A Critique of the Impact of Social Media on Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

The impact of social media on governance in Nigeria has become a focal point of scholarly and practical inquiry in recent years. Nigeria, the most populous African state with a burgeoning digital landscape, has witnessed a transformation in its governance dynamics owing to the pervasive influence of social media platforms. Social media has emerged as a potent tool for citizen engagement, political mobilization, and information dissemination in Nigeria. It has enabled citizens to voice their opinions, hold leaders accountable, and participate in democratic processes more actively than ever before. However, the impact of social media on governance in Nigeria is not without challenges. The dissemination of misinformation, hate speech, and fake news poses significant threats to political stability and social cohesion. The unchecked spread of rumours and inflammatory content on social media platforms has fueled ethnic tensions, religious conflicts, and political polarization in the country. Thus, the paper explores the pros and cons of social media on governance in Nigeria and investigate the nexus between governance and social media in Nigeria with the aid of Technological Determinism as a theoretical framework. Adopting a qualitative approach with the use of secondary data sources such as academic journals, government reports, and media reports, the study critically analyse the impact of social media on governance in Nigeria. The study finds that social media has democratized access to information in Nigeria. The study recommends the implementation of specific laws and regulations that govern social media usage to ensure accountability and responsible behaviour online. Meanwhile, on the part of the Nigerian authorities, the study recommends collaborating with social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to develop and enforce community guidelines that can help mitigate the spread of harmful content.

Keywords: Nigeria, Governance, Social Media, Information

Introduction

Since the beginning of the millennium, social media has played a pivotal role in the dissemination of information within modern societies (Luttrell, & Wallace, 2021). Its significance extends to fostering interactive dialogues for consensus-building in governance processes. The influence of social media, including news platforms, has evolved into a potent check on governmental authority. The proliferation

of diverse social media platforms, coupled with their widespread use among citizens, facilitates more accessible interaction between the government and its constituents. In today's globalized world, social media stands as a powerful force, serving as a primary platform where various interest groups converge to form consensus and reach agreements on political, social, and economic issues, irrespective of geographical boundaries. This phenomenon gained prominence with the widespread availability of the Internet, ushering in the era of the Network Society.

The consequential impact of social media's power and influence is evident in historical events such as the political crisis that rocked the United States at the aftermath of the Presidential elections between Donald Trump and Joe Biden and the federal government's ban on Twitter in Nigeria. The effects of social media are inherently dual, with both positive and negative implications, contingent on the perspectives they align with (Turel, & Qahri- Saremi, 2023). Critics argue that the drawbacks of social media in the governance process include the additional costs associated with employing information technology for gathering data, organizing political events, staging civil protests, advocating for economic and social reforms, and holding the elite accountable. Nonetheless, the overarching influence of social media remains undeniable in shaping the dynamics of contemporary governance and public discourse.

Social media plays a pivotal role in fostering and advancing governance by enhancing accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and equality within the governance framework (Sari, 2023). Through mobile connectivity facilitated by social media platforms, accountability, responsiveness, and transparency have experienced a notable surge. Social media has evolved into a vigilant observer of governmental activities, as it facilitates easy access to a wealth of government-related information, fostering citizen consent and consensus. Information regarding legislative proceedings, executive decisions, court rulings, governmental policies, budgets, recruitment processes, and services is now more readily available to the public, thereby promoting transparency and accountability in governance.

The widespread adoption of social media has catalyzed a significant shift in public discourse, particularly through social movements addressing issues affecting both specific communities and the populace at large. For instance, social media platforms have enabled diaspora communities, such as the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), to actively engage and voice their perspectives on developments within Nigeria's southeast region, so also is the Oduduwa movement in predominantly southwest region of Nigeria. Moreover, social media has served as a platform for highlighting and addressing various forms of insecurity across political, economic, and social spheres within Nigeria (Adeoti, 2023). The amplification of these issues on social media platforms has not only raised awareness domestically but has also garnered international attention, underscoring the interconnectedness of political, economic, and social stability within and beyond Nigeria's borders. Social media functions as a platform for exerting communicative influence, addressing issues of poor leadership, unjust demands, and

governmental oppression through the consensus and agreement of the majority of the populace. Additionally, from the government's perspective, social media serves as a tool for monitoring the pulse of public opinion and gathering intelligence on both domestic dissent and external threats (Adeoti, 2023). A prime illustration is the prelude to the End Sars Movement in Nigeria, during which the government utilized social media to anticipate and track the protests. The dissemination of footage depicting the actions of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) on social networking sites sparked widespread demonstrations throughout Nigeria. Consequently, the significance of social media in fostering consensus and consent in governance, particularly within democratic frameworks, cannot be overstated or disregarded.

Problem Statement

In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed a dramatic increase in social media usage, with platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram becoming essential tools for information dissemination and public discourse. This surge raises critical questions about the effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of governance in the digital age. Social media provides a space for citizens to voice their opinions, mobilize for causes, and hold public officials accountable, potentially enhancing democratic governance. However, it also poses significant challenges, including the spread of misinformation, cyberbullying, and the manipulation of public opinion. The problem is twofold: while social media offers opportunities for greater civic engagement and real-time feedback on government actions, it also risks undermining governance through the unchecked spread of false information and increased political polarization. This dual nature of social media's impact necessitates a comprehensive examination to understand its effects on policy-making, public trust, and overall governance in Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The broad objective of this research paper is to elucidate the impact of social media on governance in the Nigeria State. However, the specific objectives of the study are to:

   i.   Explore the pros and cons of social media on governance in Nigeria.
   ii. Investigate the nexus between governance and social media in Nigeria.

Methodology

The research is conceptual in nature. Thus, the research paper adopts a qualitative approach using secondary data sources such as academic journals, government reports, and media reports. The choice of secondary data allows for an in-depth analysis of the impact of social media on governance in the Nigerian state. Data collected is analysed via content analysis.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review
Concept of Social Media
Social media stands as a pivotal manifestation of our interconnected digital age, fostering a dynamic landscape where individuals, communities, and businesses converge to share, communicate, and interact in virtual realms (Takala, 2023). It represents a multifaceted ecosystem that transcends geographical barriers, reshaping the fabric of human communication, collaboration, and social dynamics. Social media encapsulates a diverse array of online platforms and applications designed to facilitate the creation, dissemination, and exchange of user-generated content. From ubiquitous giants like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to specialised networks such as LinkedIn and Reddit, social media platforms offer distinct avenues for expression, connection, and engagement.

One of the defining features of social media lies in its democratization of information dissemination and consumption (Takala, 2023). Unlike traditional media channels, which are often centralised and controlled by select entities, social media empowers individuals and communities to become creators, curators, and consumers of content. Through text, images, videos, and multimedia, users can articulate their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives, fostering a rich tapestry of diverse voices and narratives. Moreover, social media serves as a catalyst for the formation and cultivation of virtual communities, transcending geographical constraints to unite individuals based on shared interests, identities, or affiliations. Whether it be hobbyist groups, professional networks, or grassroots movements, social media platforms provide fertile ground for collective discourse, collaboration, and collective action. Social media also encompasses the notion of social networking, wherein individuals forge and nurture connections with others, spanning acquaintances, friends, family, and even strangers (Martinez, 2023). Through features like friend requests, follows, and direct messaging, social media platforms facilitate the construction of digital social networks, fostering a sense of belonging, intimacy, and social capital. Furthermore, social media serves as a powerful amplifier of societal trends, sentiments, and movements, catalysing the rapid dissemination and amplification of information and ideas. Whether it be viral memes, trending hashtags, or breaking news, social media platforms function as dynamic arenas where cultural phenomena and socio-political discourse unfold in real-time, shaping public discourse and consciousness.

However, social media is not without its complexities and challenges. As digital environments where attention is commodified and algorithms dictate content visibility, social media platforms have been criticized for fostering echo chambers, filter bubbles, and the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation (Martinez, 2023). The pervasive nature of social media also raises concerns regarding privacy, surveillance, and digital manipulation, prompting calls for greater transparency, accountability, and regulatory oversight. Moreover, the phenomenon of social media addiction underscores the profound impact of these platforms on individual behaviour, mental health, and well-being. With features engineered to elicit compulsive engagement and validation-seeking behaviours,

social media platforms have been implicated in fostering feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and social comparison among users. Nevertheless, social media remains an evolving and dynamic phenomenon, continually shaped by technological innovations, cultural shifts, and societal dynamics. As we navigate the complexities of this digital landscape, it becomes imperative to critically examine the implications of social media on our lives, relationships, and societies, while striving to harness its transformative potential for constructive dialogue, civic engagement, and social change.

As Uwalaka, (2024) put it, some of the common social media apps used in Nigeria included:

WhatsApp: WhatsApp is widely used in Nigeria for messaging, voice calls, and sharing media.

Facebook: Facebook remains popular in Nigeria for connecting with friends, sharing updates, and joining groups.

X (Formerly Twitter): X has a significant user base in Nigeria for sharing news, opinions, and engaging in discussions.

Instagram: Instagram is popular for sharing photos, videos, and stories among Nigerian users.

LinkedIn: LinkedIn is used for professional networking and job searching in Nigeria.

YouTube: YouTube is widely accessed in Nigeria for watching videos and following content creators.

Telegram: Telegram is used for messaging, group chats, and sharing media files.

These social media platforms are commonly used across various demographics in Nigeria for different purposes ranging from social networking to professional networking and information sharing. However, the popularity of social media platforms can change over time. Similarly, as at February 2024, Nigeria has over 40 million social media users, with platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp being quite popular.

The Concept of Governance

Governance is that concept that embodies the principles, structures, processes, and practices through which authority is exercised, decisions are made, and actions are taken within organizations, societies, and systems. It encompasses the mechanisms by which power is wielded, resources are allocated, and interests are reconciled to achieve collective goals and address societal challenges. Governance involve the exercise of power and authority to steer the course of human affairs towards desired outcomes. While traditionally associated with governmental institutions, governance extends beyond the realm of the state to encompass various actors and arenas, including corporations, non-governmental organizations, international bodies, and informal networks. It operates at multiple levels, from the local to the global, and across diverse domains such as politics, economics, environment, and culture.

Central to the concept of governance is the idea of legitimacy. Legitimacy refers to the perceived rightfulness and moral authority of those in positions of power to make decisions and enforce rules. Legitimacy can be derived from various sources, including democratic processes, adherence to the rule of law, respect for human rights, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to the needs and

aspirations of the governed. Without legitimacy, governance systems risk erosion of trust, legitimacy deficits, and challenges to their effectiveness and sustainability. Another key aspect of governance is the distribution and exercise of authority. Governance structures delineate the roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes of different actors within a system. These structures can be formal, such as constitutions, laws, regulations, and institutional arrangements, or informal, including norms, customs, traditions, and social practices. The distribution of authority reflects the balance of power among various stakeholders and the mechanisms for resolving conflicts and competing interests. It is also important to know that, governance involves the management of resources and the allocation of benefits and burdens in society. Resources encompass not only financial capital but also human, natural, social, and intellectual capital. Governance mechanisms determine how resources are mobilized, utilized, and distributed to promote equitable development, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Effective governance requires mechanisms for resource allocation that are efficient, transparent, inclusive, and accountable to the needs and interests of all stakeholders.

Transparency and accountability are foundational principles of good governance. Transparency entails openness, accessibility, and the free flow of information within governance processes. It enables citizens to access information, participate in decision-making, hold decision-makers accountable, and monitor the performance of public institutions. Accountability refers to the obligation of those in positions of authority to justify their actions, respond to public concerns, and accept responsibility for their decisions and their consequences. Accountability mechanisms include legal frameworks, oversight bodies, audits, elections, civil society activism, and media scrutiny. Participation and inclusiveness are also critical aspects of governance. Inclusive governance involves the active engagement of diverse stakeholders, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Participation enhances the legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability of governance systems by harnessing the collective wisdom, expertise, and creativity of the populace. Inclusive governance promotes social cohesion, civic trust, and democratic citizenship, thereby fostering social stability and resilience in the face of challenges and changes.

Notably, governance is dynamic and evolving, shaped by shifting social, economic, technological, environmental, and political forces. Globalization, technological innovation, demographic changes, climate change, pandemics, and geopolitical shifts are among the many factors reshaping the landscape of governance in the 21st century. Effective governance requires adaptive capacity, learning, innovation, and continuous improvement to navigate complexity, uncertainty, and interdependence in an increasingly interconnected world.

Concept of Good Governance

Good governance denotes the principles, processes, and institutions through which authority is exercised and decisions are made to address the needs and aspirations of a society (Brown, & Marsden,

2023). It represents the framework within which public and private institutions interact to pursue common goals, ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity, and inclusiveness. Good governance strives to foster sustainable development, enhance social justice, and promote the well-being of citizens (Lima, 201). Central to the concept of good governance is the idea of accountability. This entails the obligation of governments, institutions, and individuals to answer for their actions, decisions, and policies. Accountability mechanisms, such as regular audits, public hearings, and transparent reporting, serve to ensure that those in positions of power remain answerable to the people they serve. Accountability not only helps to prevent abuse of power and corruption but also strengthens trust between citizens and their government.

Transparency is another fundamental principle of good governance. It refers to the accessibility and availability of information regarding government activities, decision-making processes, and policies (Androniceanu, 2021). Transparency enables citizens to make informed choices, hold authorities accountable, and participate meaningfully in the governance of their communities. Openness in government fosters trust, enhances legitimacy, and reduces the risk of corruption and mismanagement. Participation is a cornerstone of good governance, emphasizing the importance of inclusive decision-making processes that involve all segments of society, including marginalized groups and minorities. Citizen engagement, through mechanisms such as public consultations, town hall meetings, and participatory budgeting, enables individuals to voice their concerns, contribute to policy formulation, and hold decision-makers accountable. By promoting inclusivity and diversity, participation enhances the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance structures.

Rule of law is a fundamental principle that underpins good governance, ensuring that laws are applied fairly, consistently, and impartially to all individuals and institutions. The rule of law provides a framework for the protection of human rights, the prevention of arbitrary actions, and the resolution of disputes through legal mechanisms (Androniceanu, 2021). A strong and independent judiciary, along with transparent legal processes, is essential for upholding the rule of law and promoting justice and equality within society. Efficiency and effectiveness are also essential components of good governance, emphasizing the prudent use of resources and the delivery of high-quality services to citizens. Effective governance requires competent, accountable, and responsive public institutions that can efficiently allocate resources, implement policies, and address the needs of the population. Embracing innovation, adopting best practices, and promoting continuous improvement are critical for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of governance systems. Ethical conduct and integrity are integral to good governance, emphasizing honesty, fairness, and integrity in the conduct of public affairs. Ethical leadership, grounded in principles of integrity, transparency, and accountability, sets the tone for responsible governance and fosters a culture of trust and respect within institutions (Androniceanu, 2021). Upholding ethical standards helps to prevent conflicts of interest, combat corruption, and maintain public confidence in government institutions.

Sustainability is an essential dimension of good governance, recognizing the interconnectedness between social, economic, and environmental factors. Sustainable governance seeks to balance the needs of present and future generations, promote environmental stewardship, and ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities. By integrating principles of sustainability into decision-making processes and policies, governments can address complex challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and social inequality.

Theoretical Framework

This research adopts the theory of 'Technological Determinism' to elucidate the impact of social media on governance in Nigeria.

Technological Determinism

Technological determinism is the theory that posits that technology shapes society's structure and cultural values (Smith and Marx, 1994). As a theory, it originated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, attributing societal change primarily to technological innovation. It suggests that technology develops autonomously and shapes human society and culture in a deterministic manner. This theory was influenced by the rapid technological advancements during the Industrial Revolution, which significantly transformed economic structures, social relations, and cultural practices. Similarly, the origin of technological determinism can be traced to thinkers like Karl Marx, who argued that the forces of production (i.e., technology) fundamentally determine societal structures and relations. Later, theorists such as Thorstein Veblen and Lewis Mumford expanded on these ideas, emphasizing the pervasive influence of technological systems on social order and human behaviour. Thus, technological determinism reveals the significant impact of social media on transformations in political communication, citizen engagement, and accountability mechanisms.

Social media, as a technology, has profoundly altered the landscape of governance in Nigeria. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become critical tools for political mobilization, information dissemination, and civic engagement. The decentralised nature of social media empowers citizens to bypass traditional media gatekeepers, directly engaging with political leaders and institutions. This shift aligns with technological determinism's core idea that technology drives societal change, in this case, fostering a more participatory political environment.

Discussion of Findings

Exploring the Pros of Social Media on Governance in Nigeria

Social media has revolutionized the way governance operates worldwide, and Nigeria is no exception. By providing a platform for communication, transparency, and civic engagement, social media has introduced several positive impacts on governance in Nigeria. The impact of social media on

governance in Nigeria cannot be overstated. In a country known for its vibrant democracy, rich cultural diversity, and complex socio-political landscape, social media has emerged as a powerful force shaping public discourse, political participation, and governmental processes. With over 200 million people, Nigeria boasts one of the largest populations in Africa, and its embrace of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram has fundamentally altered the dynamics of governance.

Democratization of Access to Information

First and foremost, social media has democratized access to information and amplified the voices of ordinary citizens (Luttrell, 2021). In a country where traditional media outlets are often influenced or controlled by political interests, social media platforms provide alternative channels for citizens to express their opinions, share news, and hold public officials accountable. Ordinary Nigerians, armed with smartphones and internet connectivity, can now report on events as they unfold, bypassing traditional gatekeepers and ensuring that diverse perspectives are heard.

Galvanizing Collective Action

Furthermore, social media has played a pivotal role in mobilizing citizens and galvanizing collective action. From the #EndSARS protests against police brutality to campaigns for electoral reform and good governance, social media has served as a catalyst for organizing grassroots movements and fostering solidarity among disparate groups. Hashtags, viral videos, and online petitions have facilitated the rapid dissemination of information and enabled Nigerians to mobilize offline protests and advocacy efforts.

Enhanced Political Participation

Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have significantly increased political participation among Nigerians. These platforms provide citizens with direct access to information about political processes, policies, and events, making it easier for them to stay informed and engaged (Luttrell, 2021). For instance, during the 2019 general elections, social media played a crucial role in mobilizing voters, spreading awareness about candidates, and disseminating voting information. Hashtags like #NigeriaDecides and #YourVoteMatters encouraged millions of young Nigerians to participate in the electoral process, many for the first time. Moreover, social media allows for the rapid organization of political movements and rallies. The #NotTooYoungToRun campaign, which advocated for reducing the age limits for political office, gained substantial traction on social media. This movement ultimately led to the successful amendment of the Nigerian Constitution, lowering the age requirements for various elected positions and enabling younger candidates to participate in governance.

Improved Transparency and Accountability

Social media has become a critical tool for promoting transparency and holding government officials accountable in Nigeria. Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are used by citizens and journalists to expose corruption, inefficiencies, and misconduct. For example, the hashtag #OpenNASS was launched to demand transparency in the financial operations of the National Assembly. The campaign pressured the legislature to disclose its budget publicly, leading to increased scrutiny and calls for fiscal responsibility.

Another significant instance is the #EndSARS movement, which started as a social media campaign against police brutality. The movement gained international attention and forced the Nigerian government to disband the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). This movement demonstrated the power of social media in mobilizing citizens, documenting abuses, and pushing for governmental reforms.

Facilitate Government Communication

Social media has also transformed how government agencies and officials communicate with the public. Many government bodies now have official social media accounts through which they disseminate information, clarify policies, and respond to public inquiries. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) used Twitter and other platforms to provide real-time updates, debunk misinformation, and offer health guidelines. This direct line of communication helped to manage public concerns and disseminate critical information quickly and efficiently.

Additionally, state governors and other officials frequently use social media to update citizens on developmental projects, new policies, and emergency responses. These updates not only keep the public informed but also foster a sense of connection between the government and its constituents.

Amplification of Civic Activism

Social media has amplified civic activism in Nigeria by giving citizens a platform to voice their concerns and organize around common issues. The #BringBackOurGirls campaign, which called for the rescue of over 200 school girls abducted by Boko Haram in 2014, is a notable example. The campaign gained global attention, drawing responses from international leaders and putting pressure on the Nigerian government to take action. Furthermore, social media supports various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups in their efforts to promote human rights, environmental protection, and social justice. These organizations leverage social media to raise awareness, mobilize support, and coordinate activities. The visibility and reach provided by social media enable these groups to influence public policy and effect change more effectively.

Exploring the Cons of Social Media on Governance in Nigeria

Spread of Misinformation

One of the most significant negative impacts of social media on governance in Nigeria is the rampant spread of misinformation. False information can be disseminated quickly, reaching a vast audience within a short period. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous false claims about the virus, its origins, and supposed cures circulated widely on platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. This misinformation created confusion and skepticism about public health directives, complicating the government's efforts to manage the health crisis effectively.

Polarization and Social Division

Social media can amplify existing societal divisions, leading to increased polarization. In Nigeria, ethnic and religious diversity is a notable feature, but it also makes the country susceptible to conflict. Social media platforms often become echo chambers where users are exposed only to information that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs. This phenomenon exacerbates ethnic and religious tensions. For instance, during the 2019 general elections, social media was rife with inflammatory rhetoric from supporters of different political factions. This contributed to an environment of distrust and hostility, undermining national unity.

Incitement of Violence

Another serious issue is the potential of social media to incite violence. In Nigeria, there have been instances where posts on social media have led to real-world conflicts. The most notable example is the series of violent clashes in Kaduna State in 2018, which were fueled by false reports and inflammatory messages on social media. These clashes resulted in significant loss of lives and properties. The speed and anonymity of social media make it a potent tool for those looking to incite violence, challenging the government's ability to maintain peace and security.

Undermining of Public Institutions

Social media can undermine trust in public institutions. In Nigeria, this is evident in the widespread skepticism about the electoral process, law enforcement, and the judiciary. During the End SARS protests in 2020, social media played a critical role in mobilizing support and sharing reports of police brutality. While it raised much-needed awareness, it also led to a surge in anti-police sentiment and broader distrust in governmental institutions. This erosion of trust can weaken the effectiveness of governance, as public cooperation is essential for the successful implementation of policies and reforms.

Challenges to Regulatory Frameworks

The rapid evolution of social media presents significant regulatory challenges. Nigeria's regulatory frameworks have struggled to keep pace with the changes in digital communication. For instance, the Nigerian government's attempt to regulate social media through the proposed "Protection from Internet Falsehood and Manipulation and Other Related Offences Bill" (commonly referred to as the "Social Media Bill") has been met with substantial opposition. Critics argue that it could stifle freedom of speech and be used to silence dissent. The tension between regulation and freedom of expression exemplifies the difficulties in crafting policies that balance governance needs with democratic principles.

Battleground for Political Elites

Social media has become a battleground for political elites vying for power and influence. Politicians and parties harness the power of social media to shape their public image, discredit opponents, and sway public opinion. Paid trolls, fake accounts, and automated bots are deployed to amplify certain messages, drown out dissenting voices, and manipulate online discourse. The weaponization of social media for political purposes undermines the integrity of the democratic process and erodes trust in institutions.

Investigating the Nexus between Social Media and Governance in Nigeria

The relation between social media and governance in Nigeria represents a complex interplay of dynamics shaping public discourse, political participation, and governmental accountability. Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and a regional powerhouse, has seen the rise of social media platforms as significant tools influencing governance processes and citizen engagement. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram have gained immense popularity in Nigeria, especially among the youth population, who constitute a significant demographic segment. These platforms have provided avenues for Nigerians to express their opinions, mobilize for social causes, and engage in political discourse on a scale previously unseen.

One of the most significant impacts of social media on governance in Nigeria is its role in fostering transparency and accountability. Citizens utilize social media platforms to expose corruption, highlight government inefficiencies, and demand greater accountability from elected officials. For instance, instances of police brutality and government corruption have been widely disseminated on social media, sparking nationwide protests and catalyzing demands for reforms. Moreover, social media has served as a catalyst for political mobilization and activism in Nigeria. During elections, political parties and candidates leverage social media platforms to disseminate campaign messages, rally support, and engage with voters. Grassroots movements and civil society organizations utilize social media to organize protests, raise awareness about social issues, and advocate for policy changes. However, the relationship between social media and governance in Nigeria is not without its challenges

and complexities. The spread of misinformation and fake news on social media platforms has emerged as a significant concern, often leading to social unrest, ethnic tensions, and political polarization. In Nigeria, where ethnic and religious diversity is pronounced, misinformation spread through social media can exacerbate existing fault lines and undermine social cohesion. Furthermore, the Nigerian government has at times resorted to tactics aimed at censoring or controlling social media platforms. In 2021, the Nigerian government indefinitely suspended Twitter operations in the country following the platform's deletion of a tweet by President Muhammadu Buhari. The suspension sparked widespread condemnation from both domestic and international actors, raising concerns about freedom of expression and government overreach. In response to the challenges posed by social media, the Nigerian government has proposed legislation aimed at regulating online content and curtailing the spread of misinformation. The proposed legislation, such as the Social Media Bill, has been met with criticism from civil society groups and human rights organizations, who argue that it poses a threat to freedom of expression and undermines democratic principles.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the impact of social media on governance in Nigeria has been profound, and transformative. The study concludes that, social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for citizen engagement, political mobilization, and transparency in the Nigerian governance landscape. From facilitating grassroots movements to amplifying voices of dissent, social media has reshaped the dynamics of governance by fostering new channels of communication and accountability. However, the challenges it present in Nigeria cannot be underestimated as the larger percentage of its users are within the age of 18 to 34 who have become a tool in the hands of political elite vying for political power in the Nigeria amongst other challenges it presents.

Recommendations

The research makes the following recommendations:

i. **Legislation and Regulation:** Implementing specific laws and regulations that govern social media usage can help ensure accountability and responsible behaviour online. These laws should define what constitutes acceptable content, establish penalties for spreading misinformation or hate speech, and outline the responsibilities of social media platforms in moderating content.

ii. **Digital Literacy and Awareness Campaigns:** Promoting digital literacy and awareness campaigns can help educate the Nigerian population about the responsible use of social media. Citizens should be informed about how to critically evaluate information online, identify misinformation, and understand the potential consequences of spreading false or inflammatory content.

iii. **Collaboration with Social Media Platforms:** Nigerian authorities should collaborate with social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to develop and enforce community

guidelines that can help mitigate the spread of harmful content. Nigerian authorities can work with these platforms to enhance content moderation tools, improve reporting mechanisms for abusive or misleading content, and facilitate the removal of illegal or harmful material.

iv.   **Independent Oversight and Monitoring:** Establishing independent oversight bodies or regulatory agencies tasked with monitoring social media activity can help ensure compliance with existing regulations and safeguard against abuses of power. These oversight bodies should be transparent, impartial, and accountable to the Nigerian public, with the authority to investigate complaints, enforce penalties, and promote best practices for online governance.

v.   **Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster collaboration between the government, civil society organizations, and private sector stakeholders to address the challenges posed by social media regulation. By working together, these stakeholders can develop comprehensive strategies for promoting responsible online behaviour, protecting user rights, and combating the spread of harmful content while respecting freedom of expression and privacy rights.

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