

## Social Media and Political Participation: is Facebook Democratizing our Youth in Nigeria?

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### Abstract

The use of social media has grown in recent elections, particularly among youth. Of significance for this age group is the rise in the use of social media and mobile devices for obtaining political information, creating user-generated political content, and expressing political views and opinions. Recently, a growing body of research has charted a decline in formal political participation among youth especially voting and party allegiance due to the rising youth involvement in activities such as protest and demonstrations. However, majority of previous research suggests there are significant relationships between social media use and online political participation among youth. Most studies have relied on college students as samples and have not used youth with vast knowledge and experience in politics as population of the study. Also, few studies have attempted to uncover tendencies of youth participating in formal political activities such as voting and party allegiance using Facebook. Therefore, in what ways do social media foster offline political participation among youth? To address this issue, the study employ multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between Facebook use, interactivity with political figures, perceived Facebook information quality, political interest and offline political participation among Nigerian youth (n=372). The results of this study indicate that Facebook use, interactivity with political figures, perceived Facebook information quality and political interest significantly correlates with youth offline political participation. Given that new technologies have facilitated alternative forms of opinion expression and information consumption, more research is needed into the ways in which these technologies promote young adults' political participation. The study's overall goal is to advance our understanding of how political expression enabled by social media contributes to the democratic process.

### Keywords:

Political  
participation, Social  
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## **Background to the Study**

Political participation includes among other things, political activities such as joining civic/political groups and having face-to-face meeting, interacting with politicians, voting, contacting government officials by phone or writing letter, signing petition online, making political contribution on social media, participating in protest, fundraising, volunteering or participating in campaign and deliberating with political figures, institutions and organizations (Tang & Lee, 2013; Vissers, Hooghe, Stolle, & Maheo, 2012; Waller, 2013). These types of political participation are the important components and foundations of successful democracy (McManimon, 2014; Putnam, 2000).

However, political communication scholars argued that political participation is declining due to a reduction in youth's civic engagement which pose a threat and negative consequences for the health of a representative democracy (Putnam, 2000). Recent research indicates that youth's interaction through social media can replace some of these lost forms of civic engagement this is because evidently, social media has provided an additional network for youth to engage politically with each other and their government. Therefore, one way of reaching youth is through social media such as facebook because it offers a place for young people to express themselves politically, locate political information, and interact with their peers about politics (Pew reports, 2011). Thus, do political activities on social media such as Facebook affect offline political participation among youth since this category is considered as young voters whom were traditionally perceived as apathetic with regards to civic engagement? Results of numerous studies reveals that political activities on Facebook is a significant predictor of political participation (Jessica Vitak, Paul Zube, Andrew Smock, Caleb Carr, Nicole Ellison, and Cliff Lampe, 2016). Therefore, using social media such as Facebook to engage youth is of special interest because youth are statistically the least represented subsection of the population in many political activities including voting and participating in campaign (Delli Carpini, 2000).

The phenomenal growth and popularity of social media in recent years, especially since the Arab Spring, couple with the growth and popularity of social media in recent years has raised scholars' attention. While researchers investigated and discovered a significant relationship between social media use and political participation however, a growing body of study have charted a decline in formal modes of political participation among youth, particularly voting and party activities, and a rising involvement by youth in more direct activity such as demonstrations and protest (Dalton, 2011). However, the use of social media such as Facebook for political activities has been widely recognized to have helped lower the barriers of youth marginalization from participating in political activities and widen the scope of informal activities (Dumitrica, 2016). Similarly, the popularity of Facebook particularly among young voters has provided a highly obvious atmosphere for candidates to promote themselves, articulate their platforms in detail, and interact with voters in fundamentally different means. Likewise, Facebook allowed youth to network with each other about political problems and to share and discuss their opinions. Studies on the political role of Facebook reveals that online political expression has positive effects on offline political participation (Jung & Zuniga, 2011; Vitak, Smock, Ellison & Lampe, 2011). For example, Jung et al. (2011) indicated that online

political messaging, such as posting messages and comments about current political issues and public affairs, is positively related to offline political participation. However, evidence for the role of political information seeking shows that Facebook use is positively tied to offline political participation and likelihood of voting (Yamamoto, & Kushin, 2014). But little is known about the relationship between Facebook use, interactivity with political figures, facebook quality information, political interest and youth offline political participation,

This research is interested in understanding the relationship between Facebook usage, interactivity with political figures, perceived Facebook information quality, political interest and offline political participation among youth in Nigerian context using youth of voting age as sample because concepts, ideas and practices need to be advanced and better understood, (Mohamad, 2013).

### **Problem Statement**

Youth political participation has been an issue of concern around the world (Skoric & Poor, 2013), because they are the important target group to political parties and politicians due to their extraordinary features such as strength, expectations and mental tendency to welcome and support new ideas (Fjerza, Gega, & Memaj, 2014). Therefore, youth participation is imperative to consider because it offers insight into future offline political participation (Vissers & Maheo, 2012), and it is indicative of adult participation of those youth. In addition, youth in particular represent the driving force of change in the society and their participation as young adult is predictive of their future participation. Furthermore, youth participation in political activities may likely foster a sense of citizenship and influence policy processes to be more transparent and accountable towards the entire younger generation (EACEA, 2013),

Nevertheless, despite the fact that some literatures have identify youth as active, diverse and easy to accept and support new changes in the society (Harris & Younes, 2010), but youth have not been recognized or involved in politics and decision making that may help them to build self-confidence and acquire skills that are relevant such as effective communication or teamwork (Diemer & Li, 2011). Similarly, in spite of youth having diverse initiatives, strength and perception on how to influence the lives of their political systems; in recent past concern have been raised about the decreasing participatory tendencies among them from political participation, electoral turnout and party membership has seriously decreased over last two decades both in Europe and beyond (Theocharis & Quintelier, 2014).

These concerns indicate that young people are becoming further disappointed with the traditional bodies of representative government (Milner, 2011) which have been generated by a number of trends such as youth denial to participate in the electoral processes, low rates of electoral turnout and even hatred to politics (Putnam, 2000; Wattenberg, 2012). This trend suggest that youth are not well represented or considered as influential in national and international level of democratic system thus, they become victims instead of becoming stakeholders in a political affairs because their priorities are often under-addressed which may eventually lead to violence, if it is not properly managed (Diemer & Li, 2011; Harris et al., 2010).

Thus, this denial of youth involvement in politics and decision making is attributed to elite or elders' conspiracy which places barrier on youth offline participation in political affairs. Scholars of Facebook and political participation have identified use of Facebook as having potentials to help the youth to break the barrier against their participation. However, few studies empirically related Facebook usage to increase participation of the youth in an offline political process (Odeyemi & Mosunmola, 2015; Ternes & Towers, 2014). This has limited the understanding of relationship between Facebook usage and offline political participation (Smyth & Best, 2013). Therefore, it is important for further study to be conducted to understand the reasons why youth have not been recognized and involved in political activities especially in Nigerian context. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between Facebook usage, interactivity with political figures, facebook quality information, political interest and youth offline political participation in Bauchi metropolis.

Furthermore, it is equally worrisome that other issues with regards to the context and sample population of some studies conducted on this issue were college students mostly from US and some European countries (Theocharis & Quintelier, 2014). Basically, this will not provide in-depth understanding because political participation involves wider society. Thus, a better samples that are diverse would be more ideal to be a good representation (Conroy, Feezell, & Guerrero, 2012). So, by focusing on youth of voting age in the larger society that are more exposed in politics will be appropriate as it is imperative to increase research both in terms of methodology used and sample population (Theocharis & Quintelier, 2014). Whereas, similar research focusing on Sub-Saharan African context is lacking (Lahabou & Wok, 2011), therefore, such context and samples may lack generalization.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study intends to investigate the relationship between Facebook usage and youth offline political participation. However, in a broader team the objectives of this study are to:

- a) Examine the relationship between Facebook usage and offline political participation among youth.
- b) Investigate the relationship between interactivity with political figures and offline political participation among youth.
- c) Identify the relationship between perceived Facebook information quality and offline political participation among youth.
- d) Explain the relationship between political interest and offline political participation among youth

### **Review of literature and Hypotheses Development**

#### **Political Participation**

Traditional participation such as participating in political campaign, rally, working for political party or candidate, taking part in voting especially during election has been considered as important to the democratic processes (Skoric & Kwan, 2011), and become an area of research to many scholars. This can be further supported by the definition of political participation as the activity that provide citizens to express their wishes and aspirations and also to some extents influence the selection of government or public officials that will create

good policy (Norris, 2001). Participation in a democratic system is a fundamental and universal right that has been recognized in the Lisbon Treaty. This further suggests that every citizen shall have equal right to take part in the democratic system (Mayoral, 2011).

It is against this background that participation of youth in offline political activities has been measured as an important component for a vibrant and strong democracy (Bakker & Vreese, 2011). Therefore, youth political participation is fundamental to democracy and without it, upcoming generation of youth may perambulate into the political process without the requisite knowledge, skills and determination to challenge the selfish political elites. As such, youth may lack enthusiasm to checkmate the actions of the government, and contribute little into the policies that influence their lives (Farson, 2013). Thus, the issue of whether and what is influencing youth to offline political participation is imperative to both researchers and political figures.

Offline political participation is an important requirement and necessary for democracy (Putnam, 2000), this is because youth have equal opportunity and right to influence different stages of political processes, right from campaign, election and policy decision and its implementation (Wyngharden, 2012). It may also be true to say that voting and elections in general symbolizes an important ways of engaging youth in the democratic processes is the most significant political activity (Dalton, 2008).

This development has created long discussions among scholars that even though youth engagement and electoral turnout appears to be low in different countries but some studies suggest that other forms of youth political participation such as online activities may likely to indicate upward direction and tendency of their participation. Additionally, activities such as demonstrations and protests have now become apparent in youth (Dalton, 2011).

Recently, Facebook has been used to mobilize individuals to participate in politics and protest around the world (Carlisle & Patton, 2013). In particular, considering Western democracies where scholars are concern with the decline of youth in political participation (Putnam, 2000), Facebook appears to hold hopes for increase political participation and reinforcing democracy (Solvang, 2009). This however, suggest that Facebook can help convert or mobilize the people that have been disengage from offline politics to now participate in political activities such as voting.

The information given is more interactive, user friendly, concise and easier to comprehend. Youth are frequently posting political issues online, their views and opinions in relations to politics, sharing news and informative articles, their interaction with political actors and viewing videos about political activities. Therefore, it can be safe to say that Facebook is suitable medium to spread political knowledge among youth and in turn increase their offline political participation. A significant positive relationship between Facebook usage and offline political participation exist thus, studies indicates that Facebook use is positively related to offline political participation (Carlisle & Patton, 2013; Vissers & Stolle, 2014; Theocharis, 2011).



## **Facebook Usage**

Facebook foster exposure to political mobilization and make political information more available, the medium is a potential means of recruiting people that were not politically motivated before into offline political activities. Thus, the accessibility and interactivity nature on Facebook can effectively function as what is now referred as 'gateway participation' Nevertheless, studies have indicated that Facebook is more powerful than traditional media (Gromping, 2014). Facebook provides a similar and advanced features in terms of exposure to information but has the additional benefits and advantages of global reach, better quality and greater speed and also an interactive medium of online political discussion. With these features, Facebook shows a significant role in the formation of political knowledge (Muntean, 2015).

Additionally, youth today get their political information from social media (Facebook) rather than the legacy traditional media such as radio, television and newspapers. The information given is more interactive, user friendly, concise and easier to comprehend. Youth are frequently posting political issues online, their views and opinions in relations to politics, sharing news and informative articles, their interaction with political actors and viewing videos about political activities (Lahabou & Wok, 2011). Therefore, it can be safe to say that Facebook is suitable medium to spread political knowledge among youth and in turn increase their offline political participation. Political knowledge, as defined by Carpini (2000), is the series of factual and true information concerning politics or political actors that is kept in a long-term memory.

Over the years, it has been argued that political knowledge is one of the important political variable that serves as a strong indicator of an ideal functioning democracy (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Thus, electorates' proper knowledge and understanding of politics is imperative in other for them to make informed decision or choice (Carpini, 2000). A well-structured and democracy requires citizens with effective knowledge, skills, and a personality of character (Ngagement, Ducation, & Galston, 2001). The knowledge and skills are much needed to judge and interpret deeds or actions of politicians and representatives with a critical and analytical mind. Political knowledge is highly required to be a competent democratic participant and analyze government public policy and institutions which in turn showcase well-grounded and effective judgment.

In relation to the above statement, Popkin and Dimock (2000), emphasized that citizens with low levels of political knowledge or lack of good information about politics may certainly not engage into public discussion of issues, make any meaningful judgment and also are probably not going to participate in political activities at all. Knowledge of politics and public participation are very important especially in terms of political decision making in a democratic setting. Also, political knowledge is an essential ingredient for participation in politics such as turn out for voting (Binder et al., 1971; Carpini, 2000). Thus, there is a positive relationship between political knowledge and offline political participation (Brooks, Carpini, & Keeter, 1997).

### **Interactivity with Politicians**

Apparently, because of Facebook heavy usage and technological advantage which bridges the online/offline connections through interactivity and fostering political campaign and engagement; politicians are now using it to post their profiles, share political information and also directly interact with their supporters (Conroy, 2012). Facebook demonstrates the quality of instructiveness and a medium compared to traditional media thus, it allows two-way communication rather than one-directional dissemination of information to the audience (Mayfield, 2008). However, the interactivity nature of Facebook may allow and create the process of interdependence among the users as such, interactivity may likely contribute to offline participation attitude towards politics (Lee & Cho, 2011). Therefore, interaction with political figures through Facebook may likely encourage and motivate youth to participate in an offline political activity such as attending political meetings, campaigns, or voting (Tang & Lee, 2013).

Recent literature shows that social interaction contributes positively to event participation, for instance people especially youth are more willing to honour invitation sent by someone they have already established relationship and interacted with (Tang & Lee, 2013). Thus, information that is distributed through multiplex networks and with existing established relationship and interaction via Facebook for example in which people are already connected online may likely trigger offline participation (Huang, Wang, & Yuan, 2014). Individual interaction and identity is a fundamental factor and instrumental towards invitation or influence for offline participation, thus message exchange online and the strength of social ties may influence political mobilization and participation (Marlowe, 2009; Vitak, et al., 2011).

While social media in general and Facebook in particular provides important opportunities for youth to interact with politicians and various stockholders, youth can become friends and initiate other linkages with political figures such as politicians in representative's bodies, government officials and prominent community leaders through Facebook (Tang & Lee, 2013). Consequently, youth 'friendship' and interaction with those important political figures are likely to be vital source of political information and viewpoint (Gromping, 2014). Therefore, these political figures especially politicians, grass root activists and political commentators have the tendencies of mobilizing and influencing youth to participate in offline political activities (Feezell *et al.*, 2009).

Thus, interactions with these political figures may increase political participation because political interactivity and discussions may likely stimulate interest to participate in offline political activities due to the fact that the process of interaction itself influences opinion formation (Ksiazek et al., 2014; Valenzuela Turner, 2011). Therefore, Facebook use appear as a fundamental source of political information as a result of political interactivity between youth and political figures thus, online interactivity seems to be correlated to political participation offline (Smith *et al.*, 2009; Dumitrica, 2014).

### **Facebook Information Quality**

Studies have indicated that individual personal purpose or intention of having good and reliable information can motivate people to select and use a specific media, therefore this can help in ascertain and justifying Facebook information quality as a motivating factor for youth in particular for using Facebook for offline political participation. This can be supported with the fact that youth select and use Facebook because it may satisfy their political information needs and desires, youth's social and psychological factors often mediate quality of information among them (Diemer & Li, 2011). Uses and Gratification theory for example has recently focused on motivational factors involved in social networks such as Facebook which shifted from simple information searching to active self-expression and participation in political activities (Tang & Lee, 2013). Thus, Facebook information quality is now becoming increasingly attractive predictor of participation into political affairs as it provide accurate, complete, up to date, well arranged and organized information needed by the youth (Young & Quan-Haase, 2009).

Thus, youth need Facebook quality information to experience interpersonal communication satisfaction and to seek the approval and support of political party or candidate (Leung & Lee, 2014). This however further suggest the fact that information content quality is an important determinant to offline participation and Facebook have been used to facilitate participation both online and offline political participation

Perceived Facebook information quality as earlier discussed demonstrate youth's perception of the collective content quality of Facebook information (Huang et al., 2014). Previous researches have documented that Facebook information quality can influence factors related to online political participation such as interactivity with individuals, usage intention to participate in offline politics activities such as engaging in civic or community services (Dong et al., 2010; Ellen Quintelier, 2007). This is because youth participation is often considered a significant element of a healthy democracy (Ellen Quintelier & Vissers, 2008), thus what facilitate youth's offline political participation is very important area of research to academics and political stakeholders. From the communication perspectives, the theoretical development of political participation has been focused on the influence of accurate and quality information from reliable and more interactive media which Facebook stands for because it facilitate interpersonal discussion about politics (Jung et al., 2011). However, a considerable body of research has demonstrated important effects of Facebook information quality on offline political participation (Jung et al., 2011).

Seemingly, when youth compare political parties and candidates and decides to support a particular party or politician the quality of information they will get may likely influence and help them to make an informed decision about the candidate or party (Lin, 2014) as such youth especially may actively participate in an offline political activities such going for campaign or physical voting. It may be accurate to say that Facebook appears to be well suited for promoting offline political participation due its features such as interactivity, speed, accuracy, timely, easy accessibility which Facebook information quality stands for. Further, use of Facebook information quality can build a communicative power such as capacity to foster socio-political movement (Sormanen & Dutton, 2015).



Cogburn and Vasquez, (2011) also claim that Facebook information quality is a determinant of youth's decision to use Facebook for political activities. Supporting this, a study aspect emphasis on how people especially youth may like exploit the informative, educational and political potentials of online networks site such as Facebook with content deemed political. The study emphasize and demonstrates the richness and accuracy of information available online to the general public and how the network offers information with speed and timely new freedoms to youth, government and nongovernmental organizations to spread their messages that may encourage offline participation (Hirzalla Fadi, 2011). Therefore, accurate information quality is highly influential to youth in terms of making a right political decision (Dhaha & Igale, 2013)

### **Political Interest**

Political interest is a political concept that is very significant for the emergence of democratic political identity and also serve as a crucial force for the exploration and desire to participate (Whiteley, 2005). Youth recently are so enthusiasm about events and happenings around them particularly political activities by seeking more knowledge and information about a political party and candidate. Their quest to know and learn more about political activities propels them to develop interest in politics and social issues by getting and sharing political information, willingness to follow political figures and engaging in political discussion (Kyranakis & Nurvala, 2013).

Further, there is a large consensus among scholars that among all other predictors, political interest have a strong influence in terms of motivation to participate in politics. This statement has a synergy with the work of (Moeller, Vreese, Esser, & Kunz, 2014), they supported this assertion by emphasizing that political interest is an attitude that provide a stable and sustainable outcome in politics because it often tells whether an individual may be politically active or passive. Therefore, it may be correct to say that Facebook users promote political interest and influence friends in their network are likely to participate in offline politics

In the same way, it is also found that youth declining in political interest is attributed to declining in offline political participation (Chao et al., 2012). This explains the fact that youth do not think of conventional ways of political participation such as taking part in voting exercise hence they often discard it. Consequently, Facebook is now the alternative platform of political expression and political interest appears to be a significantly related to online and offline political participation among youth (Kim, Kavanaugh, & Pérez-Quñones, 2007; Yamamoto & Kushin, 2014; Yang & DeHart, 2016). Facebook political activities such as reading and posting political opinions, interacting with politicians on Facebook and discussing politics with friends on Facebook groups may likely stimulate interest and knowledge about positive social and political issues, later facilitating participation in other online political activities and more demanding offline political activities (Vissers et al., 2012).

**Hypothesis 1:** Level of Facebook use positively influence the level of offline political participation among youth.

**Hypothesis 2:** Level of interaction with politicians positively influence the level of offline political participation among youth.

**Hypothesis 3:** Information quality positively influence the level of offline political participation among youth.

**Hypothesis 4:** Level of political interest positively influence the level of offline political participation among youth

### **Method**

Quantitative method was used as research design in both data collection and analysis stages. It is a method suitable for examining the relationship between independent variable (Facebook usage) and the dependent variable (offline political participation). Thus, this study is survey (cross-sectional) research methods. Surveys often allow for the study of people's opinion on a given issue of public interest. The justification for choosing cross-sectional survey is because the data was collected on individual characteristics (youth) at a specific point in time. Therefore, it can estimate prevalence outcome of youth political participation (Levin, 2006)

### **Respondents**

Respondents in this research are the youth comprising both males and females; in Bauchi metropolitan area aged between 18 to 35 years old as recommended by the UNESCO definition of youth. The choice of youth as the focus population is based on the fact that this age group often are using Facebook for political activities (Vissers et al., 2012). In Nigeria, youth have been in the frontline of struggle for independence and democracy, they also contribute and ensure good governance as well as demand for credible leadership in the country (National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria, 2012). Similarly, Bauchi Metropolis has the characteristic of urban area with a high population, high level of development and awareness of politics. Approximately, 70.25% are males between the ages of 18- 22. The majority of the respondents holds Diploma certificate (51.1%).

### **Measurement Instrument**

The measurement of offline political participation in this paper relied primarily on items adapted from the work of Jung, Kim and Gil de Zuniga (Jung, Kim & Zuniga, 2011). This instrument consists of political activities that youth carry out on Facebook such as sending or receiving political information on Facebook. The instrument used to measure Facebook Use includes items adapted from Ellison et al. This instrument consists of items that describes youth feelings and connection to Facebook. Interactivity with politicians was measured with the item scale adapted from the work Lee and Cho. The items described how Facebook help youth with the opportunity to interact with politicians and generate feedback from them. Information Quality was adapted from the work of Lim, to measure the quality, speed and accuracy of information on Facebook. While Political Interest was adapted from the work of

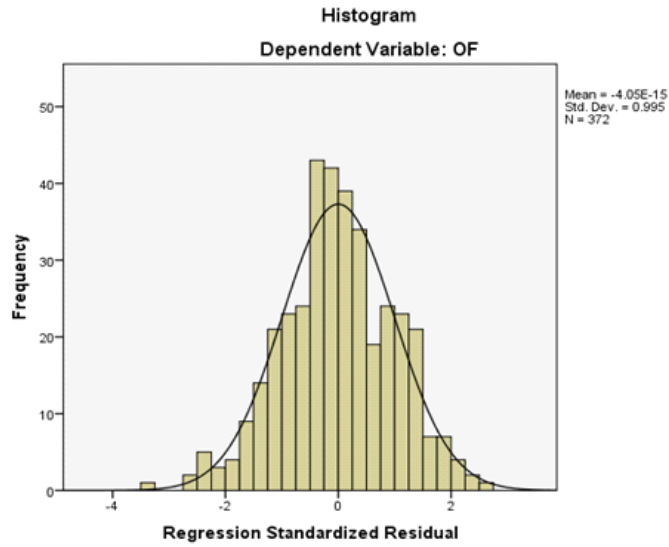
Whiteley, to measure what motivate youth want to participate in politics online. Thus, each item was measured using 5-point Likert Scale.

Prior to the actual study, we conducted pre-test study among the youth in Nigeria. The pre-test conducted sought to determine the degree of reliability, trustworthiness, dependability of the measurement used in this study. Result of the pre-test shows Cronbach's alpha for offline political participation was .87, Facebook use was .86, Interactivity was .86, Information quality was .89, and Political interest Cronbach's alpha was .88 respectively. Before testing the hypotheses, data underwent tests for normality which was conducted for each of the survey items. Tests for normality include kurtosis measures, skewness measures, and visual inspection of histograms. Most items appear to be within normality, and analysis indicates normal-shaped histograms.

## Results

Data was analyzed by using multiple regressions to test the relationship between Facebook use, interactivity with politicians, information quality, political interest and offline political participation among youth in Nigeria. Multiple regression technique was chosen because it allows researchers in social science to deal with complexity in human behaviour as adopted in previous studies (Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003; Mohamad, Bakar & Rahman, 2007). The central idea of the multiple regression method is that it is used to test the relationship between a dependent variable and two or more independent variables. Thus, by applying a multiple regression technique we can also determine specific independent variables that have a major influence on a dependent variable. The hypotheses deal with the relationship between Facebook use and offline political participation among youth respondents. Thus, a positive relationship was predicted in the hypotheses. Results of the multiple regression analysis suggest that there is a significant positive relationship between Facebook use, interactivity with politicians, quality information, political interest and offline political participation among youth ( $r = .317, p < .005$ ). Therefore, the results suggest that there is a direct relationship between Facebook use, interactivity with politicians, quality information, political interest and offline political participation.

Model of offline political participation test 4 hypotheses H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub> and H<sub>4</sub>. The significant result shows that all the 4 hypotheses are statistically significant. The hypothesized model testing indicated the results as presented below H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, and H<sub>4</sub> are supported. Thus, these hypotheses demonstrating the standard estimate were all significant ( $r^2 = .317$  and  $\beta = .458$ ) respectively. Thus, model of offline political participation fit the data statistically. Therefore, among the independent variables comprising of Facebook usage, interactivity with political figures, perceived Facebook information quality and political interest their relationship with offline political participation is statistically significant at 0.05 level. The results indicated a strong empirical evidence for H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, and H<sub>4</sub>. Thus, interactivity with political figures has the highest relationship with offline political participation with  $\beta = .265$  and t-statistics = 5.187.



**Figure 1. Histogram**

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Correlations, and Reliability of Variable**

Variables	$\alpha$	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Offline Political Participation.	.774	3.46	.62	.53**	1.000			
2. Facebook Use	.827	4.24	.53	.293*	.40**	1.000		
3. Interactivity with Politicians	.789	4.06	.66	.43**	.50**	.40**	1.000	
4. Information Quality.	.725	3.64	.61	.38**	.40**	.35**	.50**	1.000
5. Political Interest.	.776	4.10	.62	.50**	.41**	.34**	.51**	.40**

Significance \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 2. Summary of Multiple Regression for Offline Political Participation**

Variables	Expected Sign	B	t-statistics	P-value
Intercept		.46	1.92	.06
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Facebook usage	+	.20	3.85	.00**
Interactivity with political figures	+	.27	5.19	.00**
Facebook information quality	+	.12	2.35	.02**
Political interest	+	.15	2.91	.00**
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>			.32	
F-statistics (df 4, 367)			13.68	.00**
Durbin-Watson			1.83	
N			372	

**Notes:** \*\* significant at 0.05 (1-tailed), respectively; *Dependent variables* = OF, Offline political participation; *Independent variables* = FU, Facebook usage; IF, Interactivity with political figures; PQ, Facebook information quality; PI, Political interest

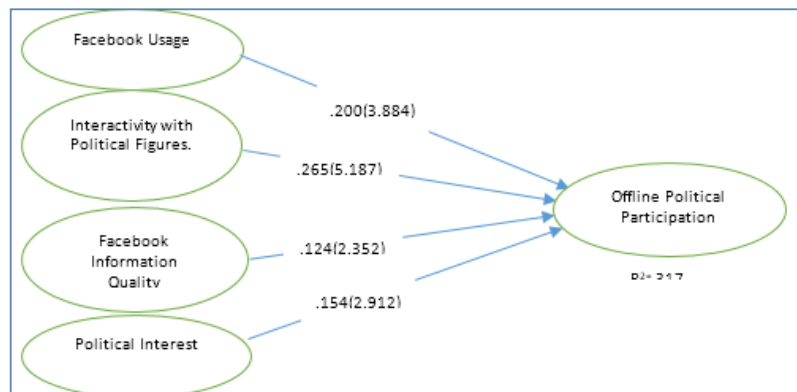
The overall pattern of results indicates a significant relationship between offline political participation and Facebook use. Results shows that Facebook use, interaction with politicians, quality information and political interest are significant predictors for offline political participation  $\beta = .46$ ,  $t$ -statistics = 1.92  $p < .05$  and  $R^2 = .317$ . These results provide support for past research Vissers and Strolle, (2014), Ksiazek, Peer and Lessard, (2014), Carlisle and Patton, (2013), as well as provide support for the current hypothesis. Therefore, the results further indicate that for Facebook use  $t$ -statistics = 1.652,  $\beta = .20$ ,  $p$ -value = .000\*\*,  $p < .05$ , Interaction with politicians  $t$ -statistics = 5.19,  $\beta = .27$ ,  $p$ -value = .00\*\*,  $p < .05$ , Information quality  $t$ -statistics = 2.35,  $\beta = .12$ ,  $p$ -value = .02\*\*,  $p < .05$ , political interest  $t$ -statistics = 2.91,  $\beta = .15$ ,  $p$ -value = .00\*\*,  $p > .05$ . Thus, interactivity with politicians have the highest significant relationship with offline youth political participation

### Discussion

This study suggests that Facebook use, interactions with politicians, quality information and political interest play an important role in influencing youth offline political participation. As can be seen in the result, Facebook use, interaction with politicians, Facebook quality information and political interest, show a significant relationship with offline political participation. This finding demonstrates an important aspect of interactions with politicians on youth offline political participation in Nigeria. Thus, for government, politicians or political party to take a meaningful decision or formulate policy in Nigeria, all components of offline political participation (Facebook use, interaction with politicians, Facebook information quality, and political interest) must be given a priority in terms of budget allocation and policy implementation. This is because they play a significant role in influencing and perhaps in determining youth offline participation. Thus, government, political stakeholders' especially political parties and candidates in Nigeria should focus more on what motivates youth to have an offline political interest so as to address youth political apathy in order to increase their



participation. Based on the analysis and outcome of the results, the following model of offline political participation was developed.



**Figure 2** Model for Offline Political Participation

### Conclusion

Bearing in mind the fact that Facebook continues to integrate in young people daily lives and that it is enthusiastically used by youth around the world, scholars also continue to examine this issue from different perspectives. Thus, this particular research added a step further in this direction. In general, the inconsistency in the findings exploring the relationship between Facebook usage and political participation attracts scholarly attention over the years. Similarly, the recent prevalent democratic transformation in Nigeria and given the unprecedented use of Facebook by the youth in the political realm of the country, signified the motivation of exploring this research.

Therefore, this research found youth political participation to be a fundamental instrument to increase a competitive advantages in political setting (Lahabou & Wok, 2013). Evidently, a more vibrant politically motivated youth are the catalyst and important segment groups to the political organizations (Dagona *et al.*, 2013). Thus, youth political participation can be perceived as an important instrument to support and enhance political organization and political parties in pursuit of strategic campaign objectives (Ahmed & Sheikh, 2013; Chan & Guo, 2013; Muntean, 2015).

It is imperative to state that offline political participation amongst youth is largely dependent on the use of Facebook because more youth are often showcasing stronger reliance on it as their online platform for securing political information they need to make an informed political decision. Hence, targeting and tailoring political messages online to the youth through Facebook and what motivate youth to develop an interest in politics should be an important factor in future campaign strategies. As youth continues to become increasingly dependent on Facebook to keep up with the demands of their socio-political lifestyle and civic engagement, it can be assumed that youth will continue to rely on online forms of social and political interaction in other to make offline commitment and engagement.

## Recommendation

To this end, this research it is recommend that employed quantitative method approach in gathering data and analysis using SPSS software. In summary, Facebook usage was found to be relevant and statistically significant to offline political participation. Nevertheless, are some limitations of this study? Firstly, this research was conducted to investigate the relationship between Facebook usage and political participation among Nigerian youth aged between 18 to 35 years. Those who may not have satisfied these eligibility conditions were excluded from the research. Thus, the results of this research could be applied only to Nigerian youth and it cannot be generalized to a larger population.

Finally, research should also be conducted to compare Nigerian youth that are Facebook members with other youth that are not Facebook members to investigate whether the use of the medium can increase political participation among them. The cross-sectional nature of this research may not account for connection among the variables thus, longitudinal studies will provide a clearer and rich picture of the mutual influence between Facebook usage and political participation

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