DIGITAL MEDIA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC VALUES AMONG SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS IN PUBLIC COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The growing expansion of digital technologies has significantly transformed patterns of communication, information sharing, and civic engagement in the worldview. Digital media platforms have increasingly become channels through which young people obtain information about governance, social issues, and political developments. This study examined the influence of digital media on the development of democratic values among Social Studies students in public Colleges of Education in Osun State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of 155 two-hundred-level Social Studies students drawn from two public Colleges of Education in Osun State: Federal College of Education Iwo and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun. Total enumeration sampling technique was used because the population size was manageable. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Digital Media and Democratic Values Questionnaire (DMDVQ) consisting of fifteen items structured on a four-point Likert scale. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation with a criterion mean of 2.50. Findings revealed that Social Studies students frequently utilize digital media platforms to access civic information and follow political events. The results further indicated that students exhibit democratic values such as respect for human rights, tolerance of diverse opinions, and interest in civic participation. The study also found that digital media contributes positively to students' civic awareness and participation in democratic discussions. The study concluded that digital media has become an important complementary tool for civic education and democratic participation among students. It was recommended that lecturers should strive to integrate digital media resources into Social Studies instruction and that digital citizenship education should be strengthened in Colleges of Education to encourage responsible and critical usage of digital platforms.

Keywords: digital media, democratic values, Social Studies education, digital citizenship, public colleges of education, Osun State. Nigeria

Introduction

In the educational context, Social Studies education plays a crucial role in promoting democratic values and civic responsibility among learners. Social Studies aims to equip students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for responsible citizenship and national development. Its teaching and learning is directed toward equipping individual learners capable of making a well-informed decision on issues and problems of survival in their interaction with varied environment. According to Mezieobi, Mezieobi & Ossai (2013, Social Studies education helps learners understand societal problems and develop attitudes necessary for democratic participation.

Similarly, Ajiboye (2015 emphasizes that Social Studies contributes significantly to the development of civic competence by exposing learners to issues related to governance, citizenship, and social justice. The integration of digital media into civic learning has attracted the attention of many researchers. The rapid advancement of digital communication technologies has significantly influenced the way individuals access information and participate in civic life. Digital media platforms such as social networking platforms, blogs, online discussion forums, and digital news outlets have become central to modern communication systems. These platforms allow individuals to exchange information, discuss social issues, and make civic discourse possible.

Young people category represents the most active groups using digital media technologies, hence, students in tertiary institutions frequently rely on digital platforms to obtain information about governance, political developments, and social issues. Through digital media, students can participate in discussions about national and global issues and express their views on matters of public interest or concern. This in effect allows the policy makers to explore diverse view in the process of decision making that will reflect view of the majority that is in conformity with democratic principle.

Scholars have argued that digital media has transformed patterns of civic participation on issues by reducing avoidable barriers to information access and facilitating public engagement. For example, Bimber (2021) notes that digital communication technologies enable citizens to participate more actively in political discussions and civic activities. This helps to promote political participation among the citizens of democratic society and at the same time promote sense of belongingness among diverse elements that made up of Nigerian society. Similarly, Boulianne (2020) found that social media use is positively associated with political participation among young people.

Digital media platforms provide opportunities for students to access diverse perspectives on societal issues and participate in discussions on governance and public policy. According to Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, (2020 digital communication technologies have expanded opportunities for youth participation in civic and political activities.

Empirical studies have also shown that digital media influences civic engagement among students. Valenzuela, Bachmann, & Bargsted, (2021). found that social media platforms facilitate civic participation by enabling users to share political information and engage in discussions about governance. In the Nigerian context, digital media has increasingly become a platform through which young people obtain information about political events and governance. Studies by Chukwuemeka and Ugwuanyi (2023) revealed that Nigerian youths rely heavily on social media platforms for information about elections and public policy. Similarly, Ekpo and Nwachukwu (2022) reported that exposure to digital media enhances civic awareness among university students.

Despite the increasing use of digital media among students, relatively few studies have focused specifically on Social Studies students in Colleges of Education. Since these students are future educators who will influence civic learning among younger generations, it is important to understand how digital media influences their democratic values.

Statement of the Problem

Concerns have been raised regarding the spread of misinformation, political propaganda, and unverified information on digital platforms. These challenges may influence students'

perceptions of democratic institutions and civic responsibilities.

Social Studies education aims to promote democratic values and civic participation among students. Yet, the increasing influence of digital media raises questions about how exposure to digital content affects students' understanding of democratic values. Despite the growing relevance of digital media in civic engagement, there is limited empirical research examining its influence on democratic values among Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. This gap necessitates the present study.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the level of digital media usage among Social Studies students in public colleges of education in Osun state. The study specifically:

1. identified the democratic values exhibited by Social Studies students in public colleges of education in Osun State.
2. determined the influence of digital media on the development of democratic values among Social Studies students

Research Questions

The following research question were raised:

1. what democratic values are exhibited by Social Studies students?
2. what is the level of digital media usage among Social Studies students in public Colleges of Education in Osun State?
3. how does digital media influence the development of democratic values among Social Studies students?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of 155 two-hundred-level Social Studies students from the two institutions earlier identified. The study adopted total enumeration sampling technique, whereby all members of the population participated in the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Digital Media and Democratic Values Questionnaire (DMDVQ) containing 15 items arranged on a four-point Likert scale. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents in the selected institutions. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, with 2.50 as the criterion mean.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Level of Digital Media Usage among Social Studies Students

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	DECISION
1	I frequently use social media platforms to obtain information about political and civic issues.	75	52	18	10	3.24	Accepted
2	Digital media enables me to follow national political events and public debates.	70	56	20	9	3.21	Accepted
3	I use digital platforms to discuss social and political issues with others.	65	60	20	10	3.16	Accepted
4	Digital media provides access to diverse opinions about governance and democracy.	72	55	19	9	3.23	Accepted
5	Online news platforms help me stay informed about civic matters.	68	58	20	9	3.19	Accepted

The results in Table 1 indicate that Social Studies students frequently use digital media platforms for civic and political information. All items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating agreement among respondents. The highest mean (3.24) suggests that students actively use social media platforms to obtain civic information. This implies that digital media serves as a major source of civic awareness among students in the Colleges of Education studied.

Table 2: Democratic Values Exhibited by Social Studies Students

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	DECISION
6	I respect the opinions of others even when they differ from mine	80	50	18	7	3.31	Accepted
7	I believe in equal rights and justice for all citizens.	82	48	17	8	3.32	Accepted
8	I support peaceful dialogue as a way of resolving conflicts.	78	52	18	7	3.30	Accepted
9	I am interested in participating in civic activities that promote national development.	70	56	29	9	3.21	Accepted
10	I believe citizens should actively participate in democratic governance.	74	55	19	7	3.27	Accepted

The findings in Table 2 show that Social Studies students demonstrate strong democratic values. All items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean. The highest mean score (3.32) indicates strong agreement with the principle of equal rights and justice. This suggests that Social Studies education contributes positively to the development of democratic attitudes among students.

Table 3: Influence of Digital Media on Democratic Values

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	DECISION
11	Digital media increases my awareness of democratic rights and responsibilities.	73	55	19	8	3.24	Accepted
12	Exposure to civic discussions online encourages me to think critically about governance.	68	60	18	9	3.21	Accepted
13	Digital media encourages young people to participate in public discussions.	70	57	20	8	3.22	Accepted
14	Online civic campaigns motivate youths to support democratic values	65	60	22	8	3.17	Accepted
15	Digital media promotes civic engagement among students.	72	54	20	9	3.21	Accepted

The results in Table 3 reveal that digital media significantly influences the development of democratic values among Social Studies students. All items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The highest mean score (3.24) indicates that digital media increases awareness of democratic rights and responsibilities. This suggests that digital platforms serve as important channels for civic education and democratic engagement among students.

Discussion of Finding

The findings revealed that Social Studies students frequently use digital

media platforms to obtain civic information. This supports Boulianne (2020), who reported that digital media platforms serve as important sources of political information among young people.

The study also revealed that digital media exposure contributes to the development of democratic values such as tolerance and respect for human rights. This finding aligns with Kahne and Bowyer (2021), who found that digital learning environments promote civic engagement and democratic awareness among students.

Furthermore, the results indicated that digital media encourages students to participate in discussions about governance and national development. This supports the findings of Valenzuela et al. (2021), who observed that social media platforms facilitate civic participation by enabling individuals to exchange opinions on public issues.

The findings suggest that digital media can serve as an effective tool for civic education when used responsibly among students in colleges of education in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study concludes that digital media plays a significant role in shaping the democratic values of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Osun State. Digital platforms provide opportunities for students to access civic information, engage in public discussions, and develop democratic attitudes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study the following recommendations are hereby made

1. Lecturers should integrate digital media resources into Social Studies instruction so that students could further gain desirable experiences in exploring digital media in shaping their democratic values.
2. Colleges of Education should promote digital citizenship education for the purpose of enabling the students to demonstrate their civic responsibilities voluntarily for the enhancement of democratic process.
3. students should be encouraged to participate responsibly in online civic discussions for the purpose of training them for future in taking active roles in democratic process as well as equipping the learners to be able to take a well-informed decision on the issues and problems of survival the they assume leadership responsibilities. In line with these, government should improve digital infrastructure in tertiary institutions.

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