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Research Article

Influence of Social Media on Civic Awareness among Secondary School Students in Gusau Educational Zone, Zamfara State, Nigeria

Sule Muhammad[1], Mohammed Abdul Sarkin-Fada[2]

1. Federal University Gusau, Nigeria
2. Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Nigeria
Corresponding Author, Email: muhammadsule@fugusau.edu.ng (Sule Muhammad)

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Abstract. This study investigated the influence of social media on civic awareness among secondary school students in the Gusau Educational Zone, Zamfara State. Specifically, it examined the extent to which social media usage affects students' civic awareness, identified the types of social media platforms most commonly used for civic engagement, and assessed the relationship between the frequency of social media use and participation in civic-related activities. A descriptive-survey research design was adopted, with a population of 8,753 senior secondary school students, from which a sample of 351 was selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected through a structured and validated questionnaire and analyzed using simple linear regression, one-way

ANOVA, and Pearson correlation at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that social media usage significantly influences civic awareness, with platform type contributing to differences in civic knowledge. Additionally, a moderate positive relationship was found between the frequency of social media use and participation in civic activities. The study concludes that social media is a valuable tool for fostering civic awareness and engagement among adolescents, though effectiveness depends on platform selection, frequency of use, and digital literacy. Recommendations include promoting digital literacy, encouraging responsible social media use, and integrating platform-specific civic content to enhance students' civic participation.

Keyword: Civic Awareness, Digital Literacy, Influence, Social Media, Student Engagement.

PENDAHULUAN

Social media has become a powerful force shaping how young people access information, form opinions, and interact with civic issues. With the rapid growth of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, researchers have identified that social media can significantly influence civic awareness by exposing adolescents to political content and public affairs discussions (Kim et al., 2023). Studies show that engagement with social media is associated with increased participation in civic activities, including discussion of social issues and online advocacy, suggesting that digital platforms may serve as informal spaces for civic learning outside the classroom (Agarwal et al., 2024; Bajwa et al., 2025). However, the impact is not uniform; some scholars argue that misinformation and lack of media literacy can distort young people's understanding of civic processes, leading to superficial or misguided engagement (Muh Ali & Murdiansyah, 2025). Moreover, the type of social media platform and the nature of interactions influence the development of civic knowledge, indicating that both quantity and quality of social media use matter (Tarsidi et al., 2023). While studies in higher education contexts suggest positive correlations between social media use and civic awareness, research on secondary school populations remains limited, especially within African settings where socio-cultural dynamics may differ (Sheik Mohamed & Hermansyah, 2024; Oparinde & Adeyi, 2025).

The role of social media in shaping youth civic awareness, though outcomes vary by platform, usage, and digital skills. Saldivar (2026) found that Facebook use significantly influenced senior high school students' civic knowledge in the Philippines, with differences based on demographics and intensity of use. Similarly, Mesajon et al. (2025) reported that Portuguese adolescents following news and public affairs content had higher civic engagement, with TikTok particularly effective in raising social awareness. In Kenya, Achieng and Wanjala (2023) showed that frequent engagement with civic content online predicted growth in civic attitudes and intentions to participate in community activities. Conversely, Durodola and Oso

(2025) found that Nigerian secondary students' high social media use did not ensure accurate civic knowledge due to misinformation, highlighting the need for critical digital literacy. Supporting this, Lee and Kim (2024) demonstrated that digital literacy mediated the relationship between social media use and civic awareness among South Korean students. Additional research indicates that digital participation fosters social identity formation, which in turn influences democratic engagement (Suman, 2025), and that online spaces can serve as platforms for mobilization and activism (Alam, 2025). Studies during the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized social media as a key context for youth civic engagement and community building (Wilf et al., 2023; Soucie et al., 2025).

However, political participation also shows that attitudes and psychological engagement predict online civic activity (Juried Research, 2025), while thematic analyses reveal that adolescents seek information and connection online, affecting how civic content is interpreted (Alluhidan et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings demonstrate that social media can enhance civic awareness and engagement, but effectiveness depends on platform, content quality and digital literacy. Studies have examined the effects of social media on youths' civic awareness, highlighting its significance for adolescents' engagement. Erdoğan and Tuncer (2024) found that Turkish high school students' use of platforms like Instagram and Twitter significantly predicted civic knowledge and discussions of social issues, even after controlling for demographics. Similarly, Mendes and Gouveia (2025) reported that Portuguese adolescents who actively followed news and public affairs content on social media had higher civic engagement scores, with platform type influencing the degree of engagement. In Kenya, Achieng and Wanjala (2023) showed that frequent engagement with civic content on social media predicted growth in civic attitudes and intentions to participate in community activities over time.

Furthermore, not all effects are positive. Durodola and Oso (2025) found that high social media use among Nigerian secondary students did not guarantee accurate civic knowledge due to misinformation, highlighting the importance of critical digital skills. Supporting this, Lee and Kim (2024) demonstrated that digital literacy mediated the relationship between social media use and civic awareness among South Korean students, indicating that skill in evaluating online information is crucial. Consequently, these studies suggest that social media can enhance civic awareness and participation, but outcomes depend on platform type, content quality, and digital literacy. Importantly, few studies focus on secondary school students in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for research in the Gusau Educational Zone. Social media is a major source of information for adolescents, but its impact on civic awareness among secondary school students in the Gusau Educational Zone is unclear. Factors such as platform type, frequency of use, and digital literacy may influence how effectively students engage with civic content. Limited research exists

on how students use social media for civic purposes in this region, creating a gap that this study seeks to address.

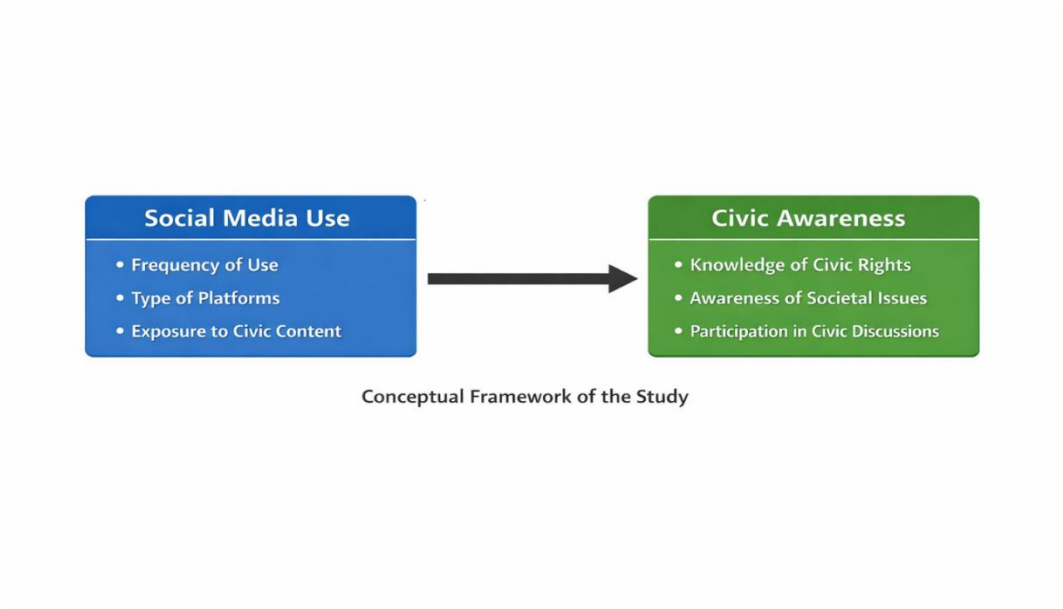
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), originally developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973). The theory explains that media users are active participants who deliberately choose specific media platforms to satisfy their information, social interaction, and personal development needs. In the context of social media, scholars argue that individuals use platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to obtain information, interact with others, and participate in discussions on societal issues (Parent, 2023; Wang & Lee, 2024). These motivations influence how users consume and interpret online content. Studies further indicate that social media engagement can provide informational and social gratifications that enhance awareness of public and civic issues among users (Wibowo, 2021; Raji et al., 2020). In relation to this study, the theory explains that secondary school students actively use social media to access information and engage with peers, which may contribute to the development of their civic awareness and understanding of societal issues.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework explains the relationship between social media use and civic awareness among secondary school students. In this study, social media use is the independent variable, measured through frequency of use, type of platforms, and exposure to civic-related content. Civic awareness is the dependent variable and refers to students' knowledge and understanding of civic rights, responsibilities, and societal issues. The framework assumes that increased interaction with social media platforms may influence and enhance students' civic awareness.

Figure 1:
The diagram of conceptual framework



Conceptual Framework of the Study

The diagram shows that social media use influences civic awareness among secondary school students. Increased exposure to social media may improve students' knowledge of civic rights and societal issues.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the extent to which social media usage affects civic awareness among secondary school students in Gusau Educational Zone.
2. To identify the types of social media platforms most commonly used by secondary school students for civic information and engagement in Gusau Educational Zone.]
3. To assess the relationship between frequency of social media use and students' participation in civic-related activities within Gusau Educational Zone.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does social media usage influence civic awareness among secondary school students in Gusau Educational Zone?
2. What types of social media platforms are most commonly used by secondary school students for civic information and engagement?
3. What is the relationship between the frequency of social media use and students' participation in civic-related activities?

Hypotheses

1. **H_{01}:** Social media usage has no significant influence on civic awareness among secondary school students in Gusau Educational Zone.
2. **H_{02}:** There is no significant difference in civic awareness based on the type of social media platforms used by secondary school students.

3. **H_{03}:** There is no significant relationship between the frequency of social media use and students' participation in civic-related activities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-survey research design to investigate the influence of social media on civic awareness among secondary school students in the Gusau Educational Zone. The population comprised 8,753 senior secondary school students, from which a sample of 351 was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across schools, class levels, and gender. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire title "Social Media Usage and Civic Awareness" measuring demographic information, social media usage, platform types, frequency of engagement, and civic awareness. The instrument was validated by experts and found reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. Data analysis involved simple linear regression to examine the influence of social media usage on civic awareness, one-way ANOVA to assess differences based on platform type, and Pearson correlation to explore the relationship between frequency of use and civic participation. Analyses were conducted at a 0.05 significance level using SPSS. Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation and confidentiality, were strictly observed throughout the study.

RESULTS

Table 1

Simple Linear Regression Analysis Showing the Influence of Social Media Usage on Civic Awareness among Secondary School Students in Gusau Educational Zone

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	1.118	0.140	-	7.99	0.000
Social Media Usage	0.552	0.037	0.618	14.91	0.000

The simple linear regression analysis shows that social media usage has a significant positive influence on civic awareness among secondary school students in Gusau Educational Zone. The regression coefficient ($B = 0.552$, $t = 14.91$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that an increase in social media usage is associated with an increase in students' civic awareness. The R^2 value of 0.382 suggests that approximately 38.2% of the variance in civic awareness is explained by social media usage, confirming that social media is an important predictor of civic knowledge and engagement. Therefore, H_{01} is rejected.

Table 2

One-Way ANOVA Showing the Difference in Civic Awareness Based on Type of Social Media Platforms Used

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Group	17.86	3	5.95	4.18	0.006

Within Group	494.63	347	1.43	4.18	0.006
Total	**512.49**	**350**			

The One-Way ANOVA reveals a significant difference in civic awareness based on the type of social media platforms used F (3, 347) = 4.18, p = 0.006). This implies that the platform a student primarily uses (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok) affects their level of civic awareness. Post-hoc tests would further identify which specific platforms contribute to higher civic awareness. Hence, H_{02} is rejected, indicating that platform type influences civic engagement.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation Analysis Showing the Relationship between Frequency of Social Media Use and Participation in Civic Activities

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Frequency of Social Media Usage	351	3.82	0.94	0.573	0.000
Participation in Civic Activities	351	3.45	0.87	0.573	0.000

The Pearson correlation analysis shows a moderate positive relationship between the frequency of social media use and students' participation in civic activities (r = 0.573, p = 0.000). This indicates that students who use social media more frequently are more likely to engage in civic-related activities, such as discussions, community initiatives, or awareness campaigns. Therefore, H_{03} is rejected, suggesting that frequent social media engagement promotes active civic participation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results from Table 1 indicate that social media usage significantly predicts civic awareness among secondary school students in the Gusau Educational Zone (B = 0.552, t = 14.91, p < 0.05). The R^2 value of 0.382 suggests that approximately 38.2% of the variance in civic awareness is explained by social media usage, confirming the strong predictive role of digital platforms in shaping students' understanding of civic rights and responsibilities. This aligns with previous studies by Kim et al. (2023), who observed that social media exposure to news and public affairs content fosters civic engagement among adolescents. Similarly, Agarwal et al. (2024) and Bajwa et al. (2025) emphasize that social media can provide informal educational spaces that enhance awareness of societal issues. The finding confirms that secondary school students actively use social media not only for entertainment but also to access civic information, supporting the tenets of the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973), which posits that users deliberately seek media to satisfy informational and social needs.

Table 2 demonstrates a significant difference in civic awareness based on the type of social media platform used F (3, 347) = 4.18, p = 0.006). This finding suggests

that certain platforms are more effective in promoting civic knowledge among students. Studies support this observation; for example, Saldivar (2026) found that Facebook usage among senior high school students in the Philippines was associated with higher civic knowledge, whereas Mesajon et al. (2025) noted that TikTok was particularly effective for raising social awareness among adolescents in Portugal. Similarly, Mendes and Gouveia (2025) argue that platform-specific features, such as content type and interaction modes, influence the degree of civic engagement. The results highlight that platform selection matters, indicating that educators and policymakers should consider platform characteristics when designing digital civic education interventions.

The Pearson correlation in Table 3 ($r = 0.573$, $p = 0.000$) shows a moderate positive relationship between the frequency of social media use and participation in civic activities. This suggests that students who engage more frequently with social media are likely to participate in civic discussions, community initiatives, or awareness campaigns. The finding resonates with studies by Achieng and Wanjala (2023) in Kenya, who reported that frequent engagement with civic content online predicted growth in civic attitudes and participation intentions. However, Durodola and Oso (2025) caution that high usage does not automatically guarantee accurate civic knowledge due to misinformation, highlighting the critical role of digital literacy in mediating effective engagement (Lee & Kim, 2024). Consequently, while frequent social media use fosters civic participation, complementary strategies to enhance digital literacy are essential for ensuring meaningful civic engagement among students.

CONCLUSION

The study established that social media usage significantly influences civic awareness among secondary school students in the Gusau Educational Zone. The type of social media platform and the frequency of use were found to affect students' knowledge of civic rights, responsibilities, and participation in civic activities. Findings indicate that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok serve as important channels for civic engagement, while frequent engagement enhances participation in discussions and community initiatives. However, the effectiveness of social media in promoting civic awareness depends on students' ability to critically evaluate information, highlighting the importance of digital literacy. Overall, social media emerges as a valuable tool for fostering civic knowledge and participation among adolescents in this context.

Recommendations

1. Schools should implement digital literacy education to equip students with skills to critically evaluate online civic content and reduce misinformation.

2. Educators and policymakers should encourage the use of platforms proven to enhance civic awareness, tailoring content to adolescents' preferred social media channels.
3. Students should be guided on ethical and responsible social media engagement, emphasizing constructive civic participation.
4. Schools and community organizations should create initiatives that encourage regular online discussions and activities related to civic issues.

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