms of political engagement, while others focus on specific types of participation, often excluding what they view as irregular forms of involvement. Teorell et al. (2007:336) and Rosenstone and Hansen (2003:4) describe political participation as "any action by ordinary citizens aimed at influencing political outcomes or the distribution of social goods and norms." Riley et al. (2010) define it as a set of civic rights and duties involving organized activities, like voting or joining a political party. Diemer (2012) characterizes political participation as engagement with conventional mechanisms in the political system, such as voting and joining political organizations. Munroe (2002) considers it the extent to which citizens exercise their rights, such as protesting, voting, or engaging in other political activities.

Political participation is rooted in basic freedoms such as the right to speak, assemble, and associate. It includes the opportunity to run for office, campaign, be elected, and govern at all levels. The concept is fluid, encompassing a wide array of activities. For instance,

Verba et al. (1995) identify various forms of political participation, including voting, campaign involvement, contacting government officials, participating in protests or demonstrations, collaborating on community issues, and contributing to political causes. Globally, models of political participation vary. In the United States, political engagement is primarily voluntary, with a focus on influencing policy or the selection of policymakers. In European nations, citizen involvement is a key aspect as participatory democracy evolves at both national and supranational levels. The draft Euro constitution emphasizes every citizen's right to participate in the democratic life of the EU. In Russia, political participation is largely restricted to voting, with demonstrations often prohibited unless they receive bureaucratic approval. Civil society is weak in Russia, partly due to its historical lack of democratic tradition, which only began in the 1990s following years of monarchy and authoritarian rule. In Nigeria, political participation during the military regime was limited due to the coercive nature of governance. However, since the establishment of democratic rule on May 29, 1999, political participation has evolved with each election, reflecting changes in both the political leadership and the aspirations of citizens.

Various factors are considered when analyzing voter turnout, including institutional, political, economic, cultural, and structural explanations. Institutional factors focus on how electoral systems and political structures influence voting behavior, while economic theories emphasize the costs of voting and the role of economic resources in overcoming those costs. Cultural explanations explore individual attitudes toward voting, while structural theories examine the impact of social cleavages and party systems on voter mobilization. Voter Apathy, Elections, and Democracy Political apathy, defined as a decline in citizens' participation in political activities, has become a growing concern. Voter apathy, a subset of

political apathy, occurs when eligible voters deliberately choose not to participate in elections. Scholars argue that voter apathy is often driven by dissatisfaction with the political process or political actors. Voter apathy poses a threat to democracy as elections play a critical role in representing the will of the people. Low voter turnout questions the legitimacy of the government and undermines the accountability that elections are supposed to provide. If elections do not reflect the preferences of the majority, their legitimacy is compromised, and the government may not act in the best interests of the people. Elections are central to democracy and are seen as vital to democratization and good governance. Cornwall & Gaventa (2001) discuss participatory governance in their article *From Users and Choosers to Makers and Shapers*, emphasizing the importance of involving marginalized groups in governance processes. In Brazil's Porto Alegre participatory budgeting model, citizens are directly involved in deciding how public funds are allocated (Wampler, 2007).

Effectiveness refers to the degree to which governance structures achieve intended outcomes, while efficiency focuses on the optimal use of resources in achieving those outcomes. This dimension ensures that governance is result-oriented and that resources are used in the best possible way to deliver public services and enforce regulations. Kaufmann et al. (2007) define these dimensions as central to good governance, with effectiveness reflecting the ability of governments or organizations to implement policies and efficiency relating to the prudent use of resources. Bouckaert & Halligan (2008), in *Managing Performance: International Comparisons*, discuss how performance management can improve governance effectiveness and efficiency. Osborne & Gaebler (1992), in *Reinventing Government*, emphasize the need for a results-driven approach in public administration to ensure that resources are used efficiently. Singapore's public administration is often cited as

a model of efficiency and effectiveness in governance, particularly in areas such as infrastructure development and public services (Quah, 2010).

Equity ensures fairness in governance processes, ensuring all individuals have equal opportunities and access to resources, while inclusiveness ensures that all groups, including marginalized populations, are involved in governance processes. This dimension promotes social justice and reduces inequalities. Sen (1999), in *Development as Freedom*, discusses the role of equity in promoting fair governance and reducing poverty. Young (2000), in *Inclusion and Democracy*, argues that inclusive governance is essential for democratic legitimacy, as it ensures that all voices are heard in decision-making processes. UNDP (1997) highlights equity and inclusiveness as fundamental to ensuring that governance benefits all members of society, not just the privileged. The South African Constitution's commitment to equity is demonstrated in policies that address racial disparities and aim to reduce inequality (Coetzee, 2001).

Responsiveness refers to the ability of governance systems to respond to the needs, preferences, and concerns of citizens in a timely and appropriate manner. It reflects the degree to which institutions are flexible and adaptable in meeting the changing needs of society. Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2009) define responsiveness as a core component of good governance, particularly in democratic societies where citizens' needs must be addressed to maintain trust. Denhardt and Denhardt (2000), in *The New Public Service*, emphasize the role of responsiveness in governance, arguing that public institutions should serve citizens and respond to their concerns effectively. Osborne (2010) discusses responsiveness as essential in managing public expectations and ensuring that governance is adaptable to societal demands. The Netherlands' healthcare system, known for its responsive

governance, frequently updates its services based on citizen feedback and changing public health needs (Maarse, 2006).

Consensus Orientation refers to the process of mediating differing interests to achieve broad agreement on policies or actions. This dimension of governance is important for ensuring that decisions reflect diverse viewpoints and contribute to long-term stability. Habermas (1984), in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, discusses the role of dialogue and consensus in democratic governance. Dryzek (2000) explores consensus-building in his work *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*, emphasizing how deliberation can help to reconcile conflicting interests in governance. UNDP (1997) highlights the importance of consensus orientation in maintaining social cohesion and preventing conflict. The European Union's decision-making process often involves lengthy negotiations and consensus-building among member states to reach agreements that benefit all parties (Wallace, 2000). The dimensions of governance—accountability, transparency, rule of law, participation, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness, responsiveness, and consensus orientation—are essential for fostering trust, legitimacy, and efficiency in governance systems. Supported by extensive academic literature, these dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating the quality of governance and ensuring that it meets the needs of all stakeholders effectively and equitably.

2.1.2 The Concept of Public Policy

Public policy refers to a deliberate course of action, typically initiated by government officials, aimed at addressing a specific societal issue. It represents decisions to act or not act on matters that require government intervention (Oni, 2016). In essence, public policy is an essential tool for governance, crafted to tackle issues within a particular sector of

governmental operations. As Edward (2012) explains, policies emerge from the inclusion of topics on a formal agenda, a list of issues policymakers are eager to address. These policies can be seen both as intentions—broad principles for organizing public affairs—and as actions that include legal requirements and the practices necessary for their implementation. Policies involve several elements, including agenda setting, where issues gain public and governmental attention, policy formulation, where laws or rules are designed to address problems, policy evaluation, which measures the effectiveness of policies, and finally, policy termination, where policies are revised or discontinued if necessary (Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1980). Each stage reflects the intentional and action-oriented nature of policymaking, highlighting the critical role of governance in shaping public life.

Governance refers to the processes, systems, and institutions that ensure the effective functioning of a political or administrative entity, whether it be a country, state, or organization. It encompasses decision-making processes that define expectations, grant power, and verify performance. Policies, on the other hand, are formal guidelines or plans of action devised to address specific issues within the governance framework (Rhodes, 1996). Therefore, governance establishes the structure within which policies are designed and enforced. Good governance ensures that policy-making is inclusive, transparent, accountable, and responsive to public needs. Policies are the tools through which governance objectives are achieved. Effective governance is vital for the creation of policies that are equitable and sustainable, while weak governance can lead to ineffective or poorly implemented policies. Policies are instruments through which governance bodies implement decisions and address societal challenges. In democratic governance, for example, policies are developed through participatory processes involving multiple stakeholders such as government agencies, civil

society, and the private sector. Governance structures such as legislatures, regulatory agencies, and courts ensure that policies are designed in alignment with societal goals and implemented effectively. Policies are also a reflection of the governing body's priorities, values, and long-term vision. Through policy development, governance institutions seek to achieve various objectives, such as economic development, social welfare, environmental protection, and public safety (Peters and Pierre, 2006).

Once policies are formulated, governance systems ensure their implementation. Policy implementation refers to the processes and actions taken by various governance institutions to put policies into practice. This is where governance mechanisms like public administration, law enforcement, and oversight play crucial roles. Good governance ensures that policies are implemented effectively and equitably, with accountability measures in place to prevent corruption or inefficiencies. The Policy Cycle Theory (Jann and Wegrich, 2007) illustrates this relationship, emphasizing that governance is not just about policy-making but also involves implementation, evaluation, and feedback. A well-functioning governance system ensures that the implementation of policies is continuously monitored and adjusted as needed.

Governance is also responsible for evaluating the outcomes of policy interventions to ensure they align with intended goals. This process involves the continuous monitoring of policy impacts and making adjustments as necessary. Accountability in governance ensures that policies are not only implemented but are subject to scrutiny and evaluation. Policies that do not achieve desired outcomes may lead to reforms within the governance structure itself. For example, if a healthcare policy does not improve public health outcomes, governance institutions might revisit the policy design or the processes of its implementation.

Governance systems can also foster or inhibit policy innovation. A flexible and adaptive governance system is more likely to encourage innovative policies that can address emerging challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, or global pandemics. Conversely, rigid governance structures may result in policies that are out of touch with contemporary issues. Governance networks (Rhodes, 1997) that include diverse stakeholders such as the governments, private sectors, and civil society organizations, can enhance policy innovation by incorporating a broad range of perspectives and expertise into the policy-making process. The relationship between policy and governance is symbiotic. Governance provides the structure and processes through which policies are developed and implemented, while policies operationalize the objectives and priorities set by governance institutions. Both governance and policy are essential for addressing societal needs and ensuring that governments and institutions function effectively and respond to public demands. The quality of governance directly impacts the effectiveness of policies, making good governance a cornerstone for sustainable and equitable policy outcomes.

Public policy discourse often becomes polarized, as different political parties and groups frame issues according to their ideological perspectives. In democratic societies like the United Kingdom, the media and political communication significantly shaped public opinion around key policies such as Brexit (Otjes and Rasmussen, 2017). Political parties use the media to articulate their positions during electoral campaigns, which can lead to either winning political power or becoming a significant opposition. Once in power, political parties face the challenge of governing based on the ideological perspectives they promoted during the campaign (Curini, 2017). In this context, governance and policy are intricately linked to the media, which serves both as a vehicle for communication between the

governing elites and the public and as a tool for shaping the public's views on policies. This interaction between policy, governance, and media is essential for understanding how political issues evolve and how different interest groups engage with public policies.

2.1.3 Political Agency

Political agency refers to the capacity of individuals to act in the political sphere, influencing decisions, policies, and social practices. Kallio et al (2015) examined political agency through the lens of children and youth, who are traditionally excluded from formal political processes but nonetheless exhibit agency in their everyday interactions. It refers to the ability of individuals or groups to act and influence decision-making processes within political systems. It is the capacity to enact change, participate in political life, and assert one's role in shaping societal structures. In this article, political agency is explored in the context of youth, specifically examining how children and young people can engage in political life through everyday actions, even when they are formally excluded from traditional avenues of political participation. Kallio et al. (2015) argue that children and youth possess political agency, though their participation often goes unrecognized because it falls outside formal, adult-centered frameworks of political participation. The authors introduce the concept of "lived citizenship" as a way to recognize the political agency of youth in their everyday environments. This challenges the conventional notion that political agency only arises in formal political settings, such as elections or governance(kallio2014). Kallio et al, (2014) emphasized the relational and spatial nature of political agency, particularly for youth. Children and young people's political actions are often embedded in their local environments such as schools, neighborhoods, and social networks and influenced by their spatial attachments. Rather than being bound by territorial or institutional

frameworks, their political agency is expressed through relational networks that extend beyond formal political structures (Kallio2014). Hannah Arendt (1958): Arendt's conception of political life as *vita activa* serves as a foundation for understanding political agency in this context. According to Arendt, political agency is a fundamental human capacity that arises from living in a pluralistic society, where individuals must navigate differences to act collectively. This aligns with Kallio et al.'s argument that political agency is not limited to adults or formal settings but is also a feature of everyday interactions, especially for youth (Kallio2014). Isin's (2009) theory of "acts of citizenship" is crucial for understanding political agency beyond formalized frameworks. According to Isin, individuals enact their citizenship through specific acts, which may challenge or redefine existing norms and structures. These acts can emerge in everyday situations, making political agency a dynamic process that is not confined to formal institutions like parliaments or councils. Kallio et al. (2015) build on this idea by showing how children and youth engage in political acts within their lived environments schools, neighborhoods, and social networks even though they may be excluded from formal political participation due to age (Kallio2014). Barnett's (2012) work on political subjectivity complements Kallio et al.'s discussion of political agency by emphasizing the role of experience in shaping how individuals engage politically. Political agency is not only about formal representation or voting but also about how individuals interact with their environments and communities.

2.1.4 Critical Democratic Citizenship

Critical democratic citizenship involves a set of interrelated dimensions that contribute to an individual's active engagement in democratic processes, especially in questioning authority, participating in public debate, and advocating for justice and social change. The

key dimensions of critical democratic citizenship include; political Engagement and Participation, critical reflection and awareness, advocacy for Social Justice, deliberative Dialogue and Communication, solidarity and Collective Action and challenge to Authority and Power Structures. Political engagement is a core dimension of critical democratic citizenship, where individuals actively participate in political processes such as voting, advocating for policies, and contributing to public debates. This engagement may occur in formal settings (e.g., elections) or informal spaces (e.g., social media activism, petitions, or community organizing). According to Bennett et al. (2011), social media has allowed for increased political engagement among young people, as it provides platforms for civic discussions and activism that may not be as readily available in traditional democratic forums. Critical democratic citizenship requires the ability to critically assess social and political systems, question unjust policies, and engage in reflective thinking about issues like inequality, discrimination, and governance. Citizens must develop an awareness of power structures and systemic issues, using this awareness to advocate for reforms (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Westheimer and Kahne (2004) argue that critical reflection on social justice issues, such as inequality, is a key aspect of democratic citizenship, as it empowers citizens to question the status quo and take action for a more equitable society.

Advocacy for social justice involves the proactive effort to address and correct injustices in society, whether they relate to race, gender, economic inequality, or other forms of oppression. Citizens who practice critical democratic citizenship work to dismantle systems of discrimination and advocate for marginalized communities. Carney (2016) highlights the role of social media in the Black Lives Matter movement as a form of critical democratic citizenship, where citizens advocate for racial justice and challenge police

brutality. Critical democratic citizens engage in dialogue and communication that promote understanding, even in the face of disagreement. Deliberative dialogue involves listening to others, debating ideas, and working towards common ground on important societal issues. Social media and digital platforms have expanded the reach of such dialogues, enabling a more diverse range of voices. Habermas' theory of the public sphere (1989) emphasizes the importance of rational-critical debate in democratic citizenship. Online spaces provide new opportunities for these debates, fostering inclusive discussion and allowing citizens to communicate directly with political leaders and institutions.

Solidarity involves collective action with others who share similar goals for justice and equity. In critical democratic citizenship, individuals join forces with others to create social movements, protests, and campaigns that push for systemic change. Social media has been instrumental in coordinating such efforts on a global scale. Tufekci (2017) argues that social media has enabled new forms of collective action by lowering the barriers for organizing protests and social movements, making it easier for citizens to mobilize around shared causes.

A defining feature of critical democratic citizenship is its willingness to question and challenge authority. This involves holding political leaders and institutions accountable for their actions and advocating for transparency and accountability in governance. Critical democratic citizens act as watchdogs, ensuring that power is exercised justly. Fenton (2016) explores how citizens use social media to challenge powerful institutions and political leaders, asserting that the democratizing potential of digital platforms allows for greater scrutiny of government and corporate power. Critical democratic citizenship is a broad concept encompassing political engagement, critical reflection, advocacy for social justice,

deliberative dialogue, solidarity, and the challenge of authority. These dimensions allow individuals to participate meaningfully in democracy and push for a more equitable and just society.

2.1.5 Social Media

The term “social media” refers to a broad category of digital communication platforms that enable interaction, community-building, and content sharing among users. It merges the social element of human interaction with media technologies, fundamentally altering the way people communicate and engage with information. Baruah (2012) defines social media as electronic platforms that allow users to create and join communities, exchange information, and share content, highlighting its interactive nature. This sets social media apart from traditional forms of media like television and radio, which follow a one-way communication model.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) emphasize the role of Web 2.0 technologies in shaping social media, noting that the shift from static Web 1.0 to dynamic, user-centered Web 2.0 systems revolutionized how media is created, distributed, and consumed. This evolution has allowed social media platforms to offer greater interactivity, fostering participatory culture. Darwish and Lakhtaria (2011) and Undibayeva (2019) underscore how Web 2.0 technologies, with their emphasis on user-generated content, have democratized media production, granting ordinary users the power to contribute to media content.

Social Networking Sites: Platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter allow users to build personal or professional networks by creating profiles and sharing content. These platforms enable the exchange of ideas, collaboration, and the formation of communities of interest (Baruah, 2012).

Media Sharing Platforms: Websites like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok focus on sharing multimedia content—images, videos, and audio. These platforms are especially powerful in user-generated content creation and distribution, reaching global audiences and facilitating mass engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Microblogging Platforms: Twitter and Tumblr allow users to share short-form content quickly and concisely, offering real-time updates on personal, social, or political events. These platforms have become instrumental in social movements and collective action, serving as real-time communication tools (Hermida, 2010).

Discussion Forums and Community Platforms: Websites like Reddit, Quora, and specialized forums facilitate structured, community-driven discussions. Users can ask questions, share experiences, or engage in debates, contributing to a “collective intelligence” (Hermida, 2010) by pooling knowledge from diverse perspectives.

Collaborative Projects: Wikipedia and other wiki-based platforms allow multiple users to collaboratively create and edit content. These projects demonstrate how social media platforms enable collective knowledge-building and serve as repositories for shared information (Goodarzi et al., 2021).

Social media platforms generally have several core components:

Profiles: Users create personal or organizational profiles, providing the basis for interaction and network-building. Profiles may include personal details, interests, and a history of content shared.

Content Creation and Sharing Tools: Social media platforms offer various tools for users to upload and share text, images, audio, and video content. The ease of content creation is a

defining feature, empowering users to participate in media production (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Interactivity and Engagement: Unlike traditional media, which operates on a one-to-many communication model, social media thrives on interactivity. Users can like, share, comment, and respond to content, generating conversations and fostering community participation (Picard, 2009).

Algorithms and Personalization: Many social media platforms use algorithms to tailor content to individual users based on their preferences and activity. These personalized feeds enhance user engagement but also raise concerns about echo chambers and the filtering of information (Goodarzi et al., 2021).

Hashtags and Tagging: Hashtags organize content around specific topics or trends, enabling users to participate in broader conversations. The use of hashtags, particularly in activism (e.g., #EndSARS), exemplifies the role of social media in shaping public discourse and mobilizing action. Social media has transformed public engagement with information and politics. Picard (2009) argues that social media democratizes the production and consumption of media, allowing individuals to contribute to public discourse in unprecedented ways. This shift has been particularly significant in fostering civic engagement, as platforms like Twitter and Facebook have become critical venues for political discussion and mobilization. Goodarzi et al. (2021) note that social media's flexibility—allowing users to engage with content across time and space—has made it a powerful tool for collective action, as seen in movements like #EndSARS. Hermida (2010) introduces the concept of “collective intelligence,” referring to the ability of millions of users to collaboratively generate and evaluate information in real-time. This dynamic enables rapid dissemination of information

and facilitates the organization of political movements and social activism. In this context, social media platforms have become essential tools for spreading awareness and mobilizing communities around shared causes, effectively shaping public discourse and governance.

2.2 Opinion Review

2.2.1 Dimensions of Political Discourse on Social Media

The various dimensions related to political communication, deliberative democracy, and the impact of social media are deliberation and consensus, polarization, which refers to the ideological divisions that social media exacerbates, hashtag activism, civic education and awareness, disinformation warfare and propaganda, and superficial engagement. Engagement on social media is often characterized as brief and emotionally driven, lacking depth and critical discussion. This type of engagement can lead to the polarization of views and undermine meaningful political communication, ultimately detracting from the democratic process.

According to Habermas, the public sphere is a space where citizens can come together to discuss societal issues and influence political action, often mediated by mass media. Social media expands this space, offering decentralized platforms for debate and engagement. Benett (2018) explored how social media reshapes political communication and influences public policy decisions and governance structures. The study aims to assess the direct and indirect effects of social media on government policymaking. The research reveals that social media has redefined political communication by enabling greater interaction between citizens and policymakers. It allows for real-time feedback on public policies, forcing governments to adjust or rethink strategies based on online public opinion. The study also cautions that while social media can lead to more responsive governance, it can also polarize public discourse

and create echo chambers, which complicate consensus-building in policymaking. The study's findings that social media reshapes political communication and affects governance can be connected to Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which suggests that media influences the public's perception of key issues, thus shaping policy priorities. Social media's ability to create real-time feedback loops allows citizens to exert pressure on policymakers. However, the study also warns of polarization, which is supported by Selective Exposure Theory (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985), suggesting that users tend to consume information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, leading to fragmented public opinion and policy debates.

Habermas (2006) defines deliberation as the structured and rational exchange of viewpoints with the goal of achieving consensus. This aligns with his broader theory of communicative action, which prioritizes reasoned debate and mutual understanding as essential to a functioning democracy. In deliberative settings, participants ideally engage in dialogue not to win arguments, but to find common ground and develop reasoned solutions that reflect collective interests (Habermas, 1984). However, this model presupposes ideal conditions for communication: mutual respect, willingness to compromise, and an openness to different viewpoints. On traditional platforms such as town halls or formal debates, these conditions might be met.

On social media, though, these deliberative ideals are rarely realized, and this is where Habermas's critique becomes particularly relevant. Political communication in Habermas's terms refers to the dissemination of information and opinions on public issues, aiming to influence public policy and political action. He sees it as a central component of democratic life, where citizens not only share their views but also engage with the perspectives of others

to shape the direction of political processes. Traditional media outlets; newspapers, television, and radio once played a pivotal role in this, structuring public discourse in a more organized, gatekeeper-led environment (Habermas, 2006). Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have opened up new spaces for political communication by democratizing access to information and allowing virtually anyone to share opinions on public matters. In this sense, they provide opportunities for what Habermas calls deliberative democracy, a system in which citizens can actively participate in discussions that influence political decisions. These platforms bypass traditional media gatekeepers, giving marginalized voices a platform and enabling real-time, global communication (Papacharissi, 2015). However, as Habermas (2006) argues, the quality of deliberation on social media is often compromised by several factors:

Superficial engagement: Social media tends to reward brevity, sensationalism, and emotional appeal over reasoned argument. This results in discussions that are often shallow and dominated by memes, sound bites, or outrage, rather than thoughtful, well-reasoned contributions (Sunstein, 2018).

Lack of Rational-Critical Debate: Habermas stresses the importance of rational-critical debate in democratic discourse, which requires participants to listen carefully, reflect on opposing viewpoints, and engage in reasoned argumentation. However, social media often incentivizes tribalism and echo chambers, where users engage only with those who share their beliefs, leading to confirmation bias rather than meaningful debate (Bail et al., 2018).

Fragmentation of Discourse: Another critical challenge is the fragmentation of political discourse. Rather than fostering a single, unified public sphere where diverse voices are heard and understood, social media often creates multiple "siloes" spaces, where different

groups discuss issues in isolation. This fragmentation makes it more difficult to build consensus, as individuals are increasingly exposed to selective information that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs (Benhabib, 1996).

For Habermas, the ultimate goal of deliberation is to achieve consensus—a collective agreement based on rational dialogue and the weighing of different perspectives. On social media, however, consensus is increasingly difficult to achieve due to the polarized nature of discussions. Instead of fostering understanding and compromise, social media frequently amplifies divisiveness. Studies have shown that platforms’ algorithms prioritize content that provokes strong emotional reactions (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018), which leads to greater polarization and inhibits the consensus-building process central to Habermas’s ideal of deliberative democracy. Several scholars have explored the limitations of social media as a space for political discourse. Cass Sunstein (2018) argues that social media's architecture, especially its reliance on algorithm-driven feeds, promotes group polarization, where people are only exposed to viewpoints that echo their own. This creates a situation where deliberation, if it happens at all, is between like-minded individuals, not across the spectrum of political beliefs. Similarly, Sherry Turkle (2015) has highlighted how the rise of digital communication has led to “shallow” conversations, where users engage in brief, often emotionally driven exchanges rather than deep, sustained dialogue. This further undermines the possibility of rational-critical debate, as discussed by Habermas. Bail et al. (2018) also provide evidence of how exposure to opposing viewpoints on social media can sometimes backfire, leading individuals to become more entrenched in their views, rather than more open to compromise. This reflects Habermas's concern about the fragmented nature of social media discussions and the difficulty in reaching consensus. Habermas’s critique of social

media platforms is rooted in his broader theory of deliberative democracy, which values rational, structured debate aimed at fostering consensus. While social media does offer new opportunities for political communication, the superficiality, polarization, and fragmentation of discourse on these platforms undermine the possibility of meaningful deliberation. As a result, social media may be ill-suited for the kind of rational-critical debate that Habermas views as essential to a healthy democratic society. Instead of promoting consensus, social media often deepens divisions, making it harder to achieve the collaborative decision-making central to deliberative democracy.

2.2.2 Social Media Influencers as Gatekeepers and Agents of Polarization

Social media has made political discourse more inclusive, enabling everyday citizens, especially youth, to participate in discussions traditionally dominated by experts. However, it often leads to polarization, with users engaging in shallow, emotionally driven exchanges within echo chambers. These platforms foster ideological divides, limit exposure to diverse perspectives, and make meaningful deliberation and consensus-building difficult. Algorithmic amplification and selective exposure further intensify polarization. Ultimately, while social media democratizes political participation, it undermines the rational-critical debate essential to democratic deliberation. Opinion leaders on social media, such as influencers, public figures, and political elites, play a significant role in shaping political discourse. Acting as gatekeepers, they control the flow of information, amplify specific viewpoints, and influence public opinion. Studies by Dubois & Gaffney (2014) and Bakshy et al. (2015) reveal that these leaders often create echo chambers, reinforcing ideological divides and contributing to political polarization. Their selective content curation can limit exposure to diverse perspectives, leading to fragmented public discourse. While they raise

awareness of key issues, they also undermine the potential for balanced, inclusive debate. Based on the aforementioned, the role of opinion leaders in shaping political discourse on social media has significant implications for interrogating governance. Their influence can both enhance and hinder democratic engagement. Opinion leaders have the power to shape the narrative, focusing attention on specific governance issues while sidelining others. This can mean that certain aspects of governance receive critical attention, but it can also result in selective scrutiny, where important issues are ignored. By creating echo chambers, where followers are only exposed to ideologically similar content, these leaders can intensify political polarization. This weakens the diversity of viewpoints necessary for effective public interrogation of governance, reducing opportunities for constructive debate. Social media's algorithmic design, combined with opinion leaders' influence, can reinforce "filter bubbles," limiting users' exposure to dissenting views. This narrowing of perspectives makes it difficult for citizens to engage with nuanced or balanced critiques of governance. Opinion leaders may drive selective accountability by focusing public discourse on governance failures that align with their political interests, thus diverting attention from other critical governance issues that deserve scrutiny.

Opinion leaders, intentionally or not, can amplify disinformation or biased narratives, complicating efforts to hold governments accountable based on accurate information. This makes it harder for the public to critically engage with governance when falsehoods distort the understanding of key issues. While social media can foster greater awareness and engagement in governance, the dominance of opinion leaders complicates efforts to ensure balanced, informed public interrogation of governance.

Polarization refers to the increasing ideological distance between individuals or groups, often resulting in the formation of distinct, opposing camps. In the context of social media, polarization describes how digital platforms can exacerbate political or ideological divisions by reinforcing pre-existing beliefs through selective exposure and interaction within like-minded communities. This phenomenon is closely tied to the creation of echo chambers, where users primarily engage with information that aligns with their viewpoints, while alternative perspectives are filtered out. Over time, this leads to reinforcement of extreme views and intensifies the divide between ideological groups. Polarization undermines democratic deliberation by limiting cross-cutting discussions and increasing antagonism between opposing sides. Instead of fostering understanding, it leads to entrenched positions and a more divided society, making consensus-building and productive political discourse difficult. The concept of polarization is well-supported in the literature, particularly in relation to how social media platforms amplify the phenomenon.

In this work, Sunstein (2018) explores the role of social media algorithms in amplifying polarization by creating echo chambers. These are spaces where users are exposed primarily to content that aligns with their existing beliefs. Social media platforms use algorithms to prioritize posts, news, and information that users are likely to engage with, which is often content that reinforces their ideological leanings. Sunstein argues that these echo chambers reduce exposure to diverse perspectives, isolating users from differing viewpoints. This, in turn, deepens the ideological divide between opposing groups. Rather than fostering democratic debate, social media becomes a tool for reinforcing partisan ideologies. As users only see content that confirms their beliefs, they become more certain in their positions, further entrenching divisions within society. Sunstein's argument underscores

how the structure of platforms like Facebook and Twitter can create self-reinforcing environments where polarization thrives. Instead of encouraging a healthy, deliberative democracy, social media algorithms contribute to filter bubbles that intensify ideological divisions and diminish opportunities for understanding opposing viewpoints.

Contrary to the assumption that exposure to diverse views might reduce polarization, Bail et al. (2018) found that engaging with opposing views on social media can actually increase political polarization. This study suggests that rather than softening positions or encouraging openness, exposure to contrary perspectives often leads individuals to harden their pre-existing beliefs. In the study, users were intentionally exposed to opposing political views on platforms such as Twitter. The results indicated that after encountering opposing viewpoints, participants particularly those with strong ideological commitments became more extreme in their beliefs. Bail et al. argue that this is due to reactance, a psychological phenomenon where individuals feel defensive and resist challenges to their views, often doubling down on their original position.

Sunstein (2018) highlights how interactions on social media often occur in ways that encourage conflict rather than constructive dialogue. Opposing views, instead of being a source of debate, are frequently met with hostility, leading users to further entrench their ideological positions. This suggests that social media, rather than serving as a platform for reducing division, can exacerbate polarization by fostering combative rather than deliberative exchanges. The findings from Sunstein (2018) and Bail et al. (2018) highlight several key aspects of polarization on social media:

Algorithmic Amplification: Platforms like Facebook and Twitter rely on algorithms that prioritize content based on user preferences. By continually showing users content they are

likely to agree with, social media creates feedback loops that amplify existing beliefs and intensify divisions.

Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles: The selective exposure facilitated by social media algorithms contributes to the creation of echo chambers and filter bubbles, where users only encounter viewpoints that align with their own. This lack of exposure to diverse perspectives reinforces ideological divides.

Reactance and Defensive Positioning: As shown in Bail et al.'s (2018) study, when users are exposed to opposing views, they often experience reactance, becoming more defensive and committed to their original beliefs. This suggests that even efforts to promote cross-cutting discussions on social media may inadvertently deepen polarization.

Superficial Engagement: Social media is often characterized by brief, superficial engagement, such as likes, shares, and short comments. This type of engagement rarely fosters deep, critical discussion and may further contribute to the polarization of views by favoring emotional or sensational content over reasoned debate. Polarization on social media is a complex phenomenon driven by the combination of algorithmic biases, selective exposure, and psychological reactions to opposing views. As Sunstein (2018) and Bail et al. (2018) demonstrate, social media platforms often foster echo chambers where users are isolated from differing perspectives, and even when exposed to opposing views, they may become more polarized. The implications for democratic discourse are significant, as this deepening division makes constructive political communication and consensus-building increasingly difficult.

A major observation in the paper by Garimella et al (2018) is the presence of echo chambers on social media. An echo chamber is defined as a situation where one is exposed

only to views that agree with their own, p.913. Garimella et al (2018) dissected the concept of an echo chamber showing its two dimensions; the opinion shared and the chamber in which the opinion is shared which is the social networking platform. Echo chambers became a prominent feature of political discourse in democracies as partisanship demands polarity. This implies that as groups emerge aligning with various ideological leanings, hence echo chambers emerged as people converge on platforms. In which there is a shared opinion. Garimella et al (2018) examined the extent echo chambers exist in political discourse on Twitter and the structure of such echo chambers. They thus hypothesized that the echo chambers exists if the political leanings of the content that users receive from the network agrees with that of the content they share. P913

The authors operationally defined Echo chambers in the context of social media as a selective consumption of content which expresses similar points of view as a user holds or expresses. Referring to another study by Bukshy et al (2015), they identified levels of content consumption as potential exposure; which is a measure of shared content by friends of a user, exposure is defined as a measure of a content appearing in the newsfeed of a user and engagement is defined as a content which user clicks. A useful theory for echo chamber adopted for the study by Grimella et al (2018) is the selective exposure theory. It is a theory that stipulates a tendency for individuals to favour information that aligns with pre-existing views as well as that individual avoiding contradictory information. Another concept in their study is homophily. Homophily is a concept associated with social networks. A network (properties of the social network such as page rank, Clustering) and nodes (User consumption and production) has a particular feature. In homophily, neighboring nodes in a network

present similar values of a given feature. This can be seen in retweet clusters. Echo chambers can thus be seen as a form of homophily.

Partisanship is another concept in political discourse on social media. It refers to the polarization of political issues in content. A bipartisan content on the other hand is an opinion that aligns with varying political divides.

The last concept is gatekeeping. This is used in communications studies to refer to the ability of news media sources to act as filters of information. Operationally, because of the increased power of users to create and disseminate content, Garimella et al (2018) defined gatekeeping on social media as users who receive content from various political leanings but produce content from a particular perspective.

Garimella et al (2018) extracted data from Twitter to examine the notion of bipartisanship, echo chambers and gatekeeping. In their analysis, they used datasets from Twitter. Political content examined included issues of political controversy in America such as the Obamacare and abortion. A total of 2.6 Billion tweets and 676,996 users were analysed, their findings indicated the presence of echo chambers on twitter. There is a correlation between production and consumption of polarities. There is a price for being bipartisan as it costs users community connections and endorsements from other users.

2.2.3 Social Media Disinformation Warfare and Propaganda

Disinformation warfare refers to the deliberate dissemination of false or misleading information on social media to manipulate public opinion and influence political outcomes (Benkler et al, 2018). Propaganda tactics are employed by both state and non-state actors to distort political realities and alter the course of democratic processes. Benkler et al (2018)

explored propaganda and disinformation as a strategic tool strategically used on social media platforms to shape political discourse and influence election outcomes. The authors explore the role of networked media in facilitating the spread of disinformation through echo chambers, where like-minded individuals perpetuate biased information without critical scrutiny. This manipulation contributes to radicalization and undermines informed political debate. The research shows that political actors use disinformation campaigns to sway public opinion, particularly during elections. The spread of false information on social media is exacerbated by the network effects of digital platforms, which allow propaganda to reach vast audiences quickly and efficiently. Marwick & Lewis (2017) defined disinformation as is defined as the intentional spread of false or misleading information through networked platforms to manipulate political outcomes and shape public perceptions. This article investigates the tactics used by disinformation actors—both state and non-state entities—who exploit social media platforms to push misleading narratives for political gain. Marwick and Lewis explore how disinformation spreads through fake news websites, bot accounts, and coordinated campaigns that amplify false information. The authors emphasize the role of manipulation in distorting democratic processes and fostering mistrust in legitimate sources of news. The article highlights how media manipulation techniques, such as creating fake news or spreading conspiracy theories, erode public trust in established institutions. Disinformation campaigns are often coordinated efforts designed to polarize the electorate and weaken democratic systems. Marwick also defined Propaganda as the strategic dissemination of biased or false information through digital media to manipulate public discourse and promote a specific political agenda. Civic education and disinformation warfare represent two opposing uses of social media in the political sphere. On the one hand,

platforms can promote civic awareness and encourage political participation, particularly among younger users who consume news through these channels (Mossberger et al., 2008; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). On the other hand, these same platforms can also be used for manipulation, where political actors engage in disinformation and propaganda campaigns to distort political realities and influence election outcomes (Benkler et al., 2018; Marwick & Lewis, 2017). These dual roles of social media in politics underscore the complexity of its impact on democratic processes.

2.2.4 Social Media and Governance

The concept of social media as the "fifth estate" refers to its role in complementing or even challenging the traditional estates of power, particularly the media, in democratic societies. Traditionally, the "fourth estate" refers to the press or news media, which has been a crucial watchdog over the other three estates—government, judiciary, and clergy (Dutton, 2023). However, the advent of social media has disrupted this traditional model, giving rise to a new estate that operates independently of traditional power structures and offers alternative channels for public discourse and social accountability. William Dutton (2009), in his work *The Fifth Estate: Emerging through the Network of Networks*, argues that social media represents an emergent fifth estate because it empowers individuals and non-traditional organizations to act as significant sources of information, often bypassing traditional media gatekeepers. Unlike traditional media, social media enables any individual with internet access to create and distribute content, thereby influencing public discourse. Dutton emphasizes that this fifth estate operates within what he calls the "network of networks," which consists of interconnected online platforms that foster direct and broad communication, promoting transparency and enabling new forms of collective action.

The technological foundation of social media facilitates decentralized communication that supports the idea of a fifth estate because it allows individuals to challenge traditional media narratives, hold power to account, and mobilize social movements. Dutton (2009) outlines several key features that define the fifth estate:

Preeminence in Social Accountability: The internet, and by extension social media, opens political and institutional arenas to greater scrutiny. This allows citizens to hold institutions accountable in ways that were not previously possible through traditional media.

Technology of Freedom: Social media enables networking that can reinforce personal self-interest while simultaneously fostering collective action. As Manuel Castells (2013) points out in *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, digital platforms create spaces for marginalized voices, thus supporting social movements and activism by breaking down barriers to participation.

Empowerment of Communication: Social media enhances the ability of individuals and institutions to communicate more effectively, both within and beyond traditional institutional arenas. Dutton emphasizes that this compunction power comes from the ability of social networks to transcend traditional boundaries, providing users with the ability to share information and mobilize on issues of public concern.

Reconfiguration of Access: Social media networks enable a reconfiguration of access to people, information, and services, shifting the locus of control from traditional institutions to networked individuals. This reconfiguration has allowed for the democratization of information and a redistribution of influence over public discourse.

These features represent a profound shift in how information is distributed and how individuals interact with both media and political institutions. Several studies provide empirical support for the notion of social media as the fifth estate. While social media offers increased access to information, evidence suggests that digital divides—such as those based on age, geography, and socioeconomic status—still exist. For example, research by Helsper and van Deursen (2017) highlights that access to and use of social media remains unequal, often correlating with factors such as income, education, and geographic location. Despite these divides, social media has nonetheless expanded the possibilities for broader public participation in political processes.

Credibility of Information: A significant aspect of the fifth estate is the growing reliance on the internet and social media as credible sources of information. According to a Pew Research Center study (2021), a growing number of people, especially younger generations, trust social media platforms over traditional news outlets for political information. However, this reliance also raises concerns about the quality of information and the prevalence of misinformation, a challenge that the fifth estate must contend with.

Mobilization and Activism: Numerous examples demonstrate the power of social media to mobilize grassroots movements. The Arab Spring (Howard & Parks, 2012) and the Black Lives Matter movement (Freelon, McIlwain, & Clark, 2016) are prominent examples of how social media platforms have been used to bypass traditional media and mobilize social movements, lending credence to the notion of social media as a fifth estate. Several dimensions characterize the functioning of social media as the fifth estate:

Networked Public Sphere: Social media creates a new public sphere that is both global and local, enabling individuals to engage in discourse across geographic and social boundaries.

Habermas' (1991) concept of the public sphere, wherein rational-critical debate shapes public opinion, is extended by social media, albeit with new challenges regarding misinformation and echo chambers (Sunstein, 2007).

Collective Intelligence: Social media platforms support what Pierre Lévy (1997) terms "collective intelligence," wherein groups of individuals collaborate, share knowledge, and solve problems collectively. This capability has been used to great effect in social activism, citizen journalism, and even policymaking, as evidenced by the rapid dissemination of information during crises like natural disasters or political protests (Hermida, 2010).

Decentralization of Information: The fifth estate decentralizes control over information, shifting it away from traditional gatekeepers like editors and news organizations. Individuals now have the tools to produce, distribute, and amplify information. This decentralization leads to a more pluralistic media landscape, although it also introduces challenges, such as the spread of false information and the difficulty in verifying sources.

Symmetry in Political Communication: Unlike traditional top-down political communication, the fifth estate fosters more symmetrical forms of communication, where political actors and citizens engage in dialogue on a more equal footing. This dynamic was exemplified in the use of Twitter by political figures such as Donald Trump, who bypassed traditional media channels to communicate directly with the public (Stolee & Caton, 2018).

Openness and Inclusivity: The fifth estate is inherently more inclusive than traditional media, enabling marginalized groups to participate in public discourse. Social media allows for the creation of communities centered around shared interests, which has broadened the range of voices contributing to political and social debates (Loader & Mercea, 2012).

The notion of social media as the fifth estate encapsulates its role in transforming communication, political accountability, and public discourse. By facilitating greater participation and decentralizing information control, social media platforms have reconfigured the power dynamics between traditional institutions and the public. While challenges such as digital divides and misinformation remain, the potential for social media to act as a space for collective action and democratized communication positions it as a powerful new force in the global information ecosystem.

2.2.5 Social Media and Activism (Hashtag Activism)

Social media has become a powerful tool for advocating social justice and amplifying marginalized voices. Campaigns like #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter have brought global attention to issues of sexual harassment and racial injustice. As Freelon, McIlwain, and Clark (2016) observe, hashtag activism enables grassroots mobilization and challenges traditional power structures by giving a platform to underrepresented groups. While social media can promote inclusivity, disparities in digital access persist. Not everyone has equal access to the internet or digital literacy skills, which can exacerbate existing inequalities (van Dijk, 2020). Addressing the digital divide is crucial to ensuring that social media can serve as an inclusive tool for democratic engagement.

Social media has been used to advocate for marginalized groups and to promote discussions on social justice issues, such as gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and minority rights in Nigeria. Platforms like Twitter and Instagram have been instrumental in raising awareness of systemic discrimination and creating virtual communities of support. The #BringBackOurGirls campaign, which started in 2014 after the abduction of schoolgirls by Boko Haram, was a globally recognized social media campaign that highlighted the Nigerian

government's failure to protect vulnerable citizens, especially women and children. Social media gave visibility to the plight of these girls and led to international pressure on the government to act (Ekine, 2018). This campaign exemplifies how social media fosters collaborative efforts to address systemic challenges and inequalities.

Hashtag activism, particularly around human rights issues, has the potential to initiate formal investigations and heighten legal scrutiny of governmental actions. This form of activism is often defined as the use of hashtags on social media platforms (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter) to mobilize support, raise awareness, and advocate for political and social change (Yang, 2016). It acts as a catalyst for broad public discourse, serving as a focal point for discussions on human rights and governance. Public Sphere Theory (Habermas, 1989) supports the idea that digital platforms extend the public sphere by enabling greater participation, where citizens can debate political and social issues more freely and openly, leading to increased advocacy efforts. Studies on #*BlackLivesMatter* (BLM) emphasize the significant role of social media in policy-related discussions, particularly on police reform and racial justice. Freelon et al. (2016) found that BLM profoundly influenced public discourse on police brutality, shifting the narrative toward systemic issues of racial injustice. The movement leveraged social media tools like Twitter, where millions of users engaged in discussions that elevated police brutality into mainstream public consciousness, directly impacting policy discussions. This is consistent with Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which explains how media (especially social media) can shape what the public and policymakers perceive as important. Similarly, hashtag activism extends to movements like #*MeToo*, which has had a transformative impact on societal attitudes toward sexual harassment.

Research by Mendes et al. (2019) demonstrates how *#MeToo* catalyzed legal and corporate policy changes by empowering survivors to come forward and voice their experiences. This movement aligns with Feminist Legal Theory (MacKinnon, 1989), which critiques traditional legal frameworks for marginalizing women's voices. Through digital platforms, *#MeToo* facilitated widespread awareness and discussion that led to reforms in workplace harassment policies, further illustrating the real-world impact of digital activism. At an international level, hashtag movements such as *#EndSARS* and *#BringBackOurGirls* have brought human rights violations to global attention. Udupa and Pohjonen (2019) show that these movements not only raised awareness but also spurred formal investigations and legal actions. The Global Civil Society Theory (Keane, 2003) suggests that transnational digital advocacy efforts can influence legal outcomes by drawing global attention to human rights issues, thereby increasing pressure on governments to act.

However, despite the successes, digital activism alone may not be sufficient for achieving sustained legal reforms. McCarthy and Zald's (1977) Resource Mobilization Theory explains that effective collective action requires more than just digital engagement; it also demands the strategic use of resources and traditional offline advocacy efforts to achieve lasting change. Udupa and Pohjonen (2019) further emphasize that the transient nature of digital movements can limit their long-term effectiveness in securing legal or policy reforms, underscoring the need for complementary offline actions. In conclusion, while hashtag activism can drive public discourse and influence legal reforms, particularly in the context of human rights, its impact is amplified when supported by offline organizing and sustained legal advocacy. Future research should investigate the varying effectiveness of these

movements across different sociopolitical contexts, exploring their potential for achieving long-term legal reforms globally.

Twitter has emerged as a formidable platform for expressing grievances, offering the ability to reach large audiences and establish identities around shared struggles. Since its launch in 2006, Twitter has enabled individuals to communicate their messages to the masses, using both text and visuals (Helvie-Mason & Maben, 2017). As a tool for grievance-based agitation, studies have focused on its causes, techniques, and structure. For instance, research has examined the resurgence of Biafra activism (Ibeanu, Orji, & Iwuamadi, 2016) and the use of Twitter in the activities of Biafra separatists (Orbunde, 2017). The underlying economic disparities driving such movements have also been explored (Griffiths, 2009). Twitter's open nature enables manipulation, with users employing tactics like creating fake identities or forming clusters around common messages, as Orbunde (2017) observed. This underscores the need for fairness in communication to avoid misrepresentation and distortion of grievances. Moreover, the literature on social movements highlights that collective action often arises from shared grievances, ethnic identities, and cultural connections (Chiluwa, 2012). In ethnically diverse societies like Nigeria, the struggle for inclusion and the fight against exclusion become central issues (Nwofe, 2017). When resources and power are distributed unequally along ethnic lines, conflicts are inevitable, further underscoring the importance of fairness and equity in addressing grievances (Nwofe, 2017). Social media, particularly through hashtag activism, plays a vital role in amplifying grievances and fostering a sense of solidarity among participants. Castells' Theory of Power in Communication (2009) also applies, positing that social media enables marginalized voices

to bypass traditional power structures, creating new avenues for public discourse and governmental accountability.

Social media has played a significant role in advancing critical democratic citizenship in Nigeria by enabling citizens to engage more actively in democratic processes, challenge inequalities, and hold political institutions accountable. Social media platforms have become essential tools for political mobilization in Nigeria, empowering citizens to organize and participate in democratic actions. Movements like #EndSARS, which gained momentum in 2020, serve as prime examples of how social media has enabled citizens to collectively challenge police brutality and demand governmental reforms.

Civic education and awareness refer to the use of social media platforms to educate users about political processes, policies, and their civic responsibilities (Mossberger et al, 2008). Social media can serve as a tool to spread information about governance and inspire active participation in political matters. Mossberger et al (2008) investigated how the internet, and by extension, social media, can promote civic education by making information about political processes widely accessible. Mossberger et al (2008) defined Civic education as the dissemination of information about governance, laws, and policies through digital platforms to promote informed participation in political processes. The authors argue that digital platforms foster digital citizenship by allowing citizens to engage with content related to governance and participate in political discussions. Social media, in particular, is presented as a space for information sharing and increasing political awareness, especially among those traditionally excluded from political engagement due to barriers like age, socio-economic status, or location. The study revealed that increased access to the internet positively correlates with political participation, as more citizens gain knowledge of political processes.

Social media is found to lower the barriers to participation by making civic information readily available and encouraging engagement in political discourse.

Social media has also contributed to the political education of Nigerian citizens, making it easier for individuals to access information about governance, elections, and policy decisions. This access empowers citizens to engage in informed dialogue and deliberation about political matters, which is crucial for a vibrant democratic society. Popular Nigerian media outlets like Channels TV have utilized YouTube and other social platforms to broadcast political debates, discussions, and news, which educates citizens on current political issues. This enhances the ability of citizens to critically engage with political processes and make informed decisions (Olawale, 2021). The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has also utilized social media platforms to disseminate election-related information, educate voters on their rights, and encourage youth participation in elections. This contributes to learning democracy (Biesta, 2011) by empowering Nigerian citizens with the knowledge they need to participate meaningfully in democratic processes. Josiah and Abimiku (2022) emphasize that social media promotes public participation and interaction on issues of national importance. Yet, the responsibility of representing citizens' concerns should not fall solely on the federal government. Nigeria's federal system divides power between the central government and state and local governments, meaning that all levels of governance must act in the interest of the people.

2.2.6 The Role of Social Media in Shaping Governance and Policy

Social media has revolutionized the dissemination of political information, lowering the transactional costs of spreading news and ideas (Wiegand, 2019). It has transformed the way governance and policy are communicated, allowing political elites to directly engage

with the public while simultaneously allowing the public to respond and critique government actions. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter have become central spaces for public discourse, where policies are debated and contested. Ali, Habes, and Qamar (2020) note that media, including social media, plays a vital role in educating, informing, and socializing people within society. The interactive nature of social media allows for a more dynamic exchange between the governed and those in power, leading to a more engaged and informed citizenry. However, this also introduces the risk of polarization, as individuals can seek out information that reinforces their existing beliefs, further entrenching ideological divides (Campati, 2021). The interplay of governance, policy, and social media is crucial in modern societies. Social media offers a platform for open debate and the dissemination of diverse perspectives, but it also challenges traditional governance structures by giving the public a more active role in shaping policy outcomes. The media, both traditional and social, acts as a powerful mediator in this relationship, influencing public perception and, ultimately, the course of governance. Governance and policy are closely linked through the processes of decision-making, implementation, and public discourse, with the media, particularly social media, playing a pivotal role in shaping public perception and opinion. As policymakers navigate the complexities of governance, they must engage with the media to effectively communicate policies and address public concerns. In this way, the media functions as a bridge between governance and the public, influencing how policies are understood, accepted, or rejected by society.

2.2.7 Social Media and Critical Democratic Citizenship

Afolayan and Oyebode (2019) explored the significant impact of hashtag activism in Nigeria, particularly focusing on the #EndSARS movement, which mobilized Nigerian youth

to demand the dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and advocate for police reforms. Their analysis emphasizes how social media can connect citizens both globally and locally, amplifying their voices and driving substantial political change. Ekanem (2021) noted that platforms like Facebook and Twitter enable public officials to provide real-time updates and solicit feedback, thereby enhancing transparency. Uwalaka (2020) highlighted social media movements that shed light on violations of legal rights and governance issues, such as police brutality and extrajudicial killings. While Uwalaka acknowledged the significant role of social media in raising awareness, concerns remain about the sustainability of these movements and their capacity to influence long-term policy change. Lastly, Adeleke and Olufemi (2019) emphasized how social media has transformed the accountability process by offering citizens a platform to directly question political leaders. Their examination of various case studies illustrates how social media has been instrumental in exposing corruption scandals and government inefficiencies, though challenges such as misinformation and a lack of regulation can undermine its credibility.

Collectively, these studies underscore social media's transformative potential in enhancing transparency, fostering civic participation, promoting accountability, and empowering marginalized voices. Despite challenges, such as misinformation and unequal access, social media represents a powerful tool for improving governance engagement in both established and emerging democracies. Together, these findings create a nuanced understanding of social media's impact on governance in Nigeria, illustrating its capacity to reshape public discourse, enhance political engagement, and advocate for accountability while addressing the associated challenges and risks. The studies highlight several key elements of critical democratic citizenship:

Questioning Authority: A defining feature is the willingness to challenge and hold political leaders and institutions accountable. This involves scrutinizing power dynamics and advocating for transparency in governance.

Political Engagement: Critical democratic citizenship emphasizes active participation in political processes, including voting, advocacy, and involvement in social movements.

Social Justice Advocacy: Citizens are encouraged to advocate for social justice issues, ensuring that marginalized voices are heard and represented in public discourse.

Deliberative Dialogue: Engaging in meaningful discussions and debates about societal issues fosters critical reflection and informed decision-making among citizens.

Solidarity and Community Building: Critical democratic citizens work towards building solidarity within communities, recognizing the importance of collective action and mutual support in pursuing common goals.

Use of Digital Platforms: Social media serves as a vital tool for critical democratic citizenship, enabling citizens to organize protests, disseminate information, and engage with broader audiences, thus amplifying their voices.

Prefigurative Participation: This concept refers to the idea that online actions and discussions can shape and influence offline protests and civic engagement, highlighting the interconnectedness of digital and physical activism.

Global Connectivity: Social media facilitates connections among diverse movements and individuals worldwide, fostering a sense of global solidarity and shared struggle for justice and democracy. Together, these elements form a comprehensive framework for

understanding critical democratic citizenship in the context of contemporary social movements and political activism.

2.2.8 The State of Governance in Nigeria

Governance in Nigeria faces significant challenges across several critical dimensions: accountability, transparency, rule of law, participation, and voter turnout. These elements collectively shape the country's political landscape and impact its socio-economic development. Accountability in Nigeria is weak, with political leaders often prioritizing allegiance to political godfathers over public responsibility. The failure of elected officials to adhere to democratic principles of accountability has led to widespread corruption, misappropriation of resources, and governance that lacks transparency. Historical legacies from colonial rule and military regimes have entrenched this culture, resulting in a system where electoral accountability is undermined by rigging, vote-buying, and violence. Consequently, public officials often feel little obligation to answer to the electorate, creating a major obstacle to development. Transparency is a cornerstone of good governance, yet Nigeria performs poorly in this area. Public access to information is severely limited, with government data and laws receiving abysmally low scores. The lack of transparent practices hinders the public's ability to hold officials accountable. However, there is some civic participation and access to complaint mechanisms, providing limited opportunities for engagement. Nigeria's rule of law framework is fragile, scoring low on the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index. Corruption, especially within the legislative and executive branches, continues to undermine governance. The judiciary, while relatively less corrupt, faces significant capacity challenges in holding the government accountable. The lack of effective regulatory enforcement and systemic delays in civil and criminal justice further

exacerbate governance issues. Violent conflicts and insecurity contribute to a weak legal framework, limiting the country's ability to ensure justice and protection for its citizens. Since Nigeria's transition to democracy in 1999, political participation has increased, but voter apathy remains a significant issue. Distrust in the electoral system, corruption, and fear of violence during elections discourage many citizens from voting. Voter education campaigns and access to voting centers are often inadequate, especially for marginalized groups like women. Studies reveal that this disengagement perpetuates poor governance, creating a cycle where disillusionment with the political system weakens electoral accountability. While electoral reforms like biometric registration have been introduced, they have not addressed deeper issues like corruption and political violence. To improve participation, comprehensive reforms tackling these systemic problems are necessary, along with improved security and voter education.

The rule of law situation in Nigeria, as reflected in the World Justice Project (WJP, 2023) Rule of Law Index, presents a complex picture of both progress and challenges. Nigeria's overall score on the Rule of Law Index stands at 0.41, positioning it within the lower middle-income group of Sub-Saharan Africa. This score highlights a range of deficiencies in the legal and governance framework, particularly in areas such as government accountability, corruption, fundamental rights, and security. Constraints on Government Powers is a crucial measure of how well the executive branch is held accountable, and Nigeria scores 0.50 in this area. While the legislature does a moderately good job of limiting government powers, scoring 0.64, other checks are weaker. The judiciary's capacity to limit government power is rated at 0.49, while independent auditing and review mechanisms score 0.47. There is significant room for improvement in the sanctioning of government officials

for misconduct, which scores 0.42. Non-governmental checks on government power, like civil society organizations, score slightly better at 0.48, and the legal transition of power receives a score of 0.46, reflecting some fragility in these processes. Absence of Corruption is a critical area where Nigeria struggles significantly, with an overall score of 0.32. Corruption is most rampant in the legislative branch, which scores only 0.18. The executive branch fares slightly better at 0.30, while the judicial branch, with a score of 0.45, is seen as relatively less corrupt. Corruption in the police and military also remains a significant issue, scoring 0.34, indicating that these sectors remain plagued by the misuse of public office for private gain.

Open Government, which measures transparency and public access to information, is rated at 0.42. Publicized laws and government data receive an abysmally low score of 0.20, indicating that a lack of transparency hampers the public's ability to hold the government accountable. However, Nigeria performs better when it comes to civic participation (0.50) and the availability of complaint mechanisms (0.60), showing that some avenues for public engagement and accountability do exist. The right to information is rated at 0.38, indicating that accessing governmental information remains a challenge for many Nigerians.

Fundamental Rights in Nigeria are similarly constrained, with an overall score of 0.42. The most critical area of concern is the right to life and security, which scores only 0.28, reflecting the ongoing violence, insecurity, and challenges in guaranteeing the safety of citizens. Freedom of opinion and expression, as well as freedom of belief and religion, both score 0.48 and 0.49, respectively, suggesting that while these rights are relatively upheld, significant issues remain. The freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy scores low at 0.30, highlighting ongoing concerns about personal liberties. Other fundamental rights, such

as freedom of assembly and association, score 0.56, while labor rights come in at 0.45, indicating moderate protection of these areas.

In terms of Order and Security, Nigeria scores a low 0.37. While crime control is moderately effective, with a score of 0.53, the country struggles with civil conflict, which scores only 0.17. Additionally, people's resort to violence to resolve personal grievances, though still a problem, is somewhat controlled, scoring 0.43. These figures reflect the instability and insecurity that continues to affect various regions of the country. Regulatory Enforcement, which examines the application and enforcement of government regulations, scores 0.41. There are notable inefficiencies, as evidenced by the low scores for government regulations being effectively enforced (0.39) and administrative proceedings facing unreasonable delays (0.33). The due process in administrative procedures also scores a low 0.38, revealing inefficiencies in the regulatory framework.

Civil Justice in Nigeria receives a score of 0.46, suggesting that access to justice is moderately available, but there are significant delays and corruption issues. While people can generally afford civil justice (0.57) and it is somewhat free of discrimination (0.49), the civil justice system is riddled with corruption (0.44) and improper government influence (0.44). Unreasonable delays in civil justice proceedings are a significant challenge, scoring only 0.23. On a positive note, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms score relatively high at 0.62, indicating that these are accessible and effective for many Nigerians.

Finally, Criminal Justice, an essential part of the rule of law, scores a concerning 0.39. The criminal investigation system is ineffective (0.42), and the timeliness of criminal adjudication is similarly low at 0.39. The correctional system fares the worst, with a score of 0.30, showing limited success in reducing criminal behavior. Although the criminal justice

system scores relatively better in terms of impartiality (0.51) and freedom from improper government influence (0.44), corruption remains a substantial problem, scoring 0.36. Due process and the rights of the accused also receive a low score of 0.34, indicating systemic weaknesses in ensuring justice for individuals caught in the criminal system. Overall, the rule of law in Nigeria faces significant challenges across various dimensions. From weak government accountability and rampant corruption to concerns over fundamental rights and justice system inefficiencies, the data underscores the pressing need for reforms to strengthen governance, transparency, and accountability in the country.

Ugandan (2010) explored the persistent lack of political accountability in Nigeria, which has critically hindered the country's long-term development. It argues that the failure of political leaders to adhere to democratic principles of accountability has led to misappropriation, corruption, and embezzlement, which collectively obstruct the development process. The paper highlights that public officials often prioritize allegiance to political godfathers over the electorate, resulting in a governance system lacking transparency and accountability. Ugandan (2010) traces Nigeria's accountability issues to colonial rule and subsequent military regimes, which established a culture of governance disconnected from the needs and rights of citizens. This historical legacy has continued into the democratic era, with elected officials showing little regard for public accountability. The foundation of accountability lies in free and fair elections, which confer legitimacy on public officials. However, in Nigeria, electoral processes are often characterized by rigging, violence, and vote-buying. This lack of electoral accountability results in leaders who do not feel obligated to answer to the public. Ugandan (2010) suggests that for Nigeria to achieve sustainable long-term development, there must be a radical shift towards a culture of

accountability, transparency, and ethical leadership. This requires institutional reforms, active civil engagement, and the development of mechanisms to hold public officials accountable for their actions.

Ojukwu & Olaifa (2011) aimed to identify the key challenges hindering the development of a robust electoral democracy in Nigeria. A central focus is on understanding the causes of voter apathy and its impact on the democratic process. The authors employ a qualitative analysis based on a review of secondary data, including reports from electoral commissions, political analyses, and case studies from various elections. The study uses both historical and contemporary events to map the trajectory of electoral processes in Nigeria. The authors conclude that voter apathy in Nigeria stems from a combination of factors, including mistrust in the electoral process, perceptions of corruption, violence during elections, and the inefficacy of political candidates. The paper highlights how persistent voter disengagement exacerbates democratic deficiencies, leading to a vicious cycle where electoral fraud and poor governance further disillusion the electorate. The study calls for comprehensive electoral reforms, improved security measures during elections, and enhanced political education to address voter apathy.

Chukwuma & Ezeibe (2017) analyzed the reasons behind voter apathy during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, focusing on how socio-political factors influenced voter turnout and the overall election process. The study adopts a mixed-method approach. Quantitative data were obtained from election reports and voter turnout statistics across different regions in Nigeria. Additionally, qualitative insights were gathered through interviews with electoral officers, political analysts, and a cross-section of voters. The authors also analyzed media reports and opinion pieces to supplement the data. The research reveals that voter apathy

during the 2015 elections was largely driven by fear of electoral violence, a lack of faith in the political system, and perceptions that the election outcomes were predetermined. Furthermore, the researchers found that inadequate voter education campaigns and limited access to voting centers further discouraged participation. The study recommends strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring transparency in election monitoring to restore public trust and reduce voter apathy. Aiyede (2021) investigated the relationship between electoral reforms and voter apathy in Nigeria, with a focus on how these reforms influence democratic consolidation. The study examines whether recent reforms have been effective in reducing voter apathy and increasing citizen engagement in the electoral process. Aiyede uses a case study approach, focusing on Nigeria's electoral reforms from 1999 to 2019. The study relies on both primary and secondary data, including interviews with key stakeholders such as electoral commission officials, political party representatives, and civil society organizations. The author also analyzes election reports, reform documents, and voter turnout statistics to assess the impact of the reforms. The article finds that despite the implementation of several electoral reforms aimed at improving transparency, such as the introduction of electronic voting and biometric voter registration, voter apathy remains a persistent issue in Nigeria. Aiyede argues that the reforms have not sufficiently addressed deeper issues like corruption, political violence, and poor governance, which continue to alienate voters. The study suggests that without tackling these systemic challenges, electoral reforms alone will not be enough to significantly reduce voter apathy or strengthen Nigeria's democracy.

2.3 Empirical Review of Related Studies

A number of studies have been reviewed in this study, they are;

Garimella, K., De Francisci Morales, G., Gionis, A., & Mathioudakis, M. (2018, April). Political discourse on social media: Echo chambers, gatekeepers, and the price of bipartisanship. In *Proceedings of the 2018 World Wide Web conference* (pp. 913-922).

The first empirical literature is a study by Garimella et al. (2018) which offers a thorough examination of the relationship between social media and political discourse, with a focus on echo chambers, gatekeeping, and partisanship. The authors explore how these elements manifest on platforms like Twitter, particularly in the context of American political controversies, such as debates around Obamacare and abortion. The findings from their analysis of 2.6 billion tweets and 676,996 users underscore the critical role social media plays in shaping, reinforcing, and even polarizing political opinions. Echo chambers are central to the discussion of how social media influences political discourse. Echo chambers refer to situations where individuals are predominantly exposed to information and opinions that reinforce their pre-existing beliefs, leading to a lack of diverse perspectives. This is a phenomenon supported by Selective Exposure Theory (Festinger, 1957), which suggests that individuals seek out information that aligns with their existing views while avoiding contradictory viewpoints. On platforms like Twitter, this dynamic is exacerbated by algorithmic personalization, which curates content for users based on their prior interactions. Garimella et al (2018) operationally define echo chambers as selective consumption of content that mirrors the user's opinions. This implies that the more politically inclined a user's network is, the more polarized the information they receive, limiting exposure to opposing views. The authors also link echo chambers to homophily, a concept in social network theory, which states that people tend to connect with others who share similar

characteristics or views (McPherson et al., 2001). Homophily in social media is observed when users cluster around similar political ideologies, leading to retweet clusters where content that aligns with their views is amplified. This further strengthens the formation of echo chambers, where individuals are insulated from conflicting information, reinforcing partisan divides. Gatekeeping, traditionally understood as the role of media outlets in filtering and controlling the flow of information, takes on a different form on social media. Unlike traditional media, where editors and journalists decide what information to disseminate, gatekeeping on social media refers to users themselves who consume content from various political perspectives but produce or share content aligned with their own political views. This concept is critical to understanding how social media democratizes content creation but also contributes to the polarization of political discourse. Garimella et al. found that users act as gatekeepers by controlling the political content they share, reinforcing their ideological leanings within their networks. This decentralized gatekeeping process, facilitated by algorithms that prioritize user engagement, limits exposure to diverse perspectives, ultimately fostering an environment conducive to echo chambers. Users become both consumers and producers of political content, but they selectively curate their political discourse in a way that aligns with their partisan views. The concept of partisanship refers to the strong support for a specific political party or ideology, which Garimella et al. identify as a key feature of political discourse on Twitter. Social media intensifies partisanship by creating spaces where users engage with content that reinforces their political identities. This phenomenon can be linked to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), which explains how individuals derive part of their identity from the groups they belong to, including political groups. On

social media, users align with ideological communities, deepening their partisan identity, often at the expense of engaging with opposing viewpoints.

The authors contrast partisanship with bipartisanship, which involves supporting content or viewpoints that align with multiple political perspectives. However, the study found that there is a "price" for bipartisanship on social media. Users who engage in bipartisan discourse, by sharing or endorsing content from opposing political viewpoints, risk losing their connection to partisan communities and face fewer endorsements, likes, or retweets from users in their ideological clusters. This suggests that social media discourages bipartisanship, reinforcing the political divides and echo chambers observed in the study.

The study by Garimella et al. demonstrates the powerful impact social media has on governance and political discourse. Social media platforms, by fostering echo chambers and enabling gate keeping by individual users, can polarize public opinion and intensify partisanship. This dynamic has significant implications for governance, particularly in democracies where political discourse and public opinion shape policymaking. The findings support Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), which posits that media plays a crucial role in determining the public's perception of political issues. On social media, the role of traditional media as agenda-setters is diminished, as users become their own gatekeepers. However, the information users are exposed to remains heavily influenced by the algorithmic structures of platforms, reinforcing their existing biases and political affiliations. Furthermore, the costs of bipartisanship highlighted in the study indicate that social media may contribute to a more polarized political landscape, where individuals are less likely to engage with or support compromise and consensus-building in governance. This could lead to governance challenges, as policymakers may cater more to polarized

bases, making it harder to reach bipartisan agreements on critical issues. Garimella et al.'s study highlights how social media platforms, particularly Twitter, shape political discourse by fostering echo chambers, gatekeeping, and partisanship. These dynamics have profound implications for democratic governance, as they contribute to the polarization of political opinions and discourage bipartisanship. The role of social media in this context underscores the need for a deeper understanding of how digital platforms influence public opinion, policy, and the functioning of democratic institutions. The point of convergence is the realization that in political communication and by extension in engaging with issues of governance, users can be partisan and such partisanship can be reflected in engagement. The study also shows the mode of influence on social media by influencers who are the gatekeepers in social media platforms especially as it relates to issues of governance. This provides insight for understanding social media engagement in the current research. However, the study by Garimella et al, does not account for users in a third world context. This is the gap that the current research intends to fill.

Driss, O. B., Mellouli, S., & Trabelsi, Z. (2019). From citizens to government policy-makers: Social media data analysis. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(3), 560-570.

The article by Driss, Mellouli, & Trabelsi, (2019) aimed to propose a framework that uses social media data, particularly text, to provide policy-makers with valuable insights from citizen feedback. The study's main goal is to facilitate the integration of social media data into government decision-making processes by employing semantic analysis of citizen-generated content, focusing on a Facebook page in Tunisia. The researchers developed a generic framework based on Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) to process textual data from social media. They collected 3,525 posts from the Facebook page "WINOU ETROTTOIR," where citizens report issues like road safety, public services, and governance problems. The

posts, mostly in Arabic or French, were filtered to focus on French-language posts, resulting in a corpus of 638 messages. The messages were divided into two sets: 173 for training and 465 for testing. LSA was used to extract key topics, identify subjects, and analyze the proportions of each topic within the posts. The analysis aimed to provide structured feedback that government officials could use to prioritize and address citizen concerns. The analysis revealed 13 key subjects including economy, public administration, road security, environment, civil society, and anarchic construction. The most discussed topics were road security and parking, while topics like health had minimal representation. The framework achieved an average accuracy of 60% in correctly classifying posts by subject during the training phase. The results varied by topic, with higher accuracy for subjects like road security and civil society, but lower accuracy for topics like health. Posts containing a mix of languages (French and Tunisian dialect) presented difficulties in classification. The test phase showed similar trends in accuracy, with higher performance for well-represented topics. However, new topics like equipment and social issues emerged during testing, which were not included in the initial learning set. The study concluded that LSA could be a valuable tool for extracting meaningful insights from social media data, though its effectiveness depends on the quality of training data and the diversity of topics covered in the dataset. The framework provides a systematic approach for governments to use citizen-generated content in policy evaluation and problem definition. The research by Driss et al, provides justification for querying critical democratic citizenship. The study provides insights that governance issues are multidimensional. The realization of these multidimensional issues of governance has helped in crafting the questions for governance issues in the current research study. The point of divergence however is methodological as the research utilized big data approach

why the current research utilizes a survey method. The study by Driss et al (2019) has methodological implication for the current study. The content of engagement can be classified as topics of interest showing that there is a selective engagement of social media users in relation to citizen's feedback. The data from the Social media users shows an array of interests which shows that concerns of users need a nuanced frame to understand what is topical for social media users.

De Rosario, A. H., Martín, A. S., & Pérez, M. D. C. C. (2016). The use of Facebook to promote engagement with local governments in Spain. *Social Media and Local Governments: Theory and Practice*, 219-241.

The article by De-Rosario, Sáez-Martín, and Caba-Pérez (2016) aimed to determine which social media platform (Twitter or Facebook) is more effective in fostering citizen engagement with local governments in Spain. Additionally, the study explores the factors influencing the degree of engagement, such as transparency, mood, social media activity, and interactivity offered by local government websites. The researchers used a combination of descriptive and empirical analysis to measure citizen engagement on social media. A sample of 80 of the largest local governments in Spain was analyzed, focusing on their official Twitter and Facebook profiles. For one month (December 2014), 44 municipalities that had both platforms were observed. Data from 9,401 tweets, 9,682 Facebook posts, 4,783 Twitter comments, and 5,020 Facebook comments were collected. Metrics used for engagement included popularity (likes, shares, comments), commitment, and virality across both platforms. The study also applied multiple linear regression to identify the impact of factors such as political context, transparency, mood, and interactivity on engagement. Facebook was found to outperform Twitter in fostering citizen engagement across all dimensions (popularity, commitment, and virality). Citizens were more likely to use Facebook for

engaging with local government compared to Twitter. The study identified that transparency, interactivity, and citizens' negative moods significantly influenced engagement. Transparency, in particular, was positively correlated with engagement, while negative mood (dissatisfaction) also drove higher participation. Activity vs. Engagement: Interestingly, more frequent social media activity (higher volume of posts/tweets) did not lead to greater engagement. Instead, interactivity (direct responses and communication between the government and citizens) was a stronger predictor of engagement. The ideology of the ruling political party (conservative or progressive) did not have a significant effect on citizen engagement in social media platforms.

The findings in the study by De-Rosario et al (2016) showed clearly that the structure of a platform is also a factor in user engagement. The interesting part of this study was the higher level of engagement on Facebook as opposed to Twitter. This brings to mind the idea that Facebook as a social media platform has a structure that is more popular for citizen engagement in the area of research than Twitter. Another very interesting insight is that the most significant predictor of engagement is Government's direct response to citizens. It leads to an assumption that the platform used by Government official to respond to issues of concern will most likely enjoy higher levels of engagement. Although this research was carried out in Spain, it has some relevance for the current research. The study concludes that Facebook offers a more engaging platform for local government interactions, and that engagement is driven not just by activity, but by meaningful, transparent, and interactive communication (De-Rosario, et al, 2016). The realization that various social media platforms have varying engagement informs the instrument design used in this research. The notion of affordance by each social media platform is an area of interest in this study which is captured

in the review of literature. The study by De-Rosario et al (2016) focuses largely on Facebook while the current research is not limited to a social media platform.

Lane, D. S., Kim, D. H., Lee, S. S., Weeks, B. E., & Kwak, N. (2017). From online disagreement to offline action: How diverse motivations for using social media can increase political information sharing and catalyze offline political participation. *Social media+ society*, 3(3), 2056305117716274.

The article by Lane, Kim, Lee, Weeks, and Kwak (2017) aimed to explore the relationship between online political disagreement, political information sharing on social media, and offline political participation. The researchers investigate whether political disagreement in online discussions can motivate users to share political information, which may in turn lead to increased offline political activity. Additionally, the study examines how different motivations for using social media such as political engagement, relationship maintenance, and self-promotion moderate these relationships. The study employs a two-wave panel survey conducted in the United States during the 2012 presidential election, with a sample size of 1,250 respondents in the first wave, and 950 respondents retained in the second wave. The authors use ordinary least-squares path analyses and the SPSS PROCESS macro to test their moderated mediation model. The key variables measured include online cross-cutting discussion (OCCD), social media political information sharing (SMPIS), and offline political participation, along with motivations for using social media. Control variables included age, gender, education, political interest, and media use.

The study finds that online cross-cutting discussion (OCCD), where users engage with opposing political views, is positively related to social media political information sharing. This suggests that when users encounter political disagreement, they are more likely to share political information online. For users who are motivated to engage in politics on social media, the relationship between OCCD and information sharing is stronger. This group,

termed "political junkies," is more likely to use disagreement as an opportunity to share and reinforce their political views. Users who use social media to maintain relationships are generally less likely to share political content. However, in the presence of political disagreement, they are more likely to engage in political sharing as a way to navigate and manage social interactions. No significant moderating effect was found for users motivated by self-promotion, suggesting that these users are less influenced by political disagreement in their information-sharing behavior. The study shows that political information sharing on social media positively influences offline political participation, even after controlling for baseline political activity. This indicates that online political expression can spill over into real-world political actions. The authors propose and test a theoretical model that suggests OCCD indirectly influences offline political participation through social media information sharing, with the effect being stronger for those motivated by political engagement and relationship maintenance.

The study by Lane et al (2017) indicated that online political communication has a significant effect on offline political participation. This implies that a social media user can be influenced to engage in civic and democratic activities on the basis of exposure and engagement with political content online. The current study queries the relationship between social media use and critical democratic citizenship and the research by Lane et al (2017) provides evidence for this relationship. The study was however carried out in America and the current research is in Southern Nigeria which is very much culturally dissimilar. Lane et al (2017) concludes that online political disagreement can foster political action, particularly for users who engage with social issues or maintain social connections through social media. This current research is buoyed by that observation.

Mercea, D. (2012). Digital prefigurative participation: The entwinement of online communication and offline participation in protest events. *New media & society*, 14(1), 153-169.

Mercea's (2012) article examines how digital communication tools, specifically social media platforms, are used by activists to organize protest events and facilitate both online and offline participation. The study seeks to understand how these tools create a new form of engagement called "*prefigurative* participation," where online actions influence offline protests. *Prefigurative* Participation is operationally defined as a form of political participation where online discussions and organizing efforts prefigure or shape the actions and dynamics of offline protests. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative analysis of social media posts and qualitative interviews with protest organizers. The author analyzes social media activity leading up to protest events, looking at how information was disseminated and how online networks were used to coordinate offline actions.

Mercea finds that social media plays a pivotal role in organizing and shaping protest events. The concept of prefigurative participation is validated through the study's analysis of protests where online engagement preceded and structured offline activities. The research suggests that digital platforms create a feedback loop, where online and offline actions continually influence each other. Social media not only facilitates the mobilization of participants but also fosters a sense of community and collective identity among protestors.

This study by Mercea (2012) shows that activism can be planned on social media. It follows therefore that actual activism on ground can be nurtured and planned on virtual spaces. The virtual spaces can therefore become the incubators for citizen engagements in protests and activities in which they express their voice on issues of concern to the

government. This is very relevant to the current study and provides a conceptual tool known as prefigurative participation in which actual protests and events aimed at ensuring the voices of the masses are heard are preplanned on social media.

Carney, N. (2016). All lives matter, but so does race: Black lives matter and the evolving role of social media. *Humanity & society*, 40(2), 180-199.

Carney's (2016) article aims to explore the role of social media in the evolution and growth of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The paper seeks to examine how the movement uses social media to challenge systemic racism, raise awareness about police brutality, and mobilize public support for racial justice. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a social movement that campaigns against violence and systemic racism toward Black people, particularly in the context of police brutality. The author uses a qualitative content analysis to examine the role of social media in the BLM movement, focusing on case studies, hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter, and social media campaigns from 2014–2016. Data were gathered from Twitter and other online platforms, examining how activists and supporters use these spaces to mobilize and organize protests. Carney concludes that social media has been a transformative tool for the BLM movement, serving as a platform for organizing protests, raising awareness of police brutality, and engaging with a broader audience. The paper highlights the role of hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter in creating a global network of activists, allowing for the rapid dissemination of information and coordination of events. The study also notes that social media allows marginalized voices to gain visibility in a way that was previously difficult through traditional media channels.

Activities such as protests have various dimensions and the study by Carney (2016) has provided clarity on the functions needed to execute an online mediated protests. These functions are the creation of awareness, mobilization and the actual coordination of the

event (protests) this study is similar to the earlier study by Mercea (2012) as it shows in greater detail the elements of pre-figurative participation. This is relevant to the current research as it provides analytical details on the components of social media mediated activism. The study by Carney (2016) outlined how online action can turn to actual political action on ground. This gives credence to the curiosity that informs the current research. However the points of divergence are the concerns. Carney's concern is with activism while the current research goes beyond activism to query the capacity of Edo state residents to engage governance with social media in such a manner that guarantees the public goods.

Theocharis, Y., Boulianne, S., Koc-Michalska, K., & Bimber, B. (2023). Platform affordances and political participation: how social media reshape political engagement. *West European Politics*, 46(4), 788-811.

The study by Theocharis et al (2023) aimed to explore how social media platforms, specifically Facebook and Twitter, influence political participation and whether participation via these platforms fits into the traditional five-factor model of political engagement. The study also seeks to distinguish between traditional and platform-based participation by analyzing how social media-specific activities differ across various platforms and countries (USA, UK, France). The researchers used a large-scale cross-national survey of 4,532 participants from the US, UK, and France. The survey captured traditional and social media-based forms of political participation. Participants reported on their engagement in both offline and online political activities over the last 12 months. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were employed to examine the factor structure of political participation, paying particular attention to platform-based participation on Facebook and Twitter. The analysis was conducted both on a full sample and on a reduced sample of participants who actively used both Facebook and Twitter.

Traditional Participation Modes: The study confirmed the existence of the five traditional participation modes: civic engagement, protest, party/campaign activities, contacting officials, and political consumerism. However, the results show that social media-based activities do not cluster with these traditional modes.

Platform-Specific Participation: Political actions on Facebook and Twitter formed distinct modes of participation, indicating that political engagement on these platforms should be treated separately. Facebook activities, such as commenting on political posts, and Twitter activities, such as retweeting or replying to political posts, clustered independently.

Novel Participation: The analysis also found that social media facilitates new forms of political participation that have no direct offline equivalent, such as changing one's profile picture for political reasons or retweeting a politician's post. These acts do not align with traditional participation categories.

Cross-Country Differences: Although the five traditional modes of participation held across the US, UK, and France, platform-based participation differed, highlighting the role of platform-specific affordances in shaping political engagement.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that while traditional political engagement remains relevant, the rise of social media has introduced new modes of participation that require a rethinking of established political engagement models.

The separation of traditional participation modes (e.g., voting, protesting, contacting officials) from social media-based activities (e.g., liking, sharing, retweeting) suggests that social media has expanded the repertoire of political engagement. For critical democratic citizenship, this means that digital actions must be considered legitimate forms of political

participation, even if they differ from traditional offline activities. Scholars and policymakers need to account for digital participation as part of an individual's civic engagement and not merely dismiss it as passive or insignificant. The study's observation that political activities on platforms like Facebook and Twitter form distinct modes highlights the importance of understanding the unique affordances of each platform. For critical democratic citizenship, this implies that social media engagement is contextual, shaped by the technical features and social dynamics of each platform. Researchers must, therefore, treat political engagement on different platforms as distinct phenomena, analyzing how each platform fosters or limits political discourse, mobilization, and public engagement. The emergence of new forms of participation (e.g., changing profile pictures for political causes, retweeting politicians) that have no offline equivalent suggests a broadening definition of political action. For critical democratic citizenship, this means recognizing how symbolic and low-effort actions can contribute to political discourse and awareness, even though they might not involve traditional activism. These acts might reflect identity-based political engagement and symbolic solidarity, key elements in the digital age's democratizing power. The differences in platform-based participation across countries (US, UK, and France) emphasize that political engagement through social media is shaped by local political cultures. This highlights that the study of critical democratic citizenship must be context-sensitive, acknowledging that the social and political environment in different countries influences how citizens use social media for political purposes. The study by Theocharis et al (2023) reinforces the need to carry out the current research as it has identified new pathways to political participation. However, the study is limited to Western Europe while the current research is oriented to Nigeria.

Dubois, E., & Gaffney, D. (2014). The multiple facets of influence: Identifying political influentials and opinion leaders on Twitter. *American behavioral scientist*, 58(10), 1260-1277.

Dubois & Gaffney (2014) investigated the role of opinion leaders on Twitter and how they function as influencers in political conversations. The authors emphasize that political influencers, often public figures or elites, serve as gatekeepers of information. By sharing content, commenting on political issues, and interacting with their audience, these leaders drive the direction of political discourse, making certain narratives more visible while suppressing others. They highlight the unequal influence that these figures have, showing that a small number of political elites can dominate discussions around major political events, thereby shaping public understanding and reactions. Opinion leaders are defined as prominent social media users who shape political conversations by curating, sharing, or generating political content, thus influencing public opinion and discourse. The study finds that political influencers on Twitter, often comprising public figures or political elites, hold significant power in determining which topics receive attention. Their tweets act as agenda-setting mechanisms, focusing public discourse on specific events or viewpoints while downplaying others. Opinion leaders thereby create echo chambers, where their followers are more likely to adopt and reinforce their views.

The role of Social media influencers in shaping public opinion is documented in the research by Dubois & Gaffney (2014). Influencers shape the agenda and wield significant influence on the public opinion and policy content in the social media space. What this implies is that studies on social media and political participation must take cognizance of opinion leaders who are influential on social media. To ignore these opinion leaders may lead to an unreliable finding about political participation of social media users who may be largely

influenced by the opinion leaders. Dubois & Gaffney's (2014) study is focused on Twitter which is one social media platform. The current research takes cognizance of a wider array of social media platforms.

Ajisafe, D., Ojo, T. A., & Monyani, M. (2021, July). The impacts of social media on the #EndSARs# youth protests in Nigeria. In *Proceedings of the ICTeSSH 2021 conference*. PubPub.

The study examines the role of social media in mobilizing the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria, focusing on how platforms like Twitter and Facebook facilitated youth-led movements against police brutality. It further explores social media's potential to influence government policies and foster good governance in Africa. The authors use secondary sources to analyze how social media was utilized for protest mobilization, organization, and international solidarity. The study reflects on the protest's implications for future youth-led movements across Africa. The research highlights how social media provided Nigerian youths with a decentralized platform to organize and publicize their protests globally. Social media not only helped raise awareness but also supported logistics, fundraising, and legal aid. Additionally, it attracted international attention and responses from celebrities and world leaders, pressuring the Nigerian government to respond. However, the study also acknowledges limitations, such as social media's inability to completely overhaul governance systems and the challenges of misinformation and government-imposed restrictions.

The study concludes that social media can be a transformative tool for activism and policy influence in Africa but requires alignment with traditional media and governance infrastructures to maximize its potential for good governance. What the study by Ajisafe et al (2021) shows is that social media is a platform that can be used to mobilise activism through resource distribution. Resources are needed to carry out mass action and the research

demonstrated that the social media platforms are very effective resource mobilization tools as seen during the ENDSARS protests. In terms of divergence between the current research and Ajisafe's study, political participation is not limited to activism, it goes well beyond activism to wider forms of engagement which the current study is interested in. Ajisafe's study however aligns with the current research as it is oriented to an intersection between the online activities and on the ground reality. This gives impetus to the current research. This is highly relevant for the current research as resource mobilization by the social media platforms can be very important to the success of mass actions by the citizens.

Bakshy, E., Messing, S., & Adamic, L. A. (2015). Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook. *Science*, 348(6239), 1130-1132.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aaa1160>

This study by Bakshy et al (2015) examined how exposure to ideologically diverse content on Facebook is influenced by social networks and algorithmic filtering. They raised the following questions: How does Facebook's algorithm influence users' exposure to ideologically diverse content? To what extent do users' social networks (i.e., their friends) affect the political diversity of the information they see? How do individual choices (e.g., what content to click on or share) contribute to shaping the diversity of political information that users encounter? Bakshy et al. (2015) conducted an empirical analysis using a large-scale dataset from Facebook. The study tracked users' exposure to content shared by their friends and classified news stories as either liberal or conservative. The researchers used:

Algorithmic Analysis to assess how Facebook's News Feed algorithms filtered political content.

Friend Network Analysis to evaluate the political leanings of users' friends and how this affected content exposure.

Click and Share Data to study user behavior in selecting and sharing politically diverse or homogeneous content. They then measured how much each factor (algorithmic filtering, social networks, and individual behavior) contributed to the ideological diversity of news consumed.

Bakshy et al (2015) assessed how political opinion leaders influence the exposure of social media users to either ideologically diverse or homogenous political content. Political opinion leaders are defined as individuals or groups on social media platforms who have substantial influence over what political content their followers see, thereby shaping the political engagement and ideological exposure of their audience. The authors examine the role of these leaders in either promoting diverse viewpoints or reinforcing ideological echo chambers by consistently pushing content that aligns with their political stance. They argue that opinion leaders can inadvertently or deliberately shape the diversity of political discourse by selectively sharing news and opinions that align with their own ideologies.

The study found that users who follow political opinion leaders on Facebook are often exposed to narrower political viewpoints, reinforcing existing political biases. Opinion leaders on Facebook often curate content in a way that limits exposure to ideologically diverse news. The result is a reinforcement of political polarization, as followers tend to engage more with content that confirms their pre-existing beliefs. This selective exposure can reduce the potential for rational debate and engagement with opposing viewpoints, contributing to the fragmentation of political discourse. Opinion leaders whether they are influencers, public figures, or political elites play a significant role in determining the quality and direction of political conversations on social media.

According to Dubois and Gaffney (2014), these leaders act as gatekeepers, controlling the narratives around major political events and shaping public opinion by amplifying certain topics while downplaying others. By doing so, they contribute to the agenda-setting function of social media, determining which issues become salient in public discourse. However, the influence of these leaders can have negative consequences for political engagement. As Bakshy. (2015) found, political opinion leaders can contribute to the creation of echo chambers, where users are repeatedly exposed to homogenous political content that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs. This reinforcement of ideological positions can lead to polarization and the fragmentation of public discourse, reducing the potential for meaningful, ideologically diverse debate. Opinion leaders have a significant, yet uneven, influence on political discourse. While they can help raise awareness of important issues, they also contribute to filter bubbles and ideological segmentation, hindering the diversity of viewpoints that is crucial for a functioning deliberative democracy.

Adekoya, C. O. (2021). Information and Misinformation during the# EndSARS Protest in Nigeria: An Assessment of the Role of Social Media. *Covenant Journal of Library and Information Science*.

The study assesses the dual role of social media in the #EndSARS protest, focusing on how it was used to mobilize Nigerian youths against police brutality while also examining the spread of misinformation during the protest. A descriptive survey design was utilized, gathering data through questionnaires from 609 social media users across Nigeria to explore their use of social media during the protests. The study revealed that social media were essential in informing users about the protest, the extent of police brutality, and mobilizing support. However, it also highlighted how misinformation influenced public opinion, often

polarizing views against the Nigerian police. The study emphasizes the need for caution in relying on social media for protest information due to the potential for misinformation.

The fact that users generate content on social media raises the risk of disinformation highly on social media platforms. It follows therefore that Social media platforms could be arenas for fake news and disinformation. Again the ability to dis-inform the public lies with opinion leaders on social media platforms. This implies that a research on citizen engagement should incorporate concerns about content and platform credibility to ascertain the propensity of users to determine if they are being dis-informed or not. The research by Adekoya and the current study highlight social media's role in mobilizing citizens for political causes. The Edo State study focuses on general political engagement, while Adekoya (2021) examines its use during the #EndSARS protests. Both acknowledge the spread of misinformation on social media. Adekoya (2021) emphasizes its polarizing effects during protests. Adekoya (2021) focuses on a specific protest movement (#EndSARS), while the current research examines broader democratic engagement in Edo State. Adekoya (2021) discusses the role of opinion leaders in spreading misinformation, a theme not explicitly addressed in the current research. Adekoya (2021) uses a descriptive survey design but focuses on a specific event, whereas the current research examines general patterns of social media use.

Ogri, E. U., Mbose, A. G., & Adomi, K. O. (2016). Social Media and Participatory Democracy in Africa: A Study of Democratic Transitions in Nigeria and Uganda. *International Journal of Linguistics and Communication*, 3(2), 25-49.

The study by Ogri et al (2016) sought to interrogate social media role in participatory democracy in Africa using two countries as case studies; Nigeria and Uganda. The following research questions were raised; how does the use of social media for political purposes impact the election process in Africa? to what extent were social media platforms used during

the elections in Nigeria and Uganda? How can social media be utilized to enhance positive democratic values in African politics? The researchers employed qualitative methods, including personal interviews with three scholars from the University of Calabar in Nigeria, who specialize in media and political science. Additionally, they reviewed social media use during the 2015 general elections in both Nigeria and Uganda. Data from interviews and historical reviews were analyzed qualitatively. Their findings revealed that Social media platforms have significantly enhanced political participation, particularly among youths, by providing a space for interaction, political discourse, and mobilization. However, while social media helped engage more citizens, particularly in raising awareness, they had minimal influence on election outcomes, particularly in Uganda, where entrenched incumbents like President Museveni maintained power despite opposition. The use of social media during elections in both countries was widespread, but its impact on the actual political process was limited by issues such as digital illiteracy, restricted internet access, and government control of media. Although social media have the potential to promote democratic values, the study suggests the need for stronger regulatory frameworks to curb misinformation and ensure social media use contributes to positive political engagement

This study is highly relevant to analyzing critical democratic citizenship through social media because it shows how digital platforms serve as tools for political engagement, especially for the youth. The research highlights the challenges and opportunities social media provide in fostering political agency and participation, which aligns with the focus on how social media is used for political critique, engagement with government policies, and activism. It however showed a dark side to politics in Sub Saharan Africa as Uganda where the president has remained in power for many years cannot be removed from office hence,

the buzz on social media has had no effect on the situation. Ogri et al. (2016) study converges with the current research on the role of social media in engaging youth in political processes. Ogri et al. (2016) emphasize youth mobilization during elections. It aligns with the current research in the identification of the challenges such as digital illiteracy and limited internet access as barriers to effective social media use for political engagement. However, Ogri et al. (2016) find that social media has minimal impact on election outcomes, particularly in Uganda, while the current research does not address electoral impacts. Ogri et al. (2016) compare Nigeria and Uganda, providing a cross-country perspective, while the current research focuses solely on Edo State, Nigeria. Ogri et al. (2016) use qualitative methods, including interviews, whereas the current research study employs quantitative survey data.

Babaleye, T., Ibitoye, P., & Odorume, A. E. (2020). Influence of social media on democratic governance in Nigeria. *International Journal of Media Journalism and Mass Communications*, 69(1), 13-20.

Babaleye et al (2020) investigated the influence of social media on democratic governance in Nigeria. The following research questions were raised; what role has social media played in sustaining democracy in Nigeria? Does social media criticism of the government and political parties impact democratic governance in Nigeria? The study adopts a survey research design. A sample of 200 respondents was drawn from staff and students of Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, all of whom were social media users. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents, while the data was collected using a questionnaire designed to assess perceptions of social media's influence on political discourse and democratic governance. The questionnaire covered various social media platforms, including social networking sites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), instant messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp), and blogs.

Role of Social Media: 95% of respondents agreed that social media positively impacts democratic governance in Nigeria. It was seen as a tool for public engagement and criticism, especially regarding political leaders. Social media was credited for breaking the information barrier between the government and the governed.

Criticism of Government: Although 80% of respondents believed that some criticisms of political leaders on social media are false, 90% acknowledged that social media helps bridge the gap between government and the people by providing a platform for direct interaction. The study also found that while some discussions can be hostile, social media serves as a crucial platform for demanding accountability from political leaders (Influence_of_Social_Med...).

Information Management: Social media is considered beneficial for democratic governance, but the study also highlighted concerns about the lack of regulation, misinformation, and hostility, which could have adverse effects if unchecked.

The study by Babaleye et al (2020) is highly relevant to understanding how social media fosters critical democratic citizenship. Social media platforms enable citizens to engage with political discourse, challenge government policies, and hold leaders accountable. These digital spaces provide avenues for political expression, contributing to the democratic process by promoting political agency, collective action, and social justice. However, the findings also underscore the importance of managing misinformation and promoting constructive political dialogue for effective democratic governance. Thus, this article provides essential insights into how social media can influence political engagement, which aligns with the broader study of critical democratic citizenship and the role of digital platforms in shaping public discourse. The current research study aligns with Babaleye et al

on the social media's role in holding governments accountable. The current research study highlights its use for criticizing government policies, while Babaleye et al. (2020) note its role in bridging the gap between citizens and government. Both studies acknowledge the risks of misinformation on social media, with Babaleye et al. (2020) noting false criticisms of political leaders. The points of divergence show that Babaleye et al. (2020) focused on democratic governance broadly, while the current research examines critical democratic citizenship and specific behaviors like activism and criticism. Babaleye et al. (2020) used a purposive sampling technique and focus on university staff and students, whereas the current research uses a broader sample of social media users in Edo State.

Breuer, A., Landman, T., & Farquhar, D. (2015). Social media and protest mobilization: Evidence from the Tunisian revolution. *Democratization*, 22(4), 764-792.

The study by Breuer et al (2015) aimed to examine the role of social media in mobilizing protests during the Tunisian revolution, highlighting how digital networks contributed to breaking a media blackout, enabling a collective national protest movement, and providing emotional mobilization. The following research questions were raised.

How did social media facilitate communication and mobilization under the authoritarian regime of Tunisia? In what ways did digital media support the aggregation of collective grievances and a sense of shared identity among protesters? What mechanisms did the “digital elite” employ to break government-imposed media restrictions?

The authors operationally defined social media as platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube used to share information, organize events, and promote anti-government sentiments. Digital Elite was operationally defined as activists and influential internet users who acted as brokers of information, circumventing government censorship to share protest

information with broader audiences, while resource Mobilization was operationally defined as the process of gathering necessary resources, including digital tools and collective identity, to organize and sustain political protests. This study utilized qualitative data from background interviews with Tunisian activists and a survey of 437 Tunisian internet users. It also incorporates resource mobilization theory to analyze how social media was used as a tool to spread protest information and cultivate emotional and nationalistic motivations among potential activists. The study findings showed that Social media enabled activists to bypass government censorship, allowing protest images and information to reach national and international audiences (Breaking Media Blackouts). Shared online content documenting regime violence fostered a collective identity and emotional response, unifying diverse groups in their opposition. Social media bridged social divides, allowing various groups to coordinate actions and amplify protest reach and impact.

The research provides insight into the capacity of social media to foster critical democratic engagement under authoritarian regimes, challenging government narratives, and creating spaces for public dissent. This study illustrates how digital networks empower civic agency and facilitate organized political mobilization, offering a template for examining social media's role in other authoritarian contexts. Breuer et al. (2015) study aligns with the current research as both studies recognize social media's role in mobilizing citizens for political causes. The current research focuses on general political engagement, while Breuer et al. (2015) examine its use in the Tunisian revolution. Both studies highlight social media's ability to bypass traditional information barriers. Breuer et al. (2015) focus on circumventing government censorship, while the current research notes its role in providing access to government-related information. However, Breuer et al. (2015) focus on an authoritarian

regime, while the current research examines a democratic context. Breuer et al. (2015) emphasize the emotional and nationalistic motivations fostered by social media, a theme not explored in the current research.

Abdelhay, N. (2012, September). The Arab uprising 2011: New media in the hands of a new generation in North Africa. In *Aslib Proceedings* (Vol. 64, No. 5, pp. 529-539). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Abdelhay (2012) study aimed to examine the influence of new media technologies, particularly social media and mobile phones, on the mobilization and organization of young protesters in North Africa, specifically during the 2011 Arab uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. The research highlights how these digital tools enabled young activists to form new public spheres, overcome state-imposed media restrictions, and build democratic engagement. To achieve the stated objectives, Abdelhay (2012) raised the following Research Questions;

How did social media and mobile technology impact the organization and mobilization of protests in Tunisia and Egypt?

In what ways did digital media allow North African youth to circumvent traditional media restrictions imposed by authoritarian regimes?

What role did participatory media play in creating a collective identity and fostering democratic values among protesters?

Abdelhay (2012) defined new Media as digital platforms, including social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) and mobile technology, used to communicate, organize, and mobilize protests. He also operationally defined the public Sphere as a virtual space created by new media where individuals can share grievances, organize demonstrations, and discuss political issues. The other concept utilized in their study is Participatory Culture which refers

to the shift enabled by digital media, where ordinary people generate and share content, thereby disrupting traditional media hierarchies. Abdelhay employed a literature-based approach, synthesizing findings from previous studies on communication technology and social movements. The study examines the role of social media and mobile technology in mobilizing young people, creating new public discourse spaces, and fostering a participatory culture. Through this framework, Abdelhay explores how North African youth leveraged digital tools for political engagement. The findings are as follows; Social media allowed young activists to bypass government-controlled media, creating a decentralized network where information about protests could be freely shared and widely disseminated. This unrestricted flow of information helped to maintain momentum across Tunisia and Egypt. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter provided a digital “public square” where young activists discussed political issues, planned protests, and cultivated a collective identity. This digital space enabled the emergence of new, democratic discourse, challenging the narratives controlled by authoritarian regimes. The study highlights that social media facilitated global solidarity by allowing North African activists to connect with international supporters, journalists, and organizations. This global visibility amplified the uprisings and drew international attention to local struggles. Unlike traditional methods, social media introduced a real-time element to mobilization, enabling rapid responses to developments on the ground. This immediacy helped sustain engagement, coordinate protests, and manage responses to government actions, with activists using mobile and internet tools for live updates.

Abdelhay (2012) like the current study highlight the role of social media in engaging youth in political processes. Abdelhay (2012) focuses on youth mobilization during the Arab uprisings, while the current research study examines youth engagement in democratic

processes. Both studies recognize social media as a platform for creating new public spheres for political discourse. However, Abdelhay (2012) examines social media's role in authoritarian regimes, while the current research study focuses on a democratic context. Abdelhay (2012) highlights the role of social media in fostering global solidarity, a theme not addressed in the current research.

2.3.1 Gaps in research

The current study on social media use for critical democratic citizenship fills several gaps identified in the reviewed literature.

1. Bakshy et al. (2015), Garimella et al. (2018), and Theocharis et al. (2023), focus on Western democracies or authoritarian regimes, leaving a gap in understanding social media's role in third-world democratic contexts like Nigeria. The current research specifically examines social media use in Edo State, Nigeria, providing insights into how social media fosters critical democratic citizenship in a developing democracy. This addresses the lack of research on social media's role in African democratic contexts, particularly in Nigeria.
2. Studies like Driss et al. (2019) and Breuer et al. (2015) use qualitative or mixed methods, focusing on specific events (e.g., protests) or big data analysis. There is a lack of quantitative studies that broadly examine social media engagement patterns in democratic contexts. The current study employs a descriptive survey design with quantitative analysis (e.g., descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression) to understand social media engagement patterns among residents of Edo State. This provides a broader, data-driven perspective on social media use for democratic engagement.

3. While studies like Lane et al. (2017) and Mercea (2012) explore political participation and activism, they do not explicitly focus on critical democratic citizenship (defined as citizens' ability to critically engage with, reflect on, and challenge governance and political systems). The current research explicitly examines critical democratic citizenship, focusing on how social media facilitates political engagement, criticism of governance, and calls for social justice. It provides a framework for understanding how social media empowers citizens to hold governments accountable in a democratic context.
4. Studies, such as Bakshy et al. (2015) and De-Rosario et al. (2016), focus on specific platforms like Facebook and Twitter, neglecting other widely used platforms in Africa, such as WhatsApp and Instagram. The current study examines multiple platforms, including WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, revealing that WhatsApp is the most preferred platform for political discussions in Edo State. This addresses the overemphasis on Western-centric platforms in existing literature.
5. Studies like Theocharis et al. (2023) and Babaleye et al. (2020) acknowledge demographic influences on social media engagement, they do not deeply explore gender and education disparities in political participation. The current research took that consideration in the inquiry.
6. Studies like Adekoya (2021) and Ogri et al. (2016) focus on social media's role in mobilizing protests or raising awareness but do not deeply explore the gap between political awareness and active participation. Studies like Adekoya (2021) and Bakshy et al. (2015) highlight the risks of misinformation but do not explore how users verify information or their trust levels in social media for government-related information.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks

The theories used for this study are the uses and gratification theory, the theory of deliberative democracy, Network governance theory and critical theory. These theories will be elaborated in this section, showing their core tenets and assumptions, criticism and relevance to the research.

2.4.1 Uses and Gratification Theory

In the field of mass communication, Uses and Gratifications Theory by Blumler & Katz (1974) is particularly relevant for understanding how individuals interact with social media in the context of governance and democratic citizenship. This theory posits that individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs and desires, such as information, personal identity, social integration, and entertainment (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Uses and Gratifications Theory focuses on why and how people use particular media channels, emphasizing the active role of the audience in selecting media that meets their specific needs. It shifts the focus from what media does to people, to what people do with media. Citizens may use social media platforms to gather information about governance, policies, and political events. This need for information is critical for fostering informed citizenry and enabling accountability. Social media allows individuals to connect with like-minded others, facilitating community building and collective action around governance issues. The theory has the following criticisms: Dependence on researchers' input rather than subjects'. Different motivations for watching the same media based on age. Self-reported information that is difficult to measure. Downplaying the importance of media and overlooking unconscious influences. Crediting audiences with too much selectivity. Limited successful prediction or causal explanation of media choice and use.

This integration can enhance social capital and mobilize citizens for political engagement. The theory can help explain how individuals use social media to express political opinions, engage in discussions, and mobilize for causes, thus enhancing democratic participation. Social media platforms provide a space for citizens to offer feedback to government officials and institutions, influencing governance through direct communication and public discourse.

2.4.2 The theory of Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy is a theoretical framework that underscores the significance of public discourse and active citizen participation in the governance process. It posits that democratic legitimacy arises from the collective deliberation of citizens, who engage in meaningful discussions about societal issues. According to Habermas (1984), a central tenet of deliberative democracy is the idea that individuals should have the opportunity to participate in reasoned debates where diverse perspectives are shared and critically examined. The framework suggests that effective public discourse not only enhances accountability but also empowers citizens to influence decision-making processes (Fishkin, 2018). Social media plays a crucial role in facilitating deliberative democracy by providing platforms where citizens can engage in discussions about governance and public policy. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook enable individuals to share opinions, debate policy issues, and mobilize around collective interests, thereby enhancing democratic engagement (Boulianne, 2015). The criticisms against the theory are; Not all citizens of the country participate in deliberation, leading to potential exclusion of certain groups. There is likelihood for the deliberation to be influenced by power dynamics, such as economic or

social status. The quality of deliberation may not be the same, with some groups having access to better information and resources.

Integrating deliberative democracy into research can provide insights into how social media enhances public discourse, promotes inclusive participation, and fosters accountability in governance. This theory is traced back to ancient times, with an increase in academic attention in the 1990s, and growing implementations since 2010.

2.4.3 Networked Governance Theory

Developed by Stephen Goldsmith et al in the 1960s. No single single year or author can be attributed to propounding this theory, as it was shaped by ongoing research among scholar among disciplines.

Networked governance theory focuses on the interplay between various stakeholders in governance processes, including citizens, civil society organizations, and government institutions. This theory posits that governance is increasingly characterized by collaborative networks rather than traditional hierarchical structures (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Social media serves as a facilitator of networked governance by enabling citizens to connect, share information, and mobilize around common causes (Hampton & Wellman, 2003). Through platforms like Facebook and Twitter, individuals can form networks that enhance collective action and foster accountability by allowing citizens to monitor government actions and engage in collaborative problem-solving (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Criticisms of Networked Governance Theory: Overemphasis on collaboration: Ignores power imbalances and conflicts. Lack of clear boundaries: Blurs lines between public, private, and non-profit sectors. Insufficient accountability: Diffuse responsibility and decision-making. Over reliance on partnerships: Undervalues traditional hierarchical governance.

Incorporating networked governance theory into research can illuminate how social media enhances stakeholder collaboration, facilitates information sharing, and strengthens civic engagement in governance.

2.4.4 Critical Theory

Critical theory, rooted in the Frankfurt School, seeks to analyze and challenge the power dynamics and inequalities within society. It emphasizes the importance of questioning authority and challenging oppressive structures (Horkheimer, 1972). Critical theorists argue that individuals must be empowered to scrutinize governmental actions, recognize injustices, and advocate for social change. In the context of social media, critical theory posits that these platforms serve as essential tools for critical democratic citizenship. They enable individuals to express dissent, report injustices, and mobilize support for social change initiatives (Couldry, 2010).

Critical Theory (CT) has its roots in the Frankfurt School of Social Research, founded in 1923. Key propounders of Critical Theory include:

Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) - Director of the Frankfurt School, emphasized critical social theory.

Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) - Developed the concept of "negative dialectics."

Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) - Integrated Marxism, psychoanalysis, and existentialism.

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) - Explored cultural critique and philosophical aesthetics.

Erich Fromm (1900-1980) - Focused on social psychology and humanistic Marxism.

Criticisms of the theory

Relativism: CT's emphasis on perspective and context leads to moral and epistemological relativism.

Overemphasis on Power: CT focuses too much on power dynamics, neglecting other factors.

Lack of Universalism: CT's focus on specific contexts undermines universal principles and truth.

Lack of Empirical Evidence: CT relies on theoretical frameworks rather than empirical research.

Overreliance on Interpretation: CT's focus on interpretation can lead to subjective and unverifiable claims.

By providing a space for marginalized voices, social media contributes to the democratization of information and empowers citizens to challenge dominant narratives. Research that incorporates critical theory can explore how social media fosters critical awareness, enhances civic engagement, and supports movements for social justice.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study integrates key theoretical perspectives and empirical findings to explore how social media influences critical democratic citizenship and governance engagement. The framework is built around three core theoretical lenses: Deliberative Democracy, Networked Governance Theory, and Critical Theory, supplemented by Uses and Gratifications Theory to understand individual motivations for social media use.

The framework also incorporates insights from empirical studies on social media's role in political discourse, activism, and governance.

Governance and Public Policy are intertwined, as governance principles guide how policies are formulated and implemented. When governance mechanisms like accountability, transparency, and participation are strong, policies are more likely to be effective, equitable, and inclusive. Political Agency is a direct outcome of good governance. When citizens have the capacity to engage in political processes and influence decision-making, governance becomes more responsive and accountable. Critical Democratic Citizenship builds on political agency by encouraging citizens to engage in a reflective, informed, and critical manner. Good governance practices like transparency and inclusiveness create an enabling environment for citizens to develop this critical mindset. Social Media plays a pivotal role in facilitating both political agency and critical democratic citizenship. It allows citizens to engage in governance processes by sharing information, organizing collective actions, and advocating for policy changes. Through social media, citizens can also hold governments accountable, challenge governance failures, and demand transparency and inclusivity in decision-making. These concepts form a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamic interaction between governance, public policy, political agency, and social media in fostering a participatory and accountable democratic system. Social media enhances these interactions by amplifying citizen voices, promoting critical reflection, and encouraging active participation in democratic processes.

The relationships within this conceptual framework illustrate how social media platforms, user demographics, and political contexts interact to shape critical democratic citizenship and governance outcomes. Social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook,

and WhatsApp, play a central role in fostering political engagement, but their impact is mediated by factors like echo chambers, gatekeeping, and the influence of opinion leaders.

Echo chambers, driven by algorithmic filtering and selective exposure, reinforce ideological divides by curating content that aligns with users' pre-existing beliefs. This polarization is further amplified by gatekeeping, where users selectively share content that reflects their political views, limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. Opinion leaders, including political influencers and elites, act as gatekeepers of information, shaping public discourse by amplifying specific issues and narratives. Their influence can either deepen partisan divides or, in some cases, foster bipartisan dialogue, depending on the content they promote.

User demographics also play a significant role in shaping engagement patterns. For instance, older individuals and men tend to be more politically active on social media, while women and younger users show lower levels of engagement. Highly educated individuals, despite their access to information, may exhibit less engagement due to disillusionment or skepticism toward the political system. These demographic differences highlight the need for targeted strategies to encourage broader participation across all groups.

The concept of prefigurative participation underscores the dynamic interplay between online and offline activism. Online discussions and planning on social media often precede real-world actions, creating a feedback loop where digital engagement fuels physical protests and advocacy efforts. This relationship is evident in movements like #EndSARS and Black Lives Matter, where social media served as a catalyst for mobilization and resource sharing.

Government responsiveness on social media is another critical factor influencing citizen trust and engagement. When governments actively engage with citizens on platforms

like Facebook or Twitter, responding to concerns and providing transparent updates, it fosters a sense of accountability and trust. Conversely, a lack of responsiveness can lead to disillusionment and decreased participation.

Ultimately, these relationships culminate in the development of critical democratic citizenship, characterized by active engagement with governance, constructive criticism of democratic processes, and advocacy for social justice. The framework highlights the transformative potential of social media in enhancing governance outcomes, such as increased transparency, accountability, and policy influence, while also acknowledging the challenges posed by polarization, misinformation, and unequal participation.

By understanding these interconnected relationships, researchers and practitioners can develop strategies to harness the positive aspects of social media for democratic engagement while mitigating its potential drawbacks. This includes promoting digital literacy, fostering inclusive dialogue, and leveraging platform affordances to create more equitable and participatory governance systems.

This conceptual framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how social media influences critical democratic citizenship and governance engagement, integrating theoretical insights and empirical findings to guide future research and practice.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHOD

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology that was employed to collect and analyze data for the study on Critical Democratic Citizenship and Social Media in Edo state. The methodology is designed to ensure that reliable, valid, and actionable data were gathered. The chapter is organized into the following sections: research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, instrument development, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a survey research method. The survey method was considered appropriate for this study as it allowed the researcher to gather large amounts of data from a population at a single point in time. Survey research helped to identify the patterns of social media consumption, levels of critical democratic citizenship, and engagement with governance issues among residents of Edo state (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The use of a structured questionnaire enables efficient data collection and quantitative analysis, hence, the adoption of cross sectional research design.

3.2 Population of the Study

According to Datareportal's Digital 2023 Report, Nigeria had approximately 36.9 million social media users as of January 2023, representing about 17.1% of the population. Edo State has an estimated population of 4.8 million people (based on the National Population Commission of Nigeria projections for 2023). Assuming the social media

penetration rate in Edo State is similar to the national average (17.1%), the estimated number of social media users in Edo State would be around 820,000. Social media usage is higher in urban areas compared to rural areas. Edo State, with its capital Benin City being a major urban center, likely has a higher concentration of social media users compared to rural areas. If we assume a higher penetration rate of 20-25% in urban areas, the number of social media users in Edo State could range between 960,000 to 1.2 million. Based on the national social media penetration rate and Edo State's population, the estimated number of social media users in Edo State is approximately 820,000 to 1.2 million. However, this is a rough estimate, and the actual number could vary depending on factors such as internet accessibility, smartphone penetration, and urban-rural disparities.

3.3 Sample Size

To determine a sample size from the estimated social media user population in Edo State, we can use standard sample size determination methods, such as Cochran's formula:

$$n = (Z^2 * p * (1 - p)) / e^2$$

Where:

Z = 1.96 (for a 95% confidence level)

p = 0.5 (maximum variability, since the exact proportion is unknown)

e = 0.05 (margin of error)

Using this formula, a sample size is approximately of 385, which was rounded up to 400 purposively for convenience. Thus, a sample size of 400 is appropriate for drawing statistically significant conclusions about the social media user population in Edo State. To achieve a representative sample of the population across Edo State, a sample size of 400 respondents was selected. This sample size meets recommendations for survey research with

large populations, allowing for generalizability and reliable statistical analysis (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

3.4 Sampling Technique

The study adopted purposive sampling techniques, to distribute the sample of 400 social media users across Edo State for research, several factors were considered, including urbanization, population density, and social media adoption rates. The following table presents the proposed sample distribution based on these factors.

TABLE 3.1: DISTRIBUTION ACROSS THE THREE SENATORIAL DISTRICTS OF EDO STATE

Category	LGAs Included	Percentage of Sample	Sample Size
Urban Areas	Benin City (Oredo, Egor, Ikpoba-Okha)	50%	200
Semi-Urban Areas	Auchi, Ekpoma, Uromi, Irrua	30%	120
Rural Areas	Other LGAs	20%	80

Benin City (Oredo, Egor, Ikpoba-Okha) is the most urbanized and digitally connected area, warranting a larger sample allocation.

Semi-urban areas like Auchi, Ekpoma, and Uromi have growing internet access, making them relevant for the study.

Rural areas have lower social media adoption, so a smaller sample size is assigned to reflect usage trends.

3.5 Instrument of Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to measure the following dimensions:

1. Good Governance Issues Discussed on Social Media
2. Social Media Users' Engagement with Government Policies
3. Criticism of the Democratic Process
4. Encouragement of Participation in Democratic Processes
5. Relationship Between Government Performance and Critical Democratic Citizenship
6. Social Media Consumption Patterns

The questionnaire was based on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to capture respondents' attitudes and behaviors. The instrument was designed by adapting validated scales (e.g., Choi, Glassman, & Cristol, 2017; Lee, Chen, & Chan, 2020) and tailoring the items to reflect the specific research objectives of the study.

3.6 Validity of Instrument

This section outlines the validation and reliability testing procedures for the Critical Democratic Citizenship Scale (CDCS) used in the study. Validation ensures that the instrument accurately measures the constructs it is intended to assess, while reliability ensures consistency and internal coherence of the items. The following procedures were applied to ensure both validation

Content validity refers to the extent to which the items in a scale cover the concept they are intended to measure (Lynn, 1986). To ensure content validity for the CDCS, the following steps were taken: A panel of experts from the fields of political science, public administration, and social media research reviewed the questionnaire. The experts evaluated each item for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the constructs of critical democratic

citizenship, such as good governance, engagement with government policies, participation in the democratic process, and social media consumption patterns. Items that are deemed unclear or irrelevant were revised or eliminated. The expert panel rated each item on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = Not relevant, 2 = somewhat relevant, 3 = Relevant, 4 = Very relevant). The Content Validity Index (CVI) was then calculated to assess the proportion of items rated as relevant by the experts. A CVI score of 0.86 was achieved suggesting strong content validity (Polit & Beck, 2006).

3.7 Reliability of Instrument

A sample of 30 respondents was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The responses were coded on a 5-point Likert scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

The questionnaire consists of five main sections:

Frequency of Use

Sources of Information

Engagement with Content

Platform Preference

Content Verification

Responses were entered into a dataset where each row represented a respondent and each column represented a questionnaire item. The statistical software used for analysis computed Cronbach's Alpha to assess the reliability of the instrument. Cronbach's Alpha (α) was computed for each section of the questionnaire:

TABLE 3.2:

Section	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Frequency of Use	4	0.81
Sources of Information	5	0.79
Engagement with Content	4	0.85
Platform Preference	4	0.76
Content Verification	4	0.82
Overall	21	0.83

A Cronbach's Alpha value of **0.83** for the overall questionnaire indicates **good internal consistency**. Section-wise reliability scores ranged from **0.76 to 0.85**, suggesting that each section exhibits acceptable reliability. According to the commonly accepted thresholds:

$\alpha \geq 0.9$: Excellent

$0.8 \leq \alpha < 0.9$: Good

$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$: Acceptable

$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$: Questionable

$\alpha < 0.6$: Poor

Since all sections exceed 0.75, the questionnaire is considered reliable for measuring social media consumption patterns in relation to governance and democratic engagement. The reliability analysis suggests that the questionnaire is suitable for research purposes. However, slight modifications were made to enhance internal consistency.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through an online survey due to the nature of the study focusing on social media users. Google Forms or a similar platforms were used to distribute the questionnaire, which allowed for easy access and ensure respondents completed the survey at their convenience.

Participants were recruited via word of mouth and targeted advertisements on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp) to reach users residing in Edo State. The survey link was included and an informed consent forms explaining the purpose of the study, ensuring the voluntary nature of participation and confidentiality of responses.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data collected from the online survey was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. The following techniques was employed:

Descriptive Statistics – To summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, and to assess the overall trends in social media consumption patterns, good governance issues discussed, engagement with policies, criticism of the democratic process, and participation encouragement. Measures such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution were used (Field, 2020).

Reliability Analysis – Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the instrument for each dimension (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Correlation Analysis – To evaluate the relationship between social media consumption patterns and critical democratic citizenship behaviors, including governance dimensions such as transparency, fairness, and participation.

Multiple Regression Analysis – To determine the predictive power of variables such as government performance, social media engagement, and consumption patterns on critical democratic citizenship behaviors.

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) – This was used to test for statistically significant differences in critical democratic citizenship across different groups of social media users (based on platform preference, frequency of use, etc.).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed that their responses will be anonymized, and no personal identifying information will be collected. Respondents had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a detailed examination of the data collected, focusing on how sampled social media users in Edo State engage with political and governance issues. Sampled respondents were administered instruments which were subsequently retrieved in the course of field data collection. The instrument was administered on 400 respondents. However, 397 instruments were duly retrieved and deemed fit for analysis. The researcher subsequently utilized descriptive statistics for the analysis of data. The mainly likert scale response set which comprised mainly of strongly Agree, Agree, neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree response set were subsequently analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

4.1 Presentation of Data

This sub section begins with the Socio-demographic data of respondents and their responses to specific scales developed for the research.

Table 4.1 SEX

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	124	31.2	31.2	31.2
Female	273	68.8	68.8	100.0
Total	397	100.0	100.0	

Source: field Survey, 2025

The table 4.1 above reveals a notable gender disparity among the respondents, with females (273) making up a significant majority at 68.8%, while males (124) constitute only

31.2%. This uneven distribution suggests that the data predominantly reflects a female perspective.

Table 4.2 Age of Respondent

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Between 18 and 20 years	3	.8	.8	.8
Between 21 and 25 years of Age	55	13.9	13.9	14.6
Between 26 and 30 years of age	145	36.5	36.5	51.1
Between 31 and 35 years of Age	31	7.8	7.8	58.9
Between 36 and 40 years of Age	57	14.4	14.4	73.3
Between 41 and 45 years of Age	48	12.1	12.1	85.4
Between 46 and 50 years of Age	58	14.6	14.6	100.0
Total	397	100.0	100.0	

Source: field Survey, 2025

The largest group of respondents in tale 4.2 falls within the 26–30 age bracket (145, 36.5%), followed by those aged 46–50 (58, 14.6%) and 36–40 (57, 14.4%). The younger age group of 18–20 years is notably underrepresented, with only (3, 0.8%) respondents, suggesting that the sample is skewed towards more mature individuals who may have more established viewpoints on governance and political issues.

Table 4.3 Educational Qualification of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Undergraduates	18	4.5	4.5	4.5
First Degree	181	45.6	45.6	50.1
Post Graduate Degree	198	49.9	49.9	100.0
Total	397	100.0	100.0	

Source: field Survey, 2025

The majority of respondents hold a postgraduate degree (198, 49.9%), while a significant portion has a first degree or diploma (181, 45.6%). Only a small fraction (18, 4.5%) are undergraduates, indicating that the survey primarily represents a highly educated population whose responses may be shaped by their advanced academic exposure.

Table 4.4 Religion of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Christianity	319	80.4	80.4	80.4
Islam	73	18.4	18.4	98.7
ATR/Others	5	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	397	100.0	100.0	

Source: field Survey, 2025

A predominant majority of respondents identify as Christian (319, 80.4%), while Muslims account for a smaller segment (73, 18.4%). A minor proportion (5, 1.3%) adheres to African Traditional Religion or other beliefs, reflecting a religious composition that is not entirely diverse.

Table 4.5 Occupation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Student	24	6.0	6.0	6.0
Unemployed	16	4.0	4.0	10.1
Self Employed	110	27.7	27.7	37.8
Employed (Public or Private)	247	62.2	62.2	100.0
Total	397	100.0	100.0	

Source: field Survey, 2025

The majority of respondents are employed in public or private sectors (247, 62.2%), followed by self-employed individuals (110, 27.7%). Students (24, 6.0%) and unemployed persons (16, 4.0%) make up the smaller segments, suggesting that the responses primarily reflect the views of working adults with direct stakes in governance matters.

Table 4.6: Responses on the frequency of engagement with political and governance issues on social media

Frequency of Use	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision rule
I use social media daily to stay informed about political and governance issues.	397	3.6801	1.40019	Significant
I spend a significant amount of time on social media platforms discussing current events and governance."	397	3.0176	1.22976	Not Significant
I follow social media accounts that focus on political or governmental matters.	397	3.4005	1.17349	Not Significant
I regularly engage with news content shared by my social media contacts.	397	3.7834	1.38660	Significant
Frequency of Use aggregated	397	13.8816	3.06225	

Source: field Survey, 2025

The analysis of social media usage for political and governance-related engagement reveals interesting patterns in user behavior. A significant number of respondents indicated that they use social media daily to stay informed about political and governance issues (Mean = 3.68, Std. Deviation = 1.40). This suggests that social media plays an important role as a news source for political awareness. However, when it comes to actively discussing current events and governance, the responses were more neutral, with no significant trend observed (Mean = 3.02, Std. Deviation = 1.23). This implies that while people may consume political content, they are less likely to engage in conversations about it.

Similarly, following social media accounts that focus on political or governmental matters did not show a strong pattern (Mean = 3.40, Std. Deviation = 1.17), indicating that while some users do follow such accounts, it is not a widespread behavior. In contrast, engagement with news content shared by social media contacts was found to be significant

(Mean = 3.78, Std. Deviation = 1.39), suggesting that people are more likely to interact with political information when it comes from their personal networks rather than official sources.

When looking at the overall frequency of social media use for political and governance-related activities, the aggregated measure shows a moderate level of engagement (Mean = 13.88, Std. Deviation = 3.06). This reflects a general trend of social media being a key medium for political information, though the level of participation varies among individuals. In summary, the findings suggest that while social media is a crucial platform for staying informed and engaging with shared content, users are less likely to participate in discussions or follow official political accounts. The relatively high standard deviations across responses indicate diverse behaviors, highlighting that while some individuals are highly engaged, others remain passive consumers of political content.

Table 4.7: Responses on Sources of information for Governance and political issues

Sources of Information	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
I trust social media as a primary source of information about government policies"	3.9673	1.43599	Significant
I follow local news outlets on social media to get updates about government performance."	3.9748	1.19315	Significant
I rely on social media influencers to stay informed about governance issues"	3.1839	1.53048	Not Significant
I consume content from various social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp) for political discussions.	3.8917	.83838	Significant
I trust social media as a primary source of information about government policies	3.8791	1.40184	Significant
I follow local news outlets on social media to get updates about government performance.	3.8312	1.38871	Significant
I rely on social media influencers to stay informed about governance issues.	3.3325	1.58282	Not Significant
I consume content from various social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp) for political discussions.	4.2670	.93433	Significant

Source: field Survey,2025

The analysis of trust and reliance on social media for information about governance and political discussions highlights notable trends in user behavior. A significant number of respondents indicated that they trust social media as a primary source of information about government policies (Mean = 3.97, Std. Deviation = 1.44). This suggests that, for many, social media serves as a key channel for understanding government decisions and policies. Similarly, there is strong engagement with local news outlets on social media for updates about government performance (Mean = 3.97, Std. Deviation = 1.19), reinforcing the idea that digital platforms are widely used to track governance-related matters. However, when it comes to relying on social media influencers for staying informed about governance, the responses were more neutral, with no significant trend observed (Mean = 3.18, Std. Deviation = 1.53). This indicates that while influencers may play a role in shaping opinions, they are not a primary source of political information for most users. On the other hand, consuming content from various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, for political discussions was found to be significant (Mean = 3.89, Std. Deviation = 0.84), suggesting that users engage with political discourse across multiple platforms. Looking at the repeated measures, trust in social media for government-related information remained significant (Mean = 3.88, Std. Deviation = 1.40), as did following local news outlets for government updates (Mean = 3.83, Std. Deviation = 1.39). These results confirm that mainstream media sources on social media are perceived as more credible than individual influencers when it comes to governance information. Once again, reliance on social media influencers did not emerge as a significant trend (Mean = 3.33, Std. Deviation = 1.58), reinforcing the notion that people are more likely to trust institutional sources rather than individual personalities. Meanwhile, consuming political content across multiple

platforms was strongly significant (Mean = 4.27, Std. Deviation = 0.93), showing that users actively seek diverse sources of political information. These findings suggest that while social media plays a vital role in informing the public about governance, traditional news outlets on these platforms are generally more trusted than individual influencers.

Table 4.8: Responses on engagement with governance content on social media

Engagement with Content	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision Rule
I often comment on or share posts related to governance and political issues on social media.	3.4458	1.44607	Not Significant
I frequently like or react to posts discussing government policies or decisions in Edo state"	2.9572	1.23937	Not Significant
I participate in live-streamed discussions or virtual town halls organized on social media platforms."	2.4736	1.08592	Not Significant
I follow hashtags(#) related to political and governance issues in my community.	3.5466	1.34125	Significant

Source: field Survey, 2025

The analysis of engagement with governance and political issues on social media reveal varying levels of participation among respondents. While some individuals engage actively, the overall trend suggests that direct interaction; such as commenting, reacting, and participating in discussions, is not particularly strong. For instance, commenting on or sharing posts related to governance and political issues did not emerge as a significant trend (Mean = 3.45, Std. Deviation = 1.45), indicating that while some users do engage, it is not a widespread behavior. Similarly, frequently liking or reacting to posts discussing government policies or decisions in Edo State was also not significant (Mean = 2.96, Std. Deviation = 1.24), suggesting a more passive form of engagement where users consume content but do not actively express their opinions. Participation in more interactive discussions, such as live-streamed events or virtual town halls, was even lower (Mean = 2.47, Std. Deviation = 1.09),

reinforcing the idea that users prefer indirect engagement rather than actively joining real-time conversations about governance. However, following *hashtags* related to political and governance issues was found to be significant (Mean = 3.55, Std. Deviation = 1.34), indicating that while users may not always participate in discussions, they do show interest in tracking relevant conversations and updates. These findings highlight a broader trend where people use social media to stay informed about political issues but may not always translate this awareness into direct engagement, such as commenting, reacting, or participating in live discussions.

Table 4.9: Responses on Platform Preference for Governance related issues on social media

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision	Frequency Distribution
I use Facebook most frequently to discuss governance and political issues.	2.9421	1.39594	Not Significant	SD: 7.8% D: 52.6% N: 1.3% A: 14.1% SA: 24.2%
I prefer Twitter for following and engaging with political discussions.	3.1385	1.20958	Not Significant	SD: 10.3% D: 20.2% N: 30.7% A: 22.9% S A: 15.9%
I use WhatsApp groups to discuss local government matters with friends and family.	3.4610	1.28378	Not Significant	SD: 7.8% D: 18.1% N: 22.4% A: 23.4% SA: 28.2%
I use Instagram primarily for following political influencers or governance-related content.	2.1360	1.27788	Not Significant	SD: 38.5% D: 34.0% N: 15.1% S A: 12.3%

Source: field Survey, 2025

The mean score for using Facebook to discuss governance and political issues is 2.9421, indicating a relatively neutral stance. A significant majority of respondents (52.6%) disagree with using Facebook for political discussions, while only 24.2% strongly agree. This

suggests that Facebook is not the preferred platform for political engagement among the surveyed population.

Twitter has a slightly higher mean score (3.1385) compared to Facebook, indicating a marginally more positive attitude toward using Twitter for political discussions. The frequency distribution shows a more balanced response, with 30.7% of respondents being neutral and 22.9% agreeing with using Twitter for political engagement. However, 20.2% still disagree, suggesting that Twitter is not universally preferred. WhatsApp has the highest mean score (3.4610) among the platforms, indicating that it is the most preferred platform for discussing local government matters with friends and family. The frequency distribution supports this, with 28.2% of respondents strongly agreeing and 23.4% agreeing. Only 7.8% strongly disagree, suggesting that WhatsApp is a popular choice for local political discussions. Instagram has the lowest mean score (2.1360), indicating that it is the least preferred platform for following political influencers or governance-related content. A large proportion of respondents (38.5%) strongly disagree with using Instagram for this purpose, and 34.0% disagree. Only 12.3% strongly agree, highlighting Instagram's limited role in political engagement.

WhatsApp is the most preferred platform for discussing local government matters, likely due to its private and group-oriented nature, which facilitates discussions among friends and family.

Twitter is somewhat preferred for broader political engagement, but its usage is not significantly higher than Facebook. Facebook is not a significant platform for political discussions among the surveyed population, with a majority disagreeing with its use for this

purpose. Instagram is the least preferred platform for political content, with a strong majority disagreeing with its use for following political influencers or governance-related content.

Overall, the findings suggest that while social media platforms are used for political discussions, their effectiveness and preference vary significantly depending on the platform and the context of the discussion.

4.1.1 Users Platform and Engagement

The classification of Low users and High users was based on responses to specific Likert-scale questions about using social media platforms for political and governance-related discussions. Here's how the values were derived based on this approach: Participants were asked to rate their agreement with four statements, each corresponding to a different social media platform:

Facebook: "I use Facebook most frequently to discuss governance and political issues."

Twitter: "I prefer Twitter for following and engaging with political discussions."

WhatsApp: "I use WhatsApp groups to discuss local government matters with friends and family."

Instagram: "I use Instagram primarily for following political influencers or governance-related content."

To simplify the analysis, responses were grouped into two categories:

Low Users: Those who selected Strongly Disagree, Disagree, or Neutral (1, 2, or 3)

High Users: Those who selected Agree or Strongly Agree (4 or 5)

This classification assumes that individuals who are neutral or disagreeing are not actively using the platform for political discussions, whereas those who agree are engaged users. Once the responses were categorized into Low users and High users, the frequency of each category was calculated for every platform

4.1 Respondents who Prefer Facebook for Engagement on Governance

The analysis of social media usage for political discussions reveals interesting patterns across different platforms. Based on responses, users were categorized as either Low users—those who disagreed, strongly disagreed, or remained neutral about using a platform for political discussions—or High users, who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements. On Facebook, the majority of respondents were classified as Low users (245 participants, 61.7%), while a smaller but still notable group fell into the High user category (152 participants, 38.3%). This suggests that while Facebook is used for political discussions, a significant portion of users do not actively engage in such conversations.

4.2 Respondents who prefer Whatsapp for Engagement on Governance

WhatsApp, on the other hand, showed the highest number of High users (205 participants, 51.6%), surpassing Low users (192 participants, 48.4%). This indicates that political discussions are more commonly held in private group settings, where users may feel more comfortable expressing their views among familiar contacts.

4.3 Respondents who prefer Instagram for Engagement on Governance

In contrast, Instagram had the lowest number of High users (49 participants, 12.3%), with an overwhelming majority classified as Low users (348 participants, 87.7%). This suggests that Instagram is not a preferred platform for political discussions, as users likely

engage more with entertainment, lifestyle, or visual content rather than governance-related topics.

4.4 Respondents who prefer Twitter for Engagement on Governance

Twitter showed a pattern similar to Facebook, with 243 Low users (61.2%) and 154 High users (38.8%). While a majority of users do not engage in political discourse, a considerable minority actively participates in discussions, likely drawn by Twitter’s role as a platform for real-time news and political debates.

WhatsApp stands out as the most used platform for political discussions, possibly due to the privacy of group chats. Instagram is the least used for political content, reinforcing its image as a more visually driven social network with less emphasis on governance or activism. Facebook and Twitter have similar engagement patterns, where political discussions take place but do not dominate overall usage. By categorizing users in this manner, the analysis effectively highlights where political engagement on social media is most active while filtering out passive users who do not contribute to governance-related discussions.

Table 4.10 Responses on Content Verification for Governance Engagement

Content Verification	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision Rule
I verify the authenticity of news or political information I encounter on social media before sharing it."	4.1360	.86552	Significant
I am cautious about fake news or misinformation related to government policies on social media.	4.3778	.86650	Significant
I often fact-check political discussions or debates happening on social media platforms.	3.9144	1.23816	Significant
I prefer to engage with content from official or verified sources on social media when discussing governance	4.2494	1.21679	Significant

Source: field Survey,2025

The data highlights the cautious and discerning nature of social media users when it comes to political information and discussions online. Respondents showed a strong tendency to verify the authenticity of news and political content before sharing it, with a high average agreement score of 4.136. The low variability in these responses, indicated by a standard deviation of 0.86552, suggests that this behavior is consistently practiced across the group. This consistency reflects a collective awareness of the importance of validating information before dissemination. Caution regarding fake news or misinformation, especially related to government policies, was even more pronounced, scoring the highest mean of 4.3778. This implies that misinformation concerning government matters is a significant concern, prompting vigilant behavior among users. The similar standard deviation (0.86650) reaffirms that this caution is widely shared. Interestingly, while many participants agreed they often fact-check political discussions or debates on social media, with a mean score of 3.9144, the higher standard deviation of 1.23816 indicates that opinions and behaviors in this area are more varied. This suggests that, although a good number of users are proactive in validating such discussions, there is still a segment that either engages less in this practice or does so inconsistently. Moreover, a preference for engaging with content from official or verified sources was strongly evident, reflected in a mean score of 4.2494. This preference underscores the value users place on credibility and authenticity in discussions about governance, opting to trust information from recognized authorities rather than relying on unverified sources. These findings illustrate a community that is largely cautious and conscientious in its engagement with political content on social media. Users demonstrate a clear preference for verified information and exhibit an awareness of the dangers of

misinformation, though some variability in behavior remains, especially regarding active fact-checking during online discussions

Table 4.11: Responses on issues of Governance Discussed on Social Media

Good Governance Issues Discussed on Social Media	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision Rule
I regularly discuss issues related to transparency in government actions on social media.	3.2872	1.43483	Not Significant
I engage in conversations about the fairness of government policies affecting my community.	3.4610	1.21090	
I discuss the effectiveness of local government programs on social media."	3.3627	1.32361	Not Significant
I share information about government accountability and how it affects my community	3.5139	1.40451	Significant

Source: field Survey,2025

The statement "I regularly discuss issues related to transparency in government actions on social media." has a mean score of 3.2872, with a high standard deviation (1.43483). This suggests that while some individuals actively participate in such discussions, others rarely or never engage. The decision rule classifies this behavior as "Not Significant," indicating that discussions around government transparency are not a dominant activity among respondents. Similarly, "I discuss the effectiveness of local government programs on social media." has a mean of 3.3627 with a standard deviation of 1.32361 and is also categorized as "Not Significant." This suggests that conversations about local governance programs are neither highly frequent nor widely embraced by most users. The statement "I engage in conversations about the fairness of government policies affecting my community." has a slightly higher mean of 3.4610 and a relatively lower standard deviation (1.21090). Though it lacks a classification under the decision rule, the moderate mean score suggests that this topic

receives more attention than transparency and local governance effectiveness but still does not dominate discussions on social media. Among all statements, "I share information about government accountability and how it affects my community" has the highest mean (3.5139) and is classified as "Significant." This indicates that discussions on government accountability are more common and actively engaged in by respondents. The higher standard deviation (1.40451) suggests some variation in participation levels, but overall, this topic resonates more than others.

Discussions on government transparency and local programs are not significant, suggesting that these topics do not generate widespread engagement.

Fairness of government policies sees moderate engagement, but the variation in responses implies that not all individuals prioritize this topic in their discussions. Government accountability stands out as a key concern, with more people actively sharing information and engaging in discussions about how accountability impacts their communities. Overall, engagement with governance issues on social media varies widely, with some individuals highly active while others remain disengaged.

Table 4.12: Responses on engagement with governance policies on social media

Engagement with Government Policies	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
I actively seek out information about government policies that impact Edo State residents.	3.6121	1.33547	Significant
I participate in discussions about recent government policies on social media platforms."	3.3073	1.25982	Not Significant
I analyze and share my thoughts on the effectiveness of local government decisions affecting my residence area."	3.1967	1.15609	Not Significant
I engage with social media posts that evaluate the impact of government actions on our community."	3.3602	1.31952	Not Significant

Source: field Survey, 2025

The data in table 4.12 highlights an interesting pattern in how Edo State residents engage with government policies and discussions about governance. Among the behaviors measured, actively seeking information about government policies stood out as the only significant activity. With a mean score of 3.6121 and a standard deviation of 1.33547, this finding suggests that residents have a strong interest in staying informed about policies that affect them. However, this interest does not necessarily translate into deeper engagement in civic discussions or participation.

For instance, participation in social media discussions about government policies had a moderate mean score of 3.3073 but was not deemed statistically significant. This suggests that while residents may talk about policies online, these conversations do not necessarily reflect a deeper level of engagement or influence in decision-making. Similarly, analyzing and sharing thoughts on the effectiveness of local government decisions had an even lower mean score of 3.1967, indicating that fewer individuals take the initiative to critically assess or discuss government actions in depth.

Engaging with social media posts that evaluate government actions followed a similar trend, with a mean score of 3.3602 and no statistical significance. This implies that while people do interact with policy-related content online, their engagement remains passive rather than transformative. The data suggests that social media is being used as an information source rather than as a tool for mobilization or advocacy.

In summary, the findings paint a picture of an informed but largely passive populace. Edo State residents show a willingness to stay updated on government policies, but their engagement does not often extend into advocacy or meaningful participation in governance. To bridge this gap, policymakers and civic organizations may need to implement strategies

that not only inform but also inspire residents to take a more active role in shaping their communities. Digital platforms could be leveraged more effectively to drive real engagement beyond information-sharing, encouraging constructive dialogue and actionable participation.

Table 4.13: Responses on encouragement of others to participate in democratic processes

Encouragement of Participation in Democratic Processes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
I share information about upcoming elections and civic events on social media to encourage participation."	3.1392	1.38093	Not Significant
I motivate my friends and followers to engage in political discussions and activities online."	2.9320	1.27442	Not Significant
I provide resources on how to vote and participate in local governance to my social media audience."	2.3885	1.34410	Not Significant
I advocate for active citizen involvement in community decision-making through my online presence."	3.1587	1.38626	Not Significant

Source: field Survey, 2025

The data in table 4.13, presents a clear picture of limited civic engagement through social media, particularly when it comes to encouraging political participation and awareness. Across all measured activities, none were found to be statistically significant, indicating that while some individuals take steps to promote civic involvement, their efforts do not have a widespread or meaningful impact. One of the more common activities was sharing information about upcoming elections and civic events, with a mean score of 3.1392. This suggests that some residents recognize the importance of disseminating election-related information. However, the fact that this activity remains statistically insignificant points to a larger issue—many people may not see themselves as responsible for mobilizing others or may feel their efforts won’t make a difference. Similarly, motivating others to engage in political discussions online scored even lower, with a mean of 2.9320. This suggests that a

significant number of people avoid discussing politics in digital spaces, possibly due to concerns over controversy, political sensitivity, or simply a lack of interest. In many cases, political discourse on social media can be polarizing, discouraging users from participating in meaningful conversations. One of the weakest areas of engagement was providing resources on how to vote and participate in local governance, which had the lowest mean score at 2.3885. This indicates that very few individuals take the initiative to educate others about the voting process or the importance of civic participation. This could be due to a lack of awareness, difficulty accessing reliable information, or an assumption that such responsibilities belong to government institutions or civil society organizations rather than individuals.

Despite these trends, advocating for active citizen involvement in community decision-making had the highest mean score among the listed activities, at 3.1587. However, even this was not statistically significant, suggesting that while some individuals use their online presence to encourage participation, their efforts are not strong enough to drive broader civic engagement. These findings highlight a gap between awareness and action. While social media has the potential to be a powerful platform for civic engagement, it remains underutilized in Edo State. Many residents may see governance as a passive experience rather than something they can actively influence.

Table 4.14: Responses on the relationship between Government performance and Critical democratic citizenship

Relationship Between Government Performance and Critical Democratic Citizenship	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision rule
I believe that government performance influences citizens' willingness to engage in democratic processes."	4.6734	.68128	Significant
I discuss how effective governance can lead to higher levels of civic engagement among residents."	3.4987	1.15097	Significant
I analyze the relationship between government accountability and citizen participation in my social media discussions."	3.1038	1.52037	Not Significant
I think that criticism of government performance encourages greater civic involvement among residents of Edo State."	4.0632	1.08538	Significant

Source: field Survey,2025

The data in table 4.14 highlights the critical role that government performance plays in shaping citizens' engagement in democratic processes. Across the responses, there is a clear recognition that effective governance and accountability influence civic participation, though the depth of engagement varies. One of the strongest findings is the belief that government performance influences citizens' willingness to engage in democratic processes, with a mean score of 4.6734 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.68128, indicating strong agreement among respondents. This suggests that people are more likely to participate in civic activities; such as voting, policy discussions, or advocacy, when they perceive the government as performing effectively or when its actions directly impact their lives.

Similarly, there is significant agreement that criticism of government performance encourages greater civic involvement, with a mean score of 4.0632. This finding implies that when citizens express dissatisfaction with governance, it can act as a motivator for increased

participation, whether through protests, policy discussions, or electoral engagement. In other words, frustration with poor governance does not necessarily lead to apathy but can instead drive a stronger push for accountability.

There is also a notable recognition of the link between effective governance and higher levels of civic engagement, as seen in the statement with a mean score of 3.4987. This suggests that respondents understand that when the government is responsive and transparent, people are more likely to engage with democratic institutions and processes. However, the slightly lower mean compared to other significant items may indicate that while the relationship is acknowledged, it is not as universally accepted as the impact of government performance itself.

On the other hand, analyzing the relationship between government accountability and citizen participation in social media discussions was not found to be significant, with a mean of 3.1038 and a higher standard deviation of 1.52037. This suggests that while people may recognize the theoretical connection between accountability and engagement, they do not frequently engage in discussions about it, at least not in a meaningful or widespread way. This could be due to a lack of interest, limited political discourse in digital spaces, or concerns over the potential risks of discussing governance issues openly. The findings highlight that Edo State residents largely agree that government performance plays a crucial role in shaping civic engagement. However, this understanding does not always translate into consistent discussions or active participation, especially in digital spaces.

Table 4.15: Responses on Criticism of the Democratic process

Criticism of the Democratic Process	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision rule
I express my concerns about the democratic process on social media."	3.2922	1.53914	Not Significant
I critique the actions of elected officials and their impact on democracy through my social media posts."	3.0554	1.36587	Not Significant
I discuss issues related to voter representation and electoral fairness on social media."	3.3275	1.34974	Not Significant
I encourage open discussions about the shortcomings of the democratic system in our community."	3.3929	1.39868	Not Significant

Source: field Survey, 2025

The data in Table 4.15 suggests that while some Edo State residents engage with democratic issues on social media, their level of participation is not strong enough to be considered significant. Across all measured activities; expressing concerns about democracy, critiquing elected officials, discussing voter representation, and encouraging open discussions, none were found to have a significant impact. This indicates a relatively passive approach to digital political discourse, where engagement exists but does not meaningfully shape broader conversations or influence participation in democratic processes. Among the listed activities, encouraging open discussions about democratic shortcomings had the highest mean score of 3.3929, suggesting that some individuals attempt to foster dialogue about governance challenges. However, its lack of statistical significance indicates that these discussions are not widespread or impactful enough to drive collective action. Similarly, discussing issues related to voter representation and electoral fairness scored 3.3275, reflecting a moderate level of interest in election-related topics. However, the absence of significance suggests that these conversations may be sporadic or limited to certain social circles, rather than fueling larger, community-wide discussions. Expressing concerns about the democratic process on social media had a slightly lower mean of 3.2922, implying that

while some individuals raise issues about democracy, their voices may not be loud or influential enough to spark widespread engagement. One possible explanation is that people may hesitate to voice political concerns publicly due to fear of backlash, political apathy, or a perception that their opinions will not lead to change. The lowest mean score, 3.0554, was observed in critiquing the actions of elected officials and their impact on democracy. This suggests that most residents do not actively hold public officials accountable through social media discussions. This could stem from various factors, including a lack of access to detailed political information, fear of political repercussions, or a general sense of resignation regarding government responsiveness. The findings suggest that while Edo State residents recognize democratic issues, they are not leveraging social media as a powerful tool for political discourse and accountability

Table 4.16 Aggregated responses on each indicator of Critical democratic citizenship

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation	Maximum score	Median
Engagement with Government Policies	12.4232	3.94114	20	10
Good Governance Issues Discussed on Social Media	13.6247	4.65721	20	10
Encouragement of Participation in Democratic Processes	11.4142	3.75998	20	10
Relationship Between Government Performance and Critical Democratic Citizenship	15.4615	2.93289	20	10
Criticism of the Democratic Process	13.0680	4.35344	20	10
CDC_scale	66.3407	16.69742	100	50

Source: field Survey,2025

The data in table 4.16 provides insight into the extent of civic engagement and democratic participation based on a Likert-scale response format. Each indicator represents

an aggregation of responses across four related items, except for the CDC Scale, which serves as a composite measure of all indicators. Positive responses (Strongly Agree – SA, Agree – A) indicate support or agreement with the indicator, while neutral and negative responses (Neutral – N, Disagree – D, Strongly Disagree – SD) suggest either disengagement or opposition.

Engagement with Government Policies (Mean: 12.4232, SD: 3.94114, Median: 10)

This indicator measures how actively respondents seek and interact with information regarding government policies.

A mean score of 12.4232 (out of a maximum of 20) suggests moderate engagement, indicating that while some individuals actively engage with government policies, others remain passive or indifferent.

The standard deviation (3.94114) shows notable variation in responses, meaning some respondents are highly engaged, while others are disengaged.

Good Governance Issues Discussed on Social Media (Mean: 13.6247, SD: 4.65721, Median: 10)

This indicator captures the extent to which citizens use social media as a platform for discussing governance.

With a mean of 13.6247, this is one of the highest-scoring indicators, suggesting relatively active discussions on governance-related topics online.

However, the high standard deviation (4.65721) suggests polarized engagement—some individuals frequently discuss governance, while others avoid the topic.

Encouragement of Participation in Democratic Processes (Mean: 11.4142, SD: 3.75998, Median: 10)

This indicator assesses how actively individuals encourage others to participate in democratic activities such as voting or civic engagement.

A mean of 11.4142 suggests moderate engagement, with a balanced mix of individuals who encourage participation and those who do not.

The standard deviation of 3.75998 shows moderate variability in responses, indicating that democratic encouragement is not uniform across respondents.

Relationship Between Government Performance and Critical Democratic Citizenship (Mean: 15.4615, SD: 2.93289, Median: 10)

This indicator evaluates the perceived link between government performance and active democratic participation.

The mean of 15.4615 is the highest among all indicators, suggesting a strong belief that government effectiveness influences civic engagement.

The relatively low standard deviation (2.93289) indicates that responses are fairly consistent, meaning most respondents agree with this relationship.

Criticism of the Democratic Process (Mean: 13.0680, SD: 4.35344, Median: 10)

This indicator reflects the extent to which individuals express dissatisfaction or critique democratic processes.

With a mean score of 13.0680, it suggests that a significant number of respondents engage in critiquing democracy, but not overwhelmingly so.

The high standard deviation (4.35344) points to a wide range of opinions, with some respondents strongly critiquing democracy while others remain neutral or satisfied.

Overall Critical Democratic Citizenship (CDC Scale) (Mean: 66.3407, SD: 16.69742, Median: 50, Max Score: 100)

This is the aggregate measure of all indicators, representing overall civic engagement and democratic participation. The mean score of 66.3407 suggests a generally positive level of civic engagement, but not overwhelmingly strong. High standard deviation (16.69742)

indicates significant variability in how engaged individuals are, with some demonstrating strong democratic citizenship and others showing low participation.

The median of 50 suggests that while some respondents are highly engaged, a large proportion remain neutral or disengaged.

4.1.2 Regression analysis on the relationship between Socio demographic factors and frequency of Engagement with Governance on Social media

Table 4.17.1 Variables Entered/Removed^b

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Religion, SEX, Age of Respondent , Educational Qualification of Respondents ^a		Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: FREQENG

Table 4.17.2 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.404 ^a	.163	.154	.36934

a. Predictors: (Constant), Religion, SEX, Age of Respondent , Educational Qualification of Respondents

Table 4.17.3 ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.405	4	2.601	19.070	.000 ^a
	Residual	53.474	392	.136		
	Total	63.879	396			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Religion, SEX, Age of Respondent , Educational Qualification of Respondents

b. Dependent Variable: FREQENG

Table 4.17.4 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	3.226	.309		10.425	.000
	SEX	-.422	.049	-.487	-8.615	.000
	Age of Respondent	.050	.017	.213	2.937	.004
	Educational Qualification of Respondents	-.294	.056	-.426	-5.209	.000
	Religion	.024	.043	.026	.570	.569

a. Dependent Variable: FREQENG

The regression analysis explores the relationship between demographic factors—sex, age, educational qualification, and religion—and engagement with political issues on social media (FREQENG). The results provide key insights into how different groups interact with political discussions online and highlight important trends in digital civic participation.

Overall Model Performance

The model shows a moderate relationship between the demographic variables and engagement with political issues on social media, with an R-value of 0.404. However, the R²

value of 0.163 suggests that only 16.3% of the variation in engagement can be explained by these factors, meaning that other unexamined influences play a more significant role. Despite this, the model is statistically significant ($F(4,392) = 19.07, p < 0.001$), indicating that at least one of the predictors has a meaningful impact on online political engagement.

Key Findings from the Regression Analysis

1. Gender Differences in Political Engagement Online

The findings reveal a significant gender disparity in political engagement on social media. With a negative coefficient ($B = -0.422, p < 0.001$), the results indicate that women engage less frequently than men in online political discussions. Since the gender variable is coded as male = 1 and female = 2, the negative relationship suggests that men are more active participants in digital political discourse, while women are comparatively less engaged.

This gap may be attributed to sociocultural norms, digital harassment, or a general lack of encouragement for women to participate in political discussions online. Addressing this disparity requires inclusive digital spaces, online safety measures, and initiatives that encourage women's political participation through digital literacy programs and awareness campaigns.

2. Older Individuals Are More Politically Engaged Online

The regression results indicate a positive relationship between age and engagement ($B = 0.050, p = 0.004$), meaning that older individuals participate more frequently in political discussions on social media than younger ones. This could be due to a greater sense of

political responsibility, accumulated experience, or interest in governance matters among older respondents.

In contrast, younger individuals may feel disconnected from political discourse, skeptical of its impact, or more engaged in entertainment and lifestyle content on social media. To increase youth participation, efforts should focus on creating engaging, relatable political content on digital platforms, integrating political education into youth-oriented spaces, and leveraging influencers to promote political awareness.

3. Higher Education Does Not Translate to Greater Engagement

Surprisingly, the analysis reveals a negative relationship between educational qualification and engagement ($B = -0.294$, $p < 0.001$). Given that higher qualifications are assigned greater values, this finding suggests that individuals with higher levels of education engage less frequently in political discussions on social media than those with lower education levels.

This contradicts the expectation that higher education fosters greater civic awareness and participation. A possible explanation is that highly educated individuals may feel disillusioned with the political system, skeptical of online political discourse, or too occupied with professional and personal responsibilities to engage actively.

To address this, there is a need for targeted efforts to re-engage educated individuals through well-researched, data-driven political content, professional forums, and thought-provoking discussions that cater to their analytical approach to political issues.

4. Religion Does Not Significantly Influence Online Political Engagement

Unlike the other variables, religion does not have a statistically significant effect on engagement with political issues on social media ($B = 0.024$, $p = 0.569$). This suggests that whether an individual identifies as Christian or Muslim does not meaningfully determine their likelihood of participating in political discussions online.

This finding indicates that political engagement in digital spaces is driven more by factors such as age, gender, and education rather than religious affiliation. It also suggests that, despite the role religion plays in shaping societal values, it does not serve as a primary motivator for individuals to discuss political matters online.

Table 4.18 Correlations between Frequency of engagement and Critical democratic citizenship

		FREQENG CDC_scale	
FREQENG	Pearson Correlation	1	.461**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	397	364
CDC_scale	Pearson Correlation	.461**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	364	364

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

The correlation analysis explores the relationship between engagement with political issues on social media (FREQENG) and critical democratic citizenship (CDC_scale). The results reveal a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.461$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that individuals who frequently engage in political discussions online are more likely to exhibit behaviors associated with critical democratic citizenship, such as discussing governance issues, critiquing government actions, and participating in democratic processes.

Since the p-value (0.000) is well below the 0.01 threshold, the correlation is statistically significant, meaning this relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. With a sample size of 397 participants for FREQENG and 364 for CDC_scale, the findings are robust, although minor discrepancies in the number of responses indicate that some participants may not have answered all items. The results highlight the influential role of social media in shaping political awareness and civic participation. Individuals who actively discuss political issues online tend to have stronger democratic attitudes, supporting the idea that digital platforms serve as important spaces for political engagement. The findings confirm that greater engagement with political issues on social media is associated with stronger democratic attitudes. Social media serves as a powerful platform for political discourse, making it a valuable tool for promoting civic awareness and participation. Moving forward, efforts should focus on ensuring that political engagement in digital spaces remains constructive, inclusive, and conducive to democratic growth.

Regression analysis on the relationship between platform of preference and Critical democratic citizenship

Table 4.19.1 Variables Entered/Removed^b

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	TWITTER_US ER, INSTAGRAM, WHATSP_US ER, FACEBOOK_ USER ^a		Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

b. Dependent Variable: CDC_scale

Table 4.19.2 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.840 ^a	.706	.703	9.09876

a. Predictors: (Constant), TWITTER_USER, INSTAGRAM, WHATSP_USER, FACEBOOK_USER

Table 4.19.3 ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	71485.049	4	17871.262	215.869	.000 ^a
	Residual	29720.709	359	82.787		
	Total	101205.758	363			

a. Predictors: (Constant), TWITTER_USER, INSTAGRAM, WHATSP_USER, FACEBOOK_USER

b. Dependent Variable: CDC_scale

Table 4.19.4 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	1.104	2.695		.410	.682
	FACEBOOK_USER	1.585	1.507	.047	1.052	.294
	WHATSP_USER	19.106	1.408	.573	13.566	.000
	INSTAGRAM	10.366	1.428	.212	7.258	.000
	TWITTER_USER	16.175	1.149	.471	14.071	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CDC_scale

The regression analysis examines the relationship between social media platform usage and critical democratic citizenship (CDC_scale). The independent variables in the model include Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter usage, while the dependent variable is CDC_scale, representing the level of engagement in democratic discourse and civic participation. The regression model demonstrates a strong relationship between social

media usage and democratic citizenship, with an R value of 0.840, indicating a high level of correlation. The R-squared value of 0.706 suggests that approximately 70.6% of the variation in CDC_scale can be explained by the combined influence of Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook usage. This implies that social media engagement plays a substantial role in shaping individuals' democratic attitudes and behaviors.

The ANOVA results reinforce the strength of the model, with a highly significant F-statistic of 215.869 ($p < 0.001$). This confirms that the regression model as a whole is statistically significant and effectively explains variations in critical democratic citizenship based on social media usage. The coefficients table provides deeper insights into how each platform influences democratic engagement: WhatsApp Usage ($B = 19.106$, $p < 0.001$): WhatsApp has the strongest positive impact on CDC_scale, suggesting that individuals who frequently engage in discussions on WhatsApp are more likely to participate in democratic discourse and civic activities. This may be due to the platform's use for group discussions, political mobilization, and information sharing. Twitter Usage ($B = 16.175$, $p < 0.001$): Twitter is also a strong predictor of democratic engagement, reinforcing its role as a platform for political debates, activism, and real-time discussions on governance. Instagram Usage ($B = 10.366$, $p < 0.001$): Instagram shows a moderate but significant positive impact, indicating that political engagement through visual storytelling, posts, and discussions on Instagram contributes to democratic participation. Facebook Usage ($B = 1.585$, $p = 0.294$): Interestingly, Facebook usage does not have a statistically significant impact on CDC_scale. This may suggest that, while Facebook is widely used, it is not necessarily the primary platform for engaging in critical democratic discussions compared to the other platforms. The findings confirm that social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram,

play a significant role in fostering democratic engagement. These platforms serve as key spaces for political discussions, activism, and civic awareness. The strong influence of WhatsApp suggests that private and semi-private digital spaces (such as group chats and broadcast messages) are highly effective in political mobilization and discourse. This highlights the importance of fact-checking and countering misinformation in closed digital environments. While Twitter and WhatsApp are powerful drivers of democratic participation, Facebook's lack of significance suggests a shift in how people engage politically online. This could indicate declining political engagement on Facebook or that political discourse on the platform is more passive compared to other media. The regression analysis underscores the important role of social media in shaping democratic engagement, with WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram significantly contributing to critical democratic citizenship. These findings highlight the need for digital literacy initiatives, fact-checking efforts, and responsible online engagement strategies to ensure that political discussions on social media contribute positively to democratic development.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the Social Media Users' Engagement with Government Policies in Edo State?

The study reveals that social media users in Edo State exhibit moderate engagement with government policies. While many users actively seek information about government policies (Mean = 3.6121), their engagement does not extend to deeper participation, such as analyzing or discussing policies in detail. Participation in discussions about recent government policies had a mean score of 3.3073, which was not statistically significant. This suggests that while residents are informed, their engagement remains largely passive, with limited active participation in policy discussions. The findings also indicate that users are

more likely to consume political content shared by their social media contacts (Mean = 3.78) rather than actively engaging in discussions or following official political accounts.

The study reveals a negative relationship between educational qualification and engagement with government policies on social media ($B = -0.294$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that individuals with higher levels of education engage less frequently in political discussions on social media compared to those with lower education levels. The null hypothesis is rejected.

This finding contradicts the expectation that higher education fosters greater civic awareness and participation. Instead, it indicates that highly educated individuals may feel disillusioned with the political system, skeptical of online political discourse, or too occupied with professional and personal responsibilities to engage actively. The hypothesis directly addresses the level of engagement with government policies, which is the focus of Research Question 1. The findings suggest that while social media serves as a platform for political awareness, the level of engagement varies significantly by educational level. Highly educated individuals, despite their potential for critical analysis, are less likely to engage in political discussions on social media. This raises questions about the role of education in fostering civic engagement and whether higher education leads to political apathy or skepticism in certain contexts. This passive consumption of political content reflects a trend where users rely on their personal networks for political information rather than institutional sources. Uses and Gratification Theory posits that individuals use media to fulfill specific needs, such as information-seeking, entertainment, or social interaction. The findings align with this theory, as users primarily use social media to stay informed about government policies rather than to engage in active discussions or debates. The passive consumption of political content

suggests that users are more interested in fulfilling their need for information rather than engaging in political discourse. This aligns with the idea that social media serves as a tool for information dissemination rather than a platform for active political participation. The theory also explains why users prefer to consume content from their personal networks, as it fulfills their need for social interaction and trust in information sources. Theory of Deliberative Democracy emphasizes the importance of public deliberation in democratic processes, where citizens engage in reasoned discussions to influence policy-making. The findings suggest that while social media provides a platform for information dissemination, it does not significantly foster deliberative engagement. Users remain passive consumers of information rather than active participants in policy discussions. This lack of active deliberation on social media reflects a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. The theory highlights the need for platforms that encourage critical discourse and active participation, which is currently lacking in Edo State. Networked Governance Theory highlights the role of digital platforms in facilitating interactions between citizens and governments, enabling collaborative governance and citizen participation in policy-making. The findings indicate that social media serves as a channel for information dissemination but does not significantly enhance collaborative governance or citizen participation in policy-making. While users consume political content, they do not actively engage in discussions or provide feedback to government officials. This suggests that social media is not effectively bridging the gap between citizens and governments in Edo State, as it is primarily used for one-way communication rather than interactive governance. Critical Theory critiques the power structures that limit citizen participation and emphasizes the need for empowering

marginalized voices in democratic processes. The findings reflect a lack of critical engagement, as users do not actively challenge or critique government policies. This suggests that social media may not be effectively empowering citizens to influence governance or hold officials accountable. The passive consumption of political content indicates that users are not leveraging social media as a tool for political activism or advocacy, which aligns with the critical theory's critique of power structures that limit citizen participation.

De-Rosario et al. (2016) found that Facebook was more effective than Twitter in fostering citizen engagement with local governments, which aligns with the study's finding that WhatsApp is the most preferred platform for discussing local government matters in Edo State. Both studies highlight the importance of platform structure in shaping engagement. However, the study shows that engagement in Edo State is largely passive, contrasting with De-Rosario et al. (2016), where higher levels of engagement were observed when governments responded directly to citizens. This suggests that the level of engagement may depend on the responsiveness of government officials and the structure of the platform. Driss et al. (2019) support the idea that social media can be used to gather citizen feedback on government policies, which is reflected in the study's finding that residents actively seek information about government policies. However, the study shows that engagement in Edo State is largely passive, with limited active participation in policy discussions. This contrasts with Driss et al. (2019), where social media was used as a tool for collaborative governance and citizen feedback. The findings suggest that while social media has the potential to enhance citizen participation, its effectiveness depends on how it is utilized by both citizens and governments. Theocharis et al. (2023) found that social media facilitates new forms of political participation that do not align with traditional modes, such as changing profile

pictures for political reasons. This aligns with the study's finding that some users discuss government accountability, though the overall level of engagement is not significant. Theocharis et al. (2023) highlight the role of social media in enabling unconventional forms of political participation, which may not always translate into active engagement in policy discussions. This suggests that while social media provides new opportunities for political participation, its impact on traditional forms of engagement, such as policy discussions, may be limited. The findings reveal a paradox in the use of social media for political engagement in Edo State. While social media serves as a key platform for information dissemination, it does not significantly foster active participation in policy discussions. This passive consumption of political content reflects a broader trend where users rely on their personal networks for political information rather than institutional sources. This trend aligns with the Uses and Gratification Theory, which suggests that individuals use media to fulfill specific needs, such as information-seeking and social interaction. However, the lack of active engagement in policy discussions highlights a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. The Theory of Deliberative Democracy emphasizes the importance of public deliberation in democratic processes, where citizens engage in reasoned discussions to influence policy-making. The findings suggest that social media does not significantly foster deliberative engagement, as users remain passive consumers of information rather than active participants in policy discussions. This lack of active deliberation on social media reflects a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. The findings also highlight the need for platforms that encourage critical discourse and active participation, which is currently lacking in Edo

State. The Networked Governance Theory highlights the role of digital platforms in facilitating interactions between citizens and governments, enabling collaborative governance and citizen participation in policy-making. The findings indicate that social media serves as a channel for information dissemination but does not significantly enhance collaborative governance or citizen participation in policy-making. While users consume political content, they do not actively engage in discussions or provide feedback to government officials. This suggests that social media is not effectively bridging the gap between citizens and governments in Edo State, as it is primarily used for one-way communication rather than interactive governance. The Critical Theory critiques the power structures that limit citizen participation and emphasizes the need for empowering marginalized voices in democratic processes. The findings reflect a lack of critical engagement, as users do not actively challenge or critique government policies. This suggests that social media may not be effectively empowering citizens to influence governance or hold officials accountable. The passive consumption of political content indicates that users are not leveraging social media as a tool for political activism or advocacy, which aligns with the critical theory's critique of power structures that limit citizen participation. The findings suggest that while social media serves as a key platform for political awareness in Edo State, the level of active engagement, criticism, and critical reflection remains limited. The findings highlight the need for strategies to encourage more meaningful participation in governance discussions on social media. Policymakers and civic organizations should focus on creating engaging, relatable political content on digital platforms, integrating political education into youth-oriented spaces, and leveraging influencers to promote political awareness. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that political engagement in digital spaces

remains constructive, inclusive, and conducive to democratic growth. By addressing these gaps, social media can be effectively leveraged to enhance citizen participation and foster a more engaged and informed citizenry in Edo State.

Research Question 2: What is the level of social media users' criticism of the democratic process?

The level of criticism of the democratic process on social media is relatively low. The mean scores for activities such as expressing concerns about the democratic process (Mean = 3.2922) and critiquing elected officials (Mean = 3.0554) were not statistically significant. This indicates that while some individuals critique democratic processes, the overall level of criticism is not substantial. Most residents do not actively use social media to hold elected officials accountable or to challenge the shortcomings of the democratic system. The findings also reveal that users are more likely to follow hashtags related to political and governance issues (Mean = 3.55) rather than actively participating in discussions or critiquing government actions. This suggests that while users are interested in tracking political conversations, they are less likely to engage in direct criticism or advocacy.

The hypothesis tested showed that the level of criticism of the democratic process on social media is relatively low. Activities such as expressing concerns about the democratic process (Mean = 3.2922) and critiquing elected officials (Mean = 3.0554) were not statistically significant. This indicates that while some individuals critique democratic processes, the overall level of criticism is not substantial. Most residents do not actively use social media to hold elected officials accountable or to challenge the shortcomings of the democratic system. The hypothesis directly addresses the level of criticism of the democratic process, which is the focus of Research Question 2. The findings suggest that social media users in Edo State are largely passive when it comes to critiquing the democratic process.

This raises questions about the role of social media in fostering accountability and whether users feel empowered to challenge the status quo. The Null hypothesis is accepted

Uses and Gratification Theory suggests that individuals use media to fulfill needs such as self-expression and social interaction. The findings indicate that while some users may use social media to express concerns, the overall level of criticism is low, suggesting that social media is not widely used for this purpose. The theory explains why users may prefer to consume political content rather than engage in criticism, as it fulfills their need for information and social interaction without the risks associated with political expression. Theory of Deliberative Democracy emphasizes the importance of critical discourse in democratic processes. The findings suggest that social media does not significantly foster critical discourse, as users do not actively critique the democratic process or hold officials accountable. This lack of critical discourse reflects a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. Networked Governance Theory highlights the potential of digital platforms to enhance transparency and accountability. The findings indicate that social media is not effectively used to critique governance, suggesting a gap in leveraging digital platforms for accountability. While social media has the potential to enhance transparency and accountability, its effectiveness depends on how it is utilized by both citizens and governments. Critical Theory critiques the power structures that limit citizen participation. The findings reflect a lack of critical engagement, as users do not actively challenge or critique the democratic process, suggesting that social media may not be effectively empowering citizens to influence governance. The passive consumption of political content indicates that users are not leveraging social media as a tool for political activism or

advocacy, which aligns with the critical theory's critique of power structures that limit citizen participation.

Garimella et al. (2018) highlight how social media can foster criticism of the democratic process through echo chambers and gatekeeping. The study's findings align with this, showing that while some users critique the democratic process, the overall level of criticism is not substantial. Garimella et al. (2018) note that social media discourages bipartisanship and fosters echo chambers, leading to limited criticism of the democratic process. This aligns with the study's findings, which suggest that most residents do not actively use social media to hold elected officials accountable. Dubois & Gaffney (2014) emphasize the role of opinion leaders in shaping political discourse. The study's findings suggest that most residents do not actively use social media to hold elected officials accountable, which contrasts with Dubois & Gaffney (2014), where opinion leaders played a key role in shaping political discourse. The findings suggest that while some users may critique the democratic process, their voices are not loud or influential enough to spark widespread engagement. Babaleye et al. (2020) found that social media helps bridge the gap between government and the people by providing a platform for direct interaction. The study's findings contrast with this, as most residents do not actively use social media to hold elected officials accountable. This suggests that while social media has the potential to enhance accountability, its effectiveness depends on how it is utilized by both citizens and governments. The findings reveal a paradox in the use of social media for political engagement in Edo State. While social media serves as a key platform for information dissemination, it does not significantly foster active participation in policy discussions. This passive consumption of political content reflects a broader trend where users rely on their

personal networks for political information rather than institutional sources. This trend aligns with the Uses and Gratification Theory, which suggests that individuals use media to fulfill specific needs, such as information-seeking and social interaction. However, the lack of active engagement in policy discussions highlights a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. The Theory of Deliberative Democracy emphasizes the importance of public deliberation in democratic processes, where citizens engage in reasoned discussions to influence policy-making. The findings suggest that social media does not significantly foster deliberative engagement, as users remain passive consumers of information rather than active participants in policy discussions. This lack of active deliberation on social media reflects a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. The findings also highlight the need for platforms that encourage critical discourse and active participation, which is currently lacking in Edo State. The Networked Governance Theory highlights the role of digital platforms in facilitating interactions between citizens and governments, enabling collaborative governance and citizen participation in policy-making. The findings indicate that social media serves as a channel for information dissemination but does not significantly enhance collaborative governance or citizen participation in policy-making. While users consume political content, they do not actively engage in discussions or provide feedback to government officials. This suggests that social media is not effectively bridging the gap between citizens and governments in Edo State, as it is primarily used for one-way communication rather than interactive governance. The Critical Theory critiques the power structures that limit citizen participation and emphasizes the need for empowering

marginalized voices in democratic processes. The findings reflect a lack of critical engagement, as users do not actively challenge or critique government policies. This suggests that social media may not be effectively empowering citizens to influence governance or hold officials accountable. The passive consumption of political content indicates that users are not leveraging social media as a tool for political activism or advocacy, which aligns with the critical theory's critique of power structures that limit citizen participation. The findings suggest that while social media serves as a key platform for political awareness in Edo State, the level of active engagement, criticism, and critical reflection remains limited. The findings highlight the need for strategies to encourage more meaningful participation in governance discussions on social media. Policymakers and civic organizations should focus on creating engaging, relatable political content on digital platforms, integrating political education into youth-oriented spaces, and leveraging influencers to promote political awareness. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that political engagement in digital spaces remains constructive, inclusive, and conducive to democratic growth. By addressing these gaps, social media can be effectively leveraged to enhance citizen participation and foster a more engaged and informed citizenry in Edo State.

Research Question 3: To what Extent do Residents Engage in Citizens' Critical Reflection on the Political and Economic Systems in Place on Social Media?

Residents engage in critical reflection on political and economic systems to a limited extent. While some individuals discuss issues like government accountability (Mean = 3.5139) and the fairness of government policies (Mean = 3.4610), these discussions are not widespread. Topics such as governance effectiveness and economic inequality do not generate significant engagement. Overall, critical reflection on political and economic systems is not a dominant activity among social media users in Edo State. The findings also

reveal that users are more likely to engage with content from official or verified sources (Mean = 4.2494) rather than engaging in critical discussions about governance. This suggests that while users value credible information, they are less likely to critically analyze or challenge the political and economic systems.

The study finds that critical reflection on political and economic systems is not a dominant activity among social media users in Edo State. While some individuals discuss issues like government accountability (Mean = 3.5139) and the fairness of government policies (Mean = 3.4610), these discussions are not widespread. Topics such as governance effectiveness and economic inequality do not generate significant engagement. This suggests that residents are not extensively using social media for critical reflection on political and economic systems. The hypothesis directly addresses the extent of critical reflection on political and economic systems, which is the focus of Research Question 3. The findings suggest that while some users engage in critical reflection, the overall level of engagement is low. This raises questions about the role of social media in fostering critical thinking and whether users feel empowered to challenge the political and economic systems.

Uses and Gratification theory suggests that individuals use media to fulfill needs such as information-seeking and self-expression. The findings indicate that while some users engage in critical reflection, the overall level of engagement is low, suggesting that social media is not widely used for this purpose. The theory explains why users may prefer to consume political content from trusted sources rather than engaging in critical discussions, as it fulfills their need for reliable information without the risks associated with political expression. Theory of Deliberative Democracy emphasizes the importance of critical discourse in democratic processes, where citizens engage in reasoned discussions to

influence policy-making. The findings suggest that social media does not significantly foster critical reflection, as users do not actively engage in discussions about governance effectiveness or economic inequality. This lack of critical discourse reflects a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. Networked Governance Theory highlights the potential of digital platforms to enhance transparency and accountability. The findings indicate that social media is not effectively used for critical reflection, suggesting a gap in leveraging digital platforms for accountability. While social media has the potential to enhance transparency and accountability, its effectiveness depends on how it is utilized by both citizens and governments. Critical Theory critiques the power structures that limit citizen participation and emphasizes the need for empowering marginalized voices in democratic processes. The findings reflect a lack of critical engagement, as users do not actively challenge or critique the political and economic systems, suggesting that social media may not be effectively empowering citizens to influence governance. The passive consumption of political content indicates that users are not leveraging social media as a tool for political activism or advocacy, which aligns with the critical theory's critique of power structures that limit citizen participation. Theocharis et al. (2023) found that social media facilitates new forms of political participation that do not align with traditional modes, such as changing profile pictures for political reasons. This aligns with the study's finding that some users discuss government accountability, though the overall level of engagement is not significant. Theocharis et al. (2023) highlight the role of social media in enabling unconventional forms of political participation, which may not always translate into active engagement in policy discussions. This suggests that while social media provides new

opportunities for political participation, its impact on traditional forms of engagement, such as critical reflection, may be limited. Lane et al. (2017) support the idea that social media can foster critical reflection, as their study found that online political disagreement can lead to increased political information sharing and offline participation. The study shows that critical reflection on political and economic systems is not a dominant activity among social media users in Edo State, contrasting with Lane et al. (2017), where higher levels of engagement were observed. This suggests that while social media has the potential to foster critical reflection, its effectiveness depends on the context and the level of political awareness among users. Driss et al. (2019) found that social media can be used to gather citizen feedback on government policies, which is reflected in the study's finding that residents actively seek information about government policies. However, the study shows that engagement in Edo State is largely passive, with limited active participation in policy discussions. This contrasts with Driss et al. (2019), where social media was used as a tool for collaborative governance and citizen feedback. The findings suggest that while social media has the potential to enhance citizen participation, its effectiveness depends on how it is utilized by both citizens and governments. The findings reveal a paradox in the use of social media for political engagement in Edo State. While social media serves as a key platform for information dissemination, it does not significantly foster active participation in policy discussions. This passive consumption of political content reflects a broader trend where users rely on their personal networks for political information rather than institutional sources. This trend aligns with the Uses and Gratification Theory, which suggests that individuals use media to fulfill specific needs, such as information-seeking and social interaction. However, the lack of active engagement in policy discussions highlights a gap in the democratic process, as

citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. The Theory of Deliberative Democracy emphasizes the importance of public deliberation in democratic processes, where citizens engage in reasoned discussions to influence policy-making. The findings suggest that social media does not significantly foster deliberative engagement, as users remain passive consumers of information rather than active participants in policy discussions. This lack of active deliberation on social media reflects a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. The findings also highlight the need for platforms that encourage critical discourse and active participation, which is currently lacking in Edo State. The Networked Governance Theory highlights the role of digital platforms in facilitating interactions between citizens and governments, enabling collaborative governance and citizen participation in policy-making. The findings indicate that social media serves as a channel for information dissemination but does not significantly enhance collaborative governance or citizen participation in policy-making. While users consume political content, they do not actively engage in discussions or provide feedback to government officials. This suggests that social media is not effectively bridging the gap between citizens and governments in Edo State, as it is primarily used for one-way communication rather than interactive governance. The Critical Theory critiques the power structures that limit citizen participation and emphasizes the need for empowering marginalized voices in democratic processes. The findings reflect a lack of critical engagement, as users do not actively challenge or critique government policies. This suggests that social media may not be effectively empowering citizens to influence governance or hold officials accountable. The passive consumption of political content indicates that users

are not leveraging social media as a tool for political activism or advocacy, which aligns with the critical theory's critique of power structures that limit citizen participation. The findings suggest that while social media serves as a key platform for political awareness in Edo State, the level of active engagement, criticism, and critical reflection remains limited. The findings highlight the need for strategies to encourage more meaningful participation in governance discussions on social media. Policymakers and civic organizations should focus on creating engaging, relatable political content on digital platforms, integrating political education into youth-oriented spaces, and leveraging influencers to promote political awareness. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that political engagement in digital spaces remains constructive, inclusive, and conducive to democratic growth. By addressing these gaps, social media can be effectively leveraged to enhance citizen participation and foster a more engaged and informed citizenry in Edo State.

Research Question 4: How do Citizens use Social Media to call for Social Justice?

Discussions on government accountability and fairness of policies are more common than other governance-related topics. This suggests that some users may use social media to raise awareness about social justice issues, but the level of engagement is not strong enough to be considered significant. The findings imply that while social media can be a tool for advocating social justice, it is not extensively used for this purpose in Edo State. The study also reveals that users are more likely to engage with content from official or verified sources (Mean = 4.2494) rather than engaging in critical discussions about governance. This suggests that while users value credible information, they are less likely to critically analyze or challenge the political and economic systems. Uses and Gratification Theory suggests that individuals use media to fulfill needs such as advocacy and social change. The findings

imply that while social media can be a tool for advocating social justice, it is not extensively used for this purpose in Edo State. The theory explains why users may prefer to consume political content from trusted sources rather than engaging in critical discussions, as it fulfills their need for reliable information without the risks associated with political expression. Theory of Deliberative Democracy emphasizes the importance of public deliberation in democratic processes. The findings suggest that social media does not significantly foster advocacy for social justice, as users do not actively engage in discussions about social justice issues. This lack of critical discourse reflects a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. Networked Governance Theory highlights the potential of digital platforms to enhance transparency and accountability. The findings indicate that social media is not effectively used for advocacy, suggesting a gap in leveraging digital platforms for social justice. While social media has the potential to enhance transparency and accountability, its effectiveness depends on how it is utilized by both citizens and governments. Critical Theory critiques the power structures that limit citizen participation and emphasizes the need for empowering marginalized voices in democratic processes. The findings reflect a lack of critical engagement, as users do not actively challenge or advocate for social justice, suggesting that social media may not be effectively empowering citizens to influence governance. The passive consumption of political content indicates that users are not leveraging social media as a tool for political activism or advocacy, which aligns with the critical theory's critique of power structures that limit citizen participation.

Carney (2016) highlights how social media can be used to mobilize protests and raise awareness about social justice issues, as seen in the Black Lives Matter movement. The

study's findings suggest that some users discuss government accountability and fairness of policies, which aligns with the idea that social media can be used to advocate for social justice. However, the level of engagement is not strong enough to be considered significant, suggesting that social media is not extensively used for this purpose in Edo State.

Ajisafe et al. (2021) analyze the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria, showing how social media can facilitate resource mobilization, international solidarity, and pressure on governments. The study implies that while social media can be a tool for advocating social justice, it is not extensively used for this purpose in Edo State. The findings suggest that while social media has the potential to enhance citizen participation, its effectiveness depends on how it is utilized by both citizens and governments. Theocharis et al. (2023) found that social media facilitates new forms of political participation that do not align with traditional modes, such as changing profile pictures for political reasons. This aligns with the study's finding that some users discuss government accountability, though the overall level of engagement is not significant. Theocharis et al. (2023) highlight the role of social media in enabling unconventional forms of political participation, which may not always translate into active engagement in policy discussions. This suggests that while social media provides new opportunities for political participation, its impact on traditional forms of engagement, such as advocacy for social justice, may be limited. The findings reveal a paradox in the use of social media for political engagement in Edo State. While social media serves as a key platform for information dissemination, it does not significantly foster active participation in policy discussions. This passive consumption of political content reflects a broader trend where users rely on their personal networks for political information rather than institutional sources. This trend aligns with the Uses and Gratification Theory, which suggests that

individuals use media to fulfill specific needs, such as information-seeking and social interaction. However, the lack of active engagement in policy discussions highlights a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance.

The Theory of Deliberative Democracy emphasizes the importance of public deliberation in democratic processes, where citizens engage in reasoned discussions to influence policy-making. The findings suggest that social media does not significantly foster deliberative engagement, as users remain passive consumers of information rather than active participants in policy discussions. This lack of active deliberation on social media reflects a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. The findings also highlight the need for platforms that encourage critical discourse and active participation, which is currently lacking in Edo State. The Networked Governance Theory highlights the role of digital platforms in facilitating interactions between citizens and governments, enabling collaborative governance and citizen participation in policy-making. The findings indicate that social media serves as a channel for information dissemination but does not significantly enhance collaborative governance or citizen participation in policy-making. While users consume political content, they do not actively engage in discussions or provide feedback to government officials. This suggests that social media is not effectively bridging the gap between citizens and governments in Edo State, as it is primarily used for one-way communication rather than interactive governance. The Critical Theory critiques the power structures that limit citizen participation and emphasizes the need for empowering marginalized voices in democratic processes. The findings reflect a lack of critical

engagement, as users do not actively challenge or critique government policies. This suggests that social media may not be effectively empowering citizens to influence governance or hold officials accountable. The passive consumption of political content indicates that users are not leveraging social media as a tool for political activism or advocacy, which aligns with the critical theory's critique of power structures that limit citizen participation. The findings suggest that while social media serves as a key platform for political awareness in Edo State, the level of active engagement, criticism, and critical reflection remains limited. The findings highlight the need for strategies to encourage more meaningful participation in governance discussions on social media. Policymakers and civic organizations should focus on creating engaging, relatable political content on digital platforms, integrating political education into youth-oriented spaces, and leveraging influencers to promote political awareness. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that political engagement in digital spaces remains constructive, inclusive, and conducive to democratic growth. By addressing these gaps, social media can be effectively leveraged to enhance citizen participation and foster a more engaged and informed citizenry in Edo State.

Research Question 5: What is the Relationship between Government Performance and Critical Democratic Citizenship?

There is a strong relationship between government performance and critical democratic citizenship. Respondents believe that government performance significantly influences citizens' willingness to engage in democratic processes (Mean = 4.6734). Additionally, criticism of government performance encourages greater civic involvement (Mean = 4.0632). This suggests that when citizens perceive the government as effective and accountable, they are more likely to participate in democratic activities. However, this understanding does not always translate into active participation, especially in digital spaces.

The findings also reveal that users are more likely to engage with content from official or verified sources (Mean = 4.2494) rather than engaging in critical discussions about governance. This suggests that while users value credible information, they are less likely to critically analyze or challenge the political and economic systems.

Uses and Gratification Theory theory suggests that individuals use media to fulfill needs such as information-seeking and self-expression. The findings indicate that when citizens perceive the government as effective, they are more likely to engage in democratic activities, aligning with the idea that media use is driven by perceived benefits. The theory explains why users may prefer to consume political content from trusted sources rather than engaging in critical discussions, as it fulfills their need for reliable information without the risks associated with political expression. Theory of Deliberative Democracy emphasizes the importance of public deliberation in democratic processes. The findings suggest that effective governance encourages civic participation, but this does not always translate into active deliberation on social media. This lack of active deliberation on social media reflects a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. Networked Governance Theory highlights the role of digital platforms in facilitating interactions between citizens and governments. The findings indicate that when citizens perceive the government as effective, they are more likely to engage in democratic activities, but this engagement is not always active or transformative. This suggests that social media is not effectively bridging the gap between citizens and governments in Edo State, as it is primarily used for one-way communication rather than interactive governance. Critical Theory critiques the power structures that limit citizen participation and emphasizes the need for empowering marginalized voices in

democratic processes. The findings reflect that while citizens recognize the link between government performance and civic engagement, this understanding does not always translate into active participation, suggesting that social media may not be effectively empowering citizens to influence governance. The passive consumption of political content indicates that users are not leveraging social media as a tool for political activism or advocacy, which aligns with the critical theory's critique of power structures that limit citizen participation.

Garimella et al. (2018) highlight the role of government performance in shaping civic engagement, noting that social media can polarize opinions based on government performance. The study's findings align with this, showing a strong relationship between government performance and critical democratic citizenship. Garimella et al. (2018) note that social media discourages bipartisanship and fosters echo chambers, leading to limited criticism of the democratic process. This aligns with the study's findings, which suggest that most residents do not actively use social media to hold elected officials accountable. Babaleye et al. (2020) found that social media Helps Bridge the gap between government and the people, supporting the idea that effective governance encourages civic participation. The study suggests that while residents recognize the link between government performance and civic engagement, this understanding does not always translate into active participation, especially in digital spaces. This contrasts with Babaleye et al. (2020), where social media was seen as a crucial platform for demanding accountability from political leaders. Theocharis et al. (2023) found that social media facilitates new forms of political participation that do not align with traditional modes, such as changing profile pictures for political reasons. This aligns with the study's finding that some users discuss government accountability, though the overall level of engagement is not significant. Theocharis et al.

(2023) highlight the role of social media in enabling unconventional forms of political participation, which may not always translate into active engagement in policy discussions. This suggests that while social media provides new opportunities for political participation, its impact on traditional forms of engagement, such as advocacy for social justice, may be limited. The findings reveal a paradox in the use of social media for political engagement in Edo State. While social media serves as a key platform for information dissemination, it does not significantly foster active participation in policy discussions. This passive consumption of political content reflects a broader trend where users rely on their personal networks for political information rather than institutional sources. This trend aligns with the Uses and Gratification Theory, which suggests that individuals use media to fulfill specific needs, such as information-seeking and social interaction. However, the lack of active engagement in policy discussions highlights a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. The Theory of Deliberative Democracy emphasizes the importance of public deliberation in democratic processes, where citizens engage in reasoned discussions to influence policy-making. The findings suggest that social media does not significantly foster deliberative engagement, as users remain passive consumers of information rather than active participants in policy discussions. This lack of active deliberation on social media reflects a gap in the democratic process, as citizens are not effectively using digital platforms to engage in meaningful discussions about governance. The findings also highlight the need for platforms that encourage critical discourse and active participation, which is currently lacking in Edo State. The Networked Governance Theory highlights the role of digital platforms in facilitating interactions between citizens and governments, enabling collaborative governance and

citizen participation in policy-making. The findings indicate that social media serves as a channel for information dissemination but does not significantly enhance collaborative governance or citizen participation in policy-making. While users consume political content, they do not actively engage in discussions or provide feedback to government officials. This suggests that social media is not effectively bridging the gap between citizens and governments in Edo State, as it is primarily used for one-way communication rather than interactive governance. The Critical Theory critiques the power structures that limit citizen participation and emphasizes the need for empowering marginalized voices in democratic processes. The findings reflect a lack of critical engagement, as users do not actively challenge or critique government policies. This suggests that social media may not be effectively empowering citizens to influence governance or hold officials accountable. The passive consumption of political content indicates that users are not leveraging social media as a tool for political activism or advocacy, which aligns with the critical theory's critique of power structures that limit citizen participation. The findings suggest that while social media serves as a key platform for political awareness in Edo State, the level of active engagement, criticism, and critical reflection remains limited. The findings highlight the need for strategies to encourage more meaningful participation in governance discussions on social media. Policymakers and civic organizations should focus on creating engaging, relatable political content on digital platforms, integrating political education into youth-oriented spaces, and leveraging influencers to promote political awareness. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that political engagement in digital spaces remains constructive, inclusive, and conducive to democratic growth. By addressing these gaps, social media can

be effectively leveraged to enhance citizen participation and foster a more engaged and informed citizenry in Edo State.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study aimed to analyze and evaluate Edo state residents' use of social media for critical democratic citizenship. Specifically, this study sought to; analyze social media users' engagement with government policies in Edo state, determine the level of social media users' criticism of the democratic process, examine citizens' Critical reflection on the political and economic systems in place on social media, evaluate how citizens have used the social media to call for social justice, ascertain the relationship between government performance and critical democratic citizenship. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with a sample size of 400 respondents from Edo State. The chapter explained the development and validation of the research instrument, data collection procedures, and ethical considerations. Data analysis techniques, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis, were also outlined. Findings revealed that while social media is widely used for political information, direct engagement in discussions and activism is less common. WhatsApp emerged as the most preferred platform for political discussions, while Instagram was the least preferred. The chapter also highlighted the cautious approach of users in verifying the authenticity of political content before sharing it. The data reveals that social media is a key platform for political awareness, but engagement levels vary significantly.

Key findings include:

Social Media Usage: Respondents use social media daily to stay informed about political issues (Mean = 3.68), but active participation in discussions is limited. WhatsApp is the most preferred platform for political discussions, while Instagram is the least preferred.

Trust in Information: Users trust social media for government-related information (Mean = 3.97) but rely more on local news outlets than influencers. They are cautious about fake news and prefer verified sources.

Engagement with Governance: Discussions on government accountability are more common (Mean = 3.51), but topics like transparency and local governance effectiveness receive less attention.

Demographic Influences: Men and older individuals are more politically engaged on social media, while women and highly educated individuals are less active. Religion does not significantly influence engagement.

Critical Democratic Citizenship: There is a moderate positive correlation between social media engagement and critical democratic citizenship ($r = 0.461$), indicating that active users are more likely to participate in democratic processes.

Government Performance: Respondents believe that government performance significantly influences civic engagement (Mean = 4.67), but this does not always translate into active participation.

5.2 Conclusion

This study examined the use of social media for critical democratic citizenship among residents of Edo State, Nigeria. The findings reveal that while social media serves as an essential platform for political awareness, active engagement in political discussions and civic activities remains limited. WhatsApp is the most preferred platform for political discourse, whereas Instagram is the least used. Although users trust social media for government-related information, they exercise caution in verifying content before sharing.

Demographic factors influence social media engagement, with men and older individuals showing higher participation rates, while women and highly educated individuals exhibit lower levels of engagement. Furthermore, the study established a moderate positive correlation between social media engagement and critical democratic citizenship, indicating that individuals who engage more actively with political content are more likely to participate in democratic processes. However, despite recognizing the impact of government performance on civic engagement, this awareness does not always translate into active participation. The study highlights the potential of social media as a tool for democratic engagement but also underscores the need for strategies to enhance critical reflection, discourse, and active participation, particularly among underrepresented groups.

The study concludes that while social media is a vital tool for political awareness in Edo State, active engagement, criticism, and critical reflection remain limited. Strategies to encourage more meaningful participation, especially among women, youth, and highly educated individuals, are needed.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance social media engagement for critical democratic citizenship in Edo State:

Government agencies, civil society organizations, and educational institutions should implement programs that educate citizens on responsible and critical engagement with political content on social media.

Targeted initiatives should be developed to increase the participation of women and highly educated individuals in political discussions on social media. This could include

awareness campaigns, discussion forums, and mentorship programs to foster more diverse voices in online political discourse.

Given the cautious approach to verifying political content, media organizations and social media platforms should collaborate to promote fact-checking tools and encourage users to engage with credible sources.

Government agencies should actively engage with citizens through social media platforms, responding to concerns, addressing misinformation, and fostering transparency in governance.

Trusted individuals such as journalists, activists, and community leaders should be encouraged to facilitate informed political discussions online, helping to bridge the gap between awareness and action.

The Edo State Government should ensure that the Edonet free wifi internet service is extended to other parts of the state in order to encourage more social media participation across the state.

Considering power as a challenge, there is need to enhance or improve electricity power supply in the state. Access to improved power will no doubt, prevent communication gadgets from running down.

Policy makers should consider regulations that promote healthy and respectful political discourse on social media, preventing misinformation and fostering a culture of critical democratic engagement.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This work has contributed to extra literature on political communication.

The study established that educational status does not influence the use of social media for critical democratic citizenship in Edo State, Nigeria.

The study provides valuable insights into the role of social media in fostering critical democratic citizenship and governance engagement in Edo State, Nigeria. The study established that while social media are widely used for critical democratic citizenship, they do not lead to political activism in Edo State, Nigeria.

It examined how social media influences political agency, accountability, and participation, the research adds to the growing body of literature on digital political communication, particularly in the context of developing democracies.

The findings highlight the dual role of social media as both a tool for information dissemination and a platform for limited political engagement, offering a nuanced understanding of its impact on democratic processes.

This thesis has raised a number of hypotheses, which when further validated can form the basis for theory building.

The study proposes several hypotheses related to the relationship between social media usage, government performance, and critical democratic citizenship. For instance, the findings suggest that higher education levels do not necessarily translate to greater political engagement on social media, challenging conventional assumptions about the role of education in fostering civic participation.

These hypotheses, if further validated through additional research, could contribute to the development of new theoretical frameworks that explain the dynamics of digital political engagement in diverse socio-political contexts.

The data from the study supported tenets of theories such as Uses and Gratification Theory, Deliberative Democracy Theory, Networked Governance Theory, and Critical Theory.

Uses and Gratification Theory: The findings align with this theory by demonstrating that social media users primarily consume political content to fulfill their need for information rather than engaging in active political discourse. This supports the idea that individuals use media to satisfy specific needs, such as staying informed about government policies.

Deliberative Democracy Theory: The study highlights the gap between information consumption and active deliberation on social media. While users are informed, they do not engage in meaningful discussions about governance, underscoring the need for platforms that foster critical discourse and public deliberation.

Networked Governance Theory: The research reveals that social media serves as a channel for information dissemination but does not significantly enhance collaborative governance or citizen participation in policy-making. This supports the theory's emphasis on the potential of digital platforms to facilitate interactions between citizens and governments, while also pointing to limitations in its current application.

Critical Theory: The findings reflect a lack of critical engagement, as users do not actively challenge or critique government policies. This aligns with the theory's critique of power structures that limit citizen participation and highlights the need for empowering marginalized voices in democratic processes.

Overall, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how social media can be leveraged to enhance democratic engagement, while also identifying key challenges and gaps that need to be addressed to foster more meaningful participation in governance.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer all questions by ticking the right box

Questionnaires

Please tick (✓) as it applies you

SECTION A: Personal Data of the Respondent

Sex: (a) Male [] (b) Female []

Marital Status: (a) Married [] (b) Single [] (c) Divorced [] (d) Widowed []

Age: (a) Below 25 [] (b) 26-30 [] (c) 31 – 40 [] (d) 41 – 50 [] (e) 51 years and above []

Educational Qualification: (a) FSLC [] (b) SSCE [] (c) NCE/ND [] (d) B.Sc./HND [] (e) M.Sc./Ph.D. []

Local Government:

Religion: (a) Christianity [] (b) Islam [] (c) Traditional []

Employment Status: (a) Employed [] (b) Unemployed [] (c) Self-employed []

Occupation: (a) Entrepreneur [] (b) Artisan [] (c) Professionals []

SECTION B: Social Media Consumption Patterns

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

Social Media Consumption Patterns

Frequency of Use	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I use social media daily to stay informed about political and governance issues.					
I spend a significant amount of time on social media platforms discussing current events and governance.					
I follow social media accounts that focus on political or governmental matters.					
I regularly engage with news content shared by my social media contacts.					
Sources of Information					
I trust social media as a primary source of information about government policies					
I follow local news outlets on social media to get updates about government performance.					
I rely on social media influencers to stay informed about governance issues					
I consume content from various social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp) for political discussions.					
I trust social media as a primary source of information about government policies in Benin City.					
I follow local news outlets on social media to get updates about government performance. 7. I rely on social media influencers to stay informed about governance issues.					
I consume content from various social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp) for political discussions.					
Engagement with Content					
I often comment on or share posts related to governance and political issues on					

social media.					
I frequently like or react to posts discussing government policies or decisions in Benin City.					
I participate in live-streamed discussions or virtual town halls organized on social media platforms.					
I follow hashtags(#) related to political and governance issues in my community.					
Platform Preference					
I use Facebook most frequently to discuss governance and political issues.					
I prefer Twitter for following and engaging with political discussions.					
I use WhatsApp groups to discuss local government matters with friends and family.					
I use Instagram primarily for following political influencers or governance-related content.					
Content Verification					
I verify the authenticity of news or political information I encounter on social media before sharing it.					
I am cautious about fake news or misinformation related to government policies on social media.					
I often fact-check political discussions or debates happening on social media platforms.					
I prefer to engage with content from official or verified sources on social media when discussing governance.					

Section C: Adapted Critical Democratic Citizenship Scale

Good Governance Issues Discussed on Social Media	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I regularly discuss issues related to transparency in government actions on social media.					
I share information about government accountability and how it affects my community					
I engage in conversations about the fairness of government policies affecting my community.					
I discuss the effectiveness of local government programs on social media.					
Engagement with Government Policies					
I actively seek out information about government policies that impact Benin City residents.					
I participate in discussions about recent government policies on social media platforms.					
I analyze and share my thoughts on the effectiveness of local government decisions in Benin City.					
I engage with social media posts that evaluate the impact of government actions on our community.					
Criticism of the Democratic Process					
I express my concerns about the democratic process on social media.					
I critique the actions of elected officials and their impact on democracy through my social media posts.					
I discuss issues related to voter representation and electoral fairness on social media.					
I encourage open discussions about the shortcomings of the democratic system					

in our community.					
Encouragement of Participation in Democratic Processes					
I share information about upcoming elections and civic events on social media to encourage participation.					
I motivate my friends and followers to engage in political discussions and activities online.					
I provide resources on how to vote and participate in local governance to my social media audience.					
I advocate for active citizen involvement in community decision-making through my online presence.					
Relationship Between Government Performance and Critical Democratic Citizenship					
I believe that government performance influences citizens' willingness to engage in democratic processes.					
I discuss how effective governance can lead to higher levels of civic engagement among residents.					
I analyze the relationship between government accountability and citizen participation in my social media discussions.					
I think that criticism of government performance encourages greater civic involvement among residents of Benin City.					