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Social Media, Civic Engagement, and Government Responsiveness in Nigeria: A Quantitative Study of Digital Political Communication

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Abstract. This study examines the relationship between social media use, civic engagement, and perceived government responsiveness within Nigeria's digital political communication environment. The study employed a quantitative research design using a structured questionnaire administered to Nigerian citizens aged 18 years and above. Of the 500 questionnaires distributed, 450 valid responses were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression with SPSS. Stratified random sampling was used to represent respondents across demographic groups and urban and rural locations. The findings revealed that 74% of respondents used social media daily for political purposes, 61% shared political content, 48% participated in online campaigns, and 55% used social media to monitor government performance. However, only 42% perceived the government as responsive to their online engagement, while 38% expressed disagreement and 20% remained neutral. Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between social media use and civic engagement $r = 0.46, p < 0.001$. Multiple regression analysis showed that social media use frequency $\beta = 0.41, \quad p < 0.001$), education level $\beta = 0.22, \quad p = 0.008$, and urban residence $\beta = 0.18, \quad p = 0.032$ significantly predicted civic engagement. The model explained 38% of the variance in civic engagement $R^2 = 0.38$. Social media plays an important role in facilitating civic engagement and expanding digital political participation in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the limited perception of government responsiveness highlights a gap between online participation and institutional accountability.

Keywords: Civic Engagement; Digital Political Communication; Government Responsiveness; Nigeria; Participatory Democracy; Social Media.

1. Introduction

The development of digital communication has significantly transformed the relationship between citizens, political institutions, and democratic governance (Asimakopoulos et al., 2025; Csesznek et al., 2024; Romanishyn et al., 2025; Widodo & Kristiyono, 2025). In contemporary democracies, political participation is no longer

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confined to voting, attending political meetings, or joining formal organisations; it increasingly includes sharing political information, discussing public issues, participating in online campaigns, and scrutinising government activities through digital platforms. These practices create new opportunities for citizens to communicate their concerns and engage in public affairs beyond conventional institutional boundaries. Theocharis & van Deth (2017) explain that political participation has expanded to encompass diverse forms of civic and political action, including digitally mediated activities. Similarly, Bennett & Segerberg (2012) demonstrate that digital media facilitate connective action by enabling individuals to coordinate political engagement through personalised communication and networked relationships. From a political communication perspective, these developments suggest that social media should be understood not merely as channels for distributing political information but also as spaces in which civic identities, public debates, and collective political action are negotiated (McGregor et al., 2025; Papathanassopoulos & Giannouli, 2025; Sorensen, 2024; Subekti et al., 2023).

The growing use of social media has created opportunities for more interactive communication between governments and citizens. Platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, and WhatsApp enable public institutions to disseminate policy information, respond to public concerns, and receive feedback without relying exclusively on traditional communication channels. Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2012), drawing on survey data from the United States, found that using social networking sites to obtain news was positively associated with social capital, civic engagement, and political participation. These findings indicate that social media can support democratic involvement by increasing access to political information and facilitating interpersonal discussion. Nevertheless, the democratic significance of these platforms depends on more than their technological availability or the frequency of online interactions. Meaningful political communication requires opportunities for citizens to express their views, access relevant information, and receive credible responses from public institutions. Consequently, the relationship between social media use and democratic participation needs to be examined alongside the institutional conditions that determine whether digital communication contributes to accountable governance.

Despite these opportunities, the expansion of online political communication does not automatically produce meaningful democratic outcomes. Citizens may actively discuss political issues, share criticism, and participate in digital campaigns without influencing government decisions or receiving adequate institutional responses. Sawyer (2017) demonstrate that digitally mediated collective action can generate substantial political mobilisation, although its development and sustainability remain unpredictable. This distinction is important because visible online activity does not necessarily indicate substantive political influence. Arshad & Khurram (2020), in their study of government social media communication in Pakistan, examined the relationships among information quality, perceived transparency, trust, responsiveness, and online political participation. Their findings illustrate the importance of institutional communication practices in shaping citizens' perceptions and participation. These arguments raise a central question for digital political communication research: to what extent does citizens' use of social media correspond with civic engagement, and how do citizens evaluate the responsiveness of government institutions to their online participation?

This question is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where social media has become an important arena for political discussion, public criticism, civic mobilisation, and demands for accountability. The #EndSARS movement illustrates how digital platforms can

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facilitate the circulation of information, connect citizens around shared concerns, and attract national and international attention to allegations of police brutality. Iwuoha & Aniche (2022) examined the #EndSARS protests in relation to state repression and police brutality, providing an important contextual foundation for understanding the political significance of civic mobilisation in Nigeria. However, the capacity of social media to amplify citizens' voices must be distinguished from the capacity of those voices to influence institutional behaviour. Digital participation may coexist with unequal internet access, differences in digital literacy, political tensions, and concerns about the protection of civic freedoms. These conditions make Nigeria a relevant context for examining the relationship between digital political communication, citizen participation, and perceived government responsiveness rather than assuming that increased online visibility necessarily strengthens democratic accountability.

Existing scholarship provides important insights into digital participation, connective action, and government communication, but several analytical issues warrant further empirical examination. First, research on social media and civic engagement has frequently emphasised the mobilisation potential of digital platforms, while the relationship between citizens' online activities and their perceptions of institutional responsiveness requires continued contextual investigation. Second, political participation encompasses multiple activities, including sharing political content, joining online campaigns, and monitoring government performance; these activities should not automatically be treated as equivalent indicators of political influence. Third, demographic and geographical conditions may shape opportunities for participation. Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2012) demonstrate the relevance of social media use to civic and political participation, while Theocharis & van Deth (2017) highlight the conceptual and empirical challenges involved in identifying and measuring different forms of participation. Building on these contributions, the present study examines social media use and civic engagement in Nigeria while incorporating education, age, gender, and urban–rural residence into its analysis. Its central concern is the relationship between citizens' digital participation and their perceptions of government responsiveness.

The contribution of this study lies in bringing three interconnected dimensions of digital political communication into a single quantitative analysis: social media use, civic engagement, and perceived government responsiveness. Rather than evaluating social media solely in terms of its capacity to disseminate political information or mobilise collective action, the study considers whether more frequent social media use is associated with greater civic engagement and examines the demographic characteristics that predict participation. It also addresses the institutional dimension of digital communication by investigating whether citizens perceive government institutions as responsive to their online engagement. This approach extends the discussion of digital democracy from technological access and online activity towards the communication relationship between citizens and governing institutions. Empirically, the study draws on 450 valid questionnaire responses from Nigerian citizens and employs descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The resulting evidence provides a basis for assessing both the participatory opportunities associated with social media and the limitations that may prevent online engagement from being perceived as meaningful institutional dialogue.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the relationship between social media use and civic engagement in Nigeria, assess citizens' perceptions of government responsiveness to online political participation, and identify demographic factors

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associated with civic engagement. Specifically, it addresses three research questions: (1) What forms of social media use and civic engagement characterise the respondents' political communication practices? (2) What is the relationship between the frequency of social media use and civic engagement? and (3) To what extent do social media use frequency, education, age, gender, and urban–rural residence predict civic engagement? By answering these questions, the study seeks to contribute empirical evidence to scholarship on digital political communication and civic participation, while offering practical insights for developing more responsive and inclusive government communication strategies in Nigeria.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between social media use, civic engagement, and perceived government responsiveness in Nigeria. A survey approach was adopted to collect standardised responses from participants and identify patterns of digital political communication across demographic groups. The quantitative design enabled the researchers to describe respondents' social media activities and examine statistical associations between social media use and civic engagement (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Nwabuko, 2024; Slater & Hasson, 2025). In addition, multiple regression analysis was used to assess the extent to which social media use frequency, educational level, age, gender, and residential location predicted civic engagement. The study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey, in which questionnaire responses were collected for analysis at a single stage of the research process. Accordingly, the findings are interpreted as statistical associations and predictive relationships rather than evidence of direct causal effects.

The target population consisted of Nigerian citizens aged 18 years and above who used social media platforms. The study employed stratified random sampling to obtain representation across demographic categories, including age, gender, and urban–rural residence. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to prospective respondents, of which 450 were completed, returned, and included in the analysis, yielding a usable response rate of 90%. The final sample comprised 216 male respondents (48%) and 234 female respondents (52%). In terms of age, 261 respondents (58%) were aged 18–30 years, 126 (28%) were aged 31–45 years, and 63 (14%) were aged 46 years and above. Regarding residential location, 293 respondents (65%) lived in urban areas, while 157 (35%) lived in rural areas. These characteristics provided the demographic basis for examining variations in digital political participation. However, the sampling frame, geographical distribution of recruitment sites, and allocation of respondents to individual strata should be reported in greater detail to enable independent assessment of sample representativeness.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered using online and offline distribution methods. The questionnaire was designed to obtain information about respondents' social media use for political purposes, participation in online civic activities, monitoring of government performance, and perceptions of government responsiveness. Demographic information, including age, gender, educational level, and residential location, was also incorporated into the analysis. The questionnaire provided a standardised basis for comparing responses and examining relationships between the study variables. Of the 500 questionnaires distributed, 450 valid responses were retained for statistical analysis. The original manuscript does not provide sufficient detail about the questionnaire development process, the specific items used to measure each construct,

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the response scale for every variable, or the procedures used to assess instrument validity and reliability. These details should therefore be supplied from the original research records before submission to ensure methodological transparency and reproducibility.

The analysis focused on civic engagement as the principal outcome variable, with social media use frequency as the main explanatory variable. Civic engagement was examined in relation to political communication activities, including sharing political content, participating in online campaigns, and monitoring government performance. Social media use frequency was assessed through respondents' reported use of social media for political purposes. Educational level, age, gender, and residential location were included as additional predictors in the multiple regression model. Perceived government responsiveness was examined descriptively through respondents' assessments of whether government institutions responded meaningfully to their online engagement. The original manuscript also reported a mean trust score of 3.4 on a five-point scale; however, the precise items and construct represented by this score require clarification. The final article should provide explicit operational definitions, coding procedures, and measurement scales for all variables, particularly the construction of the civic engagement outcome measure used in the inferential analysis.

The questionnaire data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and patterns of political social media use. Pearson product–moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the direction and strength of the relationship between social media use frequency and civic engagement. Multiple linear regression analysis was subsequently applied to assess the predictive relationships between civic engagement and five explanatory variables: social media use frequency, educational level, age, gender, and residential location. Statistical significance was evaluated using the reported p-values, with the study presenting results at the 0.05 significance level. The regression model was assessed using its coefficient of determination (R^2), F-statistic, regression coefficients, and associated p-values. The reported model explained 38% of the variance in civic engagement ($R^2 = 0.38$). For publication, the statistical reporting should also document the coding of categorical predictors, the treatment of missing data, and the diagnostic procedures used to evaluate the assumptions of correlation and regression analysis. Where available, confidence intervals, standard errors, and standardised or unstandardised coefficients should be reported consistently.

The study involved collecting questionnaire responses from adult participants concerning social media use and political engagement. Ethical reporting should clarify how informed consent was obtained, whether participation was voluntary, how respondent confidentiality was protected, and whether approval or exemption was granted by an authorised research ethics committee. The original manuscript does not specify an ethics approval number, the name of an approving institution, or the exact consent procedure. These details must be confirmed from the researchers' records and reported accurately. No ethics approval, consent procedure, or data-protection measure should be claimed unless it was actually implemented during the study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Patterns of Social Media Use, Civic Engagement, and Perceived Government Responsiveness

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The findings indicate that social media has become an important channel for political communication and civic participation among the Nigerian respondents. Of the 450 valid questionnaire responses analysed, 74% of respondents reported using social media daily for political purposes. This finding demonstrates the prominent role of digital platforms in facilitating citizens' access to political information and their engagement with public affairs. Beyond consuming political information, respondents also reported participating in activities that enabled them to circulate political messages, express their opinions, and monitor government performance. Specifically, 61% shared political content, 48% participated in online campaigns, and 55% used social media to monitor government performance. These results suggest that social media engagement extends beyond information consumption to include expressive, participatory, and monitoring activities. For example, citizens may share information about government policies through Facebook or WhatsApp, participate in online campaigns concerning public services, or use social media posts to draw attention to perceived shortcomings in government performance.

Despite these relatively high levels of digital political participation, the findings reveal a more limited perception of government responsiveness. Only 42% of respondents perceived the government as responsive to their online engagement, whereas 38% disagreed with this assessment and 20% expressed a neutral position. This distribution suggests that citizens' active participation in digital political communication does not necessarily correspond with their perception that government institutions respond meaningfully to their concerns. For instance, citizens may collectively raise complaints about inadequate public services or demand clarification regarding government policies through social media, yet remain uncertain whether their messages influence institutional decisions. The difference between reported participation and perceived responsiveness highlights an important distinction between the visibility of citizens' voices in digital spaces and their perceived influence on public administration. Nevertheless, because the study used a cross-sectional survey, these findings describe respondents' reported experiences and perceptions rather than independently verifying the actual responses of government institutions.

Table 1 Patterns of Social Media Use, Civic Engagement, and Perceived Government Responsiveness

Indicator	Percentage (%)
Daily social media use for political purposes	74
Sharing political content	61
Monitoring government performance	55
Participation in online campaigns	48
Perceived government responsiveness	42
Disagreement with perceived government responsiveness	38
Neutral perception of government responsiveness	20

Source: Authors' survey data, as reported in the study manuscript.

The results presented in Table 1 demonstrate that daily political social media use was the most frequently reported activity, followed by sharing political content and monitoring government performance. Participation in online campaigns was comparatively less prevalent, suggesting that citizens' engagement may take different forms, ranging from relatively accessible individual actions to more organised forms of

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collective participation. More importantly, the finding that only 42% perceived government institutions as responsive indicates that the expansion of digital participation does not automatically translate into a corresponding perception of institutional accountability. These descriptive findings provide the empirical foundation for examining the statistical relationship between social media use and civic engagement.

3.2. Relationship between Social Media Use and Civic Engagement

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between social media use and civic engagement among the Nigerian respondents $r = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$. The correlation coefficient indicates a moderate positive association between the two variables. In practical terms, respondents who reported more frequent social media use tended to report higher levels of civic engagement. This finding supports the proposition that digital platforms can provide opportunities for citizens to participate in political communication, circulate information about public issues, and engage in activities related to government monitoring. For example, individuals who frequently encounter political discussions on social media may have more opportunities to share their perspectives, join online campaigns, or follow debates about public policies than individuals who use these platforms less frequently for political purposes.

The statistical significance of the correlation indicates that the observed relationship is unlikely to be attributable to random variation under the assumptions of the statistical test and the null hypothesis of no population correlation. However, the strength of the relationship should not be interpreted as evidence that social media use directly causes civic engagement. Because the research employed a cross-sectional design, the relationship may also reflect other influences, such as political interest, educational background, access to digital technology, or existing motivation to participate in public affairs. For instance, politically interested citizens may both use social media frequently and actively participate in civic activities, meaning that their political interest could contribute to both behaviours. Accordingly, the findings establish an empirical association between social media use and civic engagement while leaving the direction and underlying mechanisms of that relationship open to further investigation.

Table 2 Pearson Correlation between Social Media Use and Civic Engagement

Variables	Pearson's r	p-value	Interpretation
Social media use and civic engagement	0.46	< 0.001	Moderate positive, statistically significant relationship

Source: Authors' statistical analysis of survey data.

As shown in Table 2, the positive correlation coefficient indicates that higher reported social media use is associated with higher reported civic engagement. The significance level $p < 0.001$ provides strong statistical evidence against the null hypothesis of zero correlation. From the perspective of digital political communication, this finding suggests that social media may function as an important environment for facilitating citizens' engagement with political information and civic activities. Nevertheless, the strength of this relationship also indicates that social media use alone does not fully account for variations in civic engagement. Other individual, social, and institutional factors may contribute to whether citizens transform digital communication into active participation in public affairs.

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3.3. Predictors of Civic Engagement and the Digital Participation–Responsiveness Gap

Multiple regression analysis further examined the predictive relationships between social media use frequency, educational level, age, gender, residential location, and civic engagement. The reported regression model explained 38% of the variance in civic engagement $R^2 = 0.38$, indicating that the predictors included in the model collectively accounted for a substantial proportion of the observed differences in respondents' civic engagement scores. Social media use frequency emerged as a statistically significant positive predictor $\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$. Educational level was also positively associated with civic engagement $\beta = 0.22$, $p = 0.008$, while urban residence showed a statistically significant positive relationship with civic engagement $\beta = 0.18$, $p = 0.032$.

These results indicate that the frequency of political social media use, educational background, and residential location were important predictors of civic engagement within the reported model. For example, frequent engagement with political information online may provide individuals with greater opportunities to follow public debates, share political messages, and participate in digital campaigns. Similarly, educational experiences may support individuals' ability to interpret political information and articulate their views, while differences between urban and rural environments may reflect variations in digital access and opportunities for participation. These explanations are plausible interpretations of the statistical findings, rather than mechanisms directly established by the reported analysis.

Table 3 Multiple Regression Results for Predictors of Civic Engagement

Predictor	Standardised coefficient $\boldsymbol{\beta}$	$\boldsymbol{p}$-value	Result
Social media use frequency	0.41	< 0.001	Significant positive predictor
Educational level	0.22	0.008	Significant positive predictor
Urban residence	0.18	0.032	Significant positive predictor
Age	Not reported	Not reported	Requires complete regression output
Gender	Not reported	Not reported	Requires complete regression output
Model $\boldsymbol{R^2}$	0.38	—	38% of variance explained

Source: Authors' statistical analysis of survey data.

The regression findings in table 3 identify social media use frequency as the strongest of the three reported significant predictors, followed by educational level and urban residence, based on the reported standardised coefficients. The model's R^2 value of 0.38 indicates that 62% of the variance in civic engagement remained unexplained by the predictors collectively, suggesting that other factors may also be relevant. However, the available manuscript does not provide the individual regression coefficients and significance levels for age and gender, the model's F-statistic, or confidence intervals. Consequently, the statistical significance of age and gender cannot be established from the information currently available, and the overall model fit cannot be fully assessed. These

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results should be supplemented with the complete SPSS regression output before the article is submitted for publication.

Beyond the predictive relationships, the descriptive findings reveal an important distinction between citizens' digital participation and their perceptions of government responsiveness. Although 74% of respondents used social media daily for political purposes and substantial proportions shared political content or monitored government performance, only 42% perceived government institutions as responsive to their online engagement. This pattern suggests that the opportunities provided by digital platforms for political expression may exceed citizens' perceptions of institutional responsiveness. In practical terms, citizens may successfully circulate information, attract attention to public problems, and participate in online campaigns without necessarily perceiving that government institutions have acknowledged or addressed their concerns. The findings therefore point to the importance of examining digital political communication not only through indicators of participation but also through the perceived quality of communication between citizens and public institutions. However, the survey did not independently measure actual government response rates or establish whether specific online campaigns influenced government decisions. The participation–responsiveness gap should therefore be interpreted as a difference between reported civic engagement and perceived institutional responsiveness, rather than definitive evidence that government institutions failed to act.

3.4. Discussion: Social Media, Civic Engagement, and the Limits of Digital Government Responsiveness

The findings demonstrate that social media use is positively associated with civic engagement in Nigeria, highlighting the role of digital platforms in facilitating citizens' participation in political communication and public affairs. The significant correlation between social media use and civic engagement $r = 0.46, \quad p < 0.001$, together with the positive regression coefficient for social media use frequency $\beta = 0.41, p < 0.001$, suggests that more frequent engagement with political content is associated with higher levels of civic participation. This finding is consistent with Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) concept of connective action, which explains how digital communication networks enable individuals to participate in collective action through personalised content sharing and networked mobilisation. It also corresponds with Lee (2022), Rabaca & Butalid (2025), who identified associations between social networking site use for news, social capital, civic engagement, and political participation. In the Nigerian context, these findings suggest that social media can provide citizens with accessible channels for circulating political information, expressing public concerns, and participating in digitally mediated civic activities. However, the observed relationships should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects, given the cross-sectional design of the present study.

An important contribution of this study is its distinction between the frequency of digital participation and citizens' perceptions of government responsiveness. Although respondents reported substantial engagement in political social media activities, fewer than half perceived government institutions as responsive to their online engagement. This finding raises questions about the extent to which digital participation is translated into meaningful institutional communication. From the perspective of democratic participation, the opportunity to express opinions does not necessarily guarantee that public institutions acknowledge, consider, or respond to citizens' concerns. Md Rashedul Islam (2025), González-Cacheda & Outeda (2021) demonstrate that digitally mediated

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collective action can facilitate political mobilisation, although the consequences and sustainability of such mobilisation are not automatic. Similarly, Prasodjo (2025) and Afiyah (2024) emphasise the relevance of government communication practices to citizens' perceptions of transparency, trust, and responsiveness. Read alongside this literature, the present findings indicate that the democratic significance of social media should be assessed not only through the visibility of citizens' participation but also through their perceptions of the communication relationship between citizens and government institutions. Nevertheless, the present survey measures perceived responsiveness rather than independently verified institutional behaviour; therefore, the findings do not establish that government institutions systematically ignored or failed to act on online demands.

The regression results further indicate that civic engagement is associated with educational level and residential location, in addition to social media use frequency. Education emerged as a positive predictor of civic engagement $\beta = 0.22, p < 0.008$, while urban residence was also positively associated with the outcome $\beta = 0.18, p < 0.032$. These findings suggest that digital political participation may be shaped by conditions beyond access to social media platforms alone. Education may be associated with citizens' capacity to interpret political information, evaluate public claims, and communicate their concerns, while differences between urban and rural environments may reflect unequal opportunities for digital access and participation. These interpretations are consistent with the broader argument that digital participation occurs within social and infrastructural contexts rather than in a technologically neutral environment. However, because the study did not directly measure digital literacy, internet affordability, network quality, or political efficacy, these factors cannot be identified as demonstrated explanations for the observed differences. Future research should examine these mechanisms explicitly and investigate whether the relationship between social media use and civic engagement varies across socioeconomic and geographical groups.

The findings also contribute to discussions of digital democracy by indicating that the expansion of online political communication should not be treated as sufficient evidence of stronger democratic accountability. Social media may lower barriers to political expression and enable citizens to communicate concerns outside conventional institutional channels, but the effectiveness of this participation may depend on whether public institutions provide accessible, credible, and substantive responses. This distinction is particularly relevant to Nigeria, where digital platforms have provided spaces for civic mobilisation and public debate, including during the #EndSARS protests discussed by Iwuoha & Aniche (2022). The present study does not directly evaluate the effects of #EndSARS or establish that its dynamics explain the survey results. Rather, the case offers contextual relevance for understanding why online visibility and institutional responsiveness should be examined as distinct dimensions of digital political communication. For public institutions, the findings point to the importance of developing transparent communication procedures, acknowledging citizen feedback, clarifying how complaints are processed, and communicating the outcomes of public consultations. Such practices may strengthen the perceived meaningfulness of digital participation, although their actual effects require empirical evaluation.

Taken together, this study advances an integrated understanding of digital political communication by examining social media use, civic engagement, and perceived government responsiveness within a single quantitative framework. Its principal contribution lies in demonstrating that social media use is positively associated with civic

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engagement while documenting a difference between reported participation and perceived institutional responsiveness. The regression model explained 38% of the variance in civic engagement, indicating that the included predictors account for a meaningful but incomplete proportion of the observed differences. The remaining unexplained variance underscores the need to investigate additional factors, including political interest, digital literacy, political efficacy, trust in institutions, and the quality of government communication. The study's cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported questionnaire data, and absence of direct measures of government response behaviour limit the conclusions that can be drawn about causality and institutional accountability. Moreover, the reported regression results should be interpreted alongside the complete model output, particularly the coefficients for age and gender, which are not available in the current results. Future research could combine representative surveys with interviews, analyses of government social media responses, and longitudinal observations to examine whether digital participation is followed by identifiable institutional responses. Such an approach would help distinguish between the mobilisation capacity of social media and its potential contribution to more responsive democratic governance.

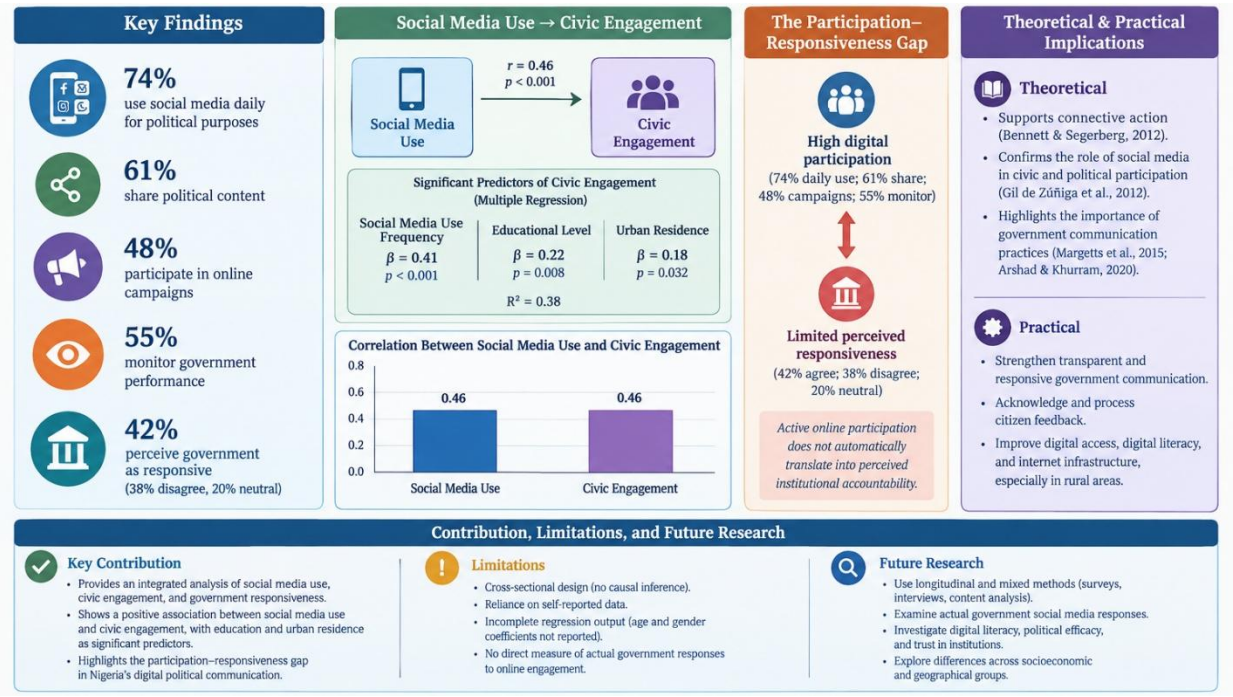


Figure 1 From Online Participation to Democratic Responsiveness: Key Findings and Discussion.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between social media use, civic engagement, and perceived government responsiveness in Nigeria. The findings show that 74% of respondents use social media daily for political purposes, while 61% share political content, 48% participate in online campaigns, and 55% use social media to monitor government performance. The statistical analysis indicates a significant positive relationship between social media use and civic engagement $r = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$, with social media use frequency, education, and urban residence emerging as significant predictors of civic engagement. However, only 42% of respondents perceive the government as responsive to online engagement, compared with 38% who disagree and 20% who remain neutral. This contrast highlights a potential gap between digital political

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participation and perceived government responsiveness, suggesting that although social media provides opportunities for citizens to express opinions and engage in political activities, online participation does not necessarily translate into a stronger perception of governmental accountability.

4. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between social media use, civic engagement, and perceived government responsiveness among Nigerian respondents. The findings demonstrate that social media has become an important channel for political communication and civic participation, with 74% of respondents reporting daily social media use for political purposes. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between social media use and civic engagement $r = 0.46, p < 0.001$. Multiple regression analysis further identified social media use frequency $beta = 0.41, p < 0.001$, educational level $beta = 0.22, p = 0.008$, and urban residence $beta = 0.18, p = 0.032$ as significant positive predictors of civic engagement. The regression model explained 38% of the variance in civic engagement, indicating that digital communication practices and selected sociodemographic characteristics are relevant to understanding citizens' participation in public affairs. Nevertheless, these associations should not be interpreted as evidence of causality, given the cross-sectional design of the study.

A key contribution of this study is its identification of a gap between reported digital participation and perceived government responsiveness. Although respondents reported substantial engagement in sharing political content, participating in online campaigns, and monitoring government performance, only 42% perceived government institutions as responsive to their online engagement, compared with 38% who disagreed and 20% who remained neutral. This finding highlights the importance of distinguishing opportunities for political expression from citizens' perceptions that their participation receives meaningful institutional attention. Social media may facilitate the circulation of political information, the articulation of public concerns, and civic mobilisation. However, these opportunities do not necessarily translate into perceptions of stronger accountability or more responsive governance. For policymakers and public institutions in Nigeria, the findings underscore the importance of establishing transparent digital communication mechanisms, acknowledging citizen feedback, providing timely responses, and communicating the outcomes of public consultations. Such measures could strengthen the relationship between digital participation and institutional communication, although their effectiveness requires further empirical assessment.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Its cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported questionnaire data limit causal inference and may be affected by recall and response biases. Furthermore, perceived government responsiveness was measured through respondents' assessments rather than independent observations of institutional responses, while the reported regression results require complete statistical output to establish the contribution of all specified predictors. Future research should employ longitudinal and mixed-methods designs to investigate how digital civic participation develops over time and whether online demands lead to identifiable institutional responses. Combining surveys with interviews, analyses of government social media interactions, and systematic assessments of response timeliness and policy outcomes would provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital political communication.

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Further studies should also examine the roles of digital literacy, political interest, political efficacy, institutional trust, and urban–rural inequalities in shaping civic engagement. This study contributes to the literature on digital democracy by demonstrating that social media use is positively associated with civic engagement while highlighting the distinction between citizens' capacity to participate digitally and their perceptions of government responsiveness. The democratic value of digital communication should therefore be assessed not only by the extent of online participation but also by the quality of communication and accountability connecting citizens with public institutions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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