Use of Social Networking Sites by Nigerian Polytechnic students for promoting political participation

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Abstract

The study draws its theoretical framework from the Uses and Gratifications Theory, aimed at investigating the use of social networking sites (SNS) by Nigerian Polytechnic students for promoting political participation. The study collected 841 samples from students of three Federal Polytechnics in three geopolitical zones of Nigeria to test the proposed model. Thus, the partial least squares method was used to assess the relationships in the model. The results analysed indicates a significant relationship between frequent use of social networking sites and political participation. Also, the results revealed a significant relationship between the number of social networking sites used and political participation. However, the relationships between the number of social networking sites used and the Political participation was not supported. The findings prove that a greater number of Nigerian students participate in politics and that they are vital instruments that can be used by the government in instituting governmental policies within the citizenry. It is therefore recommended that Nigerian higher institutions should convince the government, stakeholders and policymakers to commit resources to target the students for political participation, mentorship, and development of democracy as future leaders. The government should re-strategise the use of Social Network Sites by Students for better political participation and the choice of better would-be leaders for the country.

Keywords: Networking sites, Perception, Political participation, Polytechnic students, Social media

1. Introduction

Social networking sites exert greater influence on students' involvement with the world and prove to be vital exchange mechanisms at their disposal. Social networking sites have evolved far beyond mere socialisation functions to become vital political and economic tools. Social networking sites have proved to be the most effective way for businesses to reach new audiences on a global scale (Altieri, Leccardi, & Ruffini, 2016, Guess, & Munger, 2023).

Similarly, social networking sites also help to fuel the global economy by creating new jobs, democratising information, and pushing brands far beyond their borders. Before the advent of social media, manufacturers had to pay huge amounts for their brands on traditional advertising media that might not have reached their target markets. At present, businesses own and create their digital media content, breaking down the barriers to reaching new audiences.

Furthermore, students use social networks to express their views and opinions as they arise. They also accord students the avenue to participate in core political issues and contribute to the welfare and development of their nation (Lall, 2014, Zoaka 2021).

Studies showed that there is increased awareness through social networking sites that have given students unprecedented foothold in the nation's political decision-making process and made them a force to

be reckoned with in matters that involve election conduct, social infrastructural developments, education policies, government expenditures, and many more (Kim & Khang, 2014). The extent to which social networking sites would integrate students into society and the world would only increase as social networking sites got more versatile and refined.

In 2015, the country witnessed the proliferation of social networking sites, where students closely monitored the events and contributed massively to the political information diffusion process (Abdulrauf, Abdul Hamid, & Ishak, 2017). This development in northern Nigeria not only ushered in a new political information and transparency era in Nigeria but also gave its political participation process a huge credibility lift.

Situating all these within the context of research gaps, several studies have investigated the effective roles played by social networking sites in facilitating student engagement (Domingo & Gargante´, 2016; Leccardi & Ruffini, 2016; Theocharis & Lowe, 2016; Tess, 2013). Yet, current research on how social networking sites (SNSs) influence student political engagement in particular is not adequate (Eid & Al-Jabri, 2016).

Again, despite the growing global concerns over the form of social and political engagements emerging from increasing dependence on social networking sites among students, little is known about how this phenomenon is happening in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular (Abdulrauf, Abdul Hamid, & Ishak, 2017; Abdu, Mohamad, & Muda, 2017). Given this gap, this study aims to provide a developing country's perspective on the use of social media in the renewed political participation among Nigerian polytechnic students (Jin, 2015; Orosz, Tóth-Király, & Bőthe, 2016; Phua & Ahn, 2016; Skiera, Hinz, & Spann, 2015).

In a similar vein, in the few studies that attempted to explain the changing aspects of social networking sites in promoting political participation, the results were varied and conflicting (for a meta-analysis, see Boulianne, 2015). For example, Carlisle & Patton (2013) identified political interest as the only important predictor of political participation on Facebook, whereas Mihailidis' (2014) survey of 800 college students showed that social media were rarely used for politics. However, Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2014), Cheng, Liang, & Leung (2015), and Kim (2017) discovered that social media political expression was a strong predictor of political participation. Again, researchers and practitioners are still wondering how student's social networking use influences their political participation (Lesch, 2018; Bursztyn, Davide, David, Noam, & Jane, 2021).

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development
2.1 Overview of Social Media
Defining social media has been somewhat difficult, as the term refers more to some form of functionality than any particular media platform (Navetta, 2011). It has been defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (2008) writes that social media or social networking sites are those sites which, on a basic technological level, combine social networking, a list of contacts and a profile. They are distinct from other applications in the way they support people's presentation of themselves, externalisation of data, new ways of community formation, and bottom-up activities. They are also distinguished by their ease of use and their re-organization of Internet geography.

In their perhaps more practical definition, Boyd and Ellison (2008) see social network sites as web-based services that allow users to: Construct a public or semi-public profile

within a bounded system articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

A distinguishing feature of social media is its interactivity and inclusiveness. It is interactive in that it represents a radical shift from the one-way communication flow of traditional media to permit unlimited two-way exchange among users. It is inclusive in that it is open to everyone to participate in; in other words, it excludes the rigid, centralised gate-keeping orientation of the traditional media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Patrick and Ese (2018) described social media as "the in-thing in this attention-getting age, used for various reasons, especially sharing ideas and information among friends." Similarly, social media are understood to be web-based platforms that enable and facilitate users to generate and share content, allowing subsequent online interactions with other users (Kaplan and Heinlein, 2010).

Social media simply refers to Internet-based tools and services that allow users to engage with each other, generate content, and search for information online. Social networking sites allow users to share information and interact with each other via the Internet or handheld devices (Buhari, 2011). Social networking sites, by their nature, have the capability of educating, informing, and enlightening their audience.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), describes media users as active in their usage, motives, and needs of gratification for attending media. Although developed for mainstream media, its utility is also tested on social networking sites and in online political scenarios. Even though the Uses and Gratification Theory assumes that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media, users take an active part in the communication process and are goal-oriented in their media use. Similarly, media users seek out a media source that best fulfils their needs. Uses and gratifications assume that the user has alternate choices to satisfy their need. Therefore, Social Networking Sites (SNS) can be used for fulfilling the need for information and expression of opinions about political issues. Uses and Gratification are the motivations behind the use of Social networking sites and political participation among students.

2.3 Concept of Political Participation

It refers to the various mechanisms through which the public expresses their political views and exercises their influence on the political process Chatora (2012) and Abubakar (2011) see it as the involvement of people (not necessarily actively) in any political process before a collective decision is reached. In their words, political participation entails citizens' engagements in the discourse of social, political, and economic issues, which serves as a stick for choosing would-be leaders. It may also include assessing the capabilities of the incumbents and advocating ways of ameliorating societal ills for a more prosperous country. Political participation includes such activities as political discourse, political campaigns, voters' rights, the actual voting, writing and signing of petitions, attending civil protests, joining interest groups that engage in lobbying, political advocacy, monitoring and reporting of cases of violations of the electoral process such as fraud, rigging, intimidations, violence, monetary inducements, underage voting etc.

Social networking sites have drastically changed the patterns in which electorates participate in politics. Social networking sites have made participation very fast, easier, and even more cost-effective (Okonko & Kenneth, 2012). Currently, social networking sites allow the electorates to interact constantly with their political associates, and share information about politics within their immediate

environment. With social networking sites, politicians now effectively communicate with their supporters.

Social networking sites greatly help the students to get involved in political activities, party politics and participating in local action. Accordingly, social networking sites are widely used by students to express their opinions, promote political discourse, and enhance the production and distribution of political news and information freely and effectively.

In his submission, Kaplan (2012), affirmed that social networking sites through the Internet, have effectively broken the monopoly of communication that was previously confined to traditional elites, due to its ability to foster pluralism and allow for freedom of expression by the citizenry. He further explained that social networking sites offer users the advantage of allowing individual members the possibility of documenting and processing facts and information concerning political issues.

2.4 Frequency of Social Networking Sites and Political Participation

Social networking sites (SNS) include a wide range of Internet-based platforms, popular among them are: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Digg, Delicious, Stumble Upon, Foursquare, blogging platforms (e.g., WordPress, Drupal, etc.), Wikipedia, bulletin boards (e.g., phbb.com). Quora and YouTube among others (Navetta, 2010). Today, the social media realm has so tremendously developed that it evolved into a very strong culture, thus, captured aptly by the Institute for Perspective Technological Studies (2008). "A social networking phenomenon has emerged over the past five years. In that time, social sites (SNS) have grown from a niche to a mass online activity, in tens of millions of Internet users are engaged, both in their leisure time and at work". Other popular social media include Myspace and WhatsApp.

However, social media usage does not necessarily result in increased productivity. Indeed, it can be argued that some content consumed on social media is of little economic value and can even distract user's attention from productive activities (Tilleul, 2023Abubakar (2011) and Abdulyakeen, & Yusuf, 2022) posit that social networking sites which include blogs (political blogs), networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), video sharing (YouTube), Audio sharing (postcard Images), or picture sharing (Flicker, Instagram), have the capacity of boosting political participation because of their openness, conversational nature, connectedness, textual and audio-visual characteristics and appeals. Okoro and Kenneth (2013) and Aba and Makinde. (2023) described social networking sites as a new genre of social media that allows users to express themselves, interact with friends, share personal information as well as publish their views. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H1: There is a significant relationship between Frequent use of Social networking sites and political participation

2.5 Number of social networking sites use and political participation

Studies on the relationship between the number of social networking sites use and political participation has shown that Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were the most popular social media platforms with college students. (Fatema, Li, Dong, & Rana 2022; Laor, 2022) For instance, it is found that a surprising 96% of students surveyed said that they used Facebook on a typical day and 84% said that they also used YouTube. Only 20% said that they used blogs, whilst 14% used Twitter, 12% used MySpace and 10% used LinkedIn respectively (Arijeniwa, & Nwaoboli, 2023).

Similarly, different SNS use can inspire young people to engage in political activities by nurturing a sense of belonging and common purpose. Therefore, different number of social networking **sites** can make

it easier to communicate and share ideas that encourages the users of these sites to participate in online activities that can give them the sense of belonging to the online or digital world (Li, Yang, & Ho, 2022).

Furthermore, SNS tools that are used for liking, sharing, and commenting on Facebook postings, for instance, may be helpful for expressing support or opposition to a particular political stance or contentious subject (Bui, Krishen, Anlamlier, & Berezan, 2022)

Theocharis, Boulianne,Koc-Michalska and Bimber,(2023) in their study asserts that SNS gives political activists the exceptional chance of using different network with potential support to share news about political events and activities. Thus, the variety of numbers of SNS at the disposal of users may convince the individual to participate in political events and activities the which otherwise might not have known about them (Casteltrione 2016). Thus, they may convince individuals to participate in these events who otherwise might not have known about them Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H2: There is a significant relationship between the number of social networking sites use and political participation

2.6 Students' perception on Social networking sites and political participation

User perception refers to how a user sees and observes the social networking sites and how it is used (Haque, Sarwar, and Yasmin, 2013:.and Cho, Cannon,Lopez, and Li ,2024) Therefore, the perception a user may have on social networking sites differs according to the user's anticipation and experience regarding the medium users of social networking sites certainly have different perceptions towards the platform in their quest to participate in politics. It is through the perceptions of social networking sites that users gather from everyday experiences, sharing information among friends and acquaintances, or online discussion and interaction that social networking site platforms can swing the intent of people to participate (Johnston, Chen, & Hauman, 2013; Nguyen, 2022).

Chan-Olmsted, Cho, and Lee, (2013) in their examination of how users perceive social networking sites, such as Facebook, indicate that users can identify five distinct dimensions, that the user may perceive about the social networking sites. such as the participatory, commonality, openness, connectedness and conversationalist nature of social networking sites. For example, they noted that participation is the extent the degree to which users can engage in an active interaction as senders and receivers as opposed to being passively sender or receiver. One can therefore state that social networking sites such as Facebook permit users to be involved and share content which facilitates the public to become more engaged and democratized than ever before. That is why Koh and Kim, (2004) viewed participation as an online community voluntary-helping behavior which provides meaningful information and knowledge for the online help-seeking users

In addition, the perception of social networking sites is related to the issue of commonality, Chan-Olmsted et al., (2013) refer to commonality, as a characteristic of social networking sites which allows individuals and organizations to identify and communicate with the people with whom they want to be politically associated with. that is, it offers a platform for users as an individual or as an organization to form groups quickly and to establish political relationships efficiently with others who share some form of political commonality with them (Haque et al., 2013). In essence, researchers have viewed the social networking site Facebook as an effective platform for establishing communities such as online political communities (Boyd & Ellison, 2007: Zhang, & Sung, 2023). Although, Boyd and Ellison (2007) observed that the notion of communality has to be differentiated from the notion of community in an online situation.

community is about the coming together of people who concentrate on a common goal and with a form of continuous and consistency in nature. while, communality is about establishing links for individuals and organizations with others who share a certain commonality, based on their temporal needs and political interests at the time of communication. For example, when a user posts an online political comment, the user may have something in common with others who share or comment on the post, but they might not necessarily belong to the same community. this means that Facebook provides a platform for users that

have commonality. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H3: There is a significant relationship between students' perception of social networking sites and political participation

2.7 Research Framework

From the literature reviewed, the following research framework was proposed to achieve the goal of the study**.** Political Participation is regarded as the dependent variable while, Frequent use of social networking sites, number of social networking sites used and students' perception of social networking sites as the independent variables.
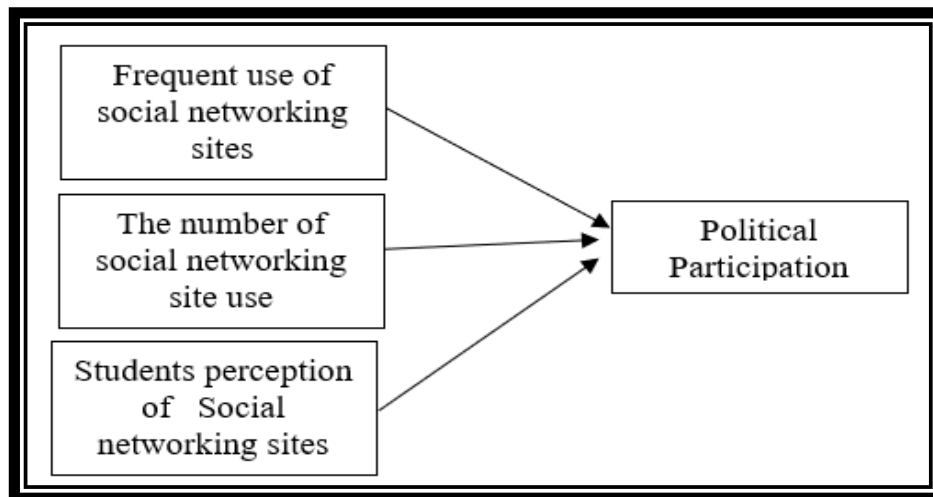

Figure 1: Research framework

3. Methodology
Research Design
The study adopts a quantitative method of research with cross-sectional descriptive survey design using Polytechnic students in three geo-political zones, in Nigeria. The institutions have a diverse target population of over thirty thousand students who come from all over Nigeria and abroad. They enrolled for various programmes across schools, colleges and departments that offer certificates, diplomas, degrees and postgraduate programmes.

Population and Sample
The three institutions selected were done strategically to capture the various social

media experiences of the use of social networking sites (SNS) by polytechnic students for promoting political participation. Using Yamane's (1967) method of calculating the sample size of a population, the study arrived at 385 students per school making a total sample of 1155. The sampling technique employed was stratified random sampling, which involved dividing the population into strata based on gender, age, and level of education.

Instrument of Data collection
The current study was conducted using a level-adapted questionnaire to collect responses from Polytechnic students. The data was gathered using a stratified

sampling method and primarily included respondents from three geopolitical regions namely; North East, North Central and North West. A total of 1155 respondents within the age range of 21 and 51 years participated in the study. The final response received from the respondents was 841 giving a response rate of 72.8%. The study used an adapted questionnaire from the work of Hershey, Jacobs-Lawson, McArdle, & Hamagami, (2007) and Alkhawaja, & Albaity, (2020) with a 7-point Likert type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The Likert scale format is a rating scale used in the measuring of behaviour, attitude or any other issue of interest that requires evaluation (Leedy & Omrod 2010).

Method of Data Analysis
Partial Least Square (PLS-SEM) software was used for the analysis of data to establish the relationships between the dependent and independents variables of the study. Statistical significance is set at $p < 0.05$ and confidence interval at 95%.

4. Results and Discussion
This research is expected to unravel the way social networking sites promote political participation among students at Polytechnic. The result may not be expected to negate the findings of other research in African countries and around the world. It is expected that the perception and the frequency of students of Polytechnic in the use of social networking sites would be known.

4.1 Preliminary Analysis
Table 1 explains the demographic features of the respondents. The respondents ranged from 15–35 years and above, however, a large number of respondents were found within the age group of 20–24 years with about 56.7%. Among 841 respondents, 478 (56.8%) were male and 363 with (48.6%) were female. Thus, it was determined that the majority of the respondents were mostly males. The main observation from demographic analysis suggested that male students were mostly engaged in the use of social networking sites for promoting political participation Thus, it was resolved that the majority of the respondents were mostly males. The main observation from demographic analysis suggested that men were mostly engaged in retirement savings compared to their female counterpart.

Table 1: Demography of the Respondent

Demographic Variable	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	478	56.8
	Female	363	48.6
	Total	841	100.0
Age of the Respondent	15-19	201	23.9
	20-24	477	56.7
	25-29	134	15.9
	30-35	28	3.3
	35 and above	1	.1
	Total	841	100.0
Academic Qualification	Diploma	361	42.9
	HND	433	51.5
	PGD	22	2.6
	Others	25	3.0
	Total	841	100.0
Which college do you belong to	Engineering	134	15.9
	Science	114	13.6
	Management Sciences	91	10.8

Demographic Variable	Items	Frequency	Percentage
	Social Sciences	346	41.1
	Environmental Sciences	58	6.9
	Others	95	11.3
	Total	838	99.6
Time spent on social networking site per week?	Less than 3 hours	198	23.5
	3-6 hours	334	39.7
	7-10 hours	171	20.3
	11-14 hours	82	9.8
	More than 14 hours	56	6.7
	Total	841	100.0
preferred social networking sites			
	WhatsApp	316	37.6
	Twitter	49	5.8
	Facebook	147	17.5
	Instagram	72	8.6
	YouTube	34	4.0
	All of the above	223	26.5
	Total	841	100.0

4.2 Assessment of measurement model

The PLS-SEM model is analysed in two steps. The first step assesses the measurement model by running the PLS algorithm, which measures the validity and reliability of each of the constructs in the model (Figure I). The second stage tests the structural model by estimating the path coefficient between the constructs, thus determining their significance and the model's predictive ability. The measurement model shows the associations between the latent variables and the measures of each original construct. The measurement model examined the individual item reliability, internal consistency and reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the model (Henseler et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2011; Hair et al., 2014). The result presents the measurement model of the online political participation of Nigerian polytechnic students. It shows the associations between the online political participation of Nigerian students and other constructs
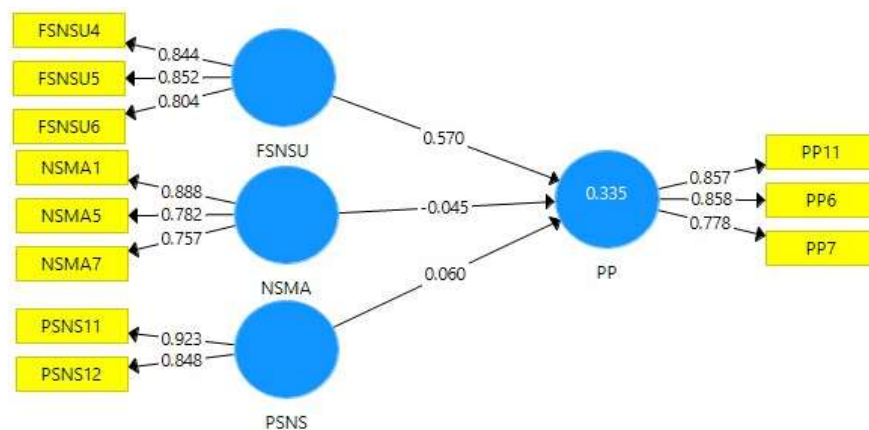

Figure2:Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed by using internal consistency and reliabilities, composite reliability, and Cronbach alpha

for reflective constructs (Table 2). All the constructs fall within the threshold range of 0.70–0.95 (Hair et al., 2019, 2022).

Table 2: Internal Consistency and Reliability

Constructs Reliability and Validity	CA	CR	AVE
Frequent use of Social networking sites	0.780	0.872	0.695
Number of social networking sites use	0.778	0.851	0.657
Student's perception of Social networking sites	0.734	0.880	0.786
Political participation	0.777	0.870	0.692

Note: CA is Cronbach's α; CR is composite reliability; AVE is average variance extracted

On the other hand, convergence validity is defined as the extent to which items genuinely represent the proposed latent construct and correlate well with other measures of a similar latent construct (Hair

et al., 2006). The convergent validity is measured by assessing the average variance extracted (AVE) of each latent construct as recommended by Fornell & Larcker (1981).

Table 3 Fornell & Larcker criterion

	FNFSU	NSMA	PP	PSNS
Frequent use of Social networking sites	**0.834**			
Number of social networking sites use	0.020	**0.811**		
Students perception of Social networking Sites	0.574	-0.034	**0.832**	
Political participation	0.088	-0.001	0.111	**0.887**

Note: The square root of the AVE are the italics and bold value

The AVE value is calculated as the mean of the squared loadings for all indicators associated with a construct as follows:

AVEεj=Σλjk2kjk=1Σλjk2+θjkkkjk=1

Where:

AVEεj= Average Variance Extracted

λjk=2 Sum of standardised loadings squared

θjk= Error variance of the kth indicator (k = 1…,Kj)

To achieve good convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) of each latent construct should be 0.50 or above, which indicates that on average, the construct explains over 50% of the variance of its items (Chin, 1998; Sarstedt, et al., 2014). In line with the recommendation of Chin (1998), the values of AVE in the model showed high loadings (p > 0.50) on their constructs, signifying good convergent validity.

Similarly, discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct differs empirically from another. It is the rate of changes between one construct and the other (Hair et al., 2014). The estimation of the discriminant validity can be done through the cross-loading of indicators, the Fornell & Larcker criterion, or the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlation. The Fornell-Lacker criterion for evaluating the discriminant validity compares the square root of the AVE (√**AVE**) with the other latent constructs (Hair et al., 2014). Fornell-Lacker (1981) recommended that the latent constructs should explain the variance of its indicator. Thus, the square root of AVE (√**AVE**) should have a higher value than other latent constructs. Therefore, the correlations between the latent constructs of the model were compared with the square root of AVE (√**AVE**). The findings indicate

that all the square roots of AVE were higher compared to the correlations between the latent constructs, indicating adequate discriminant validity within the latent constructs in the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The second method for verifying discriminant validity is examining the cross-loadings of the indicators. This method requires that the loadings of each indicator on its construct are higher than the cross-loadings on other constructs (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2014; Henseler et al., 2009). Chin (1998) recommends that all the indicator loadings should be greater than the cross-loadings. Table 4.4 presents how the indicator loadings relate to other indicators. The result shows that all indicator loadings were higher than the cross loadings signifying that the discriminant validity is fit for further analysis in the main model.

Table 4: Cross Loading

	FSNSU	NSMA	PP	PSNS
FSNSU4	0.844	0.018	0.512	0.084
FSNSU5	0.852	0.012	0.449	0.097
FSNSU6	0.804	0.019	0.469	0.040
NSMA1	0.013	0.888	-0.037	-0.005
NSMA5	0.026	0.782	-0.010	-0.003
NSMA7	0.017	0.757	-0.022	0.008
PP11	0.521	-0.020	0.857	0.120
PP6	0.491	-0.025	0.858	0.093
PP7	0.411	-0.043	0.778	0.057
PSNS11	0.053	-0.027	0.112	0.923
PSNS12	0.113	0.034	0.081	0.848

4.3 Assessment of Structural Model
The structural model assessments were performed as per the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019, 2022). The PLS-SEM generates T-statistics for testing the structural model (inner and outer models) using a method called bootstrapping. Therefore, bootstrapping is a non-parametric process that permits the testing of the statistical significance of different PLS-SEM results. It is very simple to conduct bootstrapping within the PLS-SEM settings (Streukens et al., 2016). This study, therefore, applied the standard bootstrapping technique with 500 bootstrap samples and 841 cases to evaluate the significance of the path coefficients of the model (Henseler et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2011; Hair et al., 2012; Hair et al., 2014). The PLS path estimates for the inner model indicate that hypothesis (H1) was supported, suggesting that frequent use of social networking sites significantly predicts the political participation of polytechnic students. (β=0.601, t=14.199, p<0.05).
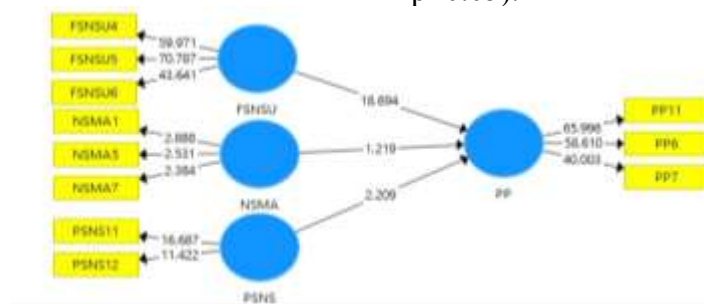

Figure 3: The Structural Model

Structural Model
Similarly, hypothesis (H2) was not supported, suggesting that the number of social networking sites used does not significantly promote Political participation among polytechnic students (β=. -0.045, t=1.219, P< 0.223). However, H3

was supported because Student's Perception of Social networking sites significantly promotes Political participation among students of polytechnic (β= 0.060, t=2.209, P< **0.02**

Table 5 Path coefficient of the structural model

Hypothesis	Relationship	**B**	**Standard Deviation**	**T-Value**	**P-Value**	**Decision**
H1	**FSNSU -> PP**	0.570	0.030	18.694	**0.000 *****	Supported
H2	**NSMA -> PP**	-0.045	0.037	1.219	**0.223**	Not Supported
H3	**PSNS -> PP**	0.060	0.027	2.209	**0.027***	Supported

Note: ***Significant at 1%, **Significant at 5%, *Significant at 10%

4.4 Discussion
The research was designed Specifically, to empirically investigate the use of social networking sites in promoting political participation among students. The results obtained show that two of the proposed hypotheses with 841 samples are supported. One hypothesis was not supported namely; relationships between the number of social networking sites used and the Political participation of Polytechnic students.

The overall model postulated a positive relationship between the Frequent use of Social networking sites and the political participation of Polytechnic students. The result obtained proved to be positively related because Frequent use of social networking sites has a significant influence on students' participation in politics. It implies that the students of the polytechnic frequently use social networking sites to present their political views and ideas while keeping in touch with political activities and comparing ideas with other politicians. It also infers that they seek to resolve political misunderstanding among the students as proposed by the previous scholars (Ali Imran, 2023; Alscher,

Ludewig, & McElvany, 2022; Fasola, & Oyadeyi, 2021; Mansoor, Raheed, & Sattar, 2022; Uwalaka, 2021).

However, the impact of the anticipated relationship between the number of social networking sites used and polytechnic students' political participation is not significant which means that although polytechnic students frequently use social networking sites their participation in politics is limited to the use of a limited number of social networking sites, this is consistent with the findings of (Ashara, & Mustaffa, 2019; Mustapha, & Omar, 2020). Most of them participate in politics on Facebook (Ashara, & Mustaffa 2019; Dagona, Karick, & Abubakar, 2013) Consistent with the proposed hypothesis (H3), students' perception of social networking sites significantly influences political participation. The findings imply that students perceive that social networking sites have a strong influence on students' political views and serve as a conducive place for promoting politics and also a comfortable place where students can post and share political information. The finding was in line with the existing literature which suggests that students

perceive social media as an avenue for political participation (Gambo, Musonda, & Zadawa, 2023; Tariq, Zolkepli, & Ahmad, 2022; Alenezi, & Brinthaupt, 2022).

4.5 Implications /Contributions of the Study

Theoretical Contributions

The findings contribute to the existing knowledge of Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) by providing an empirical study that tested the understanding of the use of social networking sites for promoting political participation among students of Polytechnic.

In this regard, this study contributes to the body of knowledge by examining the relationship between SNS use and student political participation. Specifically, it investigates how Polytechnic students' online social networking relationships promote their political participation.

Practical Contributions

The findings show that a greater number of Nigerian students participate in politics and that they are vital instruments that can be used by the government in instituting governmental policies within the citizenry.

The study will enable the institution to convince the government, stakeholders and policymakers to commit resources to target the students for political participation, mentorship and development of democracy as future leaders.

The result of the study will provoke the re-strategizing of the use of Social Network Sites by Students for better political participation and the choice of better would-be leaders for the country.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

In recent years, the proliferation of social networking sites around the globe has provided a new avenue for political participation among students. The study investigated the relationships between factors of frequency perception and number of social networking sites used and the political participation of the polytechnic

students. The perception and frequency of social networking usage are considered good predictors of political participation. The result obtained indicates that two of the variables in the proposed research model significantly influenced the political participation of the polytechnic students.

5.2 Recommendation

The study made the following recommendations:

1. The Nigerian Higher institutions to convince the government, stakeholders and policymakers to commit resources to target the students for political participation, mentorship and development of democracy as future leaders.

2. The government to re-strategise the use of Social Network Sites by Students for better political participation and the choice of better would-be leaders for the country.

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