

Social Media Introduction and Individual Empowerment Opportunities: Measuring Awareness among Residents of Four Cities in Nigeria

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Abstract

This work was on the social media introduction and individual empowerment opportunities. It was on the measuring of awareness among residents of four cities in Nigeria. The three main objectives were: To find out the proportion of persons who adapt to the introduction of social media for empowerment opportunities in four cities of Nigeria; To find out the aspect of social empowerment opportunities in which social media introduction has offered to residents of four cities in Nigeria; To find out the main barrier which affect social media contribution to raise empowerment opportunities in four cities of Nigeria. The scope of work was limited to four cities in Nigeria which were Ilorin, Onitsha, Zaria and Jos. The population was taken at 4,877,153 persons and a sample of 800. The instrument of research was a structure questionnaire proportionately distributed to respondents in the four cities. The method of research was through the use of online surveys. The data analysis was through frequency tables with percentages. Findings revealed that 488 persons supported that entertainment was the major aspect of social empowerment gained from social media against health care information, education and politics. Other findings had it that on the barriers of social media to the contributions on empowerment of users, Falsehood had 488 or (61%). This is the most significant barrier identified, accounting for more than half (61%) of the total responses. It suggests a major trust deficit in the content of radio broadcasting or adult education messaging. Individuals possibly perceive social media content as inaccurate, misleading, or propagandistic. The data highlights that content credibility, audience literacy, and socioeconomic/cultural factors play major roles in the effectiveness of radio broadcasting and adult education. The findings was also that social media restricted access due to false contents affect empowerment in as much as cost which should be considered by subsidization or free access models while programs should be culturally sensitive and, where appropriate, involve religious leaders or integrate educational content in religious programming formats. Sensitization campaigns can also address misconceptions caused by religious biases. Recommendations are that addressing these barriers through targeted strategies will enhance outreach and impact, especially in the Nigerian context where radio remains a vital tool for mass communication and education. The conclusions had it that there is a clear need for digital literacy programs, affordable internet access, and awareness campaigns that educate users about the productive use of social media—especially in underrepresented or underserved communities. There is also a need for audience feedback mechanisms and verification of facts to counteract misinformation.

Keywords: Awareness; Empowerment; Media; Opportunities; Social

1. Introduction:

Over the past two decades, the advent of social media has fundamentally reshaped how people communicate, access information, and engage in social, economic, and political activities. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok have grown from basic social networking services into powerful tools for mass communication, knowledge dissemination, community building, and personal development (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The global expansion of internet access, mobile technology, and digital infrastructure has enabled social media to become deeply embedded in daily life, transforming public discourse and social interaction in both developed and developing nations (Castells, 2012).

In sub-Saharan Africa—and particularly Nigeria, the most populous country in the region—social media plays a multifaceted role. Beyond personal communication, these platforms offer avenues for entrepreneurship, education, activism, and civic engagement (Egbunike & Olorunnisola, 2015). For many Nigerians, especially the youth, social media serves as an alternative to traditional pathways of empowerment, providing opportunities to create and share content, promote businesses, and participate in social change. For instance, the #EndSARS protest of 2020 illustrated how digital platforms could mobilize mass action and force government accountability, underscoring social media's potential as a catalyst for empowerment (Adebayo & Morah, 2021).

Social media has emerged as a transformative tool in modern society, redefining communication patterns, enabling grassroots mobilization, enhancing democratic participation, and offering platforms for personal and economic empowerment (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Castells, 2012). In Nigeria, the ubiquity of mobile phones and increasing access to the internet have amplified the reach and influence of social media, particularly among urban populations. With platforms like Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and WhatsApp becoming entrenched in daily life, individuals increasingly leverage these tools for education, entrepreneurship, activism, and self-expression.

Nigeria's urban centers such as Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and Kano have become key zones of digital transformation. These cities boast higher rates of internet penetration, smartphone ownership, and educational attainment compared to rural areas (Adeleke & Ogunshola, 2021). As such, they offer an ideal context for investigating how social media awareness translates into individual empowerment. However, despite rapid technological growth, disparities persist in access, digital literacy, and gendered usage of digital platforms, thus influencing how effectively individuals can harness social media for empowerment (Aina & Ojebuyi, 2020). In today's digitally interconnected world, individual empowerment—defined as the ability to make informed choices, gain access to



opportunities, and exert influence over one's environment—is increasingly linked to digital engagement (Shirky, 2011). Social media provides tools that enhance autonomy, amplify voices, and support knowledge acquisition. With the rise of e-learning platforms, digital marketplaces, and online advocacy networks, users can now transcend traditional limitations of geography, class, and institutional access (Uchenna & Osuagwu, 2022).

However, the extent to which Nigerians are not only aware of these opportunities but actively engage with them for empowerment purposes varies widely. This study explores this variation across four major urban centers Zaria, Jos, Onitsha and Illorin, chosen for their demographic diversity, economic activities, and strategic geopolitical relevance. Yet, awareness remains a critical first step in the empowerment process. Awareness in this context refers not only to knowledge of social media platforms but also to understanding their potential functions in achieving personal or community goals. In Nigeria, many users still engage social media mainly for entertainment or interpersonal communication, while underutilizing its full capacity for entrepreneurship, education, or civic participation (Okon, 2020). This gap between awareness and effective use represents a significant challenge in leveraging digital tools for widespread empowerment.

Moreover, contemporary concerns about digital misinformation, data privacy, and cybercrime have added new layers of complexity to the discourse on digital empowerment. While social media offers tools for upward mobility, it also presents risks that could disempower or exploit vulnerable users (Aina & Ojebuyi, 2020). Therefore, understanding the level of awareness among Nigerians in different urban contexts is crucial for shaping digital literacy programs, policy interventions, and technology access initiatives aimed at inclusive empowerment.

This study aims to measure the level of awareness of social media's empowerment potential among residents of four Nigerian cities Zaria, Onitsha, Ilorin and Jos. It seeks to identify variations in awareness by age, gender, and educational background, and to explore how this awareness translates into actual use of social media for empowerment-related activities. By doing so, the study provides valuable insights into how urban Nigerians perceive and utilize digital tools in their pursuit of personal and collective development.

2. Statement of the Problem:

Despite the rapid growth and penetration of social media platforms across Nigeria, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these digital tools contribute to individual empowerment, particularly in terms of economic, social, and civic



engagement. While global studies highlight social media as a catalyst for personal development and societal transformation, localized empirical data from Nigerian cities is limited. Residents in different urban centers may possess varying degrees of awareness and capacity to leverage social media for opportunities such as entrepreneurship, education, political participation, and social networking.

Moreover, issues such as digital literacy, inconsistent access to internet infrastructure, cultural perceptions, and socioeconomic disparities may hinder effective utilization of these platforms. Without a clear understanding of the level of awareness and the specific barriers or enablers within different Nigerian cities, policies and programs aimed at digital empowerment may fall short. Therefore, there is a need to measure the extent of awareness and usage of social media for empowerment purposes among residents in select Nigerian cities, in order to inform strategic interventions that can bridge the digital opportunity divide. The general research question is: To what degree are residents of select Nigerian cities aware or exposed to social media platforms and are applying for individual empowerment opportunities in economic, social, and civic areas?

3. Objectives of the Study:

To find out the proportion of persons who adapt to the introduction of social media for empowerment opportunities in four cities of Nigeria

To find out the aspect of social empowerment opportunities in which social media introduction has offered to residents of four cities in Nigeria

To find out the main barrier which affect social media contribution to raise empowerment opportunities in four cities of Nigeria

3.1. The research sub-questions based on main questions:

What proportion of persons in the four cities of Nigeria have adapted to the introduction of social media for empowerment opportunities?

Which aspect of social empowerment opportunities has been enhanced by the introduction of social media for residents of the four cities in Nigeria?

What is the main barriers affecting social media's contribution to increasing empowerment opportunities in the four cities of Nigeria?

3.2. Hypotheses:

H₀ (Null Hypothesis): There is no perfect relationship between the proportion of persons exposed to social media and social empowerment opportunities in four cities in Nigeria.

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a perfect relationship between the proportion of persons exposed to social media and social empowerment opportunities in four cities in Nigeria.

3.3. Literature Review:

Social Media: Definitive Overview

Social media is a generic term for the numerous forms of electronic network communication through the use of computer technology. Hasan(2013) opines that social media came to be by the advancement in telecommunication and the expansion of media product markets for global media culture. Jacka & Scott (2011) define social media to be website sources of application for social networking. These websites are commonly called by individuals as the internet and has become popular across gender, age and income. In social media, websites facilities are applied for communication by people of similar or related interest, experience, or observations from the activities of others around them. The contents generated are shared over the internet through technologies for the promotion of collaborations, oppose issues and also cause integration.

In the views of Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) social media are communication channels that build on technological applications of Web 2. 0 network systems. The system allows the creation of contents of information generated by the user using smart-phones, i-pads and general purpose table and lap top computers linked to the network. The network linkage between the message creator and the receiver or receivers makes the pattern of social media communication to be interactive and participatory at real-time. Dominick (2011) collaborates that socials media are online communication platforms that use special techniques to cause participation in conversations, linkages and information sharing in all facets of activities. These activities are not exclusive to mere social interactions but also hard matters of governance and administration of governments. In the social media process of communication, individuals have opportunities of seeing the close-up shots of photographs and sometimes the full pictures through online streaming or recorded videos. Moreso, the blogs allow the viewing of profiles by the displaying of user previous postings. Dominik adds that social media allow escape from face to face discussions, erodes gesturing, facilitate criticisms.

4. Types of Social Media Platforms:

The following social media platforms are examined.

4.1. Blogs:



Blogs are social media platforms that offer users communication in personal diaries. The extent of use by individuals and institutions is very popular. It allows comments, links and feedback from readers. It can be likened to a space on the internet where a single person or group can give or receive information, opinions, photographs, videos. It accepts any topic on all disciplines free (Watson and Hill, 2012). Maisha (2021) says that a blog is a website or part of a site that contains regularly-updated contents about one or multiple topics. The concept is short for “web log,” which connotes to log facts on a website. The contents on a blog typically originates in the formula of articles on separate web sheets christened blog posts. On the blog’s Web site are assemblages of posts filled in opposite sequential direction – from the newest to the past.

4.2. Twitter:

Gil (2021) says that Twitter is a virtual news and social interacting location where persons interconnect in petite messages called tweets. Tweeting is placement of short messages for anybody who charts you on Twitter, with the confidence that your arguments are valuable and motivating to somebody in your audience. An additional explanation of Twitter and tweeting seems to be micro blogging. Certain people use Twitter to see attention-grabbing persons and corporations online, choosing to follow their tweets. Arens (2019) adds that Twitter is all about short instant impact online contents. Twitter's big appeal is how scan-friendly it is for the tracking of hundreds of engaging twitter users and read contents with a glance, which is ideal for modern attention-deficit world. Twitter services a determined message scope limit to save things scan-friendly. Hence, all microblog tweet access is narrowed to 280 characters or fewer. This size cap encourages the concentrated and ingenious use of semantics, which makes tweets easy to scan, and interesting to write. This size limit make Twitter a prevalent social apparatus.

Twitter is easy to practice as both a broadcaster and a receiver. You link with a free account and Twitter appellation. Then you direct broadcasts (tweets) daily, hourly, or as often as you prefer. Go to the What's Happening box close to your sketch picture, type 280 or fewer characters, and get on Tweet. Persons who follow you, and possibly others get your tweet. Agwazim (2017) explains that twitter can be use for active political discussions based on faster and shorter messaging and conversations online.

4.3. Instagram:

This is a social network app made for sharing photographs and video from smartphones. It is similar to twitter since it allows users to edit and upload while also adding caption to each of the posts. It uses hastags and geotags to index posts. Instagram is primarily image-focused, offering users the opportunity to take a picture or a short



video and share these with a network of friends as well as the general public of Instagram users (Hu, Manikonda, and Kambhampati 2014). Instagram is mainly accessed through mobile devices, though images can be viewed via a traditional web browser. In part, Instagram's popularity has been fueled by the growth of mobile applications and the uptake of mobile devices over the last half decade (Saloman, 2013). This mobile-first affordance of the platform, along with the tendency of hashtags can connect disparate communities of networked individuals (Shirky 2010).

Thus social media is a platform where the users are both producers and consumers of the content. Video distribution websites, social interacting sites, debate opportunities, blogs are well-known illustrations of social media.

4.4. Youtube:

YouTube is a growing company and as a community. It has turn out to be a generally common platform for people known as YouTubers and for establishments to encourage themselves and their products. However, YouTube is a legitimately new business. YouTube was started in 2005 by three former PayPal employees: Steve Chen, Chad Hurley, and Jawed Karim (Hiebner, 2014). Youtube is a website which allows the upload of contents in a video format. YouTube has the second-largest search engine in the world, behind Google (which owns YouTube). This means people are constantly searching for information using YouTube and discovering videos relating to topics (Moreau, 2020).

YouTube delivers a modest way for individuals to store videos virtually and share them with others. YouTube videos shelter any subject everyone cares to upload a video about. These videos are stress-free to share through other methods of social media, email and websites and can also be entrenched in other websites.

Beside every video on YouTube is a list of 'suggested videos' — videos that YouTube's search engine calculates are likely to interest people who watch the video you are watching. YouTube encourages viewers to express their opinion of videos they watch, to store videos to watch later and to share videos they like. You can make a video publicly available to anyone, or share it privately with selected people.

YouTube Analytics is a self-service analytics and writing device. It provides data about each video you upload, so you can easily track how many views it gets, where people are coming from to find it and what type of people are watching it.

4.5. Face book:



Face book is one of the most familiar social media platforms in the globe. With 2.7 billion regular active users. It commenced business on February 4, 2004, Facebook has dependably progressed over the years to fit the wants of its users and entice fresh ones. This includes the purchase of Instagram and WhatsApp. Businesses can make their own pages, groups, and occasions. Facebook also offers directed advertising chances for those who want to intensify prominence to definite customers. Businesses can also use Facebook Messenger to propel personal communications to consumers.

4.6. LinkedIn:

LinkedIn is the utmost current social media location for expert contacts. The platform has over 700 million recorded users, with around 300 million dynamic users in each month. Launched in 2003, LinkedIn permits a user to add their resumes, link with others, support and make replies (Smith, 2025).

Pinterest

Pinterest is one of the social media sites and one part of search apparatus. It comprises digital bulletin panels where a user knows how to save products, project thoughts, and stimulating images. It is a faultless place to segment product pictures, exclusive DIY ideas, guidelines, and distinctive graphics. You can also brand content on your sites “pinnable” by counting pin-it keys that permit visitors to apportion your content to their panels. Pinterest started in 2010 and has since combined more than 400 million once-a-month vigorous users (Johnson, 2025).

4.7. Tumblr:

Tumblr is a blogging platform that allows several different post formats of quotes, chats, videos, photos, and even audio content. It was originally launched in 2007 and is now owned by Automattic. The user base has reduced a bit in contemporary years. However, it still has almost 400 million periodic companions. The business populace is not as great on Tumblr as it is on other platforms. However, varieties stand out from other locations that are oversaturated. It also deals as subsidized posts and lets a user effortlessly re-share items (Lee, 2025).

4.8. Flickr:

Flickr is a prevalent platform for distribution of photographs and videos. Launched in 2004, the site was bought by Yahoo in 2005 and is currently owned by SmugMug. It is expressly popular for photographers or businesses that desire to see their pictures shared everywhere in the web. Individuals use it to discover royalty-free imageries for use in content. The site has missed some of its industry influence in



contemporary years. Yet, it still has approximately 90 million monthly handlers (Brown, 2025).

4.9. Reddit:

Reddit is a social news and entertainment website with tons of sub-communities dedicated to specific interests. A registered user can submit content and comment on threads to interact with other users. Launched in 2005, the site has amassed a monthly active user base of 430 million. Reddit is not super popular with marketers. However, there are tons of active, targeted communities that make it an attractive option for sites looking to reach a new audience. There are also business-related subreddits for those interested in networking or learning (Taylor, 2025).

4.10.Snapchat:

Snapchat is a mobile messaging social media platform. A user can share one-time content with friends or post stories that go out to all that user's followers. Released in 2011, the app rapidly became common, particularly with young clients. It has since reduced a bit. However, there are still about 360 million monthly users worldwide using this social media channel. Brands that market to young consumers can set up business accounts and advertise on the app (Davis, 2025).

4.11. WhatsApp:

WhatsApp is a popular mobile messaging app. You can use it to send images, texts, documents, audio, and video content to another user individually or in groups. Launched in 2010, the company is now owned by Facebook along with Instagram. WhatsApp now has more than two billion monthly active users. Small businesses can use the app to easily communicate with customers and prospects on a personal level (Miller, 2025).

4.12. Quora:

Quora allows users to ask questions and share answers on a variety of topics. Originally launched in 2009, it now has more than 300 million monthly users. Businesses can use Quora to build expertise in a specific area. Question posts also often rank highly in search results. As a result, even those who do not actively use Quora may come across your responses (Wilson, 2025).

4.13. TikTok:



TikTok is comparatively fresh to the world of social linkages. Nevertheless, it has by now made a notable spot on the social media scenery. The app lets a user generate short, imaginative videos. It already has extra 800 million monthly active users everywhere in the world. Businesses can use it to show off their original side and create viral content as part of their social media promotion (Anderson, 2025).

4.14. Vimeo:

Vimeo is a dedicated video platform. Though not as widely adopted, it offers excellence in features for videographers and those who desire to share filmmaking content. There are about 170 million monthly active users on this social media station. However, Vimeo users can also share and implant videos on other sites. Users can also access innovative stats and analytics to check presentation (Roberts, 2025).

4.15. BizSugar:

BizSugar is a social platform explicitly for small business owners, businesspersons, and administrators. The site was formed in 2007 and is now maintained by Small Business Trends LLC. Users can exchange videocassettes, articles, blog posts, podcast events, and websites. Other users can deliberate or vote on the content they appreciate. The site spreads to more than 2 million lesser business owners once-a-month. As a result, it's an abundant abode to share means, gain information, and enter the marketplace (Martin, 2025).

4.16. Mix:

Mix is a modified location. The company bought popular content aggregator StumbleUpon since 2018. Users can assign other social sites like Facebook and Twitter to curate their feeds. Beforehand, StumbleUpon had around 35 million active users. Though, not all have stuck everywhere. Still, this social media network can come in convenience for small companies that want to part valuable or viral content (Clark, 2025).

4.17. Medium:

Medium is a platform for generating and sharing long-form content. Even though technically not a social media network, lots of individuals and establishments share the site's content. The modification is it does not have a load of additional structures like other social sites to confuse people from the key purposes. As a result, it is perfect for content originators who want their thoughts to gleam. Twitter co-founder Evan Williams created Medium in 2012. There are now closely 100 million users on the site monthly.



Industries can use the site to share multifaceted philosophies or deliberations with extensive audience (Walker, 2025).

4.18. Digg:

Digg is a news aggregator with a curated front page. Themes on this social network differ extensively and may comprise political subjects, technical findings, and viral videocassettes. Created in 2004, the site has gone through numerous recapitulations over the years. Though not as common as it once was, there are 8 million users for each month. Companies can use it to curate their own virtual feeds or share pertinent content (Young, 2025).

4.20. Viber:

Viber is a VoIP and prompt messaging mobile app, joining together social media and communications. It came out in 2010, and has approximately 260 million once-a-month vigorous users. You can use it to interchange audio, video, and pictures with other listed users. Like other chat apps, it is faultless for distribution of personal and impersonal matters with customers or associates. There are also an assemblage of chat choices (King, 2025).

4.21. WeChat:

WeChat is a multi-purpose portable messaging app. Persons can conduct text communications, speech calls, audiovisual content, and even make disbursements. There are clusters and individuals conversation alternatives. And there are roughly 1 billion monthly active users everywhere in the world. WeChat provides authorized accounts. As an outcome, organizations can customize the service to effortlessly ease communication and direct out messages as part of a social media operation (Moore, 2025).

Features of Social Media

4.22. Interactivity:

In mass media, the messages are one-sided. The broadcasters touch a huge audience but the listeners can barely show response. For instance, a blogger can obtain prompt reaction from her audience by remarks and answer back to the comments which could be right tough to do over mass media (Johnson, 2025).

4.23. Immediacy and Transparency:



Through social media, somebody can meet the audience short of any intermediary. In mass media, there are broadcasters which have important influence on the media service. But on social media, the media is exclusively shaped by the producer and openly gain access to by the audience, such as creating a video and dissemination on YouTube or a blog sheet (Smith & Adams, 2025).

4.24. Accessibility:

While the consumption of mass media is very relaxed, the making of mass media message is very difficult and can be said that it is open for merely an advantaged group. However, on social media, the production and giving out of media message is nearly as simple as consumption. All persons can compose a blog or distribute pictures short of a several of energies (Brown & Wilson, 2025).

4.25. Participation:

The development of social media technology and spread of internet has brought revolutionary participatory effects in various areas in society. From manufacturers trying to reach fresh markets to political campaigners trying to rally demonstrations, diverse units of culture apply social media for their own wants and determinations. This caused enormous number of persons to use virtual services. Nowadays, Facebook has more than 850 million users (Honigman, 2012).

5. Social Media and Social Empowerment:

5.1. Political Contacts:

In the contemporary years, the effects of social media in the aspect of politics began to display noticeably in Nigerian communities where there are a great number of online population. Political parties and front-runners started to keep interaction with people via social media devices such as Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, YouTube channels. On social linkages of Facebook and Twitter, people have much more associates than they see in their daily lives.

These social networks ease contacts among people for information and ties. So, when a post or added system of media is shared by a user the viral system allows it to spread to more individuals than it would be conceivable in any other mode. This is particularly factual when the sharing is not a private but a wide-ranging issue such as on partisan matters. Political facts sharing flow and influence people even when they do not have any link with the source. This sharing can be to create political alertness or to activate a demonstration crusade.



In election days, the social media can be used aggressively for publicity. At the global scene, political activists and groups started to use social media in Turkey to make political consciousness and in certain cases to rally demonstrations.

5.2. Mobilization:

One of the most important outcomes of the increase in the social media use and development of social media technologies can be seen in the areas of political mobilization, campaigns and governance. As the strength of social media in reaching mass audiences is comprehended, it started to appeal interests of politicians and political activists as well. In many parts of the world, mastering social media is considered as a strong advantage for politicians to succeed in their political campaigns. The effects of social media on the area of politics are not limited by the use by prominent political leaders and parties. The dogmatic activist individuals can profit from the recompenses of social media as well. The political activist collections which find it tough to reach audiences through mainstream media due to various reasons (such as censorship, profit oriented nature of mainstream media) realized that social media creates an expedient alternative. In the recent years the world witnessed that political activists can communicate, create political awareness on social issues and mobilize demonstrations through social media.

5.3. Speed:

Also being fast and low-cost, announcing protests or demonstrations on social media is much more attractive than methods used in the past such as handouts or posters. Instant Messaging

Using the viral nature established by network of weak ties, on social media the announcements can reach many people instantly without much cost or effort. Moreover, social media created a new term called citizen journalism which has influenced the process of crusades during the Gezi Parki Protests. Citizen journalists from the protest areas not only informed other people of the protests but also reported police violence and created a platform for support and solidarity with others.

5.4. Reliability:

People find mainstream media neither reliable nor free. Social media is seen as an alternative to the mainstream media in informing people of news and political issues. Moreover, social media has already become a tool in informing a high number of people



on political events such as conferences, meetings and demonstrations. A greater percentage of individuals take social media as a treasured instrument to contact people and generate political consciousness. Even though it is not the common, there is a substantial sum of people who enthusiastically rally through social media and link in political activities. Other persons trail political parties, organizations or activists by means of social media. The use of social media is fairly common for political drives.

5.5. Social Media and Empowerment:

Empowerment is defined as a process through which individuals gain control over their lives, access to resources, and the ability to influence decisions that affect them (Kabeer, 1999). In the context of social media, empowerment refers to users' capacity to utilize digital tools to enhance knowledge, communicate freely, promote businesses, and participate in civic engagement (Shirky, 2011).

5.6. The Digital Divide in Nigeria:

Although digital penetration has increased in Nigeria, a digital divide persists, influenced by factors such as education, income, urban-rural dichotomies, and gender disparities (Adeleke & Ogunshola, 2021). While urban areas benefit from better access to infrastructure and services, socio-economic inequalities still affect digital participation and the realization of empowerment outcomes.

Nigerians are among the most active social media users in Africa, with a user base exceeding 30 million as of 2023. Lagos alone accounts for a significant portion of this number, reflecting its status as a commercial and media hub. Studies by Egbunike and Olorunnisola (2015) and Okon (2020) show that social media is used extensively for information sharing, political commentary, and business promotion.

Social media has proven effective for youth and women's empowerment in Nigeria. For example, platforms like Instagram and TikTok have facilitated the rise of digital entrepreneurship among Nigerian women and creatives (Uchenna & Osuagwu, 2022). Moreover, the #EndSARS movement exemplifies how social media can be leveraged for political activism and societal change (Adebayo & Morah, 2021).

Awareness is a precursor to utilization. High levels of awareness do not always translate into active engagement unless supported by digital skills and access to infrastructure. Therefore, measuring awareness alongside engagement helps to paint a clearer picture of empowerment potential. Barriers to Empowerment via Social Media such as: Digital illiteracy (especially among older adults), Cost of internet access, Misinformation and online scams, Low trust in digital platforms for serious transactions

6. Review of Related Literature

Ukachi & Nwanna (2021) did a work on “Social Media as Information and Communication Tool for Socio-Economic Empowerment of Undergraduate Students in Nigeria”. The purpose of this work is to establish how undergraduate students in the University of Lagos and University of Nigeria, Nsukka, are using social media as information and communication tool for their socioeconomic empowerment including the exact ways in which their adoption has empowered them socioeconomically. The exploratory research design was adopted for the study while the simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting undergraduate students who were seen at the lecture rooms during the lecture days. A total number of 400 third and final-year students, were arbitrarily nominated from the Departments of Sociology and Mass Communication of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the two institution of higher education. A questionnaire, made up of open and close-ended questions was used for data gathering.

The results showed that the social media implements commonly recognized by the participants are; Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, while the most prevalently applied ones for their socio-economic empowerment are: WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. The exact ways it has empowered them socio-economically comprise; decrease in their cost of business communication, retrieving information that aided their trade to flourish, promotion of products and services, and connecting them up with fresh clienteles. This study exposed how students in the two universities are using social media as an information and communication instrument for socio-economic enablement. It presented understanding into the precise methods in which social media usage has empowered users socio-economically.

In a similar work, Fab -Ukozor & Ojiakor(2020) studied “Social Media and Youth Empowerment: An Empirical Inquiry”. The authors noted that the rise of global unemployment has prompted concern as technology, notably the Internet and social media, renders many jobs redundant. Yet, these platforms also hold potential for job creation. Drawing on Uses and Gratification theory, this study examined specific areas of social media–driven economic empowerment among users. Employing a mixed-methods design—a descriptive survey and factorial analysis—data were collected from 143 social media users aged 23–37 in Anambra State. Findings indicated high awareness of social media’s empowerment potential: 65.7% use it primarily for leisure and social connection, while 34.3% leverage it for learning and economic opportunities. Gender differences emerged in platform appeal. The study recommended mentorship programs to guide youth towards realizing social media’s empowerment capabilities.

Theoretical Framework



Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratifications Theory originated in the 1940s and shifts the focus from what media does to people to what people do with media. It posits that individuals actively select media sources that best meet their needs—whether those needs are informational, personal identity, integration, social interaction, or entertainment. UGT is ideal for examining why and how individuals use social media platforms, and how the feedback they receive fulfills certain emotional or cognitive needs. People may seek social approval, validation, or empathy from peers through likes, comments, and shares. This active seeking of feedback helps them regulate their self-concept and develop higher emotional awareness (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1970). Positive feedback can boost emotional self-esteem, while negative or absent feedback may lead to emotional deregulation or social withdrawal.

Technological Determinism Theory

Technological determinism that proposes that technological growth influences, and even governs, human behavior, societal norms, and cultural trends. It profess that technological modernizations figure the course of human past such as the printing press, the internet against beliefs. Technological determinism regulates society's structures, performance, and developments. This point of view supports how the application of AI know-how in the media industry has altered content creation, delivery, marketing, and worker dynamics (Drew, 2016). It distinguishes that AI is not only an inactive tool but also how it affects and reconfigures the media scene (Dafoe, 2015).

7. Research Methodology:

Grounded on the topic and as presented in the subunits, the research methodology engaged was an online survey to gather data from a sample of 800 persons. The population for the study was 4,877,153 residents covering four Nigerian cities: Onitsha, Zaria, Jos, and Ilorin. The sample was selected using a convenience sampling method, with the sample size of 800 spread proportionally across the four cities. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire using 15 closed-ended, multiple-choice questions developed through Google Forms. To guarantee the dependability of the instrument, a Percent Agreement reliability proof was conducted by two research assistants who cross-checked the questions, yielding an inter-rater reliability of 87%. The questionnaires were distributed to residents' email accounts obtained from services of the Email Finder.

7.1. Research Design:



This study adopted the online survey which are questionnaires created for the purpose of gathering feedback from target audience by filling forms facilitated by internet technology. Online surveys can differ in extent and arrangement and integrate diverse questions, as well as multiple-choice, ordinal scale, short answer, and more (Akpan, 2022, Akpan & Udo, 2024)

7.2. Population and Sample Size:

The population was 4,877,153 persons drawn from Onitsha at 1767000, zaria at 975153, Jos at 1,035,000 and Ilorin at 1100000. The sample size was picked conveniently at 800. In the proportionate distribution Onitsha had 290, Zaria had 160, Jos had 170 and Illorin had 180 copies.

7.3 Instrument of Research:

This was a structured questionnaire of 15 closed ended questions with four options drawn from the variables of the respective research questions. The respondents were given chances of ticking their preferred answers. The questionnaires generated from Google Forms were sent out to email accounts of residents of the countries under study which were obtained from The Email Finder or Hunter.

7.4. Validity and Reliability of research Instrument:

The Percent Agreement reliability validation was applied using two research assistants to cross check the 15 questions and the options. The two trained research assistants agreed on 13 questions, leaving 2 for a revise. Through the formula of $13/15 \times 100$, the reliability and validity position was arrived at 87%. The high inter-rater reliability in this context means that the instruments used to gather responses were accurate and reliable, for superior outcomes and effective performance.

8. Data Analysis:

Data gathered for the study was analysed using simple frequency tables to calculate the totals and the percentages. This was supported by the use of pie charts. The two instruments of analysis provided the highest scores and the least scores to determine the results and implications.



Table 1:
The proportion of persons who adapt to the introduction of social media for empowerment opportunities in four cities of Nigeria (very High, High, Average, Low).

<i>Social media Users</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Very high</i>	105	13
<i>High</i>	84	11
<i>Average</i>	208	26
<i>Low</i>	403	50
<i>Total</i>	800	100

Table 1 shows that social media users out of 800 persons, 105 or 13% responded at very high rate, 84 or 11% at High, Average scored 208 or 26 responses and low took 403 or 50% responses.

It shows that the proportion of persons who adapt to the use of social media for empowerment is low in Nigeria.

Table 2:
The aspect of social empowerment opportunities in which social media introduction has offered to residents of four cities in Nigeria. (Health, Education, Entertainment, Politics)

<i>Aspect of Empowerment</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Health</i>	15	2
<i>Education</i>	116	15
<i>Entertainment</i>	468	59
<i>Politics</i>	201	25
<i>Total</i>	800	100

Table 2 shows that in the aspect of social empowerment, out of 800 persons, 468 or 59% agreed on entertainment, while the least was on health at 15 or 2 persons. Others picked education at 116 or 15%, politics 201 or 25%. The implication is that a lot of persons use social media for entertainment aspects of empowerment.

Table 3:
The main barrier which affect social media contribution to empowerment opportunities in four cities of Nigeria

<i>Barriers</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Cost</i>	95	12

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Illiteracy	147	18
Falsehood	488	61
Religion	70	9
Total	800	100

Table 3 shows that the main barriers that affect social media contributions to empowerment opportunities on Falsehood at the top with 488 or 61% responses out of 800 persons, and the least Religion at 70 or 9%. Others picked Cost at 95 or 12%, illiteracy at 147 or 18%. The implication is that social media has the problem of fake and false items sent to users often.

9. Test of Hypothesis:

H_0 (Null hypothesis): There is no perfect relationship between the proportion of persons exposed to social media and social empowerment opportunities in four cities in Nigeria.

H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a perfect relationship between the proportion of persons exposed to social media and social empowerment opportunities in four cities in Nigeria.

The above was tested using the Spearman rank order. This method tests the degree of association between two ranked variables using this formula

$$\rho = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d_i^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

ρ = Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

d_i = difference between the two ranks of each observation

n = number of observations

Exposure to Social Media (Very High, High, Average, Low).

Empowerment Opportunities (Health, Education, Entertainment, Politics).

Table 4:

Exposure to Social Media		
Exposure	Responses	Rank
Very High	105	1
High	84	2
Average	208	3
Low	403	4



Table 5:
Empowerment Opportunities

Empowerment	Responses	Rank
Health	15	4
Education	116	3
Entertainment	201	2
Politics	468	1

Category	Exposure Rank	Empowerment Rank	Difference	+
Very High/Health	1	4	-3	9
High/Education	2	3	-1	1
Average/Entertainment	3	2	2	2
Low/Politics	4	1	3	9

$$3+1+2+3= 9$$

$$6 \times 20 = 120 / 4 \times (16-1)$$

$$1- 2 = -1$$

Using Spearman's Rank Correlation, level of ($\rho = -0.05$) which is +10 the outcome of this testing at -1 indicates that there is a perfect negative relationship between exposure to social media and empowerment opportunities. This means that as exposure increases, the empowerment decreases. This is noticeable among the adults who still stick to the analog ways of doing social and economic activities. Hence, the null hypothesis is retained and the alternate is rejected.

10. Discussion of Findings:

Discussion of findings are done based on the objectives raised. Hence on the issue of proportion of social media users, Table 1 provide the analysis and the findings. Thus, low Engagement Dominates (50%):

Half of the respondents (403 out of 800) reported low use of social media. This suggests that a significant portion of the population either lacks frequent access, digital interest, or the technical ability to engage actively on social platforms. Average Users Form a Moderate Base (26%) as about a quarter of respondents (208) reported an average level of engagement. These users may access social media occasionally or for limited purposes of checking updates or chatting but not as a regular tool for information, business, or empowerment. Only 24% (105 + 84) of respondents fall into the high and



very high usage categories. These are the active digital users who likely consume and share content regularly, and may use social media for multiple purposes including work, education, and advocacy.

The implications show that digital involvement is still emerging in Nigeria. The dominance of low engagement implies that social media literacy and integration into daily life is still developing among many Nigerians. Access alone does not guarantee meaningful usage.

The 24% of high-engagement users represent a digitally active minority who could serve as influencers or peer educators in community-based digital empowerment strategies. In their study of Nigerian university students, The finding of this work agree with Agina-Obu and Okwu (2023) that Low levels of digital literacy and engagement significantly restrict users from effectively utilizing social media's full potential in accessing educational, professional, and civic resources. Dahunsi and Ojo (2024) also attest in agreement to this findings that most average users of social media tend to restrict their engagement to entertainment and social interaction, missing out on opportunities related to entrepreneurship, education, or civic involvement.

On the aspect of social engagements, Table 2 provide the analysis and the findings, thus: That a majority of respondents (468 out of 800) identified entertainment as the primary aspect of empowerment derived from social media. This indicates that users are largely engaging with content for leisure, such as music, comedy skits, celebrity news, and lifestyle updates. It means that Social media is still predominantly seen as a recreational space rather than a developmental one by the majority of users in many developing countries as entertainment remains the most popular use of social platforms.

Political engagement ranks second, with 201 responses (25%). This reflects a significant interest in using social media for political awareness, advocacy, and civic mobilization. Platforms like Twitter (X) and Facebook are perceived as important tools for staying updated on political events, expressing opinions, and joining civic movements. Only 116 respondents (15%) cited education as their main empowerment avenue through social media. This suggests that while educational content exists, it is not yet a dominant category of engagement for users. This may be due to lack of awareness of educational resources, digital skills, or an absence of targeted educational content in local languages.

Only 15 responses (2%) were related to health empowerment, indicating that health-related content is the least engaged category on social media. Despite growing health awareness online, it seems that people still rely more on traditional media, professionals, or in-person consultation for health information. In all, while entertainment draws users in, its dominance suggests a missed opportunity to integrate more developmental content into user routines. Media producers and educators might consider

embedding educational or health-related content into entertaining formats to improve reach and impact. The 25% involvement in political discourse shows social media's growing relevance in governance and democracy. It also highlights the platform's power in shaping public opinion and holding leaders accountable. However, this calls for fact-checking mechanisms to curb the spread of political misinformation. The figures suggest that digital empowerment is unevenly distributed across content domains. A more balanced use of social media would require policy support, investment in civic-tech and edu-tech, and media campaigns to shift user attention toward more empowering uses of social media. This analysis reveals that while social media is widely used among urban Nigerians, its potential for holistic individual empowerment remains underutilized in critical areas like education and health. To maximize social media's empowering capacity, targeted strategies must be employed to diversify content consumption beyond entertainment and foster engagement with educational, civic, and health-related information. The uneven distribution of digital empowerment across content domains in Nigeria has been documented in recent scholarship. Ojebuyi and Salawu (2021) argue that although social media platforms are widely accessible, their usage is skewed heavily toward entertainment and socializing, with significantly less engagement in areas like education, health, and civic participation. Similarly, Uchenna and Osuagwu (2022) observed that while digital platforms offer vast empowerment opportunities, most users lack awareness or digital competence to maximize these tools for economic and intellectual development. This highlights a growing divide between access to technology and meaningful use, reinforcing the argument that empowerment through digital media remains unevenly distributed.

On the barriers of social media to the contributions on empowerment of users, Falsehood had 488 or (61%). This is the most significant barrier identified, accounting for more than half (61%) of the total responses. It suggests a major trust deficit in the content of radio broadcasting or adult education messaging. Individuals possibly perceive social media content as inaccurate, misleading, or propagandistic. Illiteracy had (18%) pointing to a communication gap between social media and the intended audience. Cost had (12%) indicating that social media being considered relatively cheap, cost still affects access. This could involve electricity or batteries. It reflects economic constraints faced by the audience. Religion had (9%) showing that beliefs and biases may cause resistance to certain social media content, especially if it is perceived as conflicting with doctrinal teachings. This indicates cultural sensitivity issues in programming.

The findings is that social media restricted access due to false contents affect empowerment in as much as cost which should be considered by subsidization or free access models while programs should be culturally sensitive and, where appropriate, involve religious leaders or integrate educational content in religious programming



formats. Sensitization campaigns can also address misconceptions caused by religious biases.

11. Conclusion:

The data highlights that content credibility, audience literacy, and socioeconomic/cultural factors play major roles in the effectiveness of radio broadcasting and adult education. Addressing these barriers through targeted strategies will enhance outreach and impact, especially in the Nigerian context where radio remains a vital tool for mass communication and education.

12. Recommendations:

There is a clear need for digital literacy programs, affordable internet access, and awareness campaigns that educate users about the productive use of social media—especially in underrepresented or underserved communities.

There is a need for audience feedback mechanisms and verification of facts to counteract misinformation.



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