

Review of: "Students' perceptions of e-participation in social media, citizen mobilisation and engagement: Evidence from Papua New Guinea, India, and Zimbabwe"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Theoretical framework

- There was a lack of focus on exactly what the study was about. On page, the authors argue that, "In light of this study, citizen participation and mobilisation efforts should concentrate on national dialogue for nation-building through policy influence." This does not read correct as the aim of the study is to assess the extent to which social media can be used in citizen mobilisation and engagement toward national dialogue. So, my understanding is that the study should be exploring how citizen participation can be invigorated through social media with the view to stimulate national dialogue, leading to policy influence.
- P.3 reads, "Social capital has its roots in academics....." This is not true. It is social capital as a concept that has its roots in academics; the manifestation of social capital has been there throughout the ages. This claim is not factual.
- P4. First paragraph, the World Bank (2023) definition of engagement does not read complete, review for correctness. Also some literature have been cited e.g. UNDP (2012) but it is not clear how it supports the theoretical underpinning of the study. Others include Hardeep and Singh (2022) and Abheeshai (2022), Makwerere, (2019) etc.

Methodology

- The authors are not clear on the criteria of exclusion and inclusion in the study particularly the 558 students against who randomisation was conducted.
- It is not clear how public engagement and mobilisation have been operationalised. How is it scoped so that it is clear when it is used in a context, then it can be said that there was public engagement?
- What was the methodological effect of 40% drop out rate?

Findings

- While there are findings that have been reported, it is not clear the extent to which the findings answer to the objectives of the study. For example, the first objective, "Evaluate the extent to which social media is being used by students for public engagement and mobilisation." I guess this should have explored not only the proportions of students utilising various social media, but should have gone further to establish cause and effect relationship between their access to social media and the extent to which they are using the social media for social mobilisation.
- The 100% response rate in Zimbabwe is explained by it having better internet connectivity and ICT infrastructure than

India. I don't think this is accurate.

- While findings in the narratives are disaggregate by country this is not true in the figures. The figures should also present the country-by-country outlook.
- Verbatim quotes are included in the text but no references are made in-text on them. Quotes should only be used to help emphasize a point or for triangulation to understand and interpret the quantitative components
- In P.12, one paragraph reads, "...*The reason why the majority of respondents believed in social media could be that the most of the information shared there comes from reputable sources, like news outlets, newspapers, and official announcements, among others. A valid point is that some of the information shared on social media may not have been verified and approved by the persons involved.*" Not sure about the use of contradictory sentences side-by-side.. This makes it difficult to understand the point being emphasised. There are a lot of such in the document, which needs to be relooked at.

Conclusion

- Some fresh data included in the conclusion which should otherwise have been used under the findings section e.g. "For example, after disasters such as cyclones and COVID-19, the Government of Zimbabwe used Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Telegram to express policy and other important announcements."

General

- Although there are important findings, there are not necessarily informed by the weight of evidence from the study. This would need to improve for this paper to be at the right level of quality
- Need to consistently apply APA format or any other formats as preferred by the journal