SOCIAL MEDIA AND URBAN EDUCATED YOUTHS PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN KENYA

BY

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DECLARATION

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE

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ABSTRACT

More than 60% of Kenya's population is under 24 years out of which those (18-24 years) account for a significant percentage of eligible voters, accounting for at 30%. However, this important demographic does not participate in politics effectively despite their numerical strength due to lack of appropriate institutionalized communication platforms, hence face alienation/marginalization from mainstream politics. The advent of the interactive, participative and collaborative social media occasioned by web 2.0 innovations could therefore, be the alternative platform to engage the youth in politics. This study sought to determine the relationship between how youth use social media and their participation in politics in Kenya by critically analyzing the extent to which social media use impacts on both institutional and extra-institutional political participation. This could contribute to further understanding of the shifting dynamics in youth political communications enabled by advancements in ICTs and the subsequent implication on "offline" political participation, which is a key driver for development of democracy, and social policy reforms in Kenya. Drawing from the Media Ecology Communication Theory, structured questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions were used to collect data from undergraduate students aged 18-24 years. Using mixed methods, the study collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data using descriptions, descriptive and inferential statistics mainly simple linear regression. The findings revealed a positive relationship between how the youth use social media, specifically Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Political blogs and their participation in politics. It also emerged that a clear majority of young people are asking for more opportunities to have a say in the way their political systems are governed. The increased communicative spaces on social media for youth political participation may therefore, serve to promote a sense of nationhood and development of democracy. Consequently, promoting youth participation in politics through institutionalized use of social media may foster a sense of citizenship and make policy processes more transparent and accountable to them. This may further contribute to addressing issues of youth radicalization, hate speech and ethnicity, thus mitigate post- election violence and contribute to security, building national cohesion and integration in Kenya.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCK   Communications Commission of Kenya

ICT   Information and Communication Technology

KANU   Kenya African National Union

KNBS   Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

SMS   Short Message Service

UK   United Kingdom

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

USA   United States   of   America

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Blog   - A website that allows users to post literary content

Democracy   - The active participation of citizens in politics and civic life.

Extra-institutional political Participation-Petitions, protests and demonstrations

Face book - A social networking service and website

Institutional political Participation-Political party membership, joining civil society activities and voting

Mainstream Media- Media disseminated via the largest distribution channels e.g Newspapers and the electronic broadcast media

Micro blogging-   Broadcast medium in the form of a blog

National Cohesion- National understanding or national unity of purpose amongst   the different ethnic groups in a country

New Media- The current media that utilizes digital communication technology platform

Politics-   The activity through which citizens make, preserve and amend the general rules for their governance

Political participation- The extent to which the people as a whole actively take part in decision making on their governance

 Social media- Online networking digital platform that allows interactive, participative and collaborative communication.

Slacktivism-   Online type of activism for a generation that does not necessarily translate to offline activity

Twitter- A social networking and micro blogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based posts known as "tweets" in real time.

YouTube- A video hosting and sharing site

Youth- Young people aged 15 years but below 35 years

Undergraduate Students- University students pursuing a Bachelor's degree

Web 2.0- User generated internet content driven digital platform and characterized by

Interaction, collaboration and participation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This Chapter describes Kenya's historical citizen alienation from mainstream political discourse and the role of alternative media in political communication so as to reveal the role of social media use in youth political participation. It also highlights some relevant and similar studies globally and locally in Kenya that have explored the relationship between use of new media and political engagement. The chapter consists of the background, the problem statement, research objectives, hypothesis, theoretical framework, justification, scope and limitations of the study.

1.2 Background to the study

Political participation is the extent to which citizens of a country actively take part in decision-making on how they are governed and includes electoral voting, protests, joining political interest groups and signing online as well as offline petitions. Institutionalized political participation is closely tied to the political system and the electoral process and includes activities that influence the political system such as political party membership, voting and connecting with politicians. On the other hand, extra/non-institutionalized political participation is not tied to the political system and includes all the other forms of political participation that are not institutional like protests (Barnes and Kaase, 1979 cited in Ndavula and Mberia, 2012). Political participation is closely tied to an informed citizenry which requires independent and friendly communication media platforms such as the internet on which new media is anchored.

Hamilton (2011) defines new media as an umbrella term for communications technologies that use the Internet as their primary platform and are constantly evolving. Peters (2009) as cited in Hamilton (2011)) argues that for new media to remain new the definition has to be constantly evolving and changing since what is considered "new" is dependent on the time of reference. Social media can therefore, be characterized as a type of new media and in the context of this study, social media shall refer to Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and political blogs. The study therefore, looks at how youth use social media to engage in both institutional and extra/non-institutional political participation.

Globally, the youth constitute over half of the population and have been found to be the majority users of social media. In Sub-Saharan Africa, they are the most abundant asset and are therefore, an important demographic that could constitute a critical electoral constituency to determine election outcomes in the region if they participated effectively (Auma, 2013). UNESCO (2004) defines youth as a transitional stage in life from childhood and dependence on parents to independence in adulthood while the 2010 Kenyan Constitution looks at youth as individuals in the republic who have attained the age of 18 years but under 35 years (Njonjo,2011). According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2009), 79% of the population is under 35 years, out of which those (18-35 years) account for 36% of the population and about 60% of the eligible voter population. The youth are therefore, an important demographic that can define national political agenda and influence election outcomes in Kenya if they participated effectively.

Despite being the majority age-group in Africa and Kenya specifically, youth participation in politics is hampered by their inability to access political information in friendly media formats. Although numerically important, this significant electoral constituency is underrepresented and largely ignored in political communications. They therefore, cannot participate in national political discourse and action effectively unless politics is packaged and communicated in friendly media formats to them which the mainstream media has failed to do. Due to the lack of a friendly communication platform to empower them for effective political participation, the youth feel alienated and disconnected from mainstream politics. Despite being an important demographic, youth interests and voices have also not featured prominently in decision making, policy formulation and execution further adding to their frustration. They therefore, face alienation/marginalization and exclusion from mainstream politics, hence hindering their effective participation, thereby confining them to the periphery of mainstream politics (Garcia & Fares, 2008 cited in Auma and Mukhongo, 2012).

The mainstream media have typically not targeted the youth with political messages that could enhance their participation in politics, further contributing to their frustration (Auma and Mukhongo, 2012). Due to the feeling of alienation from participation in mainstream politics, the youth have been found to be agents of implementation of the political agenda of the older political class including acts of election disputes related violence.

Globally for instance, the most recent political and social movements ranging from the 2009 Iran disputed Presidential election-related violence, the 2011 New York Occupy Wall Street to the Arab Spring of 2011 have been attributed to social media use and the

youth. The Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East has specifically been found to have been social media- driven. This web 2.0 enabled social media platform was found to have been used to mobilize and coordinate the protesters, majority of them youth. Even before the Arab Spring, the revolutions in Iran and Moldova were largely labeled "Twitter revolutions" involving the youth (Howard and Hussain, 2013). This effectively creates an impression of a marginalized young tech-savvy generation using social media as an alternative communication platform for political mobilization against alienation.

Despite the authorities trying to crackdown on internet usage in the case of the Arab Spring, the globally accessible social media still networked the protests and kept the World informed about the revolutions and in real time. During the uprisings, many people resorted to use of social media because other forms of political communication were inaccessible. Instead of stopping the revolution, the crackdown only added to the frustration and anger of the mainly youthful protesters. The frustration could have driven them to the streets which may have contributed to the success of the protests that successfully brought regime changes in the region (Howard and Hussain, 2013, Iskandar, 2013). This was a case of alienation occasioned by lack of information access where the not-easily controlled social media served as an alternative communication platform.

Youth alienation has been found to lead to frustration, hence leading to lack of interest for participation in politics, leading to youth voter apathy in some cases. Due to lack of a clear opportunity and political inclusion, young people, especially the 18-24 year olds therefore, feel systematically excluded from participation in mainstream politics (Sloam, 2010, Auma, 2012). Because of the alienation, the youth feel that their priorities are

under-addressed in the mainstream political discourse further adding to their frustration. Consequently, this significant demographic tends to be under-represented in offline politics. They are therefore, much more likely to look for political information online than to engage in offline political participation. This is evidenced by their declining voter turnout in elections whose outcomes they could determine given their large demographics.

The disenchantment renders the youth more vulnerable to participation in violent-related activities including radicalization or manipulation by senior politicians as instruments for implementation of post-election dispute-related violence. Indeed, extreme outcomes of political violence have been found to be more associated with autocratic regimes which angers the youth who resort to violence, hence diverting them from meaningful engagement in the political process (Goldstone 2001; Lia 2005 cited in Resnick and Casale, 2011). The question to ask then is: could promoting widespread use of social media for political communication mitigate this state of affairs?

The need to extensively look at the role social media may play in influencing youth political actions has to a great extent been reinforced by the events of the 2011 Arab Spring especially in Egypt where protests continued even after the successful revolution. The 2007/08 Kenyan post-election violence that saw the youth participate in violent activities although not beneficiaries of the outcomes and social media being blamed for coordinating the violence makes understanding this phenomenon even more important (Makinen and Kuira, 2008). Of critical consideration is the recent developments in Web 2.0 innovations, an area in which scholarly and academic discourse is still developing. Due to the recent nature of these events and the shifting socio-political dynamics and the

fast changing communication media landscape driven by ICTs also makes it an important area for continuous studies. There is therefore, limited data and analysis on the exact relationship between social media use and political participation, specifically how youth use social media for participation in politics.

This study drew inspiration from the use of social media as an alternative media against alienation from among others, the 2011 Arab spring and the recent cases of online political discourse most of it bordering on hate speech in Kenya. These, coupled with the restive youth plagued by lack of and under-employment in addition to the exclusion from mainstream media and politics also contributed to making this study a worthwhile undertaking. The events of 2007/08 post -election violence and the current political situation in Kenya post the near-controversial 2013 Presidential election all involving the youth also added impetus to the need for this study.

1.3 Citizen Alienation and Alternative Media in Kenya

Citizens' alienation is a way of denying citizens an opportunity to participate in national affairs through lack of access to critical political information. Previous studies on citizens' alienation from participation in mainstream politics show that this is not a new phenomenon in Kenya. Before independence, the colonial rulers used the mainstream media to serve their own interests, effectively denying the natives a voice for their participation in determining how they were governed (Nyamora, 2007). This form of alienation necessitated the rise of alternative media which served as the voice of the

citizens especially during the struggle for independence and other liberation struggles thereafter.

Historically, Kenya's early independent nationalists attached great importance to the mass media as a platform and revolutionary tool for political change in their struggle for liberation. They therefore, launched and used ethnic newspapers like *Ramogi* for the Luo by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and *Muguithania* for the Kikuyu by Jomo Kenyatta as alternative media. These were meant to reach out to their various communities as part of the strategy and silent tool in the fight against colonialism (Mukhongo, 2009). However, once they were in power, some of these nationalists perceived the alternative press as a threat to their leadership leading to strict media censorship and crackdown on political dissenting voices. Such occurrences have continued with successive governments attempting to control the mainstream media with the main aim of denying the citizens opportunities for participation in their governance.

By covering politics, the alternative press gave the citizens a platform for political participation which they traditionally could not get from the mainstream media. Although faced by state hostility, intimidation and crackdown, they still challenged and encouraged the mainstream media to become critical of the government. Until recently, the so called 'gutter' press has served as the alternative media especially on political issues that would ideally not find space in the mainstream media due to authorities' imposed censorship through strict editorial policies (Nyamora, 2007). The alternative media has therefore, to a large extent historically played a leading role in mobilizing the country's' citizens in the fight for and development of democracy in Kenya.

State crackdown on alternative media associated with the liberation struggle was a clear indicator that citizen alienation from mainstream politics is not a new phenomenon in Kenya but historical (Nyamora, 2007). This state of affairs has continued with all subsequent post-independence leaderships which have also used and controlled channels of communication. Control of the mainstream media had since been extended to the private media houses even after liberalization of the mass media in the 1990's through silent censorship and use of draconian laws implemented through threats of closure. The authorities' use of public media for propaganda including the then state-owned Voice of Kenya (VOK), the predecessor of the current Kenya Broadcasting Corporation(KBC) has continued to-date.

The media controls were meant to deny the citizens access to critical information for democratic participation in politics. However, these state controls made alternative media thrive despite repression where all perceived negative publications were proscribed especially during the one party KANU era. Frustrated scholars from mainly the University of Nairobi, then the only university and pro-democracy champions who historically led liberation struggles of the 80's were left with no alternative but to resort to 'beer hall' discussions to avoid arrest. They would later document their discussions in pamphlets for secret dissemination to the masses to enlighten them on the need for the liberation. Even as they used these silent channels to educate the masses, government agents would still crack down on them with arrests and hurried imprisonment or detentions without trials meant to silence political dissent (Magaga, 1982).

Underground movements and publications came up involving students and scholars mainly in the then only University of Nairobi in exercise of their Academic freedom and became the voices against citizen alienation. Secret publications such as *Mwakenya* and *Pambana* then referred to by the authorities as clandestine publications came up in the 1980's to project the voices of the citizens. The alternative press therefore, became a tool for political mobilization, but feeling threatened, the authorities reacted by closing this platform through proscribing such publications and cracking down on their handlers (Nyamora, 2007). These were cases of alternative media serving to mobilize citizens to claim their space against oppression by the authorities (Nyambuga, 2011). However, these alternative communication platforms were quickly outlawed and the authors hurriedly bundled into jail without due process, and others into detention without trial. Despite the hostilities from the authorities, use of alternative media in Kenya was at its peak in the early 1990's during the struggle for Democracy referred to as the 'Second Liberation'. Democracy demands that citizens have a right to seek alternative and independent sources of information for their effective participation in politics. In Kenya, access to alternative sources of information is a fundamental right as provided for in article 79 of the Kenyan Constitution, which guarantees freedom of expression. Although the mainstream media was obligated to inform the citizens politically, it was accused of promoting ethnic conflict in the way they disseminated information during the 1992 and 2007 post-election seasons. These were the elections where a vote for the opposition was seen as a vote against marginalization/exclusion and the ruling authorities did not take it lightly. This is the excuse the Authorities have historically used to control and censor the

mainstream media during political conflict through some outdated laws like the public order Act.

Despite facing hostilities from the authorities, the alternative media has historically served as a platform for the alienated citizens to engage the government or express views different from those of the ruling class. This is being replicated on social media which is effectively serving as the current alternative media for the citizens, this time driven by themselves. Nyamora (2007) looks at publications like *The Weekly Review* published by Hillary Ngw'eno, *Nairobi Law Monthly* by Lawyer Gitobu Imanyara, Finance by Gatabaki and *Society* by Nyamora himself and how they pioneered the alternative media scene in Kenya. Although these publications were initially not meant to discuss politics, they eventually ventured into political discourse to serve as the alternative voices for the alienated citizens who needed it most at the time when state oppression was at its peak. The publishers were either threatened, arrested or the publications proscribed with some driven to economic closures through hefty court fines arising from what was described as seditious or defamation articles.

By covering politics, the alternative press gave the citizens a platform for political engagement against alienation occasioned by the mainstream medias' exclusion. Although faced by state hostility, intimidation and crackdown, they still challenged and encouraged the mainstream media to become critical of the governments' repressive actions against its citizens. Until recently, the so called 'gutter' press has served as the alternative media especially on political issues that would ideally not find space in the mainstream media. Alternative media therefore, has to a large extent historically played a leading role in mobilizing the country's' citizens in the fight for and development of

democracy in Kenya (Nyamora, 2007). Nyamora finds that the alternative media had successfully given the citizens an alternative communication platform for their voices to be heard despite crackdown by the authorities especially during political crises. The alternative press therefore, historically played a mobilizing role during the fight for independence as well as subsequent liberation struggles for democracy including election seasons in Kenya. Subsequent general elections including the 2007/08 post-election crisis that the mainstream media was blamed for witnessed more use of alternative media for information dissemination and mobilization (Makinen and Kuira,2008). The coming of social media driven by web 2.0 innovations now seems to be the current citizens' alternative media that this study was interested in.

The 2007/8 post- election violence crisis in Kenya saw the state ban the mainstream media from live broadcasts but social media took over and kept the World informed on the happenings in real time. The use of the current new media specifically social media therefore, effectively served as the alternative platform for the citizens to access information on the happenings when the mainstream media channels were interfered with. This trend where authorities close down alternative media channels is similar to what was recently witnessed during the 2011 Arab Spring over a decade later. In the latter case, angered by the alienation, the demonstrators, mainly youthful took to the streets this time mobilized using social media. These are cases of citizen alienation that have led to the alternative social media- driven political participation that need to be investigated.

Transition towards greater democracy is associated with expanding free speech and rights to access of information and assembly. Power is therefore, devolved towards non-governmental actors with increased civil liberties and sustained restraints on government actions towards dissenting voices. However, many young democracies like Kenya are at a stage where individuals and civil society groups struggle to access alternative and more open sources of information (Nyamora, 2007). Denying citizens access to political information is equal to effectively locking them out of political participation. This is a case of citizens' alienation from effective political participation that could contribute to determining of their national agenda. While the early secret publications functioned as alternative voices for the citizens against alienation, social media is today's alternative media operated by the citizens themselves, referred to as citizen journalists.

 Citizen Journalism is defined by a number of attributes that makes it distinct from professional journalism, including unpaid work. This includes absence of professional training, often unedited publication of content, distinct story selection and news judgment (Lasica, 2003 cited in Howe, 2011). Citizen journalism on social media platforms is a clear example of how the new communication environment is changing the narrative thus challenging the mainstream media's monopoly of information. With its low entry barriers, no editorial and not easily state censored, the universally accessible social media is a real alternative communication platform for citizens' political engagement (Lasica, 2003 cited in Howe, 2011). The fast evolving nature of social media coupled with web 2.0 innovations may therefore, give the citizens more opportunities for political participation.

 Specifically, the web 2.0 innovations may offer the youth a voice against alienation from mainstream politics and bring them back to effective political participation. Social media has in effect dramatically changed political discourse with politicians using it to engage the mainly youthful electorate who form the majority users of this new media. Auma (2012) finds that use of social media promotes youth interest in politics which may contribute to their re-engagement in politics and bring them back to effective participation. Social media could provide the youth with a platform where they can access political information in formats appealing to them. This may therefore, be an alternative forum to express their opinions and discuss politics freely and effectively push their political agenda. What remains to be understood conclusively however, is how youth use of social media relates to their participation in politics.

Kenya's population has been characterized by a high proportion of youth who constitute about 32% of the voter population. This makes the youth an important demographic for the country's political, social and economic development (KNBS, 2009). Such a percentage of youth presents a 'youth bulge' that is plagued by un/under-employment and political exclusion that could prove to be a headache to the government. Having a population that is skewed towards the young can be a challenge for a country (UNDP, 2010). According to the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) (2012), Kenya has over 10 million social media users, majority of them youth. This critical demographic could influence political agenda if engaged effectively through a friendly communication media platform such as social media. However, despite their numerical importance, this critical electoral constituency is facing alienation from mainstream politics occasioned by lack of access to political information. Social media could therefore, serve as an

alternative for their effective participation in Kenya's political arena (Auma and Mukhongo, 2012).

When the authorities banned mainstream media live broadcasts during the Kenyan 2007/08 post-election crisis, social media was used extensively for real time information exchange globally. Kenyan bloggers became a critical part of the national discourse during the three-day ban on live broadcasts during which the web traffic from within Kenya went up threefold. As the violence escalated, a group of Kenyans in Nairobi and the Diaspora also launched '*Ushahidi'*, an online campaign platform to draw local and global attention to the violence taking place in their country. Within weeks, they had documented in detail hundreds of incidents of violence that would have otherwise gone unreported (Goldstein and Rotich,2008). Social media therefore, served as a critical source of information and exchange for Kenyans locally and the Diaspora. This attests to the place of social media as an alternative communication platform when authorities close or interfere with information flow.

Goldstein and Rotich (2008) describe three important ways that Kenyans used technology during the 2007/08 post-election crisis including SMS campaigns to promote violence. Blogs were used to challenge mainstream media narratives and online campaigns to promote awareness of human rights violations. While the authorities banned mainstream media live broadcasts during the post-election crisis, social media served as an alternative communication platform enabling citizens to exchange information on the crisis in real time. In fact, there was an exponential increase in information flow on social media during that time. It was also during this time that Mashada.com, a political blogging site was shut down by the authorities. The question that lingers is what were the authorities'

fears that prompted such an unconstitutional action? The fears shown by the authorities'
action further confirms recognition of the power of social media as an alternative media
for political mobilization.

Debates on the role social media plays in influencing youth political action have since
been reinvigorated by the Arab spring, the 2011 political upheaval that unseated long
established regimes in the Arab countries following daily protests by restive youths
(Time, 21 cited in Auma. 2012). Goldstein and Rotich (2008) find that indeed in the
Kenyan context, the internet and mobile phones had lowered the barriers to participation
and increased opportunities for many-to-many communication. This shows how
technology was used to circumvent communication barriers and facilitate information
exchange during the crisis. However, the issue of whether discussions flowing from the
grassroots can affect power and the state of democracy remained unexplored.

In terms of communicating political information, Henn et al. cited in Sloam (2007) argue
that politics is ideally not aimed at young people and therefore, has little political
meaning for them. This is a large contributing factor to their lack of interest in
conventional forms of politics and low levels of participation. It is also an indicator that
the youth need an alternative and friendly communication platform for political
expression (Gennaro and Dutton, 2006, Sloam, 2007,). Genaro, Dutton and Sloam agree
with Auma (2012) who finds that social media raises youth interest in political
participation and positively changes their perceptions on political engagement online.

Wasswa (2013) and Kamau (2013) also agree with Auma findings and go further to look at how reliance on social networking sites influences political participation. They however, limited themselves to the 2013 Kenya's elections season and although their findings point at a positive relationship, this was not conclusive and may only hold for a particular point in time. Moreover, democracy and innovations in ICTs are both fast evolving phenomena which makes the need for continuous studies on a similar subject justified. Auskalniene (2012) also recommends the need for in-depth studies to understand and measure the impact of social media use on political participation, adding to the need and motivation to carry out this study.

Mobi□lization theories suggest that democracy on social media potentially attracts previously underrepresented individuals to the new forms of horizontal and verti□c communication, hence effectively reducing inequalities in political participation (Norris, 2000 cited in Auskalniene, 2012). Consequently, social media could serve as an alternative space for political en□gagement of the politically marginalized citizens especially youth. Social media may therefore, be the alternative media platform on which to engage the youth for their effective participation in politics.

Given the evidence that social media is especially popular amongst younger people in Kenya, a demographic that would otherwise be politically marginalized are therefore, more likely to become politically active on this platform. Their political actions would most likely unfold on social media which supports freedom of communication that the youth are yearning for (Odinga, 2013). Social media to some degree therefore, acts as an

arena for political participation especially for those people who would otherwise be unengaged in politics like the youth.

Historically, alienation from mainstream politics especially among the youth has been blamed for their declining political engagement, yet the youth today remain interested in politics and are active in alternative modes of political participation. An agenda to increase youth participation must therefore, seek to understand how they participate in politics on social media which seems to serve as a friendly communication platform to them. The problem is therefore, not political apathy parse, but alienation from the mainstream political system. (Sloam 2007, Auma 2013). Through social media, the youth can access political information in formats that are appealing to them, thus enabling them to effectively engage in mainstream political discourses in Kenya.

The use of ICTs in Kenya both in the 2007 and 2013 elections are an insight into the emerging power of new media tools where the Internet and mobile phones lowered the barriers to participation and increased opportunities for many-to-many communication. Consequently, through the Web 2.0 platform, social media has opened up new possibilities for citizens especially young people to share their views in public and hold discussions with others both at national and transnational levels regardless of their national government's views (Mukhongo, 2015). Nation/state borders have been rendered porous with time and space being collapsed, effectively making the World a truly global village as was predicted by communication scholar Marshal McLuhan over four decades ago.

The mainstream media segments its audience and does not seem to specifically address the youth information needs to enable them participate in politics effectively leading to their frustration. This may contribute to their lack of interest in politics hence their low participation levels and social media could be the alternative platform to engage them politically. Young people's participation and in□volvement in political life over the internet and social media in particular has therefore, received a great public as well as academic interest. However, voter turnout and participation in protests remain the main topics to which scholars have devoted most attention when explaining the behavior of the youth in political participation. This is despite political participation being both online and offline and therefore, includes more than voting and protests.

This study included joining political interest groups, their activities and signing petitions on and offline as political participation. The study therefore, looks at how youth use of social media relates to institutional (electoral voting, protests) and extra-institutional (joining political interest groups and their activities, petitions) political participation. While there has been debate among political communication scholars on how central social media could be in how the youth organize and act, this question is now increasingly attracting interest for academic research. Furthermore, most research connecting use of social media and political or civic activity has focused on voter turnout and how political candidates and campaigns make use of social media to interact with voters.

Although Auma (2012) finds social media to have influence on youth interest in politics in Kenya, his study did not look at whether and how use of social media translates or

relates to their online and offline political participation. Wasswa (2013) and Kamau (2013) specifically look at reliance on social networking sites generally in relation to political participation in the 2013 Kenyan election season and find that reliance on social networking sites relates to political participation generally. Therefore, they did not address themselves to use of specific social media in that context, thus the exact nature of the relationship between youth use of social media and political participation remained unexplored.

The various studies on social media use for political participation in Kenya have shown that social media promotes youth interest and reliance on social networking sites relates to political engagement and participation generally. However, democracy and innovations in ICTs occasioned by Web 2.0 and their uses are fast evolving phenomena and what could be concluded today may not necessarily hold in the long run. The use of social media during the Kenyan 2007/08 post-election crisis, the near- controversial 2013 Presidential election and the current online political discourse, some bordering on hate speech gave impetus to the need to undertake this study. Research on social media is also a fast evolving line of inquiry and therefore, more studies are required to better understand their impacts on political participation as they develop and become more widely adopted. Additionally, while there has been debate on the role of social media in enabling the youth to mobilize and protest, most research in Kenya connecting the use of social media and political activity has often focused on how social media is used during electioneering periods for political campaigns by political candidates.

Although previous studies have shown that social media promotes youth interest and political engagement, few of them were found to have attempted to specifically measure the extent of social media influence on institutional and extra-institutional political participation. Despite some studies in related areas being found, none was found to have attempted to specifically look at the nature of the relationship between how youth use social media and participation in politics in Kenya. Even in areas where communication researchers globally focused on the topic earlier, little documentation was seen showing conclusively how social media use relates to youth political participation. Furthermore, no documentation of sufficient long term research was seen of similar studies focusing specifically on how youth use of social media relates to their participation in politics in Kenya (Chapter Two).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

More than 60% of Kenya's population is under 24 years out of which those (18-24 years) account for a significant percentage (30%) of eligible voters, effectively making them an important demographic that could determine election outcomes and influence national governance agenda. This is an indicator of how potentially influential the youth can be in defining the national agenda if they were enabled to participate effectively in politics. However, despite their numerical importance, youth interests have often not featured comparatively in the national policy agenda (Njonjo, 2010 cited in Auma, 2012). This has led to their feeling alienated and marginalized from mainstream politics resulting in frustration and hence seeking alternative participation modes such as engaging in violence or resorting to criminal acts, drug abuse and radicalization.

More than one third of Kenyan population has online presence consisting mainly of the youth. This has however not been harnessed to address their feeling of exclusion in terms of access to political information. Social media provided an alternative information platform to the citizens when authorities banned live media broadcasts during the Kenyan 2007/08 post-election crisis. Further, the youth appropriation of ICTs during the 2013 elections and the near-controversial Presidential elections coupled with the restive youth, current political issues in the country (ethnic animosity, calls for public protests and rallies by opposition parties; terrorism and the subsequent ethnic profiling of the Kenyan Somalis) makes understanding how youth use social media for political participation an important area of study.

Auma (2012) finds that social media use influences youth political interest while Wasswa (2013) and Kamau (2013) find that political interest has a bearing on political participation while political participation and political interest, are correlated. Despite other researchers such as Goldstein and Rotich (2010) and Mäkinen and Kuira (2008) focusing on the topic of social media and politics, there was a lack of a conclusive documentation clearly showing the specific role that social media use plays in influencing youth political participation. Research on social media is also a growing line of inquiry and therefore, more and continuous studies are required to understand their impacts on political participation as they develop and become more widely adopted. The aim of this study therefore, was to find out the relationship between youth use of social media and their participation in politics in Kenya.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose/objective of the study was to determine the relationship between the use of social media by the youth and their participation in politics in Kenya.

1.6 Research Objectives

The study sought to establish the relationship between youth use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Political blogs) and their participation in (political interest groups, elections, civil protests and signing petitions) through the specific objectives below: -

(i) To find out the contribution of social media use on youth engagement in political interest groups in Kenya.

(ii) To establish the influence of social media, use on the level of youth participation in elections in Kenya.

(iii) To determine the effect of social media, use on youth participation in online and offline protests in Kenya.

1.7 Research Questions

To help achieve the objectives. The study used research questions as shown below.

(i) What is the contribution of social media use on youth engagement in political interest groups in Kenya?

(ii) What is influence of social media use on youth participation in elections in Kenya?

(iii)What is the effect of social media use on youth participation in online and offline protest in Kenya?

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Drawing from the Media Ecology Communication Theory, this study sought to critically analyze the relationship between social media use and urban educated youths' political participation. The varied media forms are viewed as environments, and the dual role that the media plays in creating our environment and helping us to function within it can best be assessed from the perspective of media ecology (Ott and Mack, 2010). Thus, media ecology encourages us to think of the media as environments or as species that interact with another (Scolari, 2012).

Neil Postman coined the media ecology phrase in 1970 to highlight that we live in communication environments, and that those environments reflect the communication technologies that are dominant in a particular historical moment (Ott and Mack, 2010; 266). In addition, it is key to note that the depreciation of the material-immaterial distinction in new technologies is part of a larger evolution in which distinctions between nature and culture and between human and nonhuman are likewise unsettled (Stephens 2014; 2030). Thus, the ecological language about ICTs metaphorically can be understood as a response to a set of concrete circumstances that, by unsettling a variety of theoretical distinctions, calls for the kind of substantive ecological thinking (Stephens, 2014).

The media are tools for exerting domination, power and counter power and are power structures themselves and spaces of power struggles (Fuchs, 2011; 6). Thus technologies

fundamentally influence the ways in which we communicate (Ott and Mack, 2010; 265), and consequently, the study drew from the Media Ecology Communication Theory to help understand how new media technologies affect the youth's perception, understanding, feelings and decisions they make with regard to politics. New technologies can be seen, as relationship enablers in that they not only add new forms of interpersonal communication, but they fundamentally change how individuals interact (Konijn, Utz, Tanis and Barnes, 2008). Media are not technologies parse, but techno-social systems that have a technological level of artifacts that enable and constrain a social level of human activities that create knowledge produced, diffused and consumed with the help of artifacts of the technological level (Fuchs, 2014).

The study adopted the theory because it details how changes in society facilitated by new technologies affect the way individuals interact, communicate, produce and exchange knowledge and thereby take action. The theory further examines the interactions of communications media, technology, technique and processes with human feeling, thought, value, and behavior.

The theory also helps to explain why most people prioritize the same issues as important and looks at how technology utilizes, creates, influences and determines the social reality in which people interact, thereby structuring what they can see, say and do (Postman, 1985). This has been heightened by the fact that today's technological innovations converge with other developments in reminding us that the human being is neither sender nor receiver, but a medium for a larger process (Stephens, 2014).

In order to understand the magnitude of the impact that the media has in our world, McLuhan (1964) believed that media should be viewed from an ecological perspective and this is reiterated by Logan (2010), who notes that biology and culture can no longer be studied separately. Media ecology is principally interested in the media in which texts are inscribed and transmitted; and tends to view all technologies as media, so that technology and media are often synonymous (Stephens, 2014). Media is therefore, a product of technological advancement and in fact media creates the communication age in which we live. McLuhan (1964) posits that the introduction of new mediums throughout the ages has affected the way members of a society communicate and interact. In other words, the medium of a certain communication age influences the way people think, communicate and act, basically arguing that the medium is the message.

From a media ecological point of view, introducing a new technology into a culture will alter the culture because the communication ecology of the social system will change (Barnes, 2008). However, while the theory brings a lot of supporting concepts to the study, it is important to point out that this study does not necessarily agree with McLuhan on his assumption that the medium is the message. That the study appreciates that ecological thought does not automatically privilege human beings, and equating human beings with ends and nonhuman beings (technology) with means is rejected on the grounds that responsibility to self is inextricable from responsibility to other (Stephens, 2014).

The study therefore, conceptualizes technology as a channel that increases access to information by previously marginalized groups in society. Digital media have now evolved to the point in which human-to-human exchanges are completely interactive and senders and receivers exchange positions as if they were together in a face-to-face encounter (Barnes, 2008). This study benefited from the theory as it sought to find out the relationship between the use of social media by the youth and their participation in politics in Kenya.

1.9 Justification of the study

The youth in Kenya have been found to be the most ardent users of social media which could have important implications for the development of democracy (Njonjo, 2010 cited in Auma, 2012). Since the focus of this study is on how young people use social media for political participation, university undergraduate students (18-24 years) were considered an appropriate population.

These are expected to have sufficient opportunity to be politically aware and have a higher likelihood of being able to access and use new media, specifically social media, hence the decision to focus on them in this study.

Social media provides a democratic platform for the youth to interact with politics without interference and therefore, may use it to participate in politics. However, how the youth use this empowerment for democratic participation and knowledge for political participation needs to be un□derstood□prima□rily☒s a communication process becomes even more important for communication scholarship (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010;

Auskalniene, 2012). ICTs and Democracy are also fast evolving phenomena and therefore, research on them needs to be continuous. Social media was also found to have increased political participation and dialogue in the 2007 and 2013 elections that was not present before and in turn empowered Kenyans to begin taking part in political processes regardless of the position taken by the authorities. Young people's participation and involvement in politics through social media has also received a great public as well as academic interest. Furthermore, past research connecting use of social media and political participation has focused mainly on elections and how political candidates and campaigns make use of social media.

The high level of citizens' participation on social media especially the youth, before and during the Kenyan 2013 elections also shows that social media to some degree acts as an arena for their political participation. The current interactions on social media on Kenyan politics also show that the relative peace before and after the 2013 elections seemed deceptive as Kenyans remained deeply divided along ethnic lines (Odinga, 2013). The animosity exhibited on social media is therefore, a reflection of the state of affairs in the country especially among urban youth. The study also took place after the near controversial Kenyan 2013 Presidential election with fresh memories of the 2007/2008 post-election crisis and the current ethnic-political discourse on social media mainly involving the youth made this study an important undertaking.

The findings of the study will contribute towards understanding how to effectively get the youth involved in politics for development of democracy as opposed to their participation in radicalization and violence-related activities. This would therefore, contribute to

conflict management, national cohesion and integration in Kenya and further informing policy on how best social media can be utilized for effective political participation and development of democracy in Kenya. A better understanding of the role of social media in politics will also be valuable to policy makers and the civil society interested in the development of democracy. It will also contribute to understanding of the current political discourse on social media, its relationship to political engagement and its relevance for the engagement of the politically- alienated youth. It could also contribute to development of policy processes that enable the youth use social media as a communication platform against alienation/marginalization from mainstream politics.

1.10 Significance of the Study to Communication

Globally, the youth seem to be engaging more in online political activity than ever before and social media is increasingly becoming an important source of political information. This may empower the youth by giving them a communication platform and hence contribute to their effective participation in politics. Because of its transnational nature, the internet has opened up public spaces for the youth to express themselves beyond borders through the various forms of transnational social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs. The sharing and discussion of political information on social media is an indicator for formation of opinions that may ulti mately translate into political participation. This may shape their opinions on how they perceive politics and their political expectations.

The increased political participation opportunities on social media have also provided a friendly communication forum through which the youth can push their agenda. It has offered them a platform to seek and acquire politically relevant information thus making politics more accessible to them. This has been found to affect their level of interest in politics (Auskalniene, 2012, Auma and Mukhongo, 2013). The youth who have generally been marginal players in mainstream politics can then participate effectively (Sloam, 2007). Social media may therefore, offer an uncontrolled venue for youth political expression and engagement by serving as an alternative source of political information and knowledge.

The expanded opportunities for political engagement coupled with the culture of sharing and participation social media cultivates are particularly relevant for the youth. This has important implications for research with young people because freedom might be linked to non-control facilitated by the online environment (Delli Carpini, 2000; Morris, 1999 cited in Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010, Kitchin, 1998). Consequently, the need to understand democratic participation on social media primarily as a communication process becomes even more important, making this study an important undertaking. Understanding how social media use relates to political participation may effectively contribute to understanding current political discourse on web 2.0 tools for political engagement and their relevance for the engagement of the underserved groups like the youth. The central argument here is that understanding the relationship between how youth use social media and their participation in politics is important in order to explain their behavior in political engagement.

1.11 Scope of the study

This study defined political participation broadly to include participation in voting, civil protests, signing petitions and joining political interest groups. It therefore, looked at political participation to be present if a youth acknowledges/ shows or being involved in the following actions: -.

(i)Voting in elections

(ii)Civil protests/demonstrations

(iii)Signing petitions online or offline

(iv)Joining political interest groups either online or offline.

For instance, signing petitions and joining political interest groups for lobbying and advocacy campaigns like civil society would be both online and offline while voting in elections and taking part in civil protests/ demonstrations would be offline political participation. Institutionalized political participation is closely tied to the political system and the electoral processes such as activities that influence the political system including political party membership, voting and interacting with politicians. Extra/non-institutional political participation involves integrating elements of political deliberations in the everyday life decisions of the citizens.

 This study looked at both modes of political participation (Institutional and extra-institutional) with social media use as the independent variable and political participation as the dependent variable. Although social media includes many web 2.0 applications, the

study was limited to use of Face book, Twitter, YouTube and Political blogs for political participation. These have been found to be the most available to and popular among the youth.

1.12 Limitations of the study

While the youth can broadly be defined to include individuals aged 15-35 years, this study focused on the ages 18-24, which covers the majority of full time undergraduate students in Kenyan universities. The study therefore, limits membership of the youth to the ages 18-24 youth and focuses on this group since they are fairly homogeneous and fairly representative of Kenya's urban educated youth. It also uses students from public universities who have a national representation. While social media in its most inclusive definition includes many platforms, the study was limited to use of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Political blogs for political participation. The sample for the study was drawn from university undergraduate full time students from a public university campus in Nairobi City County. This choice was informed by the fact that existing data shows that majority of social media users in Kenya are and mainly youth and concentrated in urban areas, specifically Nairobi.

Since the study is on urban educated youth, it focused on university students because they are found in urban areas and are more likely to have sufficient opportunity to be politically aware. They also have a higher likelihood to access the internet and have meaningful use of social media. The study data collection was conducted over a three-

month period while the study was limited to finding out the relationship between youth use of social media and their participation in politics in Kenya.

1.13 Chapter Summary

This Chapter has outlined the focus of the study by laying content and the contextual foundation for Chapter Two (Literature Review). Historical citizen alienation from access to critical political information and discourse, especially social media use as an alternative platform for youth engagement in politics was also explored. The Media Ecology of social environments, social media use, changes in perceptions and behavior, its implications and concerns have also been established. The next chapter therefore, looks at what related studies and academic writings have said on the same subject.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of related literature on the subject under study as presented by various scholars. The chapter therefore, highlights studies on new media and politics. In particular, it details relationship of ICTs and democracy, social media and political engagement, youth use of social media for political participation. It begins by looking at what other scholars have done on the subject globally, in Africa and Kenya in particular and how they did it. This helped to identify the gaps in knowledge that this study hoped to contribute to addressing. This literature review therefore, explores recent writings on new media, youth and politics, social media use and the interplay of social media and politics. It also shows how the media ecology communication theory was used to provide a framework for the study by giving a perspective for understanding the factors under investigation.

2.2 ICTs and Democracy

The expansion in Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) has positively impacted on democracy and freedom as well as the reduction of the digital divide in

regions typically known for autocratic leadership. Communication on social media, characterized by unrestricted freedom is considered less hierarchical than real-world interactions. These new forms of communication are fast eroding the monopoly of governments over the communications landscape, effectively signaling the possibility of more open political spaces where divergent views can co-exist(Shiraz,2008). Characterized by two-way interactivity and collaborative communication, social media that is driven by web 2.0 ICT innovations therefore, supports democratic political participation.

Fundamental societal transformations, facilitated by new information communication technologies on web 2.0 have changed the way citizens interact, communicate, produce and exchange knowledge. (Auskalniene, 2012). Transnational social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs have made the internet interactive and could therefore, facilitate democratic participation. This offers users the opportunity for self-expression and to connect with others of like mind or interests globally. Consequently, social media is the alternative media for participatory public discourse, hence challenging the conventional agenda-setting position of the mainstream media. In the context of this study, new media shall refer to an umbrella term for current information communications technologies that utilize the internet as their primary platform.

Through social media, the audience now sets the agenda for the mainstream media with roles reversed between them, making everyone a content producer, editor and consumer of information at the same time. The boundary between the news consumer and the news producer is now blurred and traditional news outlets have now been forced to compete

with independent bloggers and social media websites for breaking news stories. For instance, the most important news globally today is no longer broken by the mainstream media but by Twitter and Facebook users. Most news consumers receive and send news through social media tools such as Twitter, blogs, Facebook, YouTube, and other search engines (Howe, 2011). This is seen as a threat to the business of the mainstream media and the street newspaper vendor. Although authentication is a challenge, this state of affairs cannot be reversed given the difficulty in control of information flows on social media for lack of conventional editorials.

The mainstream media globally have inevitably had to turn to social media to interact with their audience as well as pick breaking news story leads posted by the audience (Howe,2011). For instance, the International media relied on reputed bloggers and Twitter users for real-time coverage of events in the case of the 2011 Arab Spring. This poses a challenge to the traditional agenda-setting role of the mainstream media, also seen as signaling the death of the gatekeeper (Budak, 2010, Storck, 2011). This state of affairs is a threat to the conventional gate keeping role of the media and has significant implications for development of democracy and freedom of expression (Norris, 2000 cited in Auskalniene, 2012). On social media, politicians lose control of their message since an idea could go from a tweet to a blog post, to a national and even international story in a matter of hours with virtually no gatekeepers.

The lack of gatekeepers for social media content however, suggests a lack of fact-checkers and moderators, meaning that some of the information presented through social

media may not be authenticated (Metzgar and Maruggi (2009) cited in Hamilton 2011). Social media can therefore, be detrimental if not used carefully despite the benefits of reaching networks upon networks of untapped populations like the youth. Innovations in ICTs and specifically the coming of social media have encouraged audience participation in what has come to be known as citizen journalism where non-professional journalists participate in news gathering and dissemination.

Citizen journalism is a phenomenon of the emergence of a networked public sphere based on digitally networked web 2.0 applications. Citizen journalists usually report on issues that traditional media do not cover either because they do not consider them newsworthy or they simply do not have access. With social media, communicative power has therefore, been put in the hands of young people who are the majority of the users of this technology (Owen, 2009). The emergence of new media has therefore, dramatically changed the way citizens express themselves politically, essentially creating communicative spaces that enable non-institutionalized democratic participation. Communication on social media is characterized by unrestricted freedom and is considered less hierarchical than real-world interactions.

The new forms of communication on social media are fast eroding the monopoly of governments over the communications landscape effectively, signaling the possibility of more open political spaces where divergent views can co-exist. These fundamental societal transformations, facilitated by the new ICTs are therefore, changing the way citizens interact, communicate, produce and exchange knowledge. Through social media,

the power of the state to regulate social, economic and political activities is fast being eroded. The citizens and other non-state actors have been empowered to self- create and disseminate information without fear of censorship. (Auskalniene, 2012). This offers users the opportunity for self- expression and to connect with others of like mind or interests globally. In the context of this study, new media shall refer to an umbrella term for current ICTs that utilize the internet as their primary platform.

Through social media, the audience now sets the agenda for the media with roles reversed between the media and the audience making everyone a content producer, editor and consumer of information at the same time. The most important news globally today is no longer broken by the mainstream media but by Twitter and Facebook users. Although authentication is a challenge, this state of affairs cannot be reversed given the difficulty in control of information flows on social media for lack of conventional editorials. The boundary between the news consumer and the news producer is now blurred and traditional news outlets have now been forced to compete with independent bloggers and social media websites for breaking news stories (Howe, 2011).

The mainstream media globally have inevitably had to turn to social media to interact with their audience as well as pick breaking news story leads posted by the audience (Howe,2011). This poses a threat to the conventional gate keeping role of the media which has significant implications for development of democracy and freedom of expression (Norris, 2000 cited in Auskalniene, 2012). Most news consumers receive and send news through social media tools such as Twitter, blogs, Facebook, YouTube, and

other search engines. This is seen as a threat to the business of the mainstream media and the street newspaper vendor. With social media, politicians lose control of their message since an idea could go from a tweet to a blog post, a national and even international story in a matter of hours with virtually no gatekeepers. This lack of gatekeepers however, suggests a lack of fact-checkers and moderators, meaning that some of the information presented through social media may not be authenticated. Social media can therefore, be detrimental if not used carefully despite the benefits of reaching networks upon networks of untapped populations like the youth (Metzgar and Maruggi (2009) cited in Hamilton 2011).

ICTs and specifically social media have encouraged audience participation in what has come to be known as citizen journalism where non-professional journalists participate in news gathering and dissemination. Citizen journalists usually report on issues that the traditional media do not cover either because they do not consider them newsworthy or they simply do not have access Aday et al, 2012,). Social media allows politicians to direct unfiltered communication to their constituents devoid of restrictions by editorial policies that are typical of traditional journalism (Meyrowitz, 1985, GrossKlags, 2011), This has increased opportunities for citizen participation in politics through opening up of new spaces for unhindered political engagement (Owen, 2009). With social media, communicative power has therefore, been put in the hands of young people who are the majority users of this technology.

The Kenya 2007/08 post-election conflict offered fertile ground for citizen journalism because authorities banned mainstream media live broadcasts and as much as the

mainstream media covered the violence, the information was not timely and was still subjected to strict editorials. Coupled with the live broadcast ban imposed by the authorities during that period, the media houses were not able to keep up with the events as they unfolded. However, through social media, there was real time free flow of information with bloggers telling their stories way ahead of the mainstream media (Mutsvairo and Columbus 2012 cited in Odinga, 2013). The mainstream media have therefore, been forced to integrate social media platforms into their functions to connect with their audiences and remain relevant in the changing communications landscape. New media must therefore be understood as part of the wider information arena in which new and conventional media form complex interrelationships (Aday et al, 2012).

The two main Kenyan media houses, the Nation Media Group and the Standard Group opened live feed internet sites for their dailies with subsections specifically dedicated for the 2013 elections (Odinga, 2013). The Daily Nation Newspaper also developed a social media sentiment tracker on their 2013 elections website, further indicating the importance of social media for political debate and campaigns. This in itself is a form of citizen political engagement and participation (Orring 2013 cited in Odinga, 2013). In addition, just like international broadcasters such as Al Jazeera and CNN, the local Nation Television (NTV) station also opened and maintained its own YouTube channel to tap into the trans-border audience especially the Kenyan Diaspora Constituency.

The evolution of the new and dynamic social media formats has afforded young people greater opportunities to establish a presence in politics on their own terms due to the freedom it supports. The social dimension of social media may potentially bring young

voters back to politics by providing them with an alternative platform where they can access political information in formats that are appealing to them. Consequently, opening up of public spaces for political communication on social media may also generate youth interest and engagement in politics (Resnick and Casale, 2011, Auskalniene,2012, Auma and Mukhongo, 2013,). Giving the youth an opportunity to participate in politics through access and exchange of political information could therefore, create a platform for their engagement in mainstream political discourse in Kenya. ICTs and democracy are also fast evolving phenomena and both support freedom which the youth are yearning for which is key to their engagement in politics.

2.3 New Media and Politics

The World new economy is fundamentally informational, global and networked supported by the rapid developments in ICTs (Castells, 2000 cited in Auskalniene, 2012). Nation-state boundaries have been rendered porous and authorities find it difficult to control information flow and exchange among their citizens due to these technological developments. Through the internet, time and space have been compressed, making the World a truly global village. New media and specifically social media have helped make real the idea of a "global village" as predicted by communications theorist Marshall McLuhan in the 1960's (Auskalniene, 2010). Although some scholars felt that he had spoken too soon, less than four decades later, the World has attained a truly global village status completely networked by the internet.

Aday et al (2013) define new media generally as involving user-generated content, interactivity, and dissemination through the internet. Fuchs (2011) defines social media as typical interactive and collaborative applications of web 2.0 innovations integrating different media, information and communication technologies previously used strictly for socializing. Social media can also be referred to as "new media"; an umbrella term used to refer to emerging information communication technologies that use the internet platform and are constantly evolving (Peters, 2009 cited in Wasswa, 2013). What distinguishes social media from other technologies is its reliance on social networking sites as its main form of communication. Social media is therefore, a type of new media and includes Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs and others which have enabled citizens to be informed in real time about major events and topics of interest like politics globally.

The internet is a virtual space of diverse information where people can communicate freely, without the restriction of time and space. The internet platform, on which social media is anchored is therefore, a democratizing medium (Auskalniene, 2012). With social media, the so called audience now shapes the medium and its usage with everyone being both a content producer and consumer at the same time. This has opened up new opportunities for citizens to share their views publicly and hold discussions with others globally regardless of their governments' positions provided they have internet access (Bruns, 2008 cited in Stumpel, 2010). Democracy on social media is supported by its capacity to provide uncontrolled and increased access to political information and interaction, hence bringing more individuals into the political process.

The expansion of the Internet in recent years and the ease of use brought about by the web 2.0 environment have therefore, enhanced the potential for information exchange. Web 2.0 consists of the different social media and social web communities that are used for communication and establishing connections. Whereas Web 1.0 consisted of read only static websites, Web 2.0 is characterized by user produced content, interactions, collaborations and participatory two- way communication hence supports social media (Bruns, 2008 cited in Stumpel, 2010). Social media provides opportunities for meaningful civic engagement and political participation by removing the communicative power from sin□gular dominant sources of communication to the citizens. It is this two-way communication nature of social media and the role they play in citizens' engagement with politics that are central to the arguments in this study.

On social media, the citizens have opportunities for self-expression and to connect with persons of like mind or interests anywhere in the world (Gurevitz et al., 2009; Dutton, 2008; Dahl□gren, 2006 in Auskalniene, 2012). With Web.2.0, the internet has been transformed from basically an information provision system to a medium for collaboration and interactive communication (Fuchs, 2011). The transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 information communication technologies has opened more opportunities for citizens to access, challenge single politicians or political institutions and discussions with the governing authorities have become more apparent (Best and Wade, 2005). Web 2.0 therefore, promotes increased democracy, openness, the power of many, the rise of citizen journalism, a rich and convenient user experience, effectively signaling the end of hierarchies. Social media are therefore, Web 2.0 applications. Web 2.0 applications

enable users especially on social media to collaborate, publish and discuss online more than ever before.

People who were previously purely audiences have become both content producers and consumers of information at the same time. This *'prosumer'* status enabled on social media is associated with the progressive blurring of the lines separating producers from consumers of online content (Scholz, 2007 cited in Stumpel, 2010). The Web 2.0 innovation has provided an opportunity to energize political participation by enabling easy interaction between political entities and would-be voters and therefore, have emerged as sources of political information (Bruns, 2008 cited in Stumpel, 2010). Best and Wade (2005) find a positive correlation between internet prevalence and indicators of democracy and conclude that globalization of the internet contributes to democratization. The open and participatory nature of social media is compatible with fundamental democratic values that call for closer examination. It is beyond the Web 2.0 enabled *'prosumer'* status that social media finds application in political participation (Toffler 1980 cited in Fuchs (2011).

The freedom in the use of web 2.0 innovations has enabled citizens especially young people to mobilize themselves politically through networking on social media. The increasing sharing and discussion of political information on social media by the youth is an indicator for formation of opinions that may ulti□matelytranslate into political participation. It is at this point that politics and social media use for political participation find a meeting point. Social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and blogs have been found to provide new ways to stimulate citizen engagement in political

life (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010). However, scholars are still grappling with understanding the dynamics of these complex socio-political youth participation issues (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010, Auskalniene, 2012). Through social media, political actors, political institutions and the public get the opportunity to interact with one another politically (Clarke, A, 2010). In politics therefore, new media must be understood in the context of mobilization and how it changes the relationship between the electorate and the politicians.

Social media have the potential to contribute to widening citizens' public political discourse and democratic participation and may therefore, reduce the risks of state controls and hence constitute a radical break with previous communication technologies. Social media as a communication environment have the potential to change how citizens think or act, mitigate or promote group conflict, facilitate collective action, drive revolutions against dictatorial regimes or generate international attention towards a given country in problems because of its ability to network (Ndavula and Mberia, 2012). This is the key tenet of the media ecology communication theory that the study used to understand youth perceptions on social media use and politics and their collective actions in political engagement.

Before the coming of social media, a political speech used to be over just as the politician stepped down from the platform. Today, only minutes after the speech ends than does serious engagement begin on social media. For instance, Uganda's Joseph Kony's 2012 human rights abuses were exposed in a video posted in YouTube. A survey found that almost 60% of youth under 30 years who knew about the video had learnt about it

through Facebook, Twitter or other social media (Kahne and Middaugh, 2012). Social media is therefore; set to play an important role in influencing political developments globally. However, in Kenya, a country politically divided along tribal lines, if not used cautiously, social media may promote conflict and negative ethnicity where people maintain and extend ethnic hatred in their communications.

Citizen participation in democracy is enshrined in many constitutions in Africa (Ndavula and Mberia, 2012). The Kenyan Constitution (2010) article 10 section 2 (a) captures national values and principles of governance as one of the key pillars to include democracy and participation of the people. This has laid the foundation for citizens especially the youth to participate in politics freely and social media, a friendly platform for political information access inevitably meets their needs. Consequently, online social networks are becoming important sources of political information and are offering civic engagement alternatives for young people who usually are not attracted to politics as packaged conventionally. Scholars agree that the Internet especially social media may reinvigorate citizens' political engagement by increasing access to political information. This has been through its capability to facilitate political deliberation, developing social networks and providing an alternative platform for political expression and engagement (Auskalniene, 2010).

The recent political developments ranging from the New York Occupy Wall Street, the rise of 'Indignados' in Spain, the protests in Russia and Iran in 2009, and the Arab spring of North Africa and the Middle East, all of 2011 are a clear indication that social media

are now intertwined with political activity (Boulianne,2009 cited in Auskalniene,2012). The intensity of social media uses and the resultant activities during Kenya's 2013 election season proved that offline activities can be carried out online Odinga (2013). The youth were found to be the majority of the producers and consumers of these online political communications most of it bordering on ethnic expressions and hate speech. This continued well post that election season. Therefore, the need to understand democratic political participation primarily as a communication process becomes even more important for communication scholarship. Specifically, there is need to understand the relationship between youth use of social media and their online/ offline political participation.

2.4 Social Media and Political Mobilization

The evolution of new and social media has caused differing opinions among scholars about its impact during political elections. Social media has been found to serve as an alternative platform for political expression and engagement especially in Countries where authorities have maintained control on the mainstream media channels. It has the potential to increase access to political information, facilitating political deliberation and development of social networks(Auskalniene,2012). The collective, user-generate unmediated communication on social media could therefore, serve as an alternative space for civic engagement and inevitably influence contemporary society in its fight against alienation (Boulianne, 2009, cited in Auskalniene, 2012, Stumpel, 2010). This therefore, makes the field of social media and the question of various forms of conventional and

nonconventional democratic en□gagement□of particular importance in terms of research and scholarship.

Makinen and Kuira (2008) agree with Goldstein and Rotich (2008) that social media played a notable role as an alternative platform for maintaining political engagement when the authorities banned mainstream media live broadcasts during the Kenyan 2007/08 post-election crisis. Their argument was that social media tools enabled a new level of citizen participation, hence its importance as a forum for information sharing. They find that social media functioned as an alternative medium for citizen communication in terms of information sharing during the crisis. They also find that the youth tended to be more relevant as instruments for achieving political goals defined by older politicians during the crisis. Youth were found to be the main participants in the violence in the most negative way possible such as killing, maiming and looting, effectively implementing the agenda of the older politicians instead of their own.

Wasswa (2013) finds that the number of people who use the internet for political news and information peaks in times of crisis or during elections. Rather than use their numbers to direct political discourse and subsequently electoral outcomes, the youth instead engaged in violence during the political crisis (Chatora, 2012). Such a power arrangement undermines youth interests, and consigns this significant demographic to the periphery of national politics. Chatora concludes that social media proved to have a remarkable role in information dissemination and exchange during the mainstream live broadcast media ban in Kenya as the 2007/08 political crisis escalated. Social media

played the role of maintaining political engagement when the authorities banned mainstream media live broadcasts and ideally provided an alternative communication platform when the conventional channels were closed, thus widened the perspectives about the crisis.

Social media use therefore, enabled new forms of citizen participation by providing an alternative platform for open discussions on the situation (Makinen and Kuira, 2008). This experience has important implications for the process of democratization and further attests to the efficacy of social media as the alternative communication platform when the mainstream media is censored. However, whether the use of social media during the crisis had any relationship to the cause of the post-election events remained unexplored.

Iranians may have found themselves in a situation similar to Kenya's 2007/08 post-election crisis following the two country's' disputed Presidential elections. When they voted in 2009 and the voters realized that the elections had been rigged in favor of President Ahmadinejad, there were mass protests in the streets of Tehran. Social media such as Twitter and Facebook were actively used to coordinate the protests and to get news out to the international community. This is a clear demonstration that with new media use and specifically social media, global communication is drastically changing (Callahan, 2010). Callahan draws similarities between the situation in the two countries and finds that violent protests erupted in the streets of Tehran following the 2009 Iranian disputed presidential elections as happened in the Kenyan 2007 case leading to protracted post-election crisis after persistent and prolonged violence.

Makinen and Kuira (2008) also find similarities between Kenya's 2007/08 and Iran's 2009 post-election protests, illustrating that perhaps in Iran's political crisis too, social media could have been used as an alternative media to escape state censorship. According to Callahan (2010), Iranians took to social media such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter to keep the World updated on the election controversy. Makinen and Kuira further illustrate that perhaps in Iran's political crisis too, social media could have been used as a way to dodge censorship imposed by the authorities. This is a clear case of how the internet has challenged authorities with social media serving as an alternative media for political engagement. In both cases, majority of the protesters were youthful citizens mobilized and coordinated through social media. Howard and Hussain (2012) also concur with this argument when they draw parallels with the more recent Arab spring of 2011. Their findings show that social media could have mobilized and coordinated the protests. This is a form of political participation whose relationship with social media use remained unexplored and measured.

Looking at the 2007/08 Kenyan post-election political crisis and the 2013 Presidential elections, Odinga (2013) concludes that social media increased political participation and the political dialogue that was not present before. It to a large extent empowered Kenyans to take part in the political discourse and processes. The ethnic-based exchanges manifested online are an insight into the emerging power of social media tools. Odinga finds that online mass communication can drive mass action by serving as a platform where citizens mobilize themselves for a common political course. Traditionally, the state

and other political actors have called for the 'silencing' of protestors or their opponents but in 2007 and 2013, the Kenyan state lost its power to silence the masses due to the inability to control social media use. Social media could therefore, serve as an effective alternative media by enabling citizens' participation in political discourse when the authorities ban mainstream media live broadcasts (Odinga, 2013). However, whether this can increase the level of democratization remains to be ascertained.

Mäkinen and Kuira (2008) find social media tools to be supplementing, rather than replace conventional media. By serving as alternative channels of expression, social media could therefore, widen and diversify public discourse by offering critical assessments and unmediated perspectives on politics. For instance, the leading Kenyan online community, Mashada.com became overwhelmed with divisive and hostile messages along ethnic lines during the 2007 election period. Consequently, authorities ordered the site shut down in the belief that civil discourse was rapidly becoming impossible (Goldstein and Rotich 2008). This continued in 2013 and after thus social media has emerged as powerful tools for disseminating information and mobilizing citizens while evading the censors. However, the issue of whether discussions flowing from the grassroots could affect power and the state of democracy remained unexplored.

The 2011 Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East was also found to be social media- driven where the latter served a mobilization role. Faced with hostilities from the authorities, social media became the alternative used to successfully coordinate the protests. During the crisis, physical spaces for public conversation and debate were

closed down and the internet provided virtual spaces for political communication. Despite the authorities trying to crackdown on internet usage, the globally accessible social media still networked the protests and kept the World informed about the revolutions in real time. The organizers of the revolution used social media to mobilize the youth and build numbers on the ground during the protests which largely contributed to their success. Instead of stopping the revolution, the state crackdown on social media tools only fueled protesters' anger which could have contributed to their success (Howard and Hussain, 2013, Iskandar, 2013). Citizens were able to evade the state controlled media and employ social media to communicate the ideas of defiance and resistance in North Africa and the Middle East.

In Tunisia which also suffered the Arab spring, when Mohammed Bouaziz was denied a chance to work as a street vendor to fend for his family, he set himself on fire. This act sparked protests that spread across the Arab world cities as the video of Bouaziz burning was captured by a passerby and went viral on YouTube. In Egypt, Facebook facilitated the formation of anti-regime movements which had no central organization but became a significant force that later saw the ousting of the then President Hosni Mubarak (Marcus,2011 cited in Wasswa, 2013. Although there is differing opinion as to the exact role of social media in the political mobilization during the Arab Spring, Howard and Hussain, (2011) find that its main roles were in providing an organizational infrastructure for mobilization. The. Evidence of high levels of information flow and consumption during protests makes more plausible the hypothesis that these media may have spurred mass mobilization(Storck, 2011). This is notwithstanding the fact that a contributory

relationship between con□sumption of the new media and participation in demonstrations was not established.

While Ben Ali ruled Tunisia for 20 years, Mubarak in Egypt for 30 years and Gaddaf'fi in Libya for 40 years, they were all ousted by youth aged 20 to 30 years without any ideological orientation, violent intentions, or clear leadership. The success of these revolutions is a clear demonstration that the youth are globally networked and see democracy as part of their common identity as people who deserve a stake in setting their nations' governance. This is significant as it raises the potential for developing a more direct form of participative democracy, with many more voices joining in online socio-political activism (Bohler-Muller and Merwe, 2011, Howard and Hussain, 2013). Aday, et al (2012) find that the key role of social media during the revolutions may have been in building numbers from an activist core to mass publics, hence influencing international attention. The Arab Spring revolution is therefore, one of the most dramatic cases of social media influence on politics that has ignited a lot of academic and public interest.

 The Arab spring is not the first time a technological innovation has been used as a tool for change. The advent of Gutenberg's printing press in the 15th century also played a crucial role in weakening the power of the medieval church, leading to the renaissance and later the reformation and scientific revolutions (Storck, 2011). This is a clear demonstration that social media as a tool for mass action arguably leaves no government or institution insusceptible to social and political movements. According to Aday et.al (2012), measuring information consumption during political upheavals may not

necessarily reveal whether new media content actually affects political attitudes and behavior, such as participation in protests. Claims about the causal role of new media on revolutions no matter how intuitively plausible may therefore, need to be supported with compelling empirical data that seems not to be the case.

In Egypt, where the Arab Spring uprisings continued for longer, like many African countries is plagued with a youth-bulge, unable to provide jobs for its disproportionately large educated young unemployed demographic that feels marginalized. Howard and Hussain (2013) looking at this same revolution, find that social media has changed the tactics for democratization movements, confirming its relevance in contemporary political mobilization. Despite its success in coordinating the uprisings, it would seem from the events that continued in Egypt after the revolutions, social media has been less successful in translating the needs and demands of protesters into political reality (Storck 2011). It is also not clear if the popular demand for change opened by the Arab Spring will result in new and sustainable political institutions if subsequent events in Egypt are anything to go by.

During the 2007 Pakistan political crisis too, social media use featured prominently as a driver for political activism where university students were found to have used it to coordinate their protests. The use of social media during the protests could have promoted democracy, freedom of expression and greater awareness of the youth about their rights during the political crisis (Shaheen, 2008 cited in Callahan, 2010). The increasing use of social media for political communication therefore, means that public participation can truly change the way democracy works in Kenya (Ndavula and Mberia,

2012). Social media-driven revolution phenomenon is therefore, not only of concern in Africa but a global occurrence.

The citizen-led engagements largely facilitated by social media have highlighted the latent potential of social media to drive political participation. A notable feature of social media that speaks to its potential for supporting citizens' political participation is that unlike the conventional forms of mass communication, authorities are generally not able to control the public access and use of the internet platform. Social media has also been found to have lower the barriers to participation by increasing opportunities for many-to-many communication. This may therefore; provide a unique opportunity for youth political participation besides the traditional channels. It also points to the inevitable place of social media for political participation, basically agreeing with Marshall McLuhan's Media Ecology Communication theory. The theory looks at users interacting with technology as communication environments, consequently shaping their perceptions and determining how they, feel, think and act.

Citizens' participation in democracy as enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya (2010) article 10 section 2(a) states that one of the key national values and principles of governance include democracy and participation by the people. Through this statute, the state has lost the power to arbitrarily control political discourse on social media, giving this new media the potential to play an important role in influencing constitutionally enabled political developments in Kenya. The Communications Commission(CCK) of Kenya's 2013 statistics show that more than 10 million have access to the internet, majority of them through their mobile phones. At the same period, according to

socialbakers.com, the number of Facebook users in Kenya stood at slightly over 2 million. According to Wasswa, (2013), a clear majority of these users are between the ages of 18-24 which is a significant demographic for electoral politics. Coincidentally, this is the age group that this study targeted as participants

The use of social media during the 2007/08 post-election crisis in Kenya and the volatile Presidential elections in 2013 attest to the power of these emerging new media tools. Due to the high level of participation on this new media before, during and after the 2013 elections, the internet to some degree acted as a platform for political participation especially for the youth (Odinga,2013). Odinga also finds that young people who would otherwise be politically marginalized are now more likely to become active participants on social media. His main argument is that social media users tend to be younger and live in capital cities and other urban areas and are among the most politically active citizens on this platform.

Odinga findings are supported by Hamilton (2011) who finds that as new and social media evolve, it is those in the 18-24 age group who adopt and use these communication tools. These are most likely to be found in their undergraduate years at the university, making them the most suitable as participants for studies on social media use and political participation. This critical electoral constituency would otherwise be unengaged in politics for lack of a friendly communication platform. Developments in ICTs and specifically, the advent of social media has given them an opportunity to participate in politics unhindered. This means that social media cannot be ignored when communicating politics to this younger demographic. Therefore, the need to understand

the relationship between how youth use social media and their participation in politics as a measure of democratization made this study important.

2.5 Social Media and Political Participation

Political participation refers to citizens' activity that involves their expression of political views, opinions and events. It is expressed through political campaigns, voting in elections, signing petitions, joining civil protests and joining political interest groups and their activities. Political interest groups are political advocacy groups with similar political concerns who come together to try and exert influence on the political processes in order to influence public policy in a Country (Mukhongo, 2015).

Political participation can be either institutional or non/extra-institutional. Institutionalized participation includes activities that influence the political system such as party membership, voting and connecting with politicians. Extra-institutionalized participation is not tied to the political system but seems to have an indirect impact on the political decision making (Li& Marsh, 2008 cited in Ndavula &Mberia, 2012). Political self-efficacy which is an individual's belief that through their efforts they can impact political processes is a key measure of a flourishing democracy and has been shown to be highly predictive of voting intent or behavior, both key indicators of political participation. Social media allows users to experience politics at a more intimate and interpersonal level and is becoming an important source of political information for the youth (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010). This has effectively rendered the mainstream news media less important in the political lives of the youth.

Social media has been used successfully for political participation in the developed Western democracies. For instance, the 2004 and 2008 the USA Presidential elections proved to be a model to follow in engaging the youth vote. Attention to social media for campaign information was found to have played a significant role during the 2008 campaign that helped to produce a record voter turnout, especially among the youth (Kohut, 2008; Smith & Rainie, 2008 cited in Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010). Hamilton (2011) finds that social media use especially Facebook had a contribution to the USA 2008 Presidential election outcome which Barrack Obama won.

According to Hamilton, Facebook could help politicians and campaign organizers to understand the demographics and interests of their voters and to better target them. However, he did not examine other social media platforms like Twitter and YouTube which President Barrack Obama used extensively to engage with the electorate. He also did not measure the relationship between social media use and that form of political participation. Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) looking at the same election, find that social media increased individuals' participation in politics through exchanging political content online.

Budak (2010) while examining the role of social media and voter behavior in the same election finds that what crucially missed in the new media's effect on the election is firm evidence either in support of or refuting claims as to its exact role. The question was whether the consumption of both social media and conventional media had a significant

effect on a person's likelihood to engage in the political process through voting or whether disparities exist by type of media. This question remained unanswered.

Howard and Hussain (2011) find that the Arab Spring was largely organized, supported and driven by social media which served as source of information and exchange for political engagement. This was demonstrated in Tunisia and Egypt where unresponsive and out-of-touch governments were ousted using support from social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Such is a case of frustrated youth fighting alienation from mainstream political engagement. When the authorities cracked down on social media during the protests, the citizens, mainly youth took to the streets as an alternative avenue for political participation. This highlights how movements started online translate to offline activity and gain international attention (Howard and Hussain, 2011). Whether discussions flowing from the grassroots affect power and the state of democracy still remained unexplored. The relationship between online and offline political activities also remained unmeasured.

Developing African democracies are increasingly using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Political blogs in their electoral processes to stimulate citizen participation. Presidential candidates elsewhere in developing democracies including Africa have had to adapt their campaign strategies to work with social media in a way that effectively targets their audiences (Wasswa, 2013). In Nigeria for instance, President Goodluck Jonathan successfully utilized Facebook to engage with his citizens during the 2011 Presidential elections and even announced his candidacy on Facebook. Zambia and South Africa have also used these online forums to engage their citizens

politically and on development matters. Civil society and other interest groups in Zambia also employed social media to monitor incidents related to the 2011 Presidential elections.

On the contrary, authorities in Zimbabwe, Angola, Ethiopia and Uganda have tended to censor social media especially whenever the citizens organize protests. For instance, during Ethiopia's 2005 elections, the authorities were highly sensitive to the use of social media in organizing protests in support of the opposition. SMS service was shut down for a year and a half in that Country (Chatora, 2012, Howard and Hussain, 2011). However, due to the transnational nature of the internet, citizens in that Country still received information on what was happening in their locality pointing at the power of this new technology.

In Zimbabwe, where free speech and the freedoms of expression, association and assembly are heavily curtailed social media has since served as an alternative mode of expression for dissenting views in that country with the authorities struggling to censor it. Although the government has not completely censored use of the social media platforms, the distrust to these communicative tools is evident. Shutting down or censorship of social media in those countries was found to escalate the street protests as alternative communication spaces for the frustrated citizens', confirming that indeed that media alienation does in fact drive offline political participation (Chatora,.2012).

Despite hostility from the authorities, social media was also found to have had a coordinating role in the 2011 'walk to work' protests in Uganda during which the authorities threatened to shut down the social media channels. Against these challenges, social media still played a major role in facilitating citizens especially the youth to participate in politics. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs written within and outside the country were valuable in driving the protests. This clearly underscores the potential of social networking in enhancing citizens' political involvement (Kate, 2011). Chatora, 2012). These citizen-led engagements, largely facilitated by social media, have highlighted the latent potential of social media to drive political participation that may have important implications for the development of democracy.

All the Kenyan Presidential aspirants for the 2013 general elections had heavy presence on social media to connect with their online constituency composed mainly of the youth and others in the Diaspora. Apart from enabling citizens to participate in monitoring the electoral process, this initiative marked an unprecedented step in utilizing social media to entrench citizen engagement within the electoral system(Wasswa,2013). What remained unexplored and measured however, is how this form of online political participation relates to the offline mode.

2.6 Social media and Youth Political Participation

The Kenya constitution (2010), defines youth as individuals in the Republic who have attained the age of 18 years but not yet 35 years old. UNESCO's definition on the other hand considers youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. This study

concentrated on those aged 18-24 years which covers majority of students in their undergraduate years in universities. Globally, the youth constitute over half of the population and could determine their nations' governance agenda if they are fully engaged in politics which has not been the case. This important voter demographic requires to be politically informed to participate meaningfully in the development of democracy (Owen, 2009, Auma and Mukhongo,2013). However, this cannot be achieved unless they are critical consumers of media messages.

Africa with about 70 per cent of its population being youth is currently facing a youth bulge burdened by un-and underemployment that could undermine their meaningful participation in politics (Resnick and Casale, 2011). However, despite the youth bulge, a majority of the region's Presidents are over 60 years' old which some scholars argue could prevent the concerns of the youth from being brought into the political arena (Resnick and Casale, 2011). Governments and political leaders in such countries most often do not engage young citizens or encourage them to participate in politics. Scholars such as Goldstone (2001) and Reno (2007) cited in Auma (2012) associate youth bulges in populations with revolutions in the affected countries.

The youth in Africa, particularly those residing in cities and urban areas have been found to operate in broadly similar ways to their counterparts in other regions of the World. They are highly influenced by the internet and eager to use less formal and more open channels for political interaction. They are also the major beneficiaries of the extended democratic participation opportunities on social media (Resnick and Casale, 2011). They

are therefore, yarning for a media platform that gives them freedom in their communication. Developments in ICTs especially new media and specifically social media could give them an opportunity to participate in politics freely through access and exchange of political information. Social media could therefore, be the friendly communication platform to engage the youth and bring them back to mainstream political discourse (Auma and Mukhongo, 2013). However, little research has looked at the impact of social media use on the political behavior of young people and their participation in politics.

The intersection of the youth, social media and politics is not exclusively a USA story. The relationship of social media and politics came out clearly during the 2008 US Presidential elections and the 2011 Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East. The successful utilization of social media by the 2008 Obama Presidential campaigns could ultimately prove to be a model to follow in engaging the youth for political participation (Hamilton, 2011). Although social media may have been found to enhance political participation in the developed democracies, some autocratic regimes especially in Africa have continued to be committed to regulating and restraining these democratic spaces). The most recent case in East Africa was during the authorities' crackdown on the 'walk to work' protests of 2011 in Uganda (Chatora, 2012, Auma, 2012). All these involved the youth and are cases of political participation coordinated and driven by social media that need to be understood.

The 2011 UK food prices protests were also found to have been coordinated through social media where majority of the street protesters were youthful citizens

(Goodale.2011). According to Kushin and Yamamoto, (2010), the government raised concern over social media following the violent riots in protest to rising food prices, prompting proposal to block the use of social media during such occurrences. The 2011 Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East has also been found to have been coordinated and sustained through social media. When the authorities closed down physical spaces for public discourse, the internet provided virtual spaces for political communication. Ironically, government efforts to crack down on social media may have incited more public activism, especially in Egypt. Citizens, mainly youth who were isolated by efforts to shut down the Internet may have gone to the streets in frustration when they could no longer follow the unrest online.

The marginalized youth have little voice in the political processes, which to a large extent contributes to their frustration. The isolation and the perception that their voices do not matter thus their problems are largely ignored could easily make them engage in violence and conflict-related activities. Kvitsahvil (2007) finds that young people often participate in violence because of limited opportunities for constructive political participation, thus making youth bulges positively correlated to political volatility. The alienated and unemployed youth with few opportunities for positive engagement therefore, present a ready pool of recruits for radicalization and therefore, potential membership candidates for extremist groups like *Al Qaeda, ISIS, Boko haram* and *Al shabaab* or those with violent agenda.

Resnick and Casale (2011) find that the only time when the youth come out clearly to participate in politics is during protests and politically-driven violence. The youth need to be politically informed in order to make informed choices for meaningful participation in the development of democracy. This is not possible unless they are sufficiently empowered to make them critical consumers of political information (Vitak et al, 2011). Although the mainstream media in Kenya have traditionally been the main source of information on politics, they have not targeted the important youthful electoral demographic with messages that could enhance their participation. This seems to marginalize or alienate them when communicating politics leading to their frustration. Historically, the traditional media coverage of the youth has mostly emphasized their lack of interest in political engagement, hence discouraging and further alienating them from mainstream politics (Auma and Mukhongo, 2013). For that reason, although youth are majority in Kenya, they have been found to be the least informed and involved on matters of political representation. The emergence of social media has therefore, provided the youth with an alternative communication platform to access political information in formats appealing to them.

Faced by a lack of a truly independent and representative media, the youth feel alienated from mainstream politics, further adding to their frustration (Goldsten and Rotich, 2008). During the 2007/08 post-election violence, the youth participated in the most negative way possible by killing, maiming and looting. Instead of using their numerical strength to influence national agenda, they remained available to implement the political agenda of the older politicians. Although the mainstream media would have been the starting point,

they typically have not targeted the youth in their political communication that could enhance participation of this critical demographic (Auma and Mukhongo, 2013). Social media may therefore, be a suitable alternative communication platform for youth political engagement.

Social media have been found to provide new ways for citizen political engagement especially those who would otherwise be unengaged in politics including the politically marginalized groups like the youth. This group is therefore, more likely to become active through the internet and their political actions would most likely unfold on the social media platforms. On social media, the youth therefore, find an alternative media platform to traditional ways of being involved in politics (Loader and Mercea, 2.011as cited in Odinga, 2013). Kahne and Middaugh (2012) argue that the youth participate in politics on social media in response to alienation from traditional politics.

In the 2001 UK elections youth voter turnout was found to be minimal at 39% and decreased further by 2% in 2005 to stand at 37% although the overall voter turnout increased by 2% between the two elections to 61%(Sloam,2007). Sloam finds that young people in the UK were increasingly disinterested in conventional politics yet they remained active in alternative modes of political participation. Therefore, the key to youth political engagement lies in addressing the issues that concern them in a friendly media platform. The problem here is less of political apathy or even low political participation but the disconnection of young people from the political process. Research must therefore, continue into the nature of the youth none or participation in politics

using both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a convincing analysis(Sloam,2007). This recommendation among similar ones from other scholars also contributed to informing the choice of using mixed methods in this study.

Auskalniene (2012) finds that the problem is not voter apathy parse but the feeling of exclusion in how politics is communicated to the youth. Clearer communication of politics and the political process on youth friendly media platforms would therefore, seem to be the starting point for reconnecting them to conventional politics. Online social networks are therefore, becoming important sources of political information that could offer civic engagement alternatives for young people who are usually not attracted to conventional politics. An agenda to increase youth participation in politics must therefore, seek to reboot democracy in a form that is both relevant and accessible to them (Auskalniene, 2012). Therefore, the need to understand how youth use social media for political engagement and participation becomes even more apparent

According to Sloam (2007) youth of ages 18–24 years are more disenchanted and disillusioned politically due to marginalization, hence their lack of interest in mainstream politics. The problem is therefore, not political apathy but alienation from the political system. Vitak et al (2011) find that youth who use social media to participate in politics were twice as likely to report voting compared to those who did not. The increasing evidence of frustration and alienation of the youth from mainstream politics therefore, makes understanding the relationship between their online behavior and offline political

participation more critical. This is closely related to how they use social media for political participation, the core argument in this study.

Callahan (2010) looks at the use of social media and political activism during the 2007 Pakistan political crisis focusing on university students' use of online social networks for political engagement during the crisis. Internet use by the students was found to have promoted democracy, freedom of expression and greater awareness about their rights during the political crisis (Shaheen, 2008 cited in Callahan, 2010). On the 2011 Arab spring, Howard and Hussain (2011) find that as the protests continued in the streets of one country, people in the neighboring countries tweeted about the events in real time. This helped cascade conversations about freedom across the region with people finding solidarity through social media. Their findings show that during the protests, online conversations about change were positively related to the offline activities. This provides one of the most significant case studies of the role of social media in enhancing citizen political engagement. However, whether social media play a role in affecting behavioral aspects of involvement such as political participation was still not ascertained.

Kate (2011) looks at the relationship between social media as a participatory communication channel and political protests in the 2011 Arab Spring where revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East continued for longer. The protesters were found to have heavily relied on social media like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to coordinate the social protests. Government efforts to crack down on social media during the revolutions may have incited more public activism, especially in Egypt where the uprisings continued for longer.

Despite the threats, the citizen-led engagements largely facilitated by social media have highlighted the latent potential of social media platforms to drive political participation. However, Kate finds little evidence to confirm the role played by social media in countries like Yemen where internet penetration is low or in Libya where the government controlled internet use and cracked down on the users more effectively Social media tools therefore, provided the citizens with a platform for meaningful civic engagement and political participation (Kate, 2011). Although the exact influence of social media in political mobilization in the Egyptian uprisings is still not clearly understood.

During the Arab spring, social media acted as a form of alternative media as well as generating awareness both domestically and internationally about the ongoing revolution. Storck (2011) argues that the main roles of social media were in providing an organizational infrastructure. Despite its success in organizing the uprisings, it would seem from the post uprising events in Egypt that social media has been less successful in translating the needs and demands of the protesters into political reality. This is the process that has proven to be the main obstacle to protesters gaining political legitimacy. Apart from social media playing a mobilization role in the uprising, the exact role of social media in this type of political engagement was therefore, not fully addressed. Therefore, more studies need to be undertaken on the Egyptian politics post-uprising to establish the role of social networking in establishing new political parties or civil society groups.

 Political use of social media has been found to be positively related to political efficacy, online political behaviors and participation. Harriton (2011) explores the link between information and political participation, specifically looking at the relationship between political media consumption and political participation. A positive correlation between social media use and online political participation was found and that social media influences youth interest to participate in politics Auskalniene (2012) and Auma (2012). Aday et al (2012) find that social media has the potential to help individuals and groups to organize, protest, or take other forms of collective action.

Young people generally per□ceive social media as a very important platform for political deliberation and opinion shar□ing basically agreeing with the media ecology communication theory that guided the framework of this study. Vitak et al (2011), Wasswa (2013) and Kamau (2013) find that social media use positively relates to political knowledge, increased political interest and improved political self-efficacy, all of which have been linked to greater political participation. Kamau specifically finds that reliance on social networking sites is generally positively related to political participation but not civic participation Although it was established that online political participation influences offline political participation generally, the nature of the relationship remained largely unmeasured.

Kamau (2013) that reliance on social networking sites has an important though limited role in shaping political opinions and decisions. However, he looked at social networking sites generally and only measured this association at one point in time during the 2013 Kenyan general election campaigns and specifically that election. Given that Wasswa and

Kamau studies took place just a few months before and after the 2013 general elections, this could have had a bearing on the findings. Similar long term studies should therefore, be done and delinked to election seasons (Wasswa,2013). A lot could have changed with time given that democracy and innovations in ICTs are both fast changing phenomena. The need for continuous studies in this area cannot therefore, be overemphasized, hence there is need for a long term study to specifically find out the relationship between social media use and political participation which this study set to do.

Youth use of social media during the 2008 USA election was found to be positively associated with political self-efficacy and situational political involvement. The youth used YouTube, Face book, Twitter, and blogs to get political content as well as information on political campaigns (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010). Vitak et al (2011) on the same election find that the most common forms of political participation were watching campaign debates online (66.6%) followed by signing a paper petition (31%), attending a public meeting (24.2%) and signing an online petition (20.7%). A similar pattern was observed for Facebook use and political participation. However, therelationship between uses of other social media and the above forms of political participation were not examined. The relationship between online and offline political participation if any also remained unexplored.

Social media played a mobilizing role during the Arab Spring by networking the youthful protesters. This may explain the sporadic wave of protests that spread from Tunisia through Libya to Egypt and even Syria. The youth took to the streets to demonstrate due

to frustrations when the authorities interfered with social media, their only available communication platform to discuss politics. Feeling alienated, they sought alternative political expression space through demonstrations due to the frustrations (Howard and Hussain, 2013). Recent movements from Tunisia to Egypt during the 2011 Arab Spring to Russia indicate that the significance of social media's impact on political expression is not exclusively a USA story but international in scope. The social media-driven revolution phenomenon is therefore, not only of concern in Africa but also around the World (Vitak et al, 2011).

Drawing parallels between the 2009 Iranian protests and the2007/08 ethnic violence in Kenya, Aday et al (2012) conclude that both involved collective action and were driven by social media. When Kenyan authorities banned live mainstream media broadcasts during the post-election crisis, social media was used to inform and exchange information Worldwide on the crisis in real time. Mashada.com, a political blogging site and the main social media chat forum in the country was shut down by the authorities after the violence erupted (Makinen and Kiura, 2008). Howard and Hussain (2013) find that, anytime the authorities attempted to interfere with the channels of information flow, citizens would go for alternative modes of expression resulting in the escalation of the protests and violence These are cases of political alienation and use of alternative media to counter the same that need to be understood.

In the case of Iran, Callahan (2010) concludes that the way people used social media to relay information to one another and to the mainstream news media during the 2009

election protests proved that global communication is drastically changing. It is clear that during times of crisis, when physical spaces for public conversation and debate are closed down, the internet provides alternative spaces for political communication. However, whether social media play a role in affecting behavioral aspects of political involvement such as political participation remained unexplored.

Globally, the youth are seen to be engaging more in online political activity than ever before. Social media could be an important source of political information that may contribute to enhancing their participation in politics (Kushin and Yamamoto, 2010). Clarke (2010) finds that young people, who engage in politics online, are more likely to participate in politics offline such as voting than those who do not participate online. However, it is not clear from Clarke's findings whether this relationship is one of causative or correlation. Whether anecdotal political benefits from the use of social media found elsewhere can be consistent to Kenya's socio-political circumstances was also yet to be ascertained.

Politicians have been found to continuously integrate social media in their political activities including campaigns and therefore, seemingly managing to attract considerable youth participation. Social media which facilitates a two-way process of information sharing is therefore, more likely to continuously promote the active participation of young people in politics. It would therefore, be interesting to find out how far social media use for political participation addresses gaps in the youths' quest for an alternative political communication platform. This is in comparison to traditional mass media that is

seen to alienate and marginalize them. Whether and how social media use relates to their political participation generally and specifically how they use this empowerment and knowledge for political participation remains unexplored

.

A research focus on this area may have significant implications for political participation, including integration of youth issues into the national political and development agenda. It may also contribute to the development of the Country's democracy, national cohesion and integration and management of ethnic conflict and youth radicalization including threats of terrorism. Although 'several scholars have looked at political participation and social media generally mostly in the developed democracies and more recently its role in the Arab Spring, there seems to be fewer similar studies done in Kenya on the same.

Young people's participation and in☐volvementin political life on social media has received a great public as well as academic interest. Consequently, the need for more studies to draw firm conclusions about the exact role social media can play in affecting the level and quality of youth participation in democratic processes becomes even more important. This study therefore, set out to find out the relationship between youth use of social media and their participation in politics in Kenya.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed for this study points to how social media can facilitate unhindered information exchanges, interactions and in particular socialization of politics. Additionally, media ecology of social environments, social media use for political

communication, changes in perceptions and behavior, implications and concerns have also been explored. These may be useful for understanding the uses of social media for youth participation in politics. The arguments and data presented in this literature review demonstrate that social media has an important role to play in the development of democracy and future of politics in Kenya.

The literature review has also demonstrated a clear gap as to the relationship between use of social media and youth political participation in Kenya. This is despite the fact that some related studies were found to have been done in regard to this subject and more so given that ICTs and democracy are both fast evolving phenomena. The purpose of this study therefore, was to find out the relationship between how youth use social media and their participation in politics in Kenya. The next chapter therefore, focuses on the methodology used for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the philosophical paradigm, research design and methodology, population and sample selection, the instruments that were used to collect the relevant data for the study and the subsequent data analysis. The chapter therefore, provides the technical structure used in the study while explaining why certain methodological options were chosen and how such options uniquely served the objectives. As previously highlighted in Chapter One, this study used mixed methods to find out the relationship between youth use of social media and their participation in politics.

3.2 Philosophical Foundation

Kuhn (1962) defines a paradigm as the underlying assumptions and intellectual structure upon which research and development in a field of inquiry is based while Blaikie (2000) describes a research paradigm as an interpretive framework. It is simply a belief system or theory that guides the way research is done. The pragmatic paradigm provides an opportunity for multiple methods, different worldviews and different assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis. Pragmatists use mixed methods to derive knowledge about a particular problem under study.

The pragmatic paradigm also places the research problem as central and applies all approaches to understanding the problem. This means that the overall approach to

research is that of mixing data collection methods and data analysis procedures within the research process to address the 'what and 'how' of the study problem with each contributing to the final results (Creswell 2003). Mixed methods approach is associated with the pragmatic paradigm and strategies involving collecting data in a simultaneous or sequential manner using both quantitative and qualitative methods in a way that best addresses the research question/purpose (Burke et al, 2007). This study therefore, used the pragmatic paradigm and collected complementary qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously. The dominant approach in the case of this study is quantitative while the qualitative strategy helped to understand and contextualize the study findings.

3.3 Research Design

Manen(1990) defines research design as the plan of action that links the philosophical paradigms of a study to specific research methods. Research design therefore, refers to the structure of an enquiry and hence deals with a logical problem and not a logistical one. This study used a Cross Sectional survey design within a mixed method approach to guide the simultaneous collection and analysis of the study data. Cross Sectional research design has been the most used for this type of research to obtain different but complimentary data on the same topic especially for assessing perceptions and measuring trends (Kamau,2013). According to Neuman (2006), surveys are appropriate for research questions about self-reported beliefs or behaviors which this study used.

 The Cross Sectional design is useful in studying relationships between variables over a short period or at a particular point in time. This principle was used in this study to help guide it to find out the relationship between youth social media use and their participation

in politics. For purposes of this study, political participation was measured in terms of the various mechanisms through which the youth engage in politics in relation to social media use. Specifically, political participation included engagement in voting, civil protests, signing online and offline petitions and joining political interest groups as dependent variables. The independent variable was social media use and the study adopted the following structure:

Independent variable   **Dependent variable**

Social media use   **relationship_____**Political participation

(Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Political blogs)   (Voting, joining political interest

groups, protests, signing petitions)

3.4 Research Methodology

Busha and Harter (1998) define research methodology as the means, techniques and frames of reference by which researchers approach and carry out an inquiry. Kothari (2004) defines it as a way to systematically solve the research problem, whereas a research method is a particular strategy for collecting and analyzing data. Kothari, further states that research methodology includes methods or techniques, the logic behind the use of chosen methods or techniques and why a certain method is preferred over the other.

Mixed methods research focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing quantitative and qualitative data in a single study. Mixed methods also encourage the collection of more comprehensive evidence for study problems. It involves gathering both numerical as well

as text information so that the final database represents both quantitative and qualitative information. The combination of approaches provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone and offers strengths that offset the weaknesses of separately applied research methods (Creswell, 2003). Mixed sampling was also used integrating non-probability and probability sampling techniques which included purposive, simple random and systematic random sampling methods respectively. This study therefore, used a mixed methods approach to sample participants, collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data

The qualitative approach was important in this study to help understand and contextualize the findings of the quantitative component, this being a mainly quantitative study. The quantitative numerical data was collected using a structured questionnaire while the qualitative non-numerical data was obtained using a Focus Group Discussion(FGD) guide. Political involvement can be viewed as consisting of cognitive and behavioral aspects and therefore, using both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyze data provided a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study (Sloam, 2007). Mixed methods approach was therefore, the best for this study.

3.5 Target population

The study population was all youth in Kenya while the source population/sampling frame was university undergraduate students from which a representative sample of the study population was obtained from a purposively sampled Nairobi City campus of a public university. Undergraduate students are most likely to fall under the 18-24-year age group

that this study was interested in. Drawing participants from a public university also gave the study a homogeneous sample with national representation of the urban educated youth.

University students have also been found to be heavy users of social media with sufficient opportunity to access the internet through their smart phones and free broadband WIFI internet connection readily available on campus for their academic uses. This makes them a suitable sample population to examine for potential effects of social media use on their participation in politics.

Therefore, obtaining a small sample from full time undergraduate students in a city campus of a public university was considered highly representative of the entire national urban educated youth population.

3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Sampling is the process by which a relatively small number of individuals, objects or events are selected and analyzed in order to find out something about the entire population from which it is selected (Kuul, 1984). Ideally, data should have been collected from the entire population of the study but the large size of the population from the over thirty public universities in Kenya would have been unmanageable. This being a mixed methods study, probability and non-probability sampling methods were used to obtain representative samples from which data was collected.

Quantitative data relies on probability sampling which allows for generalization of results to a larger population while qualitative sampling relies mainly on non-probability

sampling methods (Sudman, 1976). Since the target population of the study was homogeneous, with many shared characteristics, probability sampling was used for the quantitative component. A homogeneous population has less variability and therefore, does not require a large sample (Auma, 2012, Wasswa, 2013, Kamau, 2013).

The study therefore, sampled its participants from a purposively selected public university campus in Nairobi City County. All of them had to be undergraduate full time degree students since these transit directly from high school, hence most likely to be within the 18-24-year age bracket that the study was interested in. Sampling was done from across all disciplines and years of undergraduate studies to arrive at a representative sample for in-depth study. An initial 160 probability sampled participants were obtained through stratification into year of study and course/class lists proportionately using multi-stage systematic and simple random sampling. These were to participate in the quantitative component of the study.

Invitations were then sent to those sampled via their university email addresses to obtain the participants who had to be aged 18-24 years for eligibility to participate in the study. Since participation was voluntary, those who confirmed participation by replying were mailed the questionnaire and requested to mail it back electronically to the study address upon filling it. Reminders were sent until a total of 124 participants confirmed their participation. However, 28 exited the study in the process while 96 completed and returned the questionnaire, equivalent to a return rate of 77.42% which was considered fairly representative of the target population for this type of homogeneous population and study. According to Babbie (2002), a response rate of above 50% is adequate for

analysis. Therefore, the 77.42% response rate, was considered as being very good for data collection and analysis especially for the homogeneous population.

Participants for the FGDs were drawn from the same sampling sub-frames using non-probability (purposive) sampling by year of study and gender to take care of gender group dynamics if any. The study conducted 4 FGDs with 32 from among the targeted respondents whose discussions were used to explore in depth the beliefs, perceptions and opinions of the participants. The discussions were thematically limited to relating youth social media use to their participation in politics and their online behavior, whether and how they interact with the media technological communication environment and its effects on their political decisions was explored. The data was used to help understand and contextualize the findings from data collected through the questionnaire. Those sampled to participate in the questionnaire were excluded from participating in the FGDs and vice versa.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

Taking a mixed methods approach, the study collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The instruments used included a structured questionnaire and a face to face FGDs guide for the quantitative and qualitative components respectively. This being a mainly quantitative study, the questionnaires generated more quantitative than qualitative data supported by the qualitative data collected from the FGDs. The qualitative research technique provided a fast way to learn from the target audience thus helped to understand and contextualize the findings from data generated from quantitative approach of the study.

This being a mainly quantitative study, it used a self-administered questionnaire with a combination of closed-ended and scaled questions to obtain self-reported beliefs and behaviors of the youth on social media use and political participation. The closed-ended questions structured questionnaire therefore captured the attitudes and perceptions from the participants by ensuring that they answered the same questions hence no opportunity for variations.

Scales are commonly used in situations where a researcher wants to measure how individuals feel or think about something and therefore, produces quantitative measures to test hypotheses. Likert scales are often used in survey research in which people express attitudes or other responses in terms of ordinal-level categories that are ranked along a continuum (Neuman, 2006).

This questionnaire therefore, used Likert scale questions to measure participants' perceptions and attitudes towards use of social media in relation to participation in politics. Most of the questions were on a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, slightly agree, disagree to strongly disagree for uniformity and easy of quantification during data coding and analysis. Care was taken to include sufficient questions for each of the variables as indicated in Table 3.1 below:

Variable	Specific Objective	Questionnaire Items
Dependent Variable: Participation in politics	1.To find out the contribution of social media use to youth engagement with political parties and civil society 2. To establish the influence of social media use on the level of youth participation in electoral voting 3.To determine the effect of social media use on youth participation in civil protests and signing petitions	6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 37, 38
Independent Variable: Use of Social media	4. To establish the level of youth use of social media and engagement in political interest groups, elections and participation in civil protests and signing petitions	8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 26, 35, 36, 39

Table 3.1: Variables, Research Objectives and Items on Questionnaire

3.8 Data presentation and analysis

Quantitative data produces numbers that can be manipulated using various statistical methods while the qualitative approach usually produces descriptions along with expressions from subjects reflecting how they view the social world (Weber, 1990). This study collected quantitative and qualitative data from the structured questionnaire and FGDs proceedings respectively.

The FGDs generated purely qualitative non-numerical data which was used to understand and contextualize the findings of the study. This is by providing critical insights to help understand the deeper reasons for some of the responses captured from the structured questionnaire. The quantitative numerical data collected from the structured questionnaire

was coded and presented in tables, graphs, pie charts, histograms for analysis and interpretation. Descriptive and inferential statistics, specifically simple linear regression were used to make statistical inferences from the data.

In order to understand the relationship between social media use and political participation, a simple linear regression analysis (using a Microsoft spreadsheet application on Excel) was done. This helped to measure the relationship between social media use (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and, Political blogs) as independent variables and the modes of political participation (voting, joining political interest groups and signing protests online and offline) as dependent variables.

3.9 Validation of tools

Validity suggests truthfulness and refers to how well an idea fits with the actual reality by addressing the question of how well the social reality being measured through research matches the constructs researchers use to understand it (Neumann, 2006). Data validation focused on the reliability of the sampling, sample, data collection and analysis techniques. The instruments used and the homogeneous study participants drawn using probability and non-probability sampling techniques contributed to the validity and reliability of the results. Validation of the study tools was done through use of pre-testing with similar participants sampled the same way as those of the actual study and feedback used to make the necessary adjustments.

Reliability refers to a study's dependability or consistency such that the same thing can be repeated or recurs under similar conditions at any other time to give the same

outcomes (Neumann, 2006). Consultation was done with experts on research methodology, data collection instruments and the feedback obtained also informed changes to align them to the research questions. This contributed to a great extent to the validity and reliability of the data collected. The study participants comprising of a homogeneous group of undergraduate full time degree students in a public university was found to be a fair representative of the study population. This also contributed immensely to the validity and reliability of the data collected and the findings.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

 To deal with ethical issues like consent to participate, trust and intrusion of participants' privacy, the purpose of the study being an academic undertaking was clearly explained to them in advance. The length of time the study would take was also explained to the participants in advance where participation was voluntary such that one was free to exit the study at any point as they wished. Measures were also taken to protect their privacy against intrusion by not requiring them to record their identities and that of the study site. According to Juan and Ong'ondo (2011) as cited in Auma, (2012), confidentiality and anonymity is only guaranteed if the person(s) or research site is not named.

Confidentiality was assured by excluding any information that could lead to their identities and that of the site being disclosed. Therefore, no data was collected that could have had the potential of identifying the study site and any participant beyond their demographics. All statutory requirements were also adhered to, including approval from Moi University authorities including securing an official research permit issued by the

Government of Kenya. This also included obtaining permission from the authorities of the research site to sample and use the participants who also had to voluntarily consent to take part in the study.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the structural design of the study including its philosophical orientation and the methodology, approaches, sampling and data generation. The quantitative and qualitative methods used to collect and analyze the data to provide a more elaborate understanding of the research problem were also extensively discussed. Data presentation and analysis, reliability, validity and ethical considerations were also discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS AND

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study and their interpretation based on the data collected from the field. Gender based focus group discussions were held and the proceedings used to help understand, contextualize, analyze and discuss the quantitative data generated from the structured questionnaire. The study sought to establish the relationship between how youth use social media and their participation in politics in Kenya. Section 4.2- 4.5 of the chapter presents the data while section 4.6 provides the interpretation given the context of existing literature as discussed in Chapter 2.

4.2 General information on the Respondents

The questionnaire required the respondents to fill in their general demographics information. The self-reported information in conjunction with that collected from the FGDs helped to understand and contextualize the findings from the main quantitative data. It also helped in ensuring that any intervening variables were included in the inferences.

4.2.1 Respondents' gender distribution

Gender	No.	%
Male	49	51
Female	47	49
Total	**96**	**100**

Table 4.1 Respondents distribution by gender

Information on the respondents' gender was sought in anticipation of gender dynamics having any effect on the findings although it was not part of the variables under study. According to the findings, 51% of the respondents were male while 49% were female indicating a fair gender parity in the composition of the respondents. According to the Kenya 2009 National Census, gender distribution stands at 50.3 % female and 49.7% male (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics cited in Kamau (2013). Gender dynamics was not found to have any indications of effect on how youth use social media in relation to their participation in politics and was therefore, not investigated further in this study.

4.2.2 Where Respondents Grew Up and Went To School

Where the respondents grew up and went to school were also captured in the first section of the questionnaire (figure 4.1). This could have effect on whether they have had access to the internet before and whether and how they currently use social media platforms.

Figure 4.1 Where respondents grew up and schooled

The findings show that 50% of the respondents grew up in rural settings and 50% in urban areas whereas 64% went to school in urban areas and 36% in rural areas. However, all of them spent at least the last one year in an urban area while at the university therefore, making them a true representation of the urban educated youth population that the study was interested in. According to the Communications Commission of Kenya quarterly report of 2012/2013, majority of Kenya's over 16 million internet and social media users are youth and found in urban areas and specifically majority of them in Nairobi City.

4.2.3 Sources of internet connection

Majority of the respondents (53%) reported using their mobile phones as the main source of internet connection while 34% use WiFi available at their campus with only 10% depending on use of modems as shown in figure 4.2 below. It emerges therefore, that youth do have access to the internet, are sufficiently connected and networked amongst themselves and their interactions with the outside world including politics would easily unfold online. The internet could therefore, give the youth an opportunity to interact with politics freely, which may contribute to their interest and participation in politics.

Figure 4.2 Sources of internet connection.

4.2.4 Social media accounts and social networking tools

It was revealed that all the respondents (100%) had social media accounts with a clear majority at 95% having Facebook followed by Twitter at 81% with YouTube and other social networking tools at 18% each as shown in figure 4.3 below. Majority of the respondents were also found to be using multiple social media platforms. It therefore, emerges therefore, that social media has become an important communication platform for the youth and that they are sufficiently connected and networked. This is an indicator that social media is an inevitable and important technological environment to interact with in their lives which may shape their political behavior. Social media may therefore, open up more opportunities for their participation in politics freely given the freedom that it provides with no gatekeepers.

Figure 4.3 Social media accounts and social networking tools

4.2.5 Period of Using Social Media

Finding out the length of time the respondents have used social media could reveal the relationship between the time they have used it and the time they have been at the university as urban youth. From figure 4.4 below, it is revealed that majority (75%) of the respondents have used social media for the last 2-5 years while 27% have used it for only one year. This coincides with the period that most of them have been at the university, an

indicator that they could have started using social media meaningfully while there. It also points at a relationship between their lives as urban educated youth and social media use.

Figure 4.4 Period of using social media

4.2.6 Preferred social media tools

From figure 4.5 below, it emerges that majority of the respondents (91%) prefer Facebook, making it their most popular social media platform followed by Twitter (75%), YouTube and Political blogs at 36% and 35% respectively while other social networking tools stood at 11%. This further confirms that they actually use social media which seems to be more friendly to them. Young people have been found to have fully embraced social media as compared to the mainstream media that has been found to alienate them (Auma and Mukhongo, 2013).

Figure 4.5 Preferred social media tools

4.2.7 Uses for social media

Finding out what the respondents' use social media for was critical to understanding their online behavior with a focus to their engagements with politics as shown in Figure 4.6 below.

Figure 4.6 Uses for social media

Findings show that the respondents have multiple uses for social media with majority (78%) using it for connecting with friends followed by entertainment at 60%, news 56% and following politics at 52%. Social media tools are therefore, emerging as important platforms for young people to network and as sources of political information among other uses. This may have significant implications on their political actions both online and offline.

4.2.8 Sources of Political Information

Sources of political information (figure 4.7 below) were considered with specific reference to social media as opposed to conventional mainstream media. The respondents were found to use multiple social media platforms as sources of political information with majority (96%) using Facebook followed by political blogs (68%) Twitter (61%) while YouTube had only 8% compared to campaign rallies which stood at 69%(offline). Generally, social media emerges as a key source of political information that may have a bearing on the respondents' interest in politics. Their political behavior is therefore, more likely to unfold online than offline which may contribute, influence or affect how participate in politics.

Figure 4.7 Sources of political information

4.2.9 Frequency of access to political information

The frequency of access to information on politics (figure 4.8 below) could be an indicator of how well politically informed the respondents are, hence an indicator of political interest which could eventually affect, contribute, influence or relate to their participation in politics.

It was found that 29% look for political information online mainly at election time only while 24% and 26% respectively go online on a daily and weekly basis to look for information on politics. This could be an indicator of the influence, effect and contribution of social media to political interest and engagement with politics.

Figure 4.8 Frequency of access to political information

4.2.10 Self-Description of Interest in Politics

It was important to find out how the respondents describe themselves in terms of interest in politics, itself an indicator/contributor to shaping their individual as well as collective political behavior. Findings revealed that 31% were very interested followed by 28% extremely interested while 20% and 17% fairly and interested respectively with only 4% not interested as shown in figure 4.9 below. Therefore, a total majority at 96% showed interest in politics generally. This, together with the fact that they are clear users of social

media already established could according to Auma (2012), Wasswa (2013) and Kamau (2013) influence their interest in and participation in politics.

Figure 4.9 Self-description of interest in politics

4.2.11 Self-Description of Political Viewpoints

A self-description of political viewpoints was meant to further interrogate the self interest in politics with a view to understanding how this could translate to political interest generally. It emerged that 38% hold liberal political viewpoints followed by conservative with moderate at 30% and 28% respectively while 14% do not know their viewpoints as shown in figure 4.10 below. This is a strong indicator of political awareness and interest in politics including contribution to the respondents' understanding of the political environment, both drivers of political participation decisions. It has been found that political viewpoints held by an individual could be a determinant of whether they are interested in politics or not which could therefore, shape or inform how they make their voting decisions and participation in politics generally (Sloam,2011).

Figure 4.10 Self-Description of Political viewpoints

From the general information on the respondents in 4.2 – 4.2.10, it has been established that young people have a access the internet and are they well- networked and connected

through the internet which could shape their individual and collective behavior. It is also found that they use social media platforms for among other purposes political information access. This could influence their interest in politics, hence political participation. Social media therefore, seems to be their friendly media platform that could serve as an alternative media to access information on politics as opposed to the mainstream media which seems to alienate them politically.

4.2.12 Social Media Use and Youth Participation in Politics in Kenya

As stated in chapter 1, this study used research questions to support its objectives. The study has established that the youth are active users of social media and for political purposes and engagement. The study therefore, analyzed to what extent social media use (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Political blogs) as independent variable impacts on institutional (political party membership, joining in political interest groups and electoral voting) and extra-institutional (petitions, protests) political participation as dependent variables. Specifically, it focused on finding out the contribution of social media use to engagement in political interest groups, influence on the level of youth participation in electoral voting and the effect in signing online and offline protests. In order to measure the nature of the relationship between social media use and various political participation modes, a simple linear regression analysis (using a Microsoft spreadsheet application on Excel) was performed.

Regression describes a relationship between an independent (x) and a dependent variable(y). A simple linear regression line is used to predict the value of y for a given value of x

Thus y= a+bx + k.   Where x = independent variable and y= dependent variable, the relationship between them can therefore, be established and measured using simple linear regression.   A least squares regression line describes the relationship between the dependent variable y and the independent variable x whereas the correlation(r) measures the direction and strength of the straight-line relationship.   A positive slope implies a positive relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable while value of r close to ± 1 indicates a strong correlation.

r^2 =Percentage of variance explained i.e. the strength of the correlation

r^2 is the proportion of the variation in the value of y that is explained by the least squares regression of y on x. r^2 is therefore, a measure of how successful the regression is in explaining the response. Perfect correlation (r = ±1) means that the points lie exactly on a straight line (Moore and Notz, 2006).

The hypothesized relationship between social media use (Face book, Twitter, YouTube and Political blogs) and political participation (voting, joining political interest groups, signing petitions/ protests) may be written as: - y=a+bx   Where a= constant amount (when no social media use, the y intercept)

ƀ= the effect in participation of an additional use of social media, the independent

variable and also the slope and k = a constant (other factors) not explained. The variable y

is the dependent variable (political participation) and x is the independent variable (social

media use) and b the coefficient of the variable which is the slope of the line of best fit of

the random scatter. r^2 and % represent the level of variation of political participation in

relation to variation in social media use i.e. % of the variation in social media use that is

related to variation in political participation.

The outcomes of the simple linear regression analysis are summarized in table 4.2 below.

Social media use Independent variable	y= a + bx straight line	Political participation Dependent variable	r	r^2
Facebook Twitter You tube Political blogs	13.8x- 4.6 Slope=13.8	Voting 2013	±0.960	0.953 95.3%
	2.9x + 5.1 Slope=2.9	Political party membership	± 0.856	0.732 73.2%
	3.2x- 0.6	Joining in activities of civil society	± 0.956	0.914

	Slope=3.2			**91.4%**
	4x+ 0.8 Slope= 4	Civil protests	± 0.951	0.905 **90.5%**
	5.7x- 4.7 Slope= 5.7	Identifying with political parties	± 0.976	0.952 **95.2%**
	4.1x + 0.7 Slope= 4.1	Signing online petitions	± 0.921	0.849 **84.9%**
	4.6x − 4 Slope= 4.6	Signing offline petitions	± 0.915	0.837 **83.7%**

Table 4.2 Simple Linear Regression

Findings from the simple linear regression analysis between social media use and youth participation in electoral voting, engagement in political interest groups, online and offline protests returned a positive association generally between the two variables. Having established that there is a positive association between youth use of social media and their participation in politics in Kenya laid ground for the study to answer the research questions.

(i) RQ1: What is the contribution of social media use on youth engagement in political interest   groups in Kenya?

(ii) RQ2: What is influence of social media use on the level of youth participation in elections in   Kenya?

(iii)RQ3: What is the effect of social media use on youth participation in online and offline protests in Kenya?

Political interest groups in the context of this study involved political party membership/identifying with political parties and joining/supporting civil society/political parties' activities.

4.3 RQ 1: What is the contribution of social media use on youth engagement in political interest groups in Kenya?

It was found earlier that 32% of the respondents reported being members of a political party and 77% of the respondents would identify with/join political interest groups while a significant majority of 79% would interact with politicians/political parties via Facebook and 40% on Twitter. Further, 82% of the respondents reported to have interacted with political parties and civil society groups on social media especially Facebook. Another majority of 80% identified with/showed interest in political activities of political interest groups while another 76% showed interest in politics. Therefore, there are indications of a relationship between youth use of social media and their engagement with political interest groups in Kenya which needed to be ascertained and measured.

4.3.1 Membership to Political Parties

It was found that 32% of the respondents reported being affiliated to a political party while 68% did not belong to any political party (Table 4.3). This could not necessarily

mean lack of interest but a pointer at the youth feeling of exclusion/marginalization from mainstream political activities.

Member	F	%
Yes	31	32.29
No	65	67.71

Table 4.3 Membership to Political Parties

4.3.2 Interaction with political parties

Whether and how the respondents interact with political parties and civil societies (political interest groups), the institutions that shape politics is an indicator of political engagement and participation. It emerged that the respondents do interact political parties online through different social media platforms with 79% doing so on Facebook with Twitter and YouTube standing at 40% and 4% respectively. Further, 30% were found to interact with political parties and politics offline through campaign rallies as shown in figure 4.11 below. There seems to be a positive relationship between youth use of social media and their interactions with political interest groups. This was then subjected to a simple linear regression analysis to establish its nature.

Figure 4.11 Interaction with political parties

4.3.3 Social media use and political party membership

From figure 4.12 and the simple linear regression equation

 y= a+ 2.9x   a= 5.1   a= y intercept, 2.9 = slope which is positive

y= 5.1 + 2.9x

r^2 =   0.732   = 73.2% contribution of social media use on engagement in political party membership

Therefore, r = ±0.856   indicating a strong correlation

It emerges that as the use of social media increases, so does the number of those who would join political parties and therefore, there is a positive relationship between social media use and joining political parties with a strong correlation. Therefore, social media use does contribute to youth tendency to join political parties in Kenya with a 73% contribution, implying that for every decision that results in increase in youth political party membership, social media use contributes by 73% to it.

 Figure 4.12 Social media use and political party membership

4.3.4 Social media use and identifying with political parties

From figure 4.13 and the simple linear regression analysis equation

$y_{= 5.7x-4.7}$ slope = 5.7 and y intercept = -4.7

r^2 =0.952= 95.2% contribution of social media use to engagement in political party activities.

r= ±0.976

This is close to ±1 indicating a strong correlation between social media use and identifying with political parties hence, as social media use increases so does participation in engagement in political parties' activities. Therefore, a positive relationship between social media use and identifying with political parties was found and social media use has a 95.2% contribution to any increase in youth engagement in political parties in Kenya. This could be an indicator of high political interest and participation

Figure 4.13 Social media use and identifying with political parties

4.3.5 Social media use and joining in civil society activities

From figure 4.14 and the simple linear regression equation   y= a+bxy= 3.2x -0.6

Therefore, y=-0.6+3.2x

Slope = 3.2   The slope 3.2 is positive

 y intercept = -0.6

r^2 =0.914= 91.4% =social media use contribution to youth tendency to engage in civil society activities.

r=± 0.956

 A positive relationship between social media use and tendency to join in civil society activities and r is very close to ±1 hence a strong correlation.

Therefore, social media use has a 91.4% contribution to youth decision to engage in civil society groups activities, implying that social media use contributes 91.4% to every increase in engagement in civil society activities.

Figure 4.14 Social media use and joining in civil society activities

From the simple linear regression analysis (Table4.2 and figures 4.3.3 -4.3.5, it emerges that: -

(i)   A positive association between social media use and engagement in political interest
        groups (political party membership, joining in political party and civil society activities) was found.

(ii)   Social media use and youth engagement in civil society activities were positively associated. Social media has a 91.4% contribution to a similar increase in joining in civil Society activities.

(iii)   Social media use and youth engagement in political party membership and their activities are positively related. Social media use has a 73.2% and a 95.2% contribution to a similar

Increase in youth engagement in political parties' membership and identifying with Political Parties respectively.

4.4 RQ 2: What is the influence of social media use on the level of youth participation in elections in Kenya?

Voting in political elections was considered separately as political participation. Participation in elections as a voter could be an indicator of interest in politics although decisions to turn out to vote for some citizens can only be explained by the *bandwagon* effect.

4.4.1 Voting in the 2013 elections

Findings revealed that a majority of 73% of the respondents voted while about 27% did not vote as shown in table 4.4 below. Those who did not vote were either not registered as voters or had low interest in politics or had not yet attained the voting age. That a majority of 73% who voted is an indicator of a high interest in politics. It is possible that belonging or not belonging to a political party will not necessarily determine or relate to the decision to turn out to vote.

Voted	F	%
Yes	70	72.92
No	26	27.08

Table 4.4 Voting in the 2013 elections

The indicative interest in politics as shown in the high percentage that voted could have been influenced by social media use. To ascertain and measure it, the study found out the relationship between youth social media and their participation in electoral voting using a simple linear regression analysis (figure 4.15).

4.4.2 Social media use and voting in 2013 elections

From the simple linear regression analysis in figure 4.15 below and the equation

y=a+13.8x   a= y intercept

  a= -4.6y = -4.6+ 13.8x   slope = 13.8   which is positive

r^2 = % of the variation in social media use that is related to variation in participation in voting.

r^2 = 0.9528 = 95.28%   r =± 0.96   A very strong correlation

Therefore, social media use has a 95.2% influence on any increase in the level of youth voting in Kenya.

Figure 4.15 Social media use, voting and political party membership

A positive influence of social media use on participation in voting was therefore, established with a social media use influence of 95.3% found to be related to a similar variation in participation in electoral voting. Therefore, social media use influences the level of participation in electoral voting by 95.3%. Social media may therefore, be the youth friendly political communication media, which could serve as the alternative to

mainstream media seen to alienate them. This may serve to bring the youth back to vote hence increase their participation in determining the national agenda.

4.5 RQ 3: What is the effect of social media use on youth participation in online and offline protests in Kenya?

Initial findings show that a clear majority of 77% and 70% of the respondents would sign online and offline petitions respectively and on the average, 60% would sign petitions generally while 70% would specifically sign offline (hard copy) petitions.

4.5.1 Social media use and online and offline political participation

The above indicative relationship between social media use and online and offline political participation was then subjected to a simple linear regression analysis to further establish an effect relationship. Social media use was then related to the specific online and offline political participation modes using simple linear regression analysis as shown in table 4.5 below.

Independent variable	Dependent variable	% of participation online	% of participation offline
Facebook use	Joining political interest groups Voting decisions Signing petitions Protests	43 48 38 62	27 65 22 10
Twitter use	Joining political interest groups Voting decision Signing petitions Protests	24 18 26 22	8 26 6 18
You Tube use	Joining political interest groups Voting decision Signing petitions Protests	23 0 0 0	2 37 23 43
Political blogs use	Joining political interest groups Voting decision Signing petitions Protests	38 23 37 64	16 53 26 21

Table 4.5 Social media uses and on/offline political participation

It can be observed that social media use generally has a higher effect on online than on offline political participation.

4.5.2 Social media use and signing online petitions

From figure 4.23 below and the equation   y= 4.6x-4   y intercept = -4   y= -4 +4.6x

Slope of y = 4.6 is positive and therefore, there is a positive relationship between social media use and signing online petitions.

r^2=0.837= 83.7% effect on signing online petitions

 r=± 0.915 indicating a strong correlation between social media use and signing online petitions. Therefore, social media use does affect youth signing of online petitions with an 84% effect on any similar increase in signing online protests/petitions.

Figure 4.16 Social media use and signing online petitions

4.5.3 Social media use and signing offline petitions

From figure 4.16 below and the equation

 y= 4.1x+0.7y -0.7= 4.1x   Slope = 4.1 and y intercept = 0.7.

The slope 4.1 is positive indicating a positive relationship between social media use and signing offline petitions.

r^2 =0.849= 84.9% variation in social media use in relation to variation in participation in signing online petitions.

r= ±0.921 which is very close to ± indicating a strong correlation between social media use and signing offline petitions.

Therefore, social media use affects youth signing of offline petitions with an 85% effect on any increase in signing offline petitions/protests.

Figure 4.17 Social media use and signing offline petitions

4.6 Discussion of the Findings

Generally, the study established that there is a positive relationship between youth social media use and their participation in politics in Kenya. It further and specifically, finds that social media use has a positive contribution to youth engagement in political interest groups, a positive influence on their voting decisions and a positive effect on their signing of online and offline petitions/protests.

4.6.1 Contribution of Social Media Use on Youth Engagement in Political Interest Groups

Initial analysis finds that about 90% of the respondents would join in civil society activities while 69% would join/ identify with political party activities and only a minimal 32 % of the respondents would be affiliated to a political party. These are indications of a positive relationship between social media use and joining political interest groups and analysis of social media uses against engagement in activities of political interest groups revealed a positive association and a strong correlation between them from the simple linear regression analysis.

It emerged that social media use does contribute to youth engagement in political interest groups with a 95.2% and 91.4% contributions to any variation in engagement in political parties and joining in civil society activities respectively.

4.6.2 Influence of Social Media Use on the Level of Youth Participation in Elections

Participation in electoral voting was restricted to voting in the 2013 general election. While the average level of social media use stood at 48% (mean of uses of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, political blogs), those who voted stood at 73%. Comparatively, 52% used social media to follow politics. A simple linear regression analysis of social media uses against participation in electoral voting finds that social media does influence electoral voting with a 95.3% influence on any variation in the level of youth participation in elections with a positive association and a strong correlation between them.

This means that social media use has a positive influence on the level of participation in elections. That use of social media promotes youth interest and engagement in politics, it may therefore contribute to their engagement in politics hence bring them back to effective political participation (Sloam, 2011).

4.6.3 Effect of social media use on youth participation in signing online and offline petitions

Civil protests include citizens holding demonstrations to express displeasure towards a government decision/action on an issue affecting them. The citizens can also sign an online or offline (hard copy) petition as protest on the same. The study analyzed to what extent social media use impacts on citizen protests as a form of political participation. It was established that as social media use increases, the tendency to sign the online and offline petitions/protests also increases. Therefore, a positive relationship between youth use of social media and youth participation in signing online and offline petitions/protests was found.

The simple linear regression revealed that youth social media use had an 84.9% and 83.7% effect on any increase in signing online and offline petitions/protests respectively. Young people using social media are therefore, more likely to participate in online than offline protests and similarly signing for the same.

4.7 Chapter Summary

As stated in Chapter 1, this study drew its theoretical framework from the Media Ecology Theory which looks at changes in technology as transforming social constructs which in turn shapes perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and behaviors. The youth are found to be sufficiently networked through the digital technological environment and specifically social media. This could determine how they think and act politically that may direct/determine their online/ offline collective political behavior. This age group has also been found to rely heavily on their social networks for information on politics such that when they adapt social media use, social networks quickly become a significant source of political information for them (Auma and Mukhongo,2013, Wasswa ,2013 and Kamau

,2013). The overall objective of the study was to find out the relationship between youth use of social media and their participation in politics in Kenya.

Political participation can be either institutional or non/ extra-institutional. For purposes of this study Institutionalized participation included activities that influence the political system such as party membership, voting in elections and connecting with politicians. Extra-institutionalized political participation is not tied to the political system but seems to have an indirect impact on the political decision making and included signing petitions, joining civil protests and joining political interest groups and their activities.

The study analyzed quantitative data from the questionnaire complimented by the focus group discussions which contributed to the understanding and contextualization of the findings. These complimentary data ensured that intervening variables were studied to reveal the extent to which the respondents use social media and how that relates to their participation in politics. The independent variable was use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Political blogs) while the dependent variables were political participation modes (electoral voting, joining political interest groups, signing petitions/ protests online and offline).

The findings shed light on the personal and social environments created by the use of social media for political engagement and participation.

Young people were found to be more likely to join political interest groups online via Facebook, Twitter and Political blogs and less likely via YouTube than offline. On the

overall, the findings suggest that young people's use of social media and their participation in politics is a complex relationship. Youth use of social media was also found to be related to how they interact with each other and their environment including following news, socialization, entertainment and politics. Social media could therefore, be the alternative space for young citizens' political engagement having been found to influence youth interest in politics and political engagement generally (Auma,2012, Kamau,2013).

A positive relationship between use of social media for political purposes and general political participation was found means that social media use is linked with the online and offline forms of political participation among young Kenyans. Specifically, that youth use of social media positively relates to their participation in institutional and extra institutional political participation may have far-reaching implications to future political engagements in Kenya. Online forms of political participation could therefore, have real and significant implications for offline political participation. This is consistent with the Media Ecology Communication Theory tenets which look at new media especially social media as environments that shape the way people interact, think and act while actively participating collectively in arenas outside of social media.

Generally, a positive relationship between youth online political behavior and their political participation in signing online and offline petitions, voting decisions, joining political interest groups was established and that social media may not have a significant effect on the street or 'offline' protests in Kenya.

It was also revealed that online protests are higher than offline, making social media use a substantial contributor to political protests. On the overall, it emerged that young people using social media are more likely to participate in online protests although social media may not necessarily have a significant effect on the street or 'offline' protests in Kenya. Specifically, this study concludes that youth social media use contributes to their engagement in political interest groups, influences their voting decisions and affects their participation in signing online and offline protests, all with a positive relationship. The next chapter summarizes the findings based on the study objectives and research questions and also provides a conclusion and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the findings; the conclusions and recommendations for further research. The study set out to establish the relationship between youth social media use and their participation in politics in Kenya.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

Social media use in the context of this study was defined to include use of Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and Political blogs while political participation is institutional (political party membership, joining in civil society activities and voting) and extra-institutional (petitions, protests). This study finds that young people are sufficiently networked and are active users of social media with majority of them have Facebook accounts followed by Twitter, YouTube and other social networking sites. Majority of them use multiple social media tools and going online for political information during election time. Additionally, majority of them use social media sources of political information as opposed to campaign rallies. Youth joining political interest groups is found higher online than offline generally as related to social media use.

Generally, political participation is generally higher online than offline for the youth who use social media except voting decisions which is higher offline than online. Young

people are therefore, more likely to engage in online and offline political participation especially those who use of Facebook and Twitter extensively. Use of YouTube has a higher impact on offline than online political participation generally except joining political interest groups which is higher online than offline. In fact, use of YouTube has no impact on online political participation except in joining political interest groups. Use of political blogs also has a higher impact on online than offline political participation except on voting decisions where it is lower online than offline. Signing petitions has been found to be higher online than offline making social media a significant contributor to social change and democracy in Kenya (Kamau,2013).

There are strong indications of a positive relationship between use of social media for political purposes and political participation pointing a rather optimistic picture of a positive relationship between youth online political behavior and their participation in signing petitions, electoral voting decisions, joining political interest groups but not demonstrations. In support of this, one discussant reacted thus: *I would rather participate in protests online than go to the streets because police will beat you senselessly* (Female participant in FGD). Wasswa (2013) and Kamau (2013) also find the same contradiction that reliance on social networking sites does not relate positively with participation in demonstrations. The prevailing volatile political situation in the Country and the political anxiety occasioned by the near-controversial 2013 Presidential election could also explain the contradiction.

A positive relationship between social media use and signing online petitions established with an 84.9% effect related to a similar variation in signing online petitions and an 83.7% effect of social media use is related to variation in signing offline petitions hence, social media use has an 83.7% effect on participation in signing offline petitions. Social media use therefore, has a significant effect on participation in signing online petitions. In conclusion therefore, social media use positively relates with and significantly contributes to youth engagement in political interest groups, influences their voting decisions and affects their decisions on signing online and offline petitions.

Youth online activities specifically on social media could therefore, have a real and significant contribution to their engagement in political activities. They exhibit collective behavior online, effectively interacting with the technological communication environment meaning that they are highly networked and are active users of social media. Young people also seem to have fully integrated use of social media into their daily lives and see it as an inevitable technological environment to interact with socially and politically. This could shape their collective perspective and interest in politics that may translate to their effective political participation. Engaging young people politically on social media may therefore, be the ultimate solution to their disconnection with politics and hence bring them back to participation in mainstream politics.

5.3 Conclusions

The general objective of the study was to determine the relationship between how youth use social media and their participation in politics. Young peoples' perceptions regarding politics on social media, as well as the specific kinds of political activities they engage in on social media were also explored.

The study findings suggest that as the number of political activities the youth engage in on social media increases, so does online and offline political participation. Young people using social media are therefore, more likely to participate in online than offline protests. Overall, there are indications of a positive (association) relationship between online participation and offline participation among the youth, painting a rather optimistic view regarding the political role of social media in the lives of young citizens in Kenya. This should not be surprising as previous research has found that any form of association, including the networked relationships that are typical of the social media networking environment helps political participation (Auma,2012, Wasswa,2013, Kamau,2013).

Young peoples' use of social media and their political participation is a complex relationship. They are found to be very active internet users and specifically social media and use it for among others as their main source for access of information on politics. Consequently, social media may serve as the alternative space for citizens' political engagement and may therefore, be the alternative platform to engage the youth for their effective participation in politics in Kenya.

When youth adopt use of social media, social networks quickly become a significant platform for their engagement with politics. Social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and blogs have emerged to provide new ways of stimulating citizens participation especially the youth to be engaged politically. The increased communicative spaces on social media is therefore, an indicator of opportunities for political participation. Consequently, social media may serve to increase youth political interest and promote their participation in politics (Auma 2012, Auskalniene,2012).

The conventional perceptions of a disengaged/ apathetic youth are giving way to a new reality of a politically active young demographic who are fully engaged in politics on social media. Social media may therefore, be the platform on which to engage young people politically to mitigate their feeling of exclusion/marginalization from mainstream politics and their portrayal as apathetic towards politics. Promoting youth participation in politics through use of social media may therefore, foster a sense of citizenship and make policy processes more transparent and accountable to them. This may enhance participation in political discourse of this critical demographic, hence contribute meaningfully to the setting of the national agenda. It could also contribute to addressing their frustration occasioned by the feeling of marginalization/alienation from mainstream politics and effectively make them more active participants in building an ethnically cohesive society and the development of democracy.

Although the youth in Kenya seem to have been politically marginalized and excluded from mainstream agenda-setting, social media is set to provide them with an alternative opportunity and freedom to fight the exclusion and alienation in order to take their rightful position in politics given their demographic importance. Youth political participation facilitated by social media could therefore, mark the beginning of their full inclusion in politics against alienation/marginalization and hence contribute fully in determining national agenda and further democratization of Kenyan politics. This could also further contribute to addressing their frustration and make them more active participants in the determination of national agenda and building of an ethnically cohesive society.

Young people have been found to have embraced social media for networking, thus facilitating them to make informed political participation decisions. Just by the click of a mouse, the youth are able to join numerous political interest groups online through social media. Additionally, it can be concluded that social media has provided a Habermasian public sphere, by opening up public discourse about their political affiliations, preferences and experiences. However, surveillance attempts by the various governments to prosecute political bloggers and hate speech offenders raises questions about freedom of expression and the threats posed by such transnational forms of communication(Mukhongo,2014).

5.4 Recommendations

(a) There is need to promote institutionalized use of social media for political engagement through youth-friendly social media use policies. This may increase communicative spaces for politics especially for young people that may serve to promote effective political discourse and development of democracy in Kenya. An all-inclusive and effective participation in politics may make policy processes more friendly, transparent and accountable towards young people and foster their sense of citizenship.

This may further address the youth feeling of marginalization/exclusion/alienation from civic participation through use of popular social media communication platforms for political engagement.

(b) There is need for the government to mainstream social media use into citizen political engagement processes to foster participation in the democratic life of young people. This may bring the youth back to mainstream politics and contribute to conflict management, national cohesion and integration thereby reducing the risk of youth participating in violent activities including radicalization and violent extremism.

(c) The government and other non-governmental agencies engaged in civic education should appropriate social media as a platform for disseminating civic information to the youth including on politics. This may give them a sense of nationhood and may contribute to their effective participation in the County's development.

(d)   Since the youth inevitably use social media which has become part of their lives, there is urgent need to come up with clear policies that encourage/integrate the use of this media for civic/political engagement. This may be the key to widening the democratic space and ultimately contribute to development of democracy and building a cohesive Kenyan society. Promoting social media use for democratic participation would also be in line with achieving the political pillar of vision 2030 for the Country.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

(a)   Although this study found a positive association between social media use and youth political participation generally, it did not look at a possible causative relationship between these variables. There would therefore, be need to investigate the causative relationship if any between social media use and political participation.

(b)   Although this study found a positive relationship between social media use and political participation, ICTs and Democracy are fast evolving phenomena and therefore, there will be need to carry out continuous and long term studies on the relationship between the wider use of ICTs, democracy and political participation.

(c)   Despite this study finding a positive association between social media use and online/ offline political participation, there has been little research focus on the extent, if at all including this study as to the relationship between youth online and offline participation in politics. It would therefore, be interesting to find out how online political participation relates to offline political participation.

5.6 Chapter Summary

The main objective of the study was to establish the nature of relationship between youth use of social media and their participation in politics. The study finds that the youth are active users of social media hence gives them the opportunity to be knowledgeable on politics which may define how they participate. Social media therefore, emerged as a friendly alternative media that may give the youth a forum to access political information against traditional media gate keepers which seem to alienate them. The networking supported on social media may shape their perceptions about life including on politics and their collective actions on the same. New media and specifically social media seems to be the current technological communication environment that could shape the way the youth think, feel and act politically as envisaged in the Media Ecology Communication theory.

On social media, the youth can freely mobilize themselves and put out their own narratives about politics. Social media may therefore, provide them with a democratic communication platform to create their own networks and share political information among themselves. They can put out their own narratives about political issues through social media without state controls and share information amongst their networks.

This could help shape their collective thinking about politics, hence influence their political actions. The youth also see politics on social media as an alternative to traditional ways of being involved that has hitherto been found to cause their *'slacktivism'* leading to political apathy. This could therefore, help mitigate their

alienation from mainstream media and politics which seem not to address issues affecting them.

The data analysis and all the requisite evidence the study collected established that there is a positive associated between youth use of social media and their participation in politics. This study specifically, finds a positive contribution of youth use of social media on their engagement in political interest groups, a positive influence on their participation in electoral voting and a positive effect on their signing of online and offline protests/petitions. Engaging young people in politics through social media platforms as alternative media could therefore, influence, affect and contribute to their effective political participation and mitigate their marginalization in national political discourse.

Although the youth are a critical electoral constituency, political systems have historically made them marginal players in defining national agenda. To bring them back to mainstream politics therefore, there is need to reboot democracy on social media and repackage it in friendly media formats to them including social media. This may contribute to making them more relevant and active players in the national political arena through enabling their effective participation which could essentially contribute to development of democracy, conflict management national cohesion and integration in addition to mitigating against ethnicity, youth radicalization and violent extremism in Kenya.

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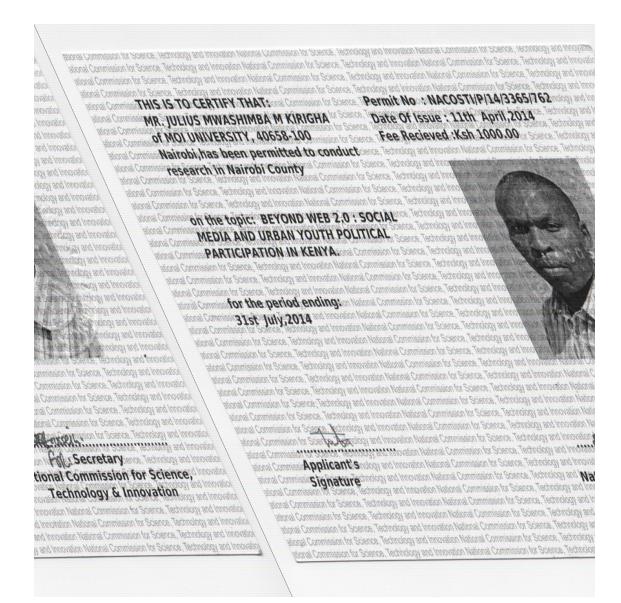Kahne, J and Middaugh, E (2012), Digital Media shapes youth participation in politics, Phi Kappa International

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I: RESEARCH PERMIT

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

MR. JULIUS MWASHIMBA M KIRIGHA

of MOI UNIVERSITY , 40658-100

Nairobi ,has been permitted to conduct

research in Nairobi County

on the topic: BEYOND WEB 2.0 ; SOCIAL MEDIA AND URBAN YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN KENYA.

for the period ending:

31st July,2014

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/14/3365/762

Date Of Issue : 11th April,2014

Fee Recieved : Ksh 1000.00

....
Secretary
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation

....
Applicant's
Signature

APPENDIX II: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Focus Group Discussions with follow up questions guided by the issues on social media use and political engagement themes.

1. Social media and politics including political party identity
2. Social media, violence and National Cohesion and Integration
3. Type of social media use for political engagement
4. Voting in elections
5. Demonstrations/ civil protests
6. Signing petitions online and offline
7. Attending campaign rallies
8. Joining political interest groups

APPENDIX III: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is part of a study on social media and youth political participation in Kenya. This is in partial fulfillment for the award of a Master of Philosophy degree in Communication Studies of Moi University. Your participation in this study by filling out this questionnaire is purely voluntary. Your participation will be guaranteed full confidentiality and your identities may only be revealed, if necessary, with your express, written authority. The researcher will greatly appreciate your cooperation. Please fill in as fully as possible by marking (√**)** and it is not required that you include your name.

Instructions: Mark your choice with a tick   √ **(**highlight and copy the tick sign to paste on the appropriate box)

Section A: Demographics

1. Gender: Male   Female

2. Age: Below 18 years   18 – 24years   over 24years

3. Highest level of education of parents

Mother

1. None   2.Primary   3. Secondary   4. College

5. University

Father

1. None   2.Primary   3. Secondary   4. College

5. University

4. Where did you grow up?

1. Rural2.Urban   3. City

5. Where did you go to school?

1. Rural2.urban   3. City

6. Are you a registered member of any political party?

1. Yes   2. No

7. Voted in the 2013 general election?

1. Yes   2. No

Section B: Politics and social media

8. Do you have a social media account?   1. Yes   2. No

If yes   which one(s) 5. Facebook   4. Twitter   3. You tube

 2. Others

9. Social networking tools that you use.

5. Face book   4. Twitter   3. YouTube   2. Political blogs

1. others

10. How long have you used them?

1. Less than I year   2.1year   3.2 - 5 years   4.5 – 10 years
5. Over 10 years

11. What do you use them fo1. News   2.Connecting with friends   3. follow
politics   4. Entertainment

5. Others

12. thinking about politics, how would you describe your own political view point?

   1. Liberal2.Moderate   3. Conservative   4. Other   5.don't know

13. Attending campaign rallies is something I will do

1. Strongly agree   2. Agree   3. slightly agree

4. Disagree   5. Strong disagree

14. I would participate in demonstrations as a democratic expression

   1. Strongly agree   2. Agree   3. Slightly agree   4. Disagree

5. Strongly disagree

15. Signing petitions is a good democratic practice.

   1. Strongly agree   2. Agree   3. Slightly agree

 4. Disagree   5. Strongly disagree

16. Your source of internet connection.

Mobile phone   Modem   WI Fi   Bluetooth   Other

17. Identifying with a political party is a democratic expression

   1. Strongly agree   2. Agree   3. disagree   4. slightly agree

 5. strongly disagree

18. How do you connect with your favorite politician?

1. Campaign rallies   2. Facebook   3. Twitter   4. You tube
5. Political logs

19. Which is your preferred social networking tool?

1. Twitter   2.Face book   3.YouTube   4. Political Blogs   5. Others

20. I prefer the social networking tool named above because

1. Friendly 2. Informative 3.Easy to use 4. Freedom

5. Don't know

21. I would recommend my preferred social network to a friend

 1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Slightly agree 4. disagree

 5. strongly disagree

22. I would prefer to vote for a youth in a general election

 1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. slightly agree 4. Disagree

5.Strongly disagree

23. Youth should be elected in political office based on

1. Age 2. Education 3. Ability 4. Constitutional Right 5. One of their own

24. Would you like to stand for a political office in election in future?

1. Yes 2.No 3. Not Sure 4. Not interested 5. Difficult

25. What criteria would you use to vote for a candidate in an election?

1. Money 2.Age 3. Development Agenda 4. Education Level

5.Youth agenda

26. How frequent do you go online for political information?

  1. Election season only 2. Monthly 3. Weekly

   4. Twice a week 5. Daily

27. How interested are you in politics.

   1. Not interested

2. Fairly Interested

 3. Interested

4. Very interested

 5. Extremely interested

28. State your satisfaction with your political party of choice.

1. Very dissatisfied   2. Dissatisfied   3. Satisfied

4. Very satisfied   5. None

29. Signing petitions online is something I will do

1. Strongly disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly agree

5. Slightly agree

30. Youth being majority voters in Kenya have taken their rightful position

 1. Strongly disagree   2. Disagree   3.   3. Agree   4. Strongly agree

    5. Slightly agree

31. I would sign a hard copy petition to communicate to government

 1. Strongly disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly agree

5. Slightly agree

32. How do you rate the contribution of youthful elected leaders?

1. Very poor   2. Poor   3. Good   4. Very good

5. Excellent

33. It is very important to participate in protests

 1. Strongly agree   2. Agree   3. Slightly agree   Disagree

 5. Strongly disagree

34. I would join and participate in the activities of civil society e.g. NGOs

  1. Strongly disagree   2. Disagree   3. Agree   4. Strongly Agree
5. slightly agree

35. How do you interact with your favorite political party?

1. Campaign rallies   2. Twitter   3. Facebook   4. You tube

5. Political blogs

36. How often to you do that for political parties.

 1. Weekly   2.Twice a week   3. Daily   4. Once a month

 5. Once a year

37. Who would you vote for in a general election?

 1. Youth   2.Any   3. Experienced politician

4. Old politicians   5.not important

38. What did you base your choice on?

1. Political party   2. Individual politician   3. Family choice

4.Friends   5. Tribe

39. Your main source of political information

 1. Campaign rallies   2. Political blogs   3. Face book

4. Twitter   5.You Tube

THANK YOU