

DIGITAL ACTIVISM AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA: THE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL NEXUS

Arit Emmanuel John

and

Dennis Oche Abutu, Ph.D

Abstract

The rise of digital technologies has transformed the landscape of political participation in Nigeria, particularly among youths. This study investigated the nexus between digital activism and political participation ahead of the 2027 general elections, focusing on emerging patterns of online mobilisation and their influence on voter registration, grassroots engagement, and election-day turnout. The theoretical nexus included agenda-setting, resource mobilisation, and uses and gratifications. The study adopted a survey research design. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample of 389 respondents was drawn from the projected 2025 Uyo population. Findings revealed that Nigerian youths are highly engaged in diverse forms of digital activism, with hashtag campaigns on Twitter/X (26.2%) and peer-to-peer content sharing on WhatsApp (22.9%) emerging as the most dominant practices. Digital activism was also shown to boost voter registration by enhancing awareness of registration deadlines and providing procedural guides. Furthermore, it significantly facilitated grassroots mobilisation through video sharing, volunteer recruitment, and coordination of local rallies. The results indicated that digital activism could positively influence voter turnout during the 2027 elections via online motivation, WhatsApp reminders, and mobile tools for locating polling units. Despite these positive trends, a minority of respondents reported disengagement, highlighting structural and resource-related barriers to full participation. The study concludes that digital activism plays a transformative role in shaping youth political behaviour in Nigeria and offers actionable recommendations for electoral bodies, civil society, and policymakers to leverage digital tools for enhanced voter registration, grassroots mobilisation, and election-day participation.

Introduction

Nigeria's political landscape has been significantly transformed by digital technologies, particularly social media platforms, which have reshaped how citizens mobilise, engage, and participate in governance. From the globally resonant #EndSARS protests of 2020 to the dynamic online campaigns surrounding the 2023 general elections, digital platforms have become powerful tools for collective action, political mobilisation, and citizen empowerment. In this new terrain, tweets, hashtags, livestreams, and viral videos have not only amplified public grievances but also facilitated real-time coordination and international solidarity. Consequently, understanding the intersection of digital activism and political participation is essential for unpacking the evolving dynamics of Nigeria's democracy (Bello, Hassan, & Sani, 2023; Aina & Afolaranmi, 2025).

Digital activism refers to the strategic use of internet-enabled technologies to organise, advocate, and mobilise for political or social change. It encompasses a range of activities, including online petitions, crowdfunding, real-time protest coordination, hashtag campaigns, and

livestreamed storytelling. Scholars argue that digital activism goes beyond symbolic “clicktivism” by converting online engagement into offline action, particularly when online discourse is supported by physical protests and policy advocacy (Bello et al., 2023). In Nigeria, digital activism has become especially significant, as mobile technology and social media provide avenues for bypassing traditional media gatekeepers and amplifying citizen voices during critical moments of governance and state accountability.

Political participation refers to the various activities citizens undertake to influence government decisions and public policy. Traditionally, this included voting, campaigning, petitioning, and attending town halls. In the digital era, however, participation increasingly extends to online engagement. It shares political content, debating issues, donating to campaigns via crowdfunding, or organising civic events digitally. In Nigeria, research on the 2023 elections indicates that social media profoundly shaped political discourse and voter decisions, particularly among youths and first-time voters (Aina & Afolaranmi, 2025). These findings underscore how digital spaces are now integral to both formal participation (e.g., voting) and informal activism (e.g., online protests).

Social media platforms, particularly Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok, play an outsized role in facilitating political engagement in Nigeria. They allow for rapid information dissemination, real-time coordination, and amplification of citizen voices to national and transnational audiences. For instance, during the 2023 presidential elections, Facebook emerged as the dominant platform, with 34.9% of users actively engaging with political content, while Twitter was critical for youth-driven discourse and agenda-setting (Lapai Journal of Humanities & Management, 2024; East African Journal of Arts & Social Sciences, 2023). However, these same platforms present vulnerabilities, including exposure to disinformation, harassment, surveillance, and state-led censorship, factors that can undermine the very activism they enable.

Nigerian youths are at the forefront of digital activism and online political participation. Empirical studies show that platforms like Twitter/X enhanced young people’s belief in their ability to influence politics, a concept known as political efficacy (East African Journal of Arts & Social Sciences, 2023). In the 2023 elections, social media became a key tool for mobilising young voters, disseminating real-time updates, and fostering peer-to-peer political dialogue. However, the link between online engagement and sustained offline participation remains complex: while online mobilisation boosted awareness and turnout, long-term effects on institutional trust and policy change remain limited (Chukwu, 2025).

Scholars examining Nigeria’s evolving political environment emphasise the interdependence between digital activism, social media affordances, and political participation. Studies on #EndSARS demonstrate how digital networks rapidly scaled local grievances into

nationwide protests, forcing government responses and attracting international attention (Bello et al., 2023). Similarly, analyses of the 2023 elections reveal that online platforms shaped political narratives, candidate visibility, and mobilisation strategies, particularly among first-time voters (Aina & Afolaranmi, 2025). However, findings are mixed: while some scholars celebrate digital activism's capacity to democratise political spaces, others point to persistent structural barriers, including state repression, misinformation, and the episodic nature of online movements (Chukwu, 2025).

Despite a growing body of literature on digital activism and political participation in Nigeria, significant gaps remain. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on episodic events like #EndSARS or offers cross-sectional analyses of past electoral cycles, leaving unanswered questions about how digital activism influences specific aspects of political participation. There is limited evidence on how online engagement translates into voter registration, grassroots mobilisation, and actual voting behaviour, particularly among Nigerian youths who dominate digital spaces. Moreover, little is known about how emerging patterns of digital activism ahead of the 2027 general elections could reshape participation dynamics and influence democratic outcomes. This study therefore seeks to examine how digital activism shapes political participation among Nigerian youths, with particular attention to its influence on voter registration, grassroots mobilisation, and actual voting ahead of the 2027 general elections.

2. Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's democratic experience has shown that elections are not only a test of institutions but also of citizen participation. The rise of digital activism, powered by platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok, has already transformed how Nigerians, particularly youths, register their grievances, mobilise, and participate in politics. The #EndSARS movement and the 2023 general elections demonstrated the power of digital platforms to amplify voices, encourage youth registration, and facilitate grassroots organising. Yet, despite this progress, Nigeria still struggles with persistent challenges: low voter registration among youths, weak grassroots mobilisation, and voter apathy on election day. These challenges raise important concerns as the country looks toward the 2027 elections, where youth participation will again be critical to democratic legitimacy.

The urgency of this study lies in the approaching 2027 general elections, where Nigeria's large youth population is expected to once again dominate the digital space. If their online energy translates into formal participation, it could significantly alter the country's political trajectory. However, if digital activism remains episodic or disconnected from institutional processes, the momentum may dissipate without meaningful reform. This tension makes it

critical to ask: to what extent can digital activism ahead of the 2027 elections influence voter registration, grassroots mobilisation, and actual voting on election day in Nigeria?

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Examine the emerging patterns of digital activism among Nigerian youths ahead of the 2027 general elections.
2. Analyse how digital activism is likely to influence voter registration among Nigerian youths before the 2027 elections.
3. Assess the potential role of digital activism in grassroots political mobilisation leading up to the 2027 elections.
4. Evaluate how digital activism could affect actual voter turnout and participation on election day in 2027.

4. Literature Review

Digital activism describes the use of internet-based tools, such as social media platforms, messaging apps, blogs, and websites, to organise, advocate, and mobilise for political or social change. In Nigeria, digital activism has emerged as a potent force in shaping public discourse and collective action, particularly among youth. For instance, the #EndSARS protests of 2020 demonstrated how online platforms enabled rapid sharing of protest information, visual documentation of police brutality, and national and global solidarity (Bello, Hassan, & Sani, 2023). Beyond protest outbreaks, digital activism continues to facilitate civic engagement, offering Nigerians avenues to bypass traditional media censorship and consolidate dispersed voices via viral hashtags, livestreams, and digital petitions. Despite infrastructural and literacy challenges, the expanding reach of mobile internet enhances its transformative potential for democratic engagement and accountable governance.

Digital activism in Nigeria spans several interrelated types that each serve distinct strategic functions. Hashtag mobilization, for example #EndSARS or #BringBackOurGirls, aggregates individual narratives into a single, searchable thread that can frame national conversations and attract global attention; empirical analyses show that hashtag campaigns can sustain public engagement by creating shared identities and urgency (Ogunderu & Afolaranmi, 2024). Messaging-app coordination, notably via WhatsApp, supports granular organisation: users share logistics, livestream information, and protest updates within trusted groups, facilitating secure coordination that is less visible to state surveillance channels (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). Meanwhile, media advocacy campaigns, such as feminist or rights-based drives on Twitter or Instagram, use storytelling, testimonies, and visual content to build awareness and

pressure policymakers. Cumulatively, these forms interplay to produce cohesive mobilisation: hashtags raise awareness; WhatsApp directs action; media campaigns deepen narratives.

The media channels through which digital activism flows in Nigeria are diverse yet complementary, each offering unique affordances. Social media platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, and Instagram operate as public-facing spaces that facilitate mass communication, narrative framing, and engagement with political content; studies of youth participation in recent electoral cycles show that platforms like Facebook and Twitter are central to shaping election discourse and forging issue salience (Aina & Afolaranmi, 2025). WhatsApp, conversely, excels in closed-group usability, enabling organisers to share mobilising calls, polling unit info, and protest logistics discreetly; research into the #EndSARS movement indicates WhatsApp was pivotal for on-the-ground coordination (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). Together, these platforms create a layered digital ecosystem: Twitter for visibility, WhatsApp for operational coordination, and Facebook/Instagram for storytelling and deepening engagement. Understanding these channels' unique functions helps map how digital activism transitions from online expression to tangible civic action.

Political participation encapsulates all the ways through which citizens attempt to influence public policy, governance, or leadership decisions. It ranges from traditional avenues such as voting, campaigning, and petitioning, to more contemporary forms like online advocacy, digital petitions, or mobilising awareness through social media. In Nigeria, structural challenges such as institutional distrust, election irregularities, and infrastructural limitations have historically undermined youth engagement (Fasola & Oyadeyi, 2021). However, digital tools are increasingly reshaping these dynamics by offering lower-cost, accessible, and interactive entry points for marginalised groups, particularly the youth, to engage in the political process (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). Through platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter, youth find new modes to voice concerns, mobilise around issues, and participate in governance in ways previously constrained by physical and political barriers.

There are three phases of political participation: In the pre-election phase, political participation often centres on voter awareness, education, and registration efforts. Digital platforms have proven pivotal in amplifying these efforts among youth, making the process more visible, communal, and urgent. For example, a 2023 study found that online activism among Nigerian youth positively correlated with political knowledge, particularly about registration and candidate information, suggesting that digital channels are critical conduits for pre-election engagement (Akeusola, 2023). Furthermore, the #YouthVotes campaign reportedly increased youth political awareness by 78%, while 65% of participants credited the campaign with influencing their decision to vote—a clear indicator of the effectiveness of digital media in mobilising voter registration and interest (ENEMS PROJECT, 2025).

During elections, political participation shifts from planning to execution—most importantly, casting ballots. Social media has played a crucial role in guiding youths through the voting process by disseminating polling unit information, security updates, and turnout expectations in real time. In the 2023 Nigerian presidential campaign, for example, Facebook emerged as the dominant platform, with 62.4% of respondents acknowledging social media's influence on their voting behaviour (Arowolo & Ogande, 2024). Additionally, in Benue State, social media platforms were instrumental in voter mobilisation efforts, with both Facebook and Twitter cited as primary channels for mobilising electoral participation (Ojomugbokenyode & Ogande, 2024).

The post-election phase provides opportunities for citizens to engage in accountability, monitoring, and advocating for electoral or policy reform. Digital tools offer unprecedented reach and immediacy for such endeavours. While explicit studies focusing solely on Nigeria are limited, broader evidence indicates that social media activism can sustain civic engagement post-election by facilitating discourse, enabling result monitoring, and organising collective follow-up actions (Anyawu & Onuoha, 2021). These platforms create spaces where citizens can hold leaders accountable and sustain political attention beyond election cycles.

5. Theoretical Framework

Digital activism operates at the intersection of media power, networked organisation and individual motivations; understanding how it maps onto political participation, specifically voter registration, grassroots mobilisation and election-day turnout, requires an integrated theoretical lens. Agenda-setting theory establishes the first link in this chain by explaining how media (now including social platforms) influence what citizens perceive as important and worthy of action; when digital campaigns make registration deadlines, civic education or protest calls salient, they alter public priorities and prime users to act (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Building on agenda-setting, the logic of connective action demonstrates that contemporary collective action often does not depend on formal organisations but on digitally enabled, personalised links and shared action frames; connective logics enable rapid diffusion of calls to register, local meeting points, or get-out-the-vote appeals across loosely connected networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). In the Nigerian context, empirical analyses show that such connective, decentralised mobilisation was a defining feature of recent episodes of digital activism, including how campaigns framed civic duties and circulated concrete calls to action (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023; Bello, Alhassan, & Inuwa-Dutse, 2023).

Castells's network society perspective ties these strands to broader structural implications by emphasising that networked media reconfigure power and collective identities: digital networks create public spheres where dispersed actors can coalesce into politically

meaningful communities capable of coordinating offline action (Castells, 2012). This explains why hashtag movements and coordinated WhatsApp groups in Nigeria not only raised awareness but also facilitated on-the-ground organising and resource pooling—key resources for converting online attention into measurable outcomes such as mass registration drives or coordinated turnout on election day (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). Complementing the macro view, networked publics theory (boyd, 2014) focuses on the affordances, persistence, visibility, spreadability and searchability, that allow messages to remain accessible and to be amplified over time; these affordances help explain why certain campaigns (those that combine public signalling with local logistics) achieve greater conversion from online interest to offline participation. Empirical work on #EndSARS and subsequent electoral cycles documents how Twitter amplified testimonials and visibility while WhatsApp groups handled discrete coordination tasks, together producing measurable spikes in civic mobilisation (Bello et al., 2023; Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023).

The micro-level mechanism that links exposure to action is clarified by uses and gratifications theory: individuals actively select media to satisfy needs (information, social identity, efficacy), and when digital activism fulfils these needs, by providing reliable registration information, social validation, or practical logistics, users are more likely to follow through with offline political acts (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Recent surveys and content analyses from Nigeria find that youth users who engaged with actionable digital content (how to register, where to vote, local meeting points) exhibited higher political knowledge and stronger intentions to register and vote; importantly, the presence of localised, trustable coordination channels (for example, moderated WhatsApp groups that link users to offline volunteers) strengthened the translation from online intent to real-world participation (Akeusola, 2023; Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). In short, agenda-setting explains salience, connective and network theories supply the organisational mechanism, platform affordances explain reach and persistence, and uses and gratifications supply the motivational bridge that converts online mobilisation into voter registration, grassroots mobilisation and election-day turnout. This integrated nexus both organises the empirical puzzles your study addresses and generates testable propositions about when and how digital activism will matter for youth political participation ahead of the 2027 elections.

6. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design and collected quantitative data using structured questionnaire administered to residents of Uyo to examine how digital activism influenced political participation, particularly voter registration, grassroots mobilisation, and election-day turnout. According to the most recent estimates, the population of Uyo metropolis in 2025 was

approximately 1,457,000 residents (Macrotrends, 2025; World Population Review, 2025). To determine the appropriate sample size, the Taro Yamane formula $n = N/(1+N(e)^2)$ was applied, where $N = 1,457,000$ and the level of precision was set at $e = 0.05$. The computation yielded $n \approx 400$ respondents, which formed the sample size.

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed, combining cluster sampling, where Uyo was divided into major streets with simple random sampling within each cluster to select participants, thereby achieving representativeness while maintaining feasibility. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire, which was pre-tested on about 10% of the calculated sample (≈ 40 respondents) to ensure validity and reliability. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, and the reliability coefficient achieved was 0.74, which was considered acceptable for social science research. Data were analysed using both descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and percentages) to summarise respondents' characteristics and inferential statistics (chi-square tests to determine associations and logistic regression to predict voter registration, mobilisation, and election-day turnout).

Data and Results

Out of the 400 copies of the questionnaire that was sent out, 389 copies were retrieved and valid for this analysis. The tables below present the data collated from the analysed responses:

Table 1: Patterns and Forms of Digital Activism Among Nigerian Youths

Patterns/Forms of Digital Activism	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Hashtag campaigns on Twitter/X	102	26.2
Sharing political content on WhatsApp	89	22.9
Signing online petitions	51	13.1
Participating in virtual protests	67	17.2
Creating digital political content	48	12.3
Donating to online political causes	32	8.2
Total	389	100

Table 1 indicates that Nigerian youths are engaging in diverse forms of digital activism ahead of the 2027 general elections. The most common activity was hashtag campaigns on Twitter/X (26.2%), followed by sharing political content via WhatsApp (22.9%). Activities requiring deeper involvement, such as signing petitions (13.1%) and participating in virtual protests (17.2%), recorded moderate engagement. Less common were content creation (12.3%) and donations to online causes (8.2%). These patterns suggest that while youths are highly active in awareness-driven activism, financially and time-intensive actions are less popular.

Table 2: Influence of digital activism on voter registration

Influence Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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Improved awareness of registration deadlines	116	29.8
Encouraged peers to register	84	21.6
Provided step-by-step registration guides	97	24.9
Facilitated online voter education	55	14.1
No significant influence	37	9.5
Total	389	100

Table 2 shows that digital activism plays a significant role in promoting voter registration among Nigerian youths. Improved awareness of registration deadlines (29.8%) and step-by-step registration guides (24.9%) were the most impactful contributions. Encouraging peers to register (21.6%) and facilitating voter education (14.1%) also highlight the social and informational roles of digital platforms. However, 9.5% of respondents reported no significant influence, suggesting a small but notable segment remains disengaged despite online mobilisation.

Table 3: Role of digital activism in grassroots political mobilisation

Mobilisation Activities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Organising local community meetings	91	23.4
Recruiting volunteers	78	20.1
Sharing grassroots mobilisation videos	102	26.2
Coordinating local rallies	64	16.5
Mobilisation through faith-based and student groups	54	13.9
Total	389	100

Table 3 reveals that digital activism has emerged as a vital tool for grassroots mobilisation. Respondents reported that social platforms are most effective in sharing mobilisation videos (26.2%) and organising local meetings (23.4%), both of which facilitate community-based engagement. Recruiting volunteers (20.1%) and coordinating local rallies (16.5%) demonstrate that digital tools are increasingly linked to on-the-ground actions, while faith-based and student groups (13.9%) further expand reach. This shows that digital activism bridges online discourse with offline grassroots structures.

Table 4: Impact of digital activism on election-day voter participation

Election-Day Influence	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Motivated by online campaigns to vote	112	28.8
Followed reminders from WhatsApp groups	95	24.4
Used mobile apps to locate polling units	74	19.0
Engaged in election monitoring initiatives	61	15.7
Digital activism had no effect	47	12.1
Total	389	100

Table 4 illustrates that digital activism could significantly boost voter turnout during the 2027 elections. Online campaigns motivating voters (28.8%) and WhatsApp reminders (24.4%) emerged as the strongest factors, showing the power of targeted mobilisation. The use of mobile apps to locate polling units (19.0%) and participation in citizen-driven monitoring initiatives

(15.7%) also highlight how digital tools can enhance both accessibility and accountability. However, 12.1% of respondents indicated that digital activism might not affect their participation, suggesting the persistence of structural or personal barriers.

7. Discussion of Findings

RQ1. What are the emerging patterns and forms of digital activism among Nigerian youths ahead of the 2027 general elections?

The dominant patterns were hashtag campaigns on Twitter/X (102; 26.2%) and sharing political content on WhatsApp (89; 22.9%), with moderate engagement in virtual protests (67; 17.2%) and signing online petitions (51; 13.1%). Content creation (48; 12.3%) and online donations (32; 8.2%) were less common. These frequencies indicate that Nigerian youths primarily used low-cost, highly viral modes of participation (hashtags and peer-to-peer sharing) rather than resource-intensive actions (financial donations or frequent content production). Hashtag campaigns supplied visibility and a shared frame for issues, while WhatsApp provided private, trusted channels for circulating messages and coordinating small-scale activities. The relative scarcity of donations and content production suggests either resource constraints or a preference for quick signalling and information sharing over longer-term investment in campaigns.

This pattern aligns with empirical work showing that Twitter is a central arena for public signalling and agenda-setting in Nigerian activism while WhatsApp functions as the backend coordination tool (Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023; Bello, Hassan, & Sani, 2023). Uwalaka and Nwala (2023) found WhatsApp instrumental in protest logistics during #EndSARS, and Bello et al. (2023) documented Twitter's role in amplifying testimonies and hashtags. Akeusola (2023) similarly reported that young Nigerians tended to engage more in information-sharing and awareness behaviours online than in financially costly support. Where our data add new insight is in quantifying these patterns ahead of 2027: hashtags and private messaging remain the leading forms of engagement, while deeper resource commitments lag.

These findings are best interpreted through the Networked Publics / Logic of Connective Action lens (boyd, 2014; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). The prominence of hashtags and peer sharing reflects a connective logic in which personalised content and affordances of networked platforms generate large numbers of low-threshold acts (shares, retweets, group forwards) that aggregate into visible movements without requiring formal organisational structures. In short, the data show connective action in practice: high visibility + low cost = widespread online participation but limited costly engagement.

RQ2. How is digital activism likely to influence voter registration among Nigerian youths before the 2027 elections?

Digital activism most strongly influenced improved awareness of registration deadlines (116; 29.8%) and providing step-by-step registration guides (97; 24.9%); 84 respondents (21.6%) said they encouraged peers to register. Only 37 respondents (9.5%) reported no significant influence. The data show that digital activism functioned primarily as an informational and normative catalyst for registration: platforms raised salience of deadlines and supplied procedural guidance that lowered the transaction costs of registering. Peer encouragement figures suggest social influence—youths not only received information but also acted as conduits within their networks to spur registration. The minority reporting no influence underscores persistent barriers (access, apathy, distrust) that online outreach did not overcome for all.

These results corroborate analyses of the 2023 cycle showing social media's capacity to raise registration and voter awareness among youth (Aina & Afolaranmi, 2025). Empirical studies of recent Nigerian activism also emphasise the effectiveness of targeted informational campaigns: Ojomugbokenyode and Ogande (2024) found that Facebook and Twitter campaigns materially increased registration awareness in Benue State, while Akeusola (2023) linked digital engagement to higher political knowledge that supported registration decisions. Our findings extend those studies by documenting that, ahead of 2027, practical supports (step-by-step guides) were nearly as consequential as deadline awareness in prompting registration.

This pattern is consistent with Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) adapted to digital media: by making registration salient and framing it as an immediate civic priority, digital activism shifted the issue onto youths' cognitive agendas and thereby fostered action. In addition, the information-reducing function aligns with rational-choice expectations about lowering transaction costs to increase registration rates.

RQ3. In what ways is digital activism likely to facilitate grassroots political mobilisation leading up to the 2027 elections?

Digital activism was most effective for sharing grassroots mobilisation videos (102; 26.2%) and organising local community meetings (91; 23.4%), followed by recruiting volunteers (78; 20.1%) and coordinating local rallies (64; 16.5%). Faith-based and student group mobilisation accounted for 54 responses (13.9%). These results show that digital platforms were used both for narrative amplification (videos that motivate and instruct) and for practical local organising (scheduling meetings, recruiting volunteers). The relatively strong showing for video content suggests that emotionally resonant, multimedia materials are particularly effective at translating online sympathy into offline action. The distribution also highlights multi-layered mobilisation: public multimedia messaging to galvanise interest plus closed or semi-closed channels to operationalise activities.

This outcome parallels findings from studies of #EndSARS and post-2020 activism where multimedia storytelling on public platforms drove attention while private messaging and local networks enabled physical mobilisation (Bello et al., 2023; Uwalaka & Nwala, 2023). Chigbu and Ihechu (2025) (mixed-methods work) similarly observed that video and narrative framing on social media motivated youth registration and canvassing in Abia State. Our results confirm this two-step mobilisation dynamic, public narrative plus private coordination, operating ahead of 2027. The result aligns with Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) and Castells's Network Society perspective. RMT emphasises that mobilisation requires resources (information, organisers, volunteers): digital tools supply informational and organisational resources (videos, volunteer recruitment channels), while network society theory explains how distributed networks pool these resources to create coordinated grassroots action (Castells, 2012). Thus, digital affordances served both to attract resources (volunteers, visibility) and to allocate them where grassroots activity occurred.

RQ4. How might digital activism affect actual voter turnout and participation on election day in 2027?

The most frequently reported election-day influences were being motivated by online campaigns to vote (112; 28.8%), following reminders from WhatsApp groups (95; 24.4%), and using mobile apps to locate polling units (74; 19.0%); 61 respondents (15.7%) engaged in election monitoring initiatives, while 47 (12.1%) said digital activism had no effect. These findings indicate that digital activism had both motivational and logistical effects on turnout: persuasive campaigns elevated intent to vote, group reminders sustained mobilisation through the voting window, and utility apps reduced informational barriers on where and how to vote. The presence of a non-trivial non-effect group (12.1%) again highlights persistent constraints that online mobilisation alone may not overcome.

These patterns mirror results from recent Nigerian empirical work: Ngoka et al. (2024) and Ikegbunam & Ezeaso (2024) demonstrated that WhatsApp and mobile communication materially influenced students' and urban voters' turnout behaviours, while Arowolo and Ogande (2024) reported social media's effect on voting decisions during the 2023 cycle. Our study corroborates and extends these findings by showing that reminders and practical tools (apps locating polling units) were key mechanisms by which online activity translated into election-day participation ahead of 2027. The turnout result is most coherently explained by Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT): youths who used digital media to fulfil information and instrumental needs (where to vote; reminders to vote) were more likely to convert online intention into action. UGT predicts that when media satisfy a user's pragmatic needs, here, logistical certainty and social motivation; they increase the probability of real-world behaviour, which our data confirmed.

8. Summary of Findings

Conclusion

This study examined the nexus between digital activism and political participation among Nigerian youths ahead of the 2027 general elections. Digital platforms were found to play a critical role in promoting voter registration, especially by improving awareness of deadlines, offering step-by-step guides, and fostering peer influence. Moreover, the study revealed that digital activism facilitates grassroots mobilisation by enabling the dissemination of multimedia mobilisation content, organising community meetings, and coordinating volunteers and rallies. Importantly, the analysis established that digital activism is poised to significantly boost voter turnout on election day, as online campaigns, reminders, and mobile tools enhance motivation, logistical preparedness, and real-time engagement.

These results underscore the transformative potential of digital platforms in reshaping youth political participation in Nigeria. However, challenges remain, including persistent disengagement among a minority of youths, resource constraints for deeper participation, and infrastructural or institutional barriers to effective mobilisation. The findings enrich existing theoretical perspectives, confirming the combined relevance of connective action, agenda-setting, resource mobilisation, and uses-and-gratifications theories in understanding how digital activism shapes civic behaviours in emerging democracies. As Nigeria approaches the 2027 elections, leveraging digital activism strategically can foster increased voter registration, enhanced grassroots mobilisation, and greater electoral participation among youths, ultimately strengthening democratic processes.

9. Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Stakeholders including civil society organisations, youth groups, and electoral bodies should invest in training youths on content creation, online petitioning, and structured virtual campaigns to move beyond awareness-driven activism towards sustained civic engagement ahead of 2027.
2. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should collaborate with youth influencers and digital campaigners to create targeted voter education content and step-by-step registration guides disseminated via WhatsApp, Twitter/X, Instagram, and TikTok to maximise reach and impact.
3. Political parties and community-based organisations should employ multimedia strategies, including short mobilisation videos, online community forums, and encrypted coordination platforms, to recruit volunteers, organise meetings, and mobilise faith-based and student networks effectively.

4. Ahead of election day, INEC, civil society actors, and tech developers should collaborate to deploy voter mobilisation apps offering features like polling unit locators, WhatsApp reminders, and election monitoring dashboards to encourage higher turnout and transparency during the 2027 elections.

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