Students' Perceptions of Social Media as a Tool for Achieving Good Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

The new means of sharing and disseminating of information, which is popularly known as social media, has enormous importance and contributes significantly towards societal development in many aspects. Social media is always used by people in Nigeria for many different purposes, especially among the youths to express their views on how they are governed. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to look at the contribution of social media in achieving good governance and accountability in Nigeria with a particular focus on the students of Mass Communication, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The study has the following objectives: To examine the contribution of social media towards achieving good governance in Nigeria and to know if social media usage in Nigeria leads to transparency and accountability in governance. The study adopted survey method and used simple random sampling technique as a means of selecting the sample. The findings of the study indicated that the potential of social media has not been fully utilized by both government and social media users in Nigeria particularly in the aspect of governance. The study recommended that both government and social media users in Nigeria should harness the potential of social media, particularly in the aspect of governance. The theory adopted by the study was Uses and Gratification theory.

***Keywords**: Social Media, Accountability, Good Governance, Transparency*

Introduction

The advent of social media has improved communication, sharing of knowledge, education as well as governance in many countries of the world. Unwin (2012) points out that the creation of new forms of digital social media during the first decade of the 21st century has transformed the ways in which many people communicate and share information.According to Jimada (2015), bloggers and social media activists have become the new independent media by providing the much-needed space in the demand for accountability and open governance.

The social media, which is part of the new media, has revolutionized the perception and attitude of many youths today. It also gives a lot of opportunities to our younger generations because of its interactive nature. Now, youths are actively participating in the governance process of their countries by contributing to discussions on many social media platforms. This means the social media serves a watchdog function.Browne (2015) notes that the social media tools have high potential for bringing about political and social change, through enhancing opportunities for political participation and opening new spaces for active citizenship. According to Jimada (2019), social media provides higher levels of participation for younger people.

Inline with the above, Yunusa (2013) notes that social media is a form of electronic communication which facilitates interaction based on certain interests and characteristics. Social media are media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing technique. Social media use web-based technologies to initiate social dialogues. They support the democratization of knowledge and information and transform people from content consumers to content producers. Social media are elements of the new media and have become the highest activity on the Internet.

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Discussion Forums and Blogs could change personal discussions and individual opinions into a topic of public debate and secure support of high ranking officials (UNDP, 2011 in Hussain, 2014). Hussain (2014) further notes that social media allows citizens not only to influence public debate, public opinion and public policy, but, on a more direct level, also to get the chance to tackle matters of consequences, for example to address deficiencies in infrastructure projects, improve project planning and uncover cases of corruption.

According to Strand in Hussain (2014), transparency means that citizens are being provided more direct and more easily available access to information on the activities of the government. Citizens can exercise their civil and political rights in a better way when

they can access information on government performance. This means that they can assess and assert their influence on public policy making, monitor the expenditures of the government and claim accountability. Access to information and transparency are therefore basic conditions for democratic governments and serve as a key tool to fight against corruption.

Social media platforms have emerged for more than 30 years and that is why some scholars feel that social media is no longer new because people have been using it for many years; thus it become mainstream. Carton (2009) in Yunusa (2014) highlight that 'Social media is not really 'new'. While it has only recently become part of the mainstream culture and the business world, people have been using the digital media for networking, socializing and information gathering almost exactly like now for over 30 years.

The history of social media can be traced back to the period when telegraph/telephone was invented for social interaction among people. Click (1993) in Yunusa (2013) defines social media as a concept that has evolved into sophisticated technology. The concept of social media can be dated back to the use of the analogue telephone for interaction.Social media according to some scholars is not so much a media but a platform. It is a phenomenon that has transformed interaction and communication of individuals throughout the world, has impacted many aspects of human communication and has become a daily practice in some users' lives (Edosomwan et al., 2011).

Dewing (2012) sees social media as referring to a wide range of internet based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute to user-created content or join online community. According to Dewing (2012), the following are the major attributes of social media: persistence, replicability, searchability and accessibility.

Therefore, social media technologies provide scale and enable anyone to reach a global audience instantly and simultaneously. This is because social media tools are generally available to

anyone at little or no cost. Social media does not require specialized skills and rigorous training; anyone can operate this means of production. Social media is capable of virtually providing instantaneous response; only the participants determine any delay in response. Social media contents are also transient; therefore, once created changes can be made easily and almost instantaneously by comments or editing.

Good governance on the other hand has been discussed by many scholars. Kaufmann (2005) says governance means the tradition and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997) defines governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. Hussain (2014, p.9) notes that:

> one of the fundamental principles of good governance is transparency, which ensures that the decision-making and thesubsequent due process monitoring and implementation of this information is freely available and directly accessible by all stakeholders. The information provided should be of the highest quality and presented in a way that is easily understood by end users, enabling them to actively participate in the governance process.

Trust and engagement of citizens is considered a prerequisite to ensure accountability and good governance. Without citizens' participation, democratic governments cannot function properly. Therefore, access to information and transparency are considered the backbone for democratic governments as well as important tools for fighting corruption.

Statement of the Problem

The advent of social media has revolutionized many facets of our lives. This can be seen in the way we interact and communicate

with oneanother. As highlighted by Okeke, Faith and Ijeoma (2016, p. 1),"the emergence of social media is a major phenomenon in the 21st century that has transformed the interaction, communication and sharing of information between people throughout the world". The social media has affected our political and democratic systems in many ways, particularly the aspect of governance. Farrell and Arezer (2008) in Okeke et al. (2016) says social media web is ripe with opportunities for candidates and office holders alike. As a result, the potential of social media appears to be most promising in political context as they can be an enabler for more participation and democracy. It is against this backdrop that this studyexamines the contributions of social media as a tool for achieving good governance in Nigeria, with a particular focus on the students of Mass Communication, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria**.**

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are

(1) To examine the contribution of social media towards achieving good governance in Nigeria.
(2) To ascertain if social media usage in Nigeria leads to transparency and accountability in governance.
(3) To determine the best way social media can be used to achieve good governance in Nigeria.

Research Questions

(1) What is the contribution of social media towards achieving good governance in Nigeria?
(2) Does social media usage in Nigeria lead to transparency and accountability in governance?
(3) What is the best way social media can be used to achieve good governance in Nigeria?

Literature Review

Unwin (2012) in a study noted that the creation of new forms of digital social media during the first decade of the 21st century has transformed the ways in which many people communicate and share information. However, the effects that the emergence of social media platforms has had on political processes remain

controversial and insufficiently understood. There is a strong will to believe that these social media are indeed making political processes more democratic, and yet the evidence does not always support such assertions. The author highlights three important issues:

(1) The ambibalance in approaches to the role of social media in political processes, particularly with respect to the character of democracies.
(2) The impacts of social media on the engagement of the poorest and most marginalized in political processes.
(3) The importance for governments to enable all their citizens to have the opportunities to participate in these new forms of political engagement.

Banday and Masood (2013) in a study analyzed current use of social media and their promising advantages for e-governance in government organizations. The study highlights potential issues related to security and privacy of individuals, employees, infrastructure and data that impede successful implementation of social media for governance. It examines draft government of India Framework for embedding social media in organizational structure and examines issued guidelines for platform to be used, authorization to engage on behalf of government organizations, scope and existence of such engagement, etc. The study compares these guidelines with similar guidelines of some other nations in terms of employees' access, account management, acceptable use, employee conduct, content, security, legal issues and citizens' conduct and enumerates its merits, demerits and scope for further improvements.

Hussain (2014) examined several models of social media use to enhance public transparency and accountability. The study shows how online information sharing technologies and social media (forums, blog platforms, social networking) enabled individuals and groups of civic activists to disseminate information about corruption in Gilgit-Baltistan. The study discovered several corruption cases exposed by the citizens and activists through Facebook.

Mishal and Abu-Shanab (2015) in a study noted that social media became a huge virtual community, with highly interactive and collaborative environment among its members. The study indicates that governments realized that more and more of their citizens are present over social networks, not over governments' websites. The study takes Facebook as one of social media applications and builds a framework for measuring communication success over social networks. The model according to the researchers proposes transparency, participation, collaboration and comfort which will lead to communication success. The model also assumes that the posted topic will influence communication success. Finally, the researchers proposed indicators and metrics to measure factors proposed in the model.

Okeke et al. (2016) in a study exploredthe extent of youth involvement with the social media for engineering process. The study discovered that the political campaigns through the new media had significant effect on the electorate's decision-making and participation in Nigerian elections. The study recommends the embracing of social media for successive political campaigns that grant the electorate the interactive opportunity with political candidates.

Ojenike, Adedokun, Odugbemi and Ojenike (2016) in a study explored the nexus between media and governance, media and sustainable development and interrelationship among media, governance and sustainable development. The study reveals that no direct casual link could be established among media role, good governance and sustainable development. The findings of the study show that if media is effectively positioned, it can enhance good governance through disclosure and exposure of governments' shady practices, publicizing citizens' needs and requirements, presentation of impacts of government policies and action through media outlets.

Jimada (2019) examined the issue of internet freedom and the role of the social media, the public sphere of accountability in

governance in Nigeria. He noted that social media has provided a platform for citizens-state interaction in the public sphereand thatit provides higher levels of participation for younger people and an avenue for women who have not been very active and vocal with a voice to demand for accountability. He indicated that recent studies suggest that internet freedom has declined in most countries because more and more governments are targeting the social media and communication Apps that aid in the spread of information, most especially those dealing with antigovernment protests and the demand for accountability in governance.

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted by this study is Uses and Gratification Theory. This is a popular approach to understanding Mass Communication. The theory places emphasis more on the consumer or audience, instead of the actual message itself by asking "what people do with media", rather than "what media do to people" (Katz, 1956). It assumes members of the audience are not passive, but take an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. Research in recent times has looked at social networking services, personal and subject based blogs, and internet forums put together to study the Uses and Gratification in posting social content. However, it should be noted that sometimes audiences misuse the available opportunities they have in the media to their disadvantage, especially in the case of social media usage among different groups of young people, e.g sending and receiving phonographic pictures, sexual harassment, data theft, etc.

Tanta, Mihovilovic and Sablic (2014) notes that in its early stage of development (around 1950s-1980s) the approach focused on traditional media- radio, newspaper and television (some theorists studied film and book usage as well). In the internet era the theory gained new momentum and significance. Katz, Blumler and Guravitchpoint out five basic assumptions of the Uses and Gratification Theory: "1. The audience is active and its media use is goal oriented; 2. The initiative in linking need gratification to a specific medium choice rests with the audience member; 3. The media compete with other resources for need satisfaction; 4.

People have enough self-awareness of their media use, interests, and motives to be able to provide researchers with an accurate picture of that use; 5. Value judgments of media content can only be assessed by the audience".

Research Methodology

The method adopted by this study was survey. Survey method according toWimmer and Dominick (2006) requires careful planning and execution, and the research must take into account a wide variety of decisions and problems. The population of the study comprises all the undergraduate students of Mass Communication, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, who were divided based on stratafrom 100 level to 400 level. The total population was estimated at 944 by the former examination officer of the department, Aminu Muhammad Abdullahi (2019). This population was chosen to give the study a focus and to avoid too wide a scope and the researcher decided to focus on the students of Mass Communication because it was assumed thata majority of them are active on social media.Wimmer and Dominick (2006) further explain that in many situations, however, an entire population cannot be examined due to time and resource constraints.

The study also adopted simple random sampling technique as a means of selecting the sample and the sample size was estimated at94.4% using 10% from the total population, which was rounded off to 95 students.Maikaba (2015) notes that using 10% from a population can serve as minimum sample size for a study.Gay (1987) also notes that a sample of 10% of the population is considered minimum. The study also adopted questionnaire as the instrument of data collection, and 95 questionnaires were distributed and filled by the students. However, only 91 were returned. The research instrument was tested using some samples of the questionnaires which were not part of the study sample and served as pilot for the study.

Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

Table 1: **Respondents Social Media Usage**

Responses	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	90	98.9%
No	1	1.1%
Total	**91**	**100%**

Table 1 shows that 90 respondents (98.9%) said that they use social media, while only 1 respondent (1.1%) said no.

Table 2: **Years theRespondents spent using Social Media**

Responses	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Less than a year	3	3.3%
Between 1-2 years	7	7.7%
2 years and above	81	89%
Total	**91**	**100%**

Table 2 shows that 3 respondents (3.3%) said they started using social media in less than a year; 7 respondents (7.7%) said between 1-2 years while 81 respondents (89%) said between 2 years and above.

Table 3: Social Media Platform patronizedmost by Respondents

Responses	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Facebook	41	45%
WhatsApp	38	41.8%
Twitter	6	6.6%
Others specify	6	6.6%
Total	**91**	**100%**

Table 3 shows that 41 respondents (45%) said they patronized Facebook the most, 38 respondents (41.8%) patronized WhatsAppthe most, 6 respondents (6.6%) patronized Twitter the most, while 6 respondents (6.6%) patronized other social media platforms apart from the ones listed above. This shows that a majority of the respondents are Facebook users with 45%, followed by WhatsApp with 41.8%.

Table 4: **Respondents' Reasons for using Social Media**

Responses	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
To express my views on governance	---------	----------
For education	13	14.2%
For information	44	48.4%
For socialization	32	35.2%
Others specify	2	2.2%
Total	**91**	**100%**

Table 4 shows that 44 respondents (48.4%) use social media for information, 32respondents (35.2%) use it for socialization, 13 respondents (14.2%) use it for education, while only 2 respondents (2.2%) use it for other purposes. This shows that a majority of the respondents use social media for information with 48.4% and no one uses it to express his/her views on governance.

Table 5: **Social Media has helped in achieving Good Governance in Nigeria**.

Responses	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Strongly agree	6	6.6%
Agree	42	46.1%
Disagree	26	28.6%
Strongly disagree	6	6.6%
Undecided	11	12.1%
Total	**91**	**100%**

Table 5 shows that 6 respondents (6.6%) strongly agreed that social media has helped in achieving good governance in Nigeria. 42 respondents (46.1) also agreed to the above opinion. 26 respondents (28.6%) disagreed and 6 respondents (6.6%) strongly disagreed, while 11 respondents (12.1%) were undecided. This shows that a majority of the respondents agreed that social media has helped in achieving good governance in Nigeria, with 46.1%.

Table 6: Social Media Users in Nigeria freely express their views on how they are governed, which leads to Transparency and Accountability in Governance.

Responses	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Strongly agree	12	13.2%

Agree	27	29.6%
Disagree	43	47.3%
Strongly disagree	4	4.4%
Undecided	5	5.5%
Total	**91**	**100%**

Table 6 shows that 12 respondents (13.2%) strongly agreed that social media users in Nigeria freely express their views on how they are governed which leads to transparency and accountability in governance.27 respondents (29.6%) agreed to the above opinion.As many as 43 respondents (47.3%) disagreed with the above opinion and 4 respondents (4.4%) strongly disagreed with the opinion, while 5 respondents (5.5%) were undecided. Surprisingly, unlike the immediatelypreceding responses, the results of this table show a contrary discovery because many of therespondents do not agree that social media in Nigeria help them to express their views on how they are governed which will ultimately lead to transparency and accountability in governance. This means the respondents agreed that social media can help in achieving good governance but a majority of them feel that their right to freely express their opinions on how they are governed was denied.

Table 7: How would you rate the Contribution of Social Media in achieving Good Governance in Nigeria?

Responses	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Poor	9	9.9%
Fair	30	32.7%
Average	27	29.7%
Good	17	18.7%
Very good	8	8.8%
Total	**91**	**100%**

Table 7 shows that 9 respondents (9.9%) rated the contribution of social media in achieving good governance in Nigeria as poor.30 respondents(32.7%) rated it fair.27 respondents (29.7%) rated it average.17 respondents (18.7%) rated it good while 8 respondents (8.8%) rated it very good. This shows that a majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the contribution of social media in achieving good governance in Nigeria is not appreciable

because the highest percentage is fair (32.9%) followed by average (29.7%).

Table 8: **Suggest the best way Social Media can be used to achieve Good Governance in Nigeria**

Responses	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Government polices/programmes should be publicized and citizens should be allowed to express their views freely on governance	44	48.3%
There should be a new social media platform where government officials and citizens will engage in interactive discussions on government programmes and policies	11	12.1%
Citizens should be enlightened on how best to use social media for governance	9	9.9%
Social media should be regulated by government and National Assembly	6	6.6%
No response	21	23.1%
Total	**91**	**100%**

Table 8 shows that 44 respondents (48.3%) suggested that government policies/programmes should be publicized and citizens should be allowed to express their views freely on governance. 11 respondents (12.1%) suggested that there should be a new social media platform where government officials and citizens will engage in interactive discussions on government

policies/programmes. 9 respondents (9.9%) suggested that citizens should be enlightened on how best to use social media particularly in the aspect of governance. 6 respondents (6.6%) suggested that social media should be regulated by government and National Assembly by enacting laws guiding the use of social media. However, 21 respondents (23.1%) didnot suggest anything.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question one: What is the contribution of social media towards achieving good governance in Nigeria?

To answer this question, as many as 44 respondents (48.4%) as shown in table 4 indicated that their main reason for using social media is for information and not a single respondent indicated governance as his/her main reason of using social media. But surprisingly, as many as 42 respondents (46.1%) in table 5 agreed that social media has helped in achieving good governance in Nigeria. Table 7 almost shows a coincidence between those who rated the contribution of social media in achieving good governance as fair (32.7%) and those who rated it average (29.7%). The findings show that both government and social media users in Nigeria are not actually using social media platforms to facilitate good governance in Nigeria. This clearly shows that a lot needs to be done to call the attention of government and social media users in Nigeria to use social media in the aspect of governance. This will lead to accountability and transparency, which will ultimately translate to good governance in Nigeria.

This could probably be as a result of fear of government reprisal among the social media users in Nigeria. In line with this, Jimada (2019) notes that recent studies suggest that internet freedom has declined in most countries because more and more governments are targeting the social media and communication Apps that aid in the spread of information, most especially those dealing with antigovernment protests and the demand for accountability in governance. This result also contradicts the notion of Uses and Gratification Theory which says “the audience members are not passive, but take an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives”.

Research Question two: Does Social Media Usage in Nigeria lead to Transparency and Accountability in Governance?
To answer this question, table 6 indicates that as many as 43 respondents (47.3%) disagreed to the statement in the questionnaire which says "social media users in Nigeria freely express their views on how they are governed which leads to transparency and accountability in governance". This clearly shows that social media usage in Nigeria does not lead to transparency and accountability in governance because social media users cannot freely express their views on governance. This is also against the fundamental human rights for all citizens in Nigeria as contained in the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as Amended.

The results of this study contradict the findings of a study conducted by Hussain (2014) where he noted that online information sharing technologies and social media enabled individuals and groups of civic activists to disseminate information about corruption in GilgitBaltistan. The study discovered several corruption cases exposed by citizens and activists through Facebook. Similarly, this result also contradicts the first assumption of Uses and Gratification Theory as pointed out by Katz, Blumler and Guravitch that the audience is active and its media use is goal-oriented. This clearly shows that the audience is not active because they cannot actively and freely express themselves on governance.

Research Question three: What is the best way Social Media can be used to achieve Good Governance in Nigeria?
To answer this question, table 8 indicates that as many as 44 respondents(48.3%) suggested that government policies/programmes should be publicized through social media platforms and citizens should be allowed to express their views freely on governance. According to them, this is the best way social media can be used to achieve good governance in Nigeria. This also shows that the government is not fully harnessing the potential of social media platforms to make sufficient publicity

about its policies/programmes to its citizens. The findings, on the other hand, also indicate that social media users in Nigeria have fear in their mind, which hinder them from expressing their opinions on governance, which is part of their fundamental human rights.

In line with this, Ojenike, et al. (2016) suggest that if media is effectively positioned, it can enhance good governance through disclosure and exposure of governments' shady practices, publicizing citizens' needs and requirements, presentation of impacts of government policies and action through media outlets.

Conclusion

This study concluded that the potential of social media have not been fully utilized by both government and social media users in Nigeria particularly in the aspect of governance, as a majority of the respondents indicate that they use social media for general information. Consequently, social media usage in Nigeria does not translate to transparency and accountability in governance because the users cannot freely express their views on governance.

Recommendations

(1) The government should harness the potential of social media platforms by making sufficient publicities about its policies/programmes to its citizens. Therefore, the government shouldnot rely only on the conventional media in reaching its publics.
(2) Social media users in Nigeria need more orientation on how best to use social media particularly in the aspect of governance. They need to know that social media platforms are not only meant for information seeking or socialization, it can be used to achieve good governance in Nigeria by exposing corrupt government officials and substandard projects which could bring about transparency and accountability in governance.
(3) The executive, the legislature and the judiciary should do everything possible to encourage freedom of expression as this

study indicates that many social media users cannot freely express their views on governance.

(4) There should be a new social media platform where government officials and citizens will come together and engage in interactive discussions on government policies/programmes.

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