

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.

This is an interesting and stimulating article and should make an important contribution to this field of work. Suggestions for consideration:

Introduction

"it is clear that social media has influenced world politics; for instance, during the 2011 Arab uprisings, there were more students than usual". I would suggest this sentence needs supporting references.

"when students are empowered and mobilised through social media, they participate in evolving forms of social identity and solidarity". I would suggest this sentence would benefit from more up to date references e.g. Gulzar et al., 2022).

Theoretical framework

"The literature analysed in this study is influenced by Bourdieu's social capital theory" (add the reference for this Bourdieu, 1985/86). I would suggest this section would benefit from additional information about Bourdieu's social capital theory and how this was built up over time.

A global perspective on social media

It perhaps would aid reader's understanding if the paragraph at the end "In the above section of the literature review, the researchers have presented a country-by-country scenario regarding social media consumption by the youths and their involvement in the affairs of their countries" if this section was moved to the beginning of 'A global perspective on social media'.

"Most of the world's students feel alienated from the decision-making processes" You might want to offer the reader an evidence base for this assertion.

"Due to a robust ICT infrastructure and facilities, the growth of digital payments and e-commerce in India has resulted in a rise in the use of social media among students and younger demographics (Harekrishna, 2003)". More up to date references would add weight and value.

"The Generation Z and Millennials" - You might want to describe these terms for the benefit of the reader.

“Chikwanha (2009) adds that the emergence of political organisations and activism on social media in Zimbabwe has aided citizens in establishing a Habermasian public sphere”. You might want to describe this concept for the benefit of the reader.

“However, the Zimbabwean government has violated students' rights to freedom of expression and association by treating them as state adversaries because they have different viewpoints”. Is this a personal opinion or are there references for this assertion?

Social media is a popular tool for activism and campaigning in Papua New Guinea (PNG), especially in places where traditional media is prohibited”. You might want to offer the reader an evidence base for this assertion.

“Concerns about ineffective leadership, corruption, subpar service delivery, and political instability, among other things, have been voiced by students, the general public, and pressure groups (Hayward-Jones, 2016). This ‘indicates’ that there has been little public mobilisation or involvement”. ‘Suggest’ may be more appropriate than ‘indicates’ unless the authors can provide evidence to support this assertion.

Challenges related to the use of social media

“Minorities have historically been undermined in terms of development, and in most cases, these communities lack access to power and the internet, which are the enablers of social media”. You might want to offer the reader an evidence base for this assertion.

“Social media has the potential to be the most effective tool for student and public empowerment when it is supported because it has helped to shape developmental goals in various contexts. It is a simple and inexpensive medium for the exchange of concepts and knowledge. The growth of the discourse of interaction benefits from the use of the internet and social media. Despite the fact that social media influences engagement and participation in most parts of the world, concerns have been voiced about the transmission of false information and hate speech”. I would suggest this sentence would benefit from supporting references

Methodology

“There were 121 students at Catholic University in Zimbabwe, 187 students at IBS University in Papua New Guinea, and 250 students at Amrita Institutions in India”. The reader might benefit from the inclusion of a brief account of the universities and the make-up of the student population

“Utilising graphs and narratives, data were presented and analysed in the order of the study's objectives”. How were the data analysed?

Objective 1: Evaluate the extent to which social media is being used for public engagement and mobilisation.

Interviews with ‘student leaders’ in India and Zimbabwe showed that most of the students had smartphones or other similar gadgets to use for social media. In contrast, ‘interviews with the student representative’ in Papua New Guinea

(PNG) provided a depressing picture of some of the students, who came from low-income households and were unable to buy smartphones or related devices, let alone data.

This section raises a number of questions e.g.

- Who were the student leaders and student representative?
- How were they recruited into the study?
- Who conducted the interviews?
- How were these interviews undertaken and how were the subsequent data analysed?

The following section would benefit from the inclusion of references which demonstrates that there is an evidence base for the assertions:

“It is obvious that social media, given the opportunity, has the power to empower students and citizens, resulting in better governance, sound democratic practices, and the provision of high-quality goods and services. It further embodies the democratisation of information by transforming citizens from content consumers into information producers. As a result, this encourages conversations among individuals, groups, and the broader public”.

“In-depth follow-up interviews with the student representatives found that social media platforms frequently featured public discussions on hot-button subjects”. More information is required concerning the ‘In-depth follow-up interviews’ and You might want to offer the reader a brief explanation of the term ‘hot-button subjects’.

Conclusions

This paper makes a valuable contribution to the existing evidence base so you might want to describe in more detail how the study adds to the existing literature on e-participation in social media citizen mobilisation and engagement.

“The silenced now have a voice thanks to social media” This assertion may benefit from a more circumscribed or a more nuanced comment which takes into consideration evidence that older people and the poorest in society are frequently excluded from utilising social media (International labour Organisation, 2022; Mubarak and Suomi, 2022).