

**MOBILE INTERNET AND THE RISE OF DIGITAL ACTIVISM
AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

Digital activism literature has proposed several ways in which social media impacts collective actions. These include providing news and information not available on traditional platforms, assisting in the coordination of protests, helping users to join political causes, creating opportunities for protestors to interact with one another, spreading enthusiasm and facilitating emotional contagion (Bennett & Segerberg, 2011, 2014; Chadwick & Howard, 2010; de-Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012, 2016; Halupka, 2014, 2016; Reedy & Wells, 2010). However many of these previous works (a) do not focus upon mobile social networking applications, and (b) are located within either legacy democracies or authoritarian regimes.

In order to bridge this research gap, this study focuses upon the use of mobile social networking applications to support digital activism within the nascent democracy of Nigeria, a country that has only recently returned from military dictatorship. Specifically, this study investigates the impact of mobile internet on the rise of digital activism among Nigerian university students from two universities in Nigeria during the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protest against the removal of petroleum subsidies by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The movement lasted for one month and took place in all the major cities in Nigeria.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted featuring two principal methods: (a) a cross-sectional quantitative survey of media platforms used by protestors (n=440); and (b) semi-structured qualitative interviews on protestors' experiences before, during and after Occupy Nigeria (n=19). Findings suggest that mobile social networking applications and social media were the platforms most used by protestors to learn, plan, coordinate and mobilize for the protest as well as to document their participation. Facebook was the most used media platform for protest purposes, while Eskiimi was of higher importance when it came to joining the protest on the first day. Controlling for other factors, mobile social networking applications and social media use increased the odds that a student attended the first day of the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protests.

Keywords: mobile social networking, social media, Occupy Nigeria, connective action, collective action, political participation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFA – Exploratory Factors Analysis

IPPA – Intention to Participate in Political Affairs

MANOVA – Multivariate Analysis of Variance

PCL – Perceived Corruption Level

PCPP – Perceived Competitiveness of Political Parties

RSUST – Rivers State University of Science and Technology

SD – Standard Deviation