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Influence of Social Media Usage on the Development of Civic Values and Social Behaviour among Secondary School Students in Zamfara State, Nigeria

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Received:

2026-06-14

Received in revised form:

2026-06-14

Accepted:

2026-06-21

Available online:

2026-06-23

Abstract: *This study investigated the influence of social media usage on the development of civic values and social behaviour among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three objectives, three research questions, and three null hypotheses tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised all senior secondary school students in public secondary schools in Zamfara State, while a sample of 375 respondents was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled Social Media Usage, Civic Values and Social Behaviour Questionnaire (SMUCVSBQ). The instrument was validated by experts in Social Studies Education, Educational Psychology, and Measurement and Evaluation, while its reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.86. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, whereas Simple Linear Regression Analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that social media usage significantly influenced the development of civic values ($\beta = .447, p < .001$) and social behaviour ($\beta = .529, p < .001$) among secondary school students. The study also established a significant positive relationship between social media usage and overall civic and social development ($r = .618, p < .001$). The study concluded that responsible social media usage contributes positively to students' civic values and social behaviour. It recommended the integration of digital citizenship education into the school curriculum, promotion of responsible social media use, and strengthened collaboration among schools, parents, and policymakers to maximize the educational and civic benefits of social media.*

Keywords: *Civic values; Secondary school students; Social behaviour; Social media usage; Zamfara State.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) has significantly transformed how people communicate, access information, learn, and participate in society. Among these innovations, social media has emerged as one of the most influential digital platforms, particularly among adolescents and young people. Applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and Snapchat are now deeply embedded in students' daily lives, facilitating communication, information sharing, collaborative learning, entertainment, and civic engagement. With increasing smartphone penetration and improved internet accessibility, social media usage among secondary school students has continued to rise globally, including in Nigeria. Consequently, social media has become a major factor shaping students' attitudes, behaviours, relationships, and value systems (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2023).

Through these platforms, students are exposed to diverse perspectives on governance, democracy, human rights, environmental sustainability, and social justice. This exposure has the potential to promote civic participation, political awareness, tolerance, and democratic values. However, the same platforms also expose adolescents to misinformation, hate speech, cyberbullying, online radicalization, and antisocial content, which may undermine responsible citizenship and moral development (UNICEF, 2023; UNESCO, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2024). Civic values refer to the principles and attitudes that promote responsible citizenship, including respect for the rule of law, honesty, tolerance, justice, cooperation, respect for diversity, and active participation in community life. These values are fundamental for democratic stability, peaceful coexistence, and national development. Traditionally, schools have been the primary institutions responsible for inculcating civic values through formal curriculum and extracurricular activities. However, the emergence of social media has expanded the channels through which adolescents acquire civic knowledge and construct civic identities, thereby increasingly influencing value formation (OECD, 2023; European Commission, 2023).

Similarly, social behaviour refers to patterns of interaction, attitudes, and conduct exhibited by individuals within society. During adolescence, such behaviour is highly sensitive to environmental influences as students develop identity, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships. Social media may enhance positive behaviours such as empathy, collaboration, leadership, and social responsibility through communication and peer interaction. Conversely, excessive or inappropriate use has been associated with aggression, cyberbullying, social isolation, addiction, reduced academic engagement, and exposure to harmful content (American Psychological Association, 2023; World Health Organization [WHO], 2024).

Globally, empirical findings on the influence of social media on adolescents remain inconclusive. While some studies suggest that responsible use enhances civic participation, digital literacy, and social connectedness, others report negative outcomes such as misinformation exposure, political polarization, mental health challenges, and declining face-to-face interaction. These mixed findings indicate that the influence of social media is

not uniform but depends on usage patterns, purpose, content quality, and users' digital literacy (OECD, 2023; UNICEF, 2023; WHO, 2024). In Nigeria, increasing internet penetration and smartphone ownership have intensified adolescents' engagement with social media. Secondary school students use these platforms for education, communication, entertainment, religious activities, and information access. Despite these benefits, concerns remain regarding cyberbullying, fake news, online fraud, violent content, digital addiction, and moral decline, raising ongoing debates among educators, parents, and policymakers about whether social media enhances or undermines civic responsibility and social development (Nigerian Communications Commission [NCC], 2024; National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2024).

In Zamfara State, this issue is more complex due to persistent insecurity, school disruptions, poverty, and limited access to structured civic education. As a result, many secondary school students increasingly rely on social media as an alternative source of information and civic learning. While this provides opportunities for awareness creation, peacebuilding, and digital engagement, it also exposes students to misinformation, extremist content, cyber harassment, and values that may conflict with societal norms. Despite the growing body of literature on social media usage among adolescents, existing studies have largely focused on usage patterns, academic performance, or isolated behavioural outcomes. Very few studies have simultaneously examined the combined influence of social media usage on both civic values and social behaviour, particularly within conflict-affected contexts such as Zamfara State. This represents a clear gap in the literature, as the interaction between civic development and social behaviour in relation to social media exposure remains underexplored.

Empirical studies have provided partial insights. Ovie and Bebenimibo (2023) reported high social media usage among secondary school students in Delta State, primarily for communication and entertainment. Adegoke et al. (2024) found that usage patterns vary by age and school type among students in Ogbomoso, recommending improved digital literacy education. Akafa et al. (2024) observed that adolescents in Abuja spend several hours daily on platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram, indicating strong integration of social media into daily life. UNESCO (2023) and OECD (2023) further emphasize that responsible digital engagement can enhance civic awareness, democratic participation, and critical thinking, while inadequate digital literacy may weaken civic responsibility. Muhammad (2025) found that civic values among secondary school students in Zamfara State are significantly shaped by moral and educational environments. However, Nwako and Chujor (2023) and Silas et al. (2023) reported that excessive social media use is associated with antisocial behaviours such as bullying, aggression, truancy, and indiscipline, while Agwanyang et al. (2023) linked high usage levels to deviant behaviours including examination malpractice and disrespect for authority.

Building on these mixed and fragmented findings, the novelty of this study lies in its integrated approach, which simultaneously examines social media usage as a predictor of both civic values and social behaviour among secondary school students in Zamfara State. Unlike previous studies that treated these outcomes separately, this study provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding how digital engagement shapes both civic orientation and social conduct in a conflict-affected educational environment.

Therefore, this study investigates the influence of social media usage on the development of civic values and social behaviour among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Specifically, it examines the extent of students' social media usage, its influence on civic values, its influence on social behaviour, and the relationship between social media usage, civic values, and social behaviour. The findings are expected to contribute to educational policy, curriculum development, and digital citizenship education by providing empirical evidence for promoting responsible social media use that enhances both civic responsibility and positive social behaviour among secondary school students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1977, 1986), provides a strong theoretical foundation for explaining how secondary school students develop civic values and social behaviour through their engagement with social media. The theory posits that learning occurs within a social context through observation, imitation, and modelling rather than through direct instruction alone. According to Bandura, individuals learn new behaviours by observing others, retaining what they observe, reproducing the behaviour, and being motivated by the perceived outcomes of those behaviours. These four processes—attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation—are central to understanding how behaviour is acquired and sustained. In relation to this study, social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) serve as powerful environments where students are continuously exposed to behavioural models. Secondary school students in Zamfara State observe the actions, lifestyles, opinions, and interactions of influencers, peers, celebrities, political actors, and other users. These observed behaviours become reference points for learning what is socially acceptable or unacceptable. As a result, social media functions as a virtual social environment where civic attitudes and social behaviours are constantly shaped through exposure and interaction.

From the perspective of civic values, Social Learning Theory explains how students develop attitudes such as tolerance, honesty, patriotism, justice, and respect for diversity through exposure to civic-oriented content online. When students observe influencers, educators, or public figures promoting democratic participation, peacebuilding, accountability, and social responsibility, they are more likely to internalize such values, especially when these behaviours are rewarded through likes, comments, and social approval. In this way, social media can positively reinforce civic awareness and encourage responsible citizenship among adolescents. However, the same learning processes can also lead to negative civic development when students are exposed to harmful content. For instance, repeated exposure to misinformation, hate speech, political extremism, or discriminatory narratives may normalize such behaviours and weaken students' civic orientation. When such content receives high engagement online, students may perceive it as socially acceptable and consequently imitate or internalize it. This demonstrates that social media can simultaneously function as a platform for both positive and negative civic learning.

Similarly, Social Learning Theory is useful in explaining the development of social behaviour among secondary school students. Adolescents are at a critical stage of identity

formation and are highly influenced by peer interactions and social feedback. Through social media, they observe how others communicate, resolve conflicts, express emotions, and relate with peers. Positive behaviours such as empathy, cooperation, leadership, and social support can be learned when students are exposed to constructive interactions and positive role models online. Conversely, negative social behaviours such as cyberbullying, aggression, social comparison, addiction to online validation, and disrespectful communication may also be learned through repeated exposure to such behaviours on social media platforms. When students observe that aggressive or inappropriate behaviours attract attention or popularity online, they may be more likely to imitate them. This reinforces the idea that behaviour is shaped not only by direct experience but also by the consequences observed in others' experiences.

In Zamfara State, Social Learning Theory is particularly relevant due to the increasing reliance of students on social media as an alternative space for interaction, learning, and information sharing. Factors such as insecurity, school disruptions, and limited access to structured civic education have made social media a major informal learning environment. Consequently, the type of contents students are exposed to plays a significant role in shaping their civic understanding and social conduct.

Digital Citizenship Theory

Digital Citizenship Theory provides a contemporary theoretical foundation for understanding how social media usage influences the development of civic values and social behaviour among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The theory was popularized by Mike Ribble (2015), who conceptualized digital citizenship as the norms of appropriate, responsible, and ethical behaviour when using digital technologies. It emphasizes that individuals in digital environments are not only users of technology but also citizens who must understand their rights, responsibilities, and behavioural expectations in online spaces. Digital Citizenship Theory is built around key dimensions that guide responsible digital engagement. These include digital etiquette, digital literacy, digital communication, digital security, digital rights and responsibilities, digital health and wellness, and digital law. Each of these components explains how individuals should behave in online environments to ensure safe, ethical, and productive participation in digital society. In the context of this study, these dimensions provide a framework for understanding how secondary school students engage with social media and how such engagement shapes their civic values and social behaviour.

In relation to civic values, Digital Citizenship Theory explains that responsible online behaviour is an extension of responsible citizenship in physical society. Students who possess strong digital citizenship competencies are more likely to demonstrate values such as honesty, tolerance, respect for diversity, accountability, and respect for the rule of law in both online and offline environments. For instance, students who are digitally literate are better able to evaluate online information critically, distinguish between credible and false information, and engage in informed civic discussions. This enhances their civic awareness and strengthens democratic values. However, when students lack digital citizenship skills, they are more vulnerable to misinformation, manipulation, and harmful online content. This may lead to the spread of fake news, engagement in hate speech, and

exposure to extremist ideologies, all of which can negatively affect their civic values. In this regard, Digital Citizenship Theory highlights the importance of digital literacy education in shaping responsible civic attitudes among adolescents in an increasingly digital society.

Similarly, the theory is highly relevant to explaining social behaviour among secondary school students. Digital Citizenship Theory emphasizes appropriate online interaction, respect for others in digital communication, and awareness of the consequences of online actions. Students who understand and practice good digital citizenship are more likely to engage in positive social behaviours such as respectful communication, collaboration, empathy, and responsible participation in online communities. On the other hand, poor digital citizenship may contribute to negative social behaviours such as cyberbullying, online aggression, harassment, addiction to social media, and irresponsible sharing of content. These behaviours often arise when students are unaware of digital etiquette and the long-term consequences of their online actions. Therefore, the theory explains how the quality of students' digital competence directly influences their social conduct in both virtual and real-life settings.

In Zamfara State, Digital Citizenship Theory is particularly important due to increasing reliance on social media as a major source of information, communication, and informal learning. Challenges such as insecurity, limited access to structured civic education, and unequal digital literacy levels make many students vulnerable to misuse of digital platforms. As a result, social media becomes both a powerful learning tool and a potential risk environment. The presence or absence of digital citizenship competencies determines whether students use these platforms constructively or destructively. Furthermore, Digital Citizenship Theory aligns directly with the objectives of this study by providing a conceptual explanation for how social media usage translates into civic and behavioural outcomes. It explains that social media itself is not inherently positive or negative; rather, the impact depends on how responsibly it is used. Students who are guided by digital citizenship principles are more likely to develop strong civic values and positive social behaviour, while those lacking such guidance may exhibit negative behavioural outcomes.

Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the extent of social media usage among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.
2. To determine the influence of social media usage on the development of civic values among secondary school students in Zamfara State.
3. To assess the influence of social media usage on the social behaviour of secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of social media usage among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria?

2. How does social media usage influence the development of civic values among secondary school students in Zamfara State?
3. In what ways does social media usage influence the social behaviour of secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. **H₀₁**: There is no significant influence of social media usage on the development of civic values among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.
2. **H₀₂**: There is no significant influence of social media usage on the social behaviour of secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.
3. **H₀₃**: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and overall civic and social development among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a representative sample of secondary school students and determine the influence of social media usage on the development of civic values and social behaviour without manipulating any of the study variables. The design also allowed for the examination of relationships and predictive influences among the variables of interest. The study was conducted in Zamfara State, Nigeria, which comprises fourteen (14) Local Government Areas (LGAs) distributed across the three senatorial districts, namely Zamfara Central, Zamfara North, and Zamfara West. The study area was selected due to the increasing prevalence of social media usage among adolescents and the need to examine its implications for civic values and social behaviour within the state's unique educational and socio-cultural activities. The population of the study comprised all Senior Secondary School (SS I–SS III) students enrolled in public secondary schools in Zamfara State. According to records obtained from the Zamfara State Ministry of Education (2025), the estimated population of Senior Secondary School students in public schools across the state is approximately 18,742 students.

This population was considered appropriate because senior secondary school students are more exposed to social media platforms and possess sufficient cognitive and emotional maturity to respond reliably to issues relating to civic values and social behaviour. The sampling frame for the study consisted of all registered Senior Secondary School students (SS I–SS III) in public secondary schools across the selected Local Government Areas in Zamfara State. Specifically, the sampling frame was drawn from the official enrolment registers of public senior secondary schools obtained from the Ministry of Education and individual school records. This ensured that every eligible student within the target population had a known and accessible chance of being included in the study. A sample size of 375 respondents was selected for the study. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, which is widely accepted for determining adequate sample sizes for large finite populations. The use of this table is justified because it provides a scientifically established method that ensures

representativeness, minimizes sampling error, and enhances the generalizability of findings. Given the estimated population size of approximately 18,742 students, the selected sample of 375 respondents falls within the recommended range, thereby ensuring statistical adequacy for regression and correlation analyses used in the study.

A multistage sampling procedure was employed. In the first stage, three Local Government Areas were randomly selected, one from each senatorial district. In the second stage, public secondary schools were selected through simple random sampling. In the third stage, proportionate sampling was used to allocate respondents to each selected school based on student population, while simple random sampling was used to select participating students from each school. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Social Media Usage, Civic Values and Social Behaviour Questionnaire (SMUCVSBQ). The instrument consisted of four sections: Section A elicited respondents' demographic information; Section B measured the extent of social media usage; Section C assessed civic values; and Section D measured students' social behaviour. The questionnaire was structured on a four-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). To ensure validity, the instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Social Studies Education, Educational Psychology, and Measurement and Evaluation from a recognized Nigerian university. Their comments and recommendations were used to refine the instrument for clarity, relevance, and appropriateness. The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot study conducted outside the sampled schools but involving respondents with similar characteristics. The responses were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.86, indicating high internal consistency. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire with the assistance of trained research assistants after obtaining permission from relevant educational authorities and school principals. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality. A high retrieval rate was achieved through on-the-spot collection of completed questionnaires. The data collected were analyzed using Simple Linear Regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis One H₀₁: There is no significant influence of social media usage on the development of civic values among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Table 1:

Simple Linear Regression Analysis on the Influence of Social Media Usage on the Development of Civic Values among Secondary School Students

Predictor Variable	F	R ²	B	SE	β	t	p-value
Constant	93.05	.200	1.912	0.214	-	8.935	< .001
Social Media Usage	93.05	.200	0.463	0.048	.447	9.646	< .001

Table 1 presents the simple linear regression analysis examining the influence of social media usage on the development of civic values among secondary school students

in Zamfara State. The analysis produced a correlation coefficient of $R = .447$, indicating a moderate positive relationship between social media usage and civic values. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .200$) indicates that approximately 20.0% of the variation in students' civic values is explained by social media usage, while the remaining 80.0% is attributable to other variables not included in the model. The regression coefficient ($\beta = .447$, $t = 9.646$, $p < .001$) shows that social media usage significantly predicts the development of civic values. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 373) = 93.05$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant influence of social media usage on the development of civic values among secondary school students in Zamfara State is rejected. This finding suggests that increased and purposeful social media usage contributes significantly to students' civic values.

Hypothesis Two H₀₂: There is no significant influence of social media usage on the social behaviour of secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Table 2:

Simple Linear Regression Analysis on the Influence of Social Media Usage on Social Behaviour among Secondary School Students

Predictor Variable	F	R ²	B	SE	β	t	p-value
Constant	144.03	.280	20.041	0.197	-	10.361	< .001
Social Media Usage	144.03	.280	0.517	0.043	.529	12.001	< .001

Table 2 shows the regression analysis examining the influence of social media usage on students' social behaviour. The findings reveal a moderate positive relationship between social media usage and social behaviour ($R = .529$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .280$) indicates that 28.0% of the variation in students' social behaviour is explained by social media usage. The standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .529$, $t = 12.001$, $p < .001$) indicates that social media usage significantly predicts students' social behaviour. Furthermore, the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 373) = 144.03$, $p < .001$. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected. The implication is that social media usage significantly influences the social behaviour of secondary school students in Zamfara State. This influence may be positive or negative depending on the nature and quality of the online content and interactions.

Hypothesis Three H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and overall civic and social development among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Table 3:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis Showing the Relationship between Social Media Usage and Overall Civic and Social Development

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Social Media Usage	375	3.12	0.58	.618	< .001	Reject H ₀₃
Overall Civic and Social Development	375	3.26	0.54	.618	< .001	Reject H ₀₃

Table 3 resents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between social media usage and overall civic and social development among secondary school students in Zamfara State. The analysis revealed a strong positive and

statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($r = .618, p < .001$). This indicates that higher levels of social media usage are associated with higher levels of overall civic and social development among the respondents. Since the probability value ($p < .001$) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between social media usage and the overall civic and social development of secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The finding implies that social media serves as an important platform capable of shaping students' civic engagement, social interaction, communication skills, awareness of societal issues, and responsible citizenship, depending on how it is utilized.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the first hypothesis revealed that social media usage has a statistically significant positive influence on the development of civic values among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria ($\beta = .447, p < .001$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. Beyond statistical significance, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .200$) indicates that social media usage explains approximately 20% of the variation in students' civic values. This suggests that while social media is an important predictor, a substantial proportion (80%) of civic value development is influenced by other factors such as school environment, parental upbringing, religious teachings, peer influence, and community norms. In practical terms, this effect size implies that social media should be viewed as a moderate but meaningful contributor to civic development rather than a dominant or sole determinant.

This finding indicates that social media has become an important avenue through which students acquire civic knowledge, develop democratic values, increase awareness of societal issues, and participate in discussions on governance, human rights, and community development. Through exposure to civic-oriented content, students are more likely to develop responsible citizenship and civic engagement. This finding is consistent with Henry Jenkins et al. (2023), who reported that digital media expands opportunities for civic participation by enabling young people to exchange ideas and engage in civic activities. Similarly, Joseph Kahne and Benjamin Bowyer (2024) found that students who actively engage with civic content on social media demonstrate higher levels of civic knowledge and participation. Likewise, UNESCO (2023) emphasized that digital citizenship education promotes civic responsibility and democratic participation, while UNICEF (2024) noted that social media provides adolescents with opportunities to participate in civic campaigns and advocate for social change.

The second hypothesis showed that social media usage significantly influences the social behaviour of secondary school students ($\beta = .529, p < .001$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .280$) further indicates that social media usage explains 28% of the variance in students' social behaviour, which represents a relatively stronger effect compared to civic values. Practically, this suggests that social media plays a substantial but not exclusive role in shaping adolescents' behaviour. In real-world terms, more than one-quarter of students' social behavioural patterns such as communication style, peer interaction, emotional expression, and social

adjustment can be attributed to their social media engagement, while the remaining 72% is influenced by other developmental, familial, and environmental factors.

This implies that social media significantly contributes to shaping students' communication patterns, peer relationships, and behavioural development. However, its influence operates within a broader ecological system that includes school discipline, parenting styles, socio-economic conditions, and cultural expectations. The result agrees with the World Health Organization (2024), which reported that digital media is a major influence on adolescent social development. Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2024) found that responsible social media use promotes communication, collaboration, and intercultural understanding among students. UNESCO (2023) also observed that digital platforms enhance collaborative learning and positive peer interaction. The finding further supports Amy Orben et al. (2024), who emphasized that the impact of social media on adolescent behaviour depends more on the quality and purpose of engagement rather than screen time alone.

The findings of the third hypothesis indicated a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between social media usage and overall civic and social development among secondary school students ($r = .618, p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The strength of this relationship suggests that students who engage more actively and meaningfully with social media tend to exhibit higher levels of civic awareness and more developed social behaviour patterns. From a practical perspective, this strong correlation indicates that social media functions as a key developmental space for adolescent civic and social formation, although it does not operate in isolation. The finding implies that improvements in students' civic and social outcomes may be achieved through structured and guided digital engagement strategies in schools. This result corroborates UNESCO (2023), which affirmed that digital technologies are important tools for promoting active citizenship and civic participation. Similarly, UNICEF (2024) maintained that adolescents who engage positively on digital platforms demonstrate stronger civic participation and social connectedness. The OECD (2024) also emphasized that responsible digital engagement enhances democratic participation and global citizenship competencies. Furthermore, Joseph Kahne et al. (2024) reported that young people who access credible civic information through social media are more likely to participate in community service and civic problem-solving. Collectively, these findings suggest that while social media is not the sole determinant of civic and social development, it plays a significant and practically relevant role that can be optimized through digital literacy and citizenship education policies.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of social media usage on the development of civic values and social behaviour among secondary school students in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The findings established that social media usage significantly influences the development of civic values and social behaviour among the students. The study also revealed a significant positive relationship between social media usage and the overall civic and social development of secondary school students. These findings suggest that social media has become an important platform for promoting civic awareness, social interaction,

communication, and responsible citizenship when used appropriately. However, the positive outcomes of social media depend largely on responsible usage, digital literacy, and proper guidance from parents, teachers, and other stakeholders. Therefore, the study concludes that the effective and responsible use of social media can serve as a valuable tool for enhancing students' civic values and positive social behaviour in secondary schools in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. School administrators and teachers should integrate digital citizenship and media literacy education into the secondary school curriculum to equip students with the skills needed to use social media responsibly and ethically.
2. Parents and guardians should regularly monitor and guide their children's social media activities to ensure that they access educational and civic-oriented content while minimizing exposure to harmful online materials.
3. Government agencies and educational policymakers should organize regular awareness programmes, seminars, and workshops on the responsible use of social media and its role in promoting civic values and positive social behaviour among students.
4. Social studies and civic education teachers should incorporate social media-based instructional strategies that encourage civic engagement, critical thinking, responsible online participation, and collaborative learning among students.
5. Students should be encouraged to use social media platforms for educational purposes, civic participation, community service initiatives, and constructive social interactions while avoiding cyberbullying, misinformation, hate speech, and other forms of negative online behaviour.

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