

Facebook usage as a political mobilization tool among youth in Saki

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ABSTRACT

Facebook and other social media platforms have become effective political mobilisation tools, especially among younger people worldwide, including in Nigeria. In order to better understand the elements influencing youth political involvement and mobilisation in Saki, Oyo State, this study looks at how young people use Facebook. It also looks at possible effects on the political climate in Nigeria. We investigate the reasons, actions, and viewpoints of Saki youth in Nigeria with reference to their political usage of Facebook using an online survey. The results offer insightful information on the changing influence of social media on political discourse and youth mobilisation initiatives in Nigeria, advancing our knowledge of this phenomena in the context of youth participation in the country's sociopolitical environment.

Keywords:

Facebook, Social Media, Political Mobilization, Youth

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have become powerful instruments for political involvement and mobilisation in the digital age, especially for younger generations (Visser & Stolle, 2014). Facebook has become a hub for information exchange, opinion expression, and organising group actions due to its large user base and interactive features (Chan et al., 2017). Nigerian young, a dynamic and politically engaged group, have embraced the internet sphere and may use Facebook to further their voices and effect genuine change. Growing awareness of the critical role that young play in influencing Africa's political climate and promoting social change has occurred in recent years (Loader et al., 2014). Throughout history, young Nigerians have been in the vanguard of social movements and political transformation, using their zeal, idealistic outlook, and technological aptitude to oppose the current quo and promote their convictions (Boulianne, 2015). The influence of youth activism in Nigeria has been evident throughout history, from the pro-democracy demonstrations of the 1990s to the more recent youth-led campaigns against insecurity and corruption. But little is known about how much young people in Nigeria, especially in Saki, Oyo State, are using Facebook as a forum for political activism. It is critical to comprehend the dynamics at work and the variables influencing adolescent participation in this virtual realm given the growing effect of social media in Nigeria on political discourse and engagement (Theocharis & Quintelier, 2016). Facebook's user-friendly interface and worldwide accessibility have made it a central platform for political activity and conversation in Nigeria. It is a potent weapon for political mobilisation because of its capacity to unite people across geographic borders, speed up the spread of information, and allow the organisation of collective action (Velasquez & LaRose, 2015). Nigerian youth, who are renowned for being tech-savvy, have embraced Facebook as a platform for discussing issues, organising campaigns and rallies, and expressing their political opinions (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). Facebook may have a variety of effects on the political activism of Nigerian young. On the one hand, it gives young people a forum to express their worries, provide their viewpoints, and get in touch with like-minded others throughout the nation. According to Chan et al. (2017), this may promote a feeling of group identification and empowerment that will increase political involvement and participation. Furthermore, Facebook can expand the reach and influence of youth-led protests in Nigeria by quickly spreading information and inspiring people to take action in unison (Bode, 2016).

However, because of their very design, social media sites like Facebook have given rise to worries about the possibility of polarisation and echo chambers in the Nigerian setting. There is a chance that people will reinforce their prejudices and prevent open communication when they are exposed to ideas and material that confirm their preexisting convictions (Vraga & Troller-Rennó, 2016). Furthermore, the legitimacy of political discourse and mobilisation attempts can be weakened by the

propagation of false information and fake news on social media platforms, which is especially problematic given Nigeria's complicated sociopolitical scene. In the backdrop of Saki, an Oyo State city renowned for its energetic and politically engaged young population, it is especially important to comprehend Facebook's role in Nigerian youth political mobilisation. Saki's youth have been leading the way in a number of regional social and political initiatives, pushing for issues including youth empowerment, good governance, and educational reform. Their commitment and enthusiasm have served as an inspiration to others and resulted in noticeable improvements in their local communities.

To what degree Saki young are using Facebook to elevate their voices and effect real change, however, is still mostly unknown. Learning more about their beliefs, actions, and motives when it comes to using Facebook for political mobilisation might help advance the conversation on social media and young involvement in Nigeria. This study has the ability to provide insight into the dynamics of young political mobilisation through social media in other regions of the nation and throughout the African continent by analysing this issue within the unique Saki setting.

1.1 Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the use of Facebook as a political mobilization tool among youth in Saki, Oyo State, Nigeria. Specifically, it aims to:

- Identify the motivations and factors that drive Saki youth to engage in political discussions and activities on Facebook within the Nigerian context.
- Explore the patterns and behaviors of Saki youth in utilizing Facebook for political purposes in Nigeria, such as sharing information, expressing opinions, and organizing collective action.
- Assess the perceived impact of Facebook-based political engagement on offline political participation and mobilization efforts among Saki youth within the Nigerian political landscape.
- Investigate the potential challenges and limitations faced by Saki youth in using Facebook for political mobilization in Nigeria.

By addressing these objectives, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of social media, particularly Facebook, in facilitating youth political engagement and mobilization within the specific context of Saki and the broader Nigerian society.

1.2 Problem Statement

Although social media sites such as Facebook are well known for their ability to promote political involvement and participation, little is known about the particular dynamics and effects of their usage among young people in Nigeria (Theocharis & Quintelier, 2016). Examining Facebook's use as a medium for political speech, organisation, and mobilisation in the Nigerian context is necessary in Saki, where young activism and political mobilisation have become more prominent. Prior

studies have demonstrated how social media may support novel types of political involvement and participation (Loader et al., 2014; Visser & Stolle, 2014). It needs more research to determine how much these factors apply to Saki youth and their Facebook usage in the Nigerian political environment. Furthermore, in the Nigerian socio-political context, little is known about the elements that encourage or inhibit Saki youth's participation with political information and activities on Facebook, as well as the various obstacles they may encounter. By tackling this issue, the research seeks to close a gap in the literature by offering empirical perspectives on Facebook's function in young people's political mobilisation in Saki and larger Nigerian society. The results can help shape programmes and tactics that use social media to provide young Nigerians a platform and help them participate in politics while taking into account the particular dynamics and problems that exist in that country.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous perspectives are offered by the literature on social media and young political involvement, which highlights the potential of sites like Facebook as mobilisation tools. Understanding the elements that encourage and maintain young people's involvement in activist issues made possible by social media is one goal. In a mixed-methods study, Kahne and Bowyer (2018) investigated this and discovered that social media platforms facilitate young participation with activist causes by making information easily available, fostering relationships, and enabling collective action. Examining the connection between social media use and offline political engagement—like going to protests is another goal. According to a meta-analysis of survey data conducted by Boulianne (2015), those who use social media for informative reasons are more likely to take part in political demonstrations than people who use it for enjoyment. This emphasises the necessity of investigating the processes by which exposure to social media influences offline political engagement. Scholars have endeavoured to comprehend the wider consequences of social media on the political involvement of young and the formation of novel modes of participation. After reviewing the research on the "networked young citizen," Loader, Vromen, and Xenos (2014) came to the conclusion that while social media platforms may encourage young people to participate in politics in new ways, their effects are contingent on a variety of contextual circumstances. The interaction between offline and online political engagement is highlighted by this goal.

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Social media may encourage political participation, but by exposing users to information and viewpoints that align with their own, it can also exacerbate political polarisation. Through an experiment and survey, Vraga and Troller-Rennó (2016) investigated this goal and brought attention to the necessity for policies that balance polarisation mitigation with the political mobilisation potential of social media. Scholars have also examined the function of social media influencers in promoting young political participation. Chan, Tsugawa, and Ubarra (2017) demonstrated how influencers may successfully mobilise adolescent engagement by amplifying political messaging and fostering a sense of collective identity through the use of survey methodologies and content analysis. Future studies should look at the unique traits and tactics

of well-known social media personalities who successfully encourage young people to participate in politics. Finally, an ethnographic research conducted in 2013 by Lim sought to understand the dynamics of young people's political participation on social media. The study revealed a range of intensity, from passive information intake to active mobilisation and organisation. This emphasises the necessity of using longitudinal methods to comprehend how young people's political participation on social media is changing over time.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study's theoretical foundations are derived from the framework of media impacts theories, particularly from the agenda-setting and uses and gratifications theories. These ideas offer insightful information on how social media sites like Facebook may impact political debate and encourage young involvement. According to Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw's agenda-setting hypothesis, the media has a big impact on how important issues and subjects are to the general public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Facebook may be seen in the context of this study as a potent agenda-setting instrument, where political information discussed and shared on the social media network can influence the interests and worries of young Saki people. Facebook has the ability to mobilise young people around certain political causes or movements by exposing them to a variety of viewpoints and highlighting particular concerns. Furthermore, according to Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch's uses and gratifications theory, people actively seek out and consume media information in accordance with their unique requirements and motives. (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). This theory can assist in explaining why young Saki decide to connect with political content on Facebook and how their usage of the site for political mobilisation activities is influenced by their motives, which include seeking information, expressing themselves, or interacting with others.

3. METHODOLOGY

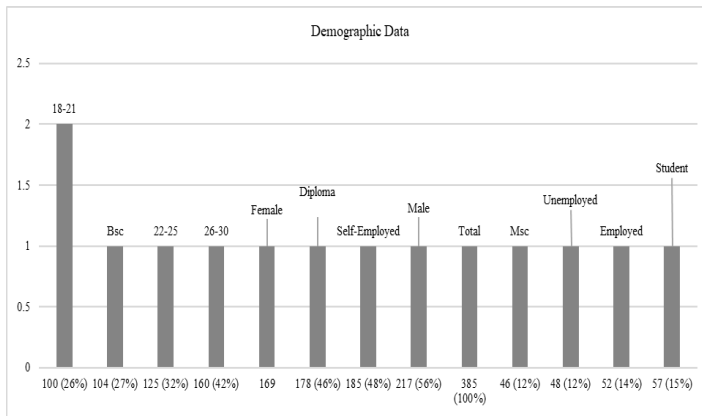
This study investigates the use of Facebook as a political mobilization tool among youth in Saki, Oyo State, Nigeria. A quantitative survey method was adopted, with an online questionnaire distributed to eligible youth. A pilot study was conducted on 30 youth to assess their understanding and identify ambiguities. The questionnaire was reviewed for construct and content validity by experts in political science and social media studies. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to evaluate internal consistency, indicating good reliability. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. A sample of 384 respondents was selected from the total population of approximately 278,002 residents. The study employed a combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques to ensure a representative sample. The target population consisted of individuals aged 18 to 30 years who were active Facebook users and engaged with political content or activities related to the Nigerian context within the past six months.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Demographic Data

Variable	Total
18-21 years	100 (26%)
22-25 years	125 (32%)
26-30 years	160 (42%)
Male	217 (56%)
Female	168 (44%)
High school	57 (15%)
Diploma	178 (46%)
Bachelor's Degree	104 (27%)
Master's Degree	46 (12%)
Employed	52 (14%)
Self-Employed	185 (48%)
Unemployed	48 (12%)
Student	100 (26%)
Total	385 (100%)

Source: Field work (2024)

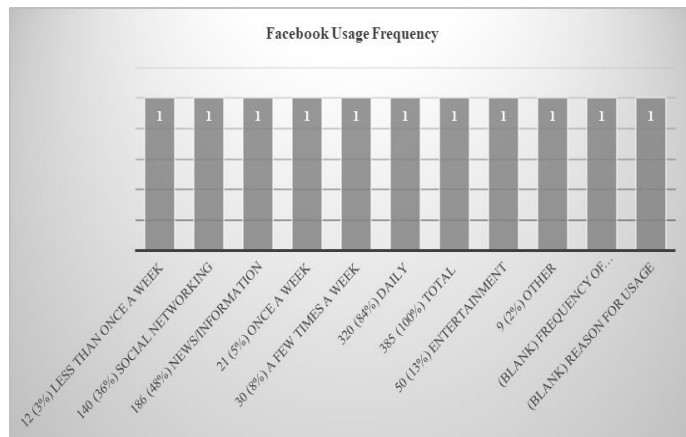


The Saki youth sample was diverse, with 42% aged between 26-30, a significant representation of young adults. The gender distribution was balanced, with 56% male and 44% female, revealing potential gender differences in Facebook usage and political engagement. The majority had a diploma, with 27% having a bachelor's degree. The employment status varied, with 48% being self-employed, followed by students, employed individuals, and unemployed individuals. This diversity may provide insights into how economic factors and time availability influence Facebook usage and political engagement among Saki youth.

Table 2: Facebook Usage

Variables	Frequency
Frequency of Facebook Usage	
Daily	320 (84%)
A few times a week	30 (8%)
Once a week	21 (5%)
Less than once a week	12 (3%)
Reason for Usage	
Social networking	140 (36%)
News/information	186 (48%)
Entertainment	50 (13%)
Other	9 (2%)
Total	385 (100%)

Source: Field work (2024)

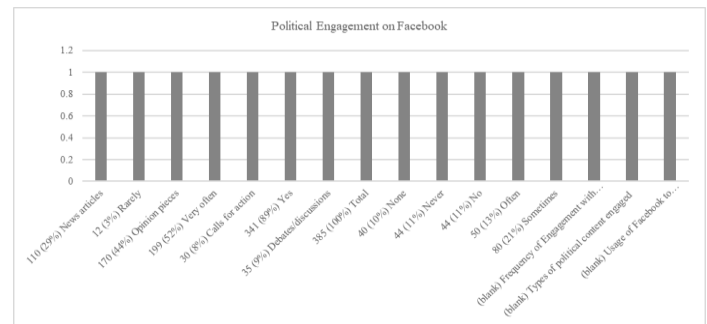


The data revealed an overwhelming majority (84%) of respondents using Facebook daily, underscoring the platform's pervasive presence in the lives of Saki youth. This high level of engagement with the platform suggests ample opportunities for exposure to political content and potential mobilization efforts. Interestingly, the primary reason cited for using Facebook was news/information (48%), followed by social networking (36%) and entertainment (13%). This finding aligns with the growing role of social media platforms as sources of information and news consumption, particularly among younger generations. The data suggests that Saki youth are actively seeking out and engaging with information on Facebook, which could facilitate exposure to political content and discussions.

Table 3: Political Engagement on Facebook

Variables	Frequency /Percentage
Frequency of Engagement with Political Content	
Very often	199 (52%)
Often	50 (13%)
Sometimes	80 (21%)
Rarely	12 (3%)
Never	44 (11%)
Types of political content engaged	
News articles	110 (29%)
Opinion pieces	170 (44%)
Debates/discussions	35 (9%)
Calls for action	30 (8%)
None	40 (10%)
Usage of Facebook to Participate or Organised a Political event	
Yes	341 (89%)
No	44 (11%)
Total	385 (100%)

Source: Field work (2024)

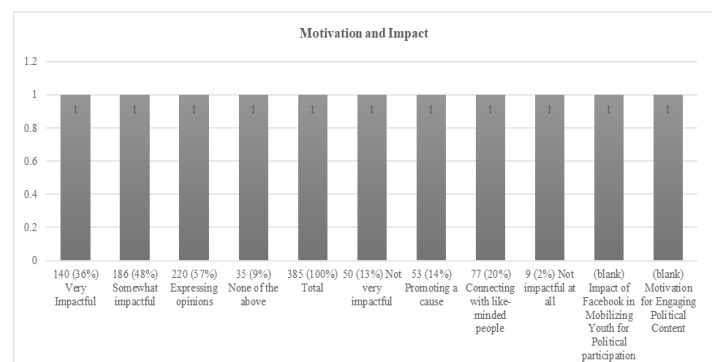


The data shows a high level of political engagement among Saki youth on Facebook, with 52% engaging with political content "very often." The most popular types of political content are opinion pieces (44%), news articles (29%), debates/discussions (9%), and calls for action (8%). A significant majority (89%) of respondents used Facebook to participate in or organize political events or activities, demonstrating its potential as a mobilization tool, aligning with the trend of social media enabling collective action and organizing political movements and campaigns.

Table 4: Motivations and Impact

Variables	Frequency/Percentage
Motivation for Engaging Political Content	
Expressing opinions	220 (57%)
Connecting with like-minded people	77 (20%)
Promoting a cause	53 (14%)
None of the above	35 (9%)
Impact of Facebook in Mobilizing Youth for Political participation	
Very Impactful	140 (36%)
Somewhat impactful	186 (48%)
Not very impactful	50 (13%)
Not impactful at all	9 (2%)
Total	385 (100%)

Source: Field work (2024)

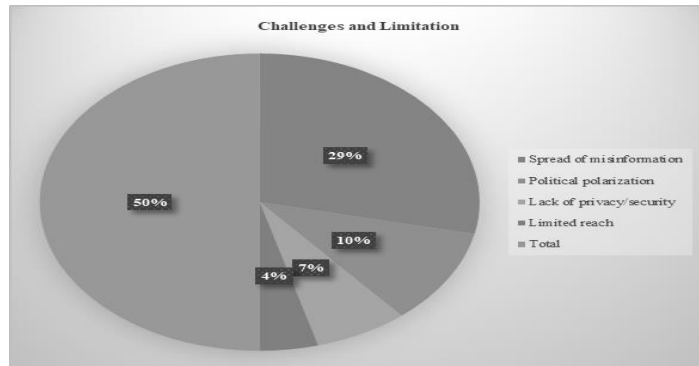


The study reveals that the main motivation for engaging with political content on Facebook is expressing opinions (57%), connecting with like-minded people (20%), promoting a cause (14%), and none of the above (9%). The majority of respondents found Facebook to be "somewhat impactful" (48%) or "very impactful" (36%), indicating its role in youth political mobilization. However, 13% found Facebook "not very impactful" and 2% found it "not impactful at all," indicating potential limitations and challenges in using social media for political mobilization.

Table 5: Challenges and Limitations

Variables	Frequency /Percentage
Challenges of Facebook as Political Mobilization tool	
Spread of misinformation	219 (57%)
Political polarization	80 (21%)
Lack of privacy/security	53 (14%)
Limited reach	33 (8%)
Total	385 (100%)

Source: Field work (2024)



The Saki youth face challenges in using Facebook for political mobilization, including the spread of misinformation (57%), political polarization (21%), lack of privacy/security (14%), and limited reach (8%). Misinformation undermines credibility and distorts political discourse. Political polarization reinforces echo chambers and ideological divides, hindering constructive dialogue. Addressing privacy concerns and ensuring inclusivity is crucial for effective mobilization efforts on social media.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings highlight the ubiquitous presence of Facebook in the lives of Saki youth and its potential as a powerful platform for political engagement and mobilization. The high levels of daily usage and the preference for news and information consumption suggest that Facebook has become a central hub for accessing and sharing political content among this demographic. The significant level of political engagement observed, with a majority of respondents actively engaging with political content and using Facebook to participate in or organize political events, underscores the platform's role as a facilitator of youth political mobilization in Saki. This aligns with broader trends of social media enabling collective action and fostering new forms of political participation, particularly among younger generations. The preference for opinion-based content, such as opinion pieces, suggests that Saki youth value the expression of diverse perspectives and the exploration of different viewpoints on political issues. This finding highlights the importance of fostering inclusive spaces for constructive dialogue and debate on Facebook, as well as promoting media literacy to combat the spread of misinformation, which emerged as a major challenge. The primary motivation of "expressing opinions" further reinforces the notion that Facebook serves as a platform for voicing perspectives and engaging in political discussions among Saki youth. This finding underscores the need to create environments that encourage respectful and constructive exchanges of ideas while mitigating the risks of polarization and echo chambers.

While a significant portion of respondents perceived Facebook as impactful in mobilizing youth for political causes, the challenges identified, such as misinformation, political polarization, lack of privacy/security, and limited reach, highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of the factors that influence the effectiveness of political mobilization efforts on social media platforms. Overall, the findings suggest that Facebook holds significant potential as a tool for political mobilization among Saki youth, but its effectiveness is contingent upon addressing the identified challenges and fostering an environment that promotes accurate information, constructive dialogue, privacy protection, and inclusivity. To

leverage the potential of Facebook for political mobilization while mitigating its risks, stakeholders should consider implementing measures such as fact-checking initiatives, media literacy campaigns, inclusive spaces for political discourse, privacy protection best practices, and strategies to expand the reach and inclusiveness of mobilization efforts. Additionally, collaboration between youth organizations, civil society groups, and relevant stakeholders can contribute to the development of comprehensive strategies that harness the strengths of social media platforms while addressing their limitations and challenges.

6. CONCLUSION/ RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explores Facebook usage patterns, political engagement, motivations, and challenges faced by Saki youth in Nigeria. The majority of the youth use Facebook daily and engage with political content regularly. Facebook is seen as a powerful tool for political mobilization, with high engagement and participation in events. However, challenges such as misinformation spread, political polarization, lack of privacy/security, and limited reach need to be addressed. The findings contribute to the discourse on social media's role in shaping political engagement and mobilization among youth, particularly in Nigeria. Understanding these dynamics can help develop more effective strategies to amplify the voices of young people and facilitate their participation in the political process. The study suggests several recommendations to combat misinformation on Facebook among Saki youth. It recommends implementing media literacy and fact-checking initiatives, fostering inclusive online spaces for political discourse, and collaborating with stakeholders to develop privacy protection guidelines. It also suggests exploring innovative strategies to expand the reach and inclusiveness of political mobilization efforts on Facebook, ensuring marginalized groups and diverse voices are represented. It encourages collaboration among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to develop strategies that leverage social media platforms' strengths while addressing limitations and challenges. Further research is needed to examine the long-term impacts of Facebook usage on youth political engagement and mobilization.

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