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Moderating Effects of Political Interest on the Relationship between Facebook Usage and Online Political Participation: Data Screening and Measurement Model

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Abstract

The ultimate objective of this article is only to carry out an initial and preliminary examination on a study data collected for empirical research on the moderating effect of political interest on the usage of Facebook for online political participation for the purpose of structural equation modelling. 600 questionnaires were distributed to various respondent in Nigeria, and only 473 questionnaires representing 79% response rate were used for this analysis. Nonresponse bias test, the common method variance test, normality test and confirmatory factor analysis were all conducted to determine the fitness of the data for further multivariate analysis. Therefore, the findings revealed that the data is adequate and fit for conducting PLS structural equation modelling analysis.

Keywords: Facebook Usage, Online Political Participation, Political Interest.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The coming of Internet in today's arena of information revolution has become a remarkable achievement for people that are interested in an alternative means of communication that deviate from the traditional mean of communication. This revolution of internet has amazingly reach to 66% growth, representing over four billion active users of internet at present (internet world stats, 2018). This development has paved way for social media's growth (Miller, Bobkowski, Maliniak, & Rapoport, 2015). In essence, Social media (SM) has provide an opportunity for the people to come and participate collectively and also to mobilize citizen to benefit from this new revolution in communication (Tang, & Lee, 2013)

The resultant of the fast growth of SM gave birth to platform such as Facebook, Twitter. These platforms offer way for citizen and politicians to participate in politics and discuss political issues (Fernandes et al. 2010) it also offer various ways for communication among citizens (Vitak et al., 2011b; Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012;). Therefore, the spread of practicing politics online is attributed to SM (Rainie et al., 2012). For example, people can share political content on FB sites, they can express their feelings, they can comment in writing about politics, they can update people on the political happenings around them on FB, they can upload and download political videos, stories, and photos on FB, they can write political articles, they can also initiate political discussion with their various groups friends on FB (Smith, 2013). Thus, Facebook and other SM platforms are considered as re-invention of another fresh revolution in communication (Rainie et al., 2012), particularly, with the way it offers an arena for every form of civic and political freedom to the citizen, thereby, helping them to interact and exchange views with government officials on different policies that have impact on their social political, and economic well-being (Rainie et al., 2012)

In essence, For the last few years, the FB platform has been regarded as the most important social media platform that help people to acquire the power to connect and reach the world in an easy and open way (Waller, 2013) because of the provision of new participatory skills (Oldmeadow, Quinn, & Kowert, 2013). Thus the study aim to investigate the relationship of Facebook usage and online political participation among youth in Nigeria and the moderation role of political interest in this relationship.

1.2 Literature Review

Several studies about FB have identified that Facebook has provided people with the opportunity of seeing the picture of the world, the of communicating with the world through content-sharing, viewpoints and opinion expression (Internet World Stats, 2015),as well as transforming political campaigns and discussions from the traditional media, like radio and newspaper to the new media of Facebook (Ogundimo, 2013). It was this recognition that made Skoric and Poor (2013) to conclude that political participation among people has gained significant improvement worldwide through FB platform.

Not only that, researchers in the area of social media and politics have acknowledged different uses that FB provides for the people in bringing to serve as domain for bringing social and political change. For example Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, and

Valenzuela (2012) have identified its uses for seeking information on politics. Additionally, for forming political content and sharing political content (Thun, 2014), for engaging people in political discussion(Kim, Hsu, & de Zuniga, 2013), for mobilizing people of like-minds towards politic Patrick . Bobkowski, Miller, Maliniak, & Rapoport, 2015) and for engaging people in social capital paricipation (Ellison, Gray, Lampe, & Fiore, 2014).

Recent researches have aalso dwelled on how the FB platform was utilized in in entrenching democracy,social chaos, and political uprisings in the political atmosphere of different nations,like the Arab spring in 2011, the 2013 presidential election in Nigeria,the 2016 foiled of coup attempt in Turkey (Haciyakupoglu & Zhang, 2015; Okoro & Nwafor, 2013; Towner, 2013). However, some scholars view some of these development with a disapproving view and of negative consequence of FB in the society.

Apparently the above submission is pointing to the fact that FB has appropriately serve as domain for entrenching democracy. It is against this submission that Kwan and Skoric, (2013) agitated for a more theoretically driven studies that will focus on precise uses that FB can offer in influencing political participation of people in an offline or online situations.

In another vein, the bulk of the contextual domain of researches on social media site and political participation were domesticated mostly in literature about developed nations studies such as (Del Vicario, Zollo, Caldarelli, Scala, & Quattrociocchi, 2017; Haciyakupoglu & Zhang, 2015; Arriagada,Valenzuela, Scherman, 2012; Vitak et al., 2011) are example of the above submission.

In Nigeria, Interestingly, Facebook platform is indisputably popular, with over 98 million active Nigerian internet users in which 17 million are Facebook users (InternetWorldStats, 2018) The Facebook site is producing a new freedom square where Nigerians generation can exercise political influence on policies and governance despite their lack of money or power (Nwakanma, 2014) However, the motive and frequency of usage of FB as a social networking site is scarce in most of the researches in the perspective of developing countries like Nigeria, more so, the different type of political participation were lacking in the same literature , hence the need for expanded research in this particular area especially in the African and Nigerian setting (Abdu, 2016; Abdulrauf, binti Abdul Hamid, & bin Ishak, 2017).

Many studies have documented how FB was recognized as a site that is used by the people to break every barrier against political participation. However, in specific to the agitation of Skoric and Kwan (2013) there are scarce researches that relate FB usage and how empirical use can increase political participation process (Odeyemi & Mosunmola, 2015; Ternes, Mittelstadt, & Towers, 2015). This signify an incomplete empirical evidence of relationship between FB and political participation (Smyth & Best, 2013). Thus, a study that examines the relationship between FB and OPP (Abdulrauf et al., 2017). Similarly many inconsistent research results found that FB usage strongly relate to Political participation (Conroy, Feezell, & Guerrero, 2012; Theocharis & Quintelier, 2014; Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009; Skoric & Poor, 2013), in contrast, some researches did not found a significant relationship of FB for OPP (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010; Vitak et al., 2011a).

Furthermore, Political interest is another important factor which researchers have recognized in the framework of different empirical examination of Politics. Researchers such as political interest to exert influence in most types of civil and political actions(Milbrath, & Goel, 1977; Verba, Nie, & Kim, 1978 Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995;).

Similarly, literatures on political participation have suggested that political interest on Facebook may likely encourage online political participation(OPP) (Traud, Mucha, & Porter, 2012; DeHart, 2016; Uzochukwu & Ekwugha, 2014). Cohen and Kahne (2012), also found that political interest may influence the use of social media significantly, but, Baumgartner and Morris (2009) found a different result signifying non-significant influence of political interest in increasing on the use of social media for political participation. However, in terms of moderation role of political interest, few researches have been conducted to examine how political interest will moderate the relationship of Facebook usage and political participation(Chan-Olmsted, Cho, & Lee, 2013; Whiteley, 2005). Therefore, Baron and Kenny (1986) emphasized the importance of using a moderating factor when studying a research with a varying findings. As a result, political interest was suggested as a moderator that is expected to strengthen the relationship between FB and on OPP. This is necessitated for the conduct of an initial data screening. Which is a necessary step in any multivariate analysis (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014). Therefore, this paper is basically written with sole aim of presenting the results of the first and preliminary analysis of the empirical

data that was collect from the field to indicate the suitability of the data for analysis using Partial least square for structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The rest of the paper contained the following sections: 3 the methods, 4.the finding of the preliminary analysis 5 -conclusion

1.3 Method

The main focus of this research is on online political participation. Specifically, the study examined the influence of Facebook Usage (FBU) as a predictor variable with (cognitive, affective social, personal and escapist) motives of usage on online political participation. Based on literature support it further considered the addition of a moderating variable ie political interest (PI) which is expected to strengthen the relationship between FBU and OPP. The Facebook has offered fresh revolution in communication. particularly, as a domain for different ways for political activities online (Rainie et al., 2012) The population of the study involves undergraduate youth in Kaduna state university KASU, with a total population of 7,023 (kaduna State University, 2015). Based on Taro Yamanie's (1967) formula of calculating sample size, with the combination of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of sample size, the sample of the study is 378. The study design is quantitative, and SPSS statistical package was used to screen and clean the data. For a more useful response rate, the sample was increased by 50 percent (Salkind, 1997). As such, 600 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in the five faculties of the university. 473 questionnaires was used for the analysis as a result of unreturned questionnaires, thus making a total response rate of 79 percent.

1.4 Results and Discussions

This section consist of the results of the preliminary findings comprises of Non-response Bias Test, Common Method Bias Test, Normality Test, Multicollinearity Test, Cross Loadings, Convergent Validity, Internal Consistency Reliabilities

1.4.1 Non-response Bias Test

The study data was examined for the detection of non-response bias, which normally happen when some respondents fail to respond. Okafor (2012) noted that non-response rate is the failure of researcher to obtain data from a sample portion of the target population. Researchers normally encounter this kind of problem (Greener, 2008). This is the situation that normally leads to the manifestation of nonresponse bias in research. Similarly, sometimes some answers of respondents may differ substantially and meaningfully from those respondents who did not answer, this may also results in nonresponse bias Armstrong and Overton (1977) proposed a method of time-trend extrapolation of comparing the early and late respondents in the detection of nonresponse bias. In survey, early respondents may demonstrate similar features with non-respondents (Armstrong & Overton, 1977; Miller & Smith, 1983). It is important to note that the size of non-response rate may practically impact the on the quality and reliability of the collected survey data (Okafor, 2012).

Therefore, we followed Miller and Smith's (1983) suggestions in detecting non response bias, the study therefore, divided the respondents into 2 groups. Those who answered within 60 days are considered early respondents while those who returned later (after 60 days) are considered late respondents. Two hundred and seventy (270) respondents (57%) have responded within 60 days while the remaining 203 respondents (43%) responded after 60 days. Also, notwithstanding the high response rate achieved in this study an analysis was conducted between the early and late respondents using the dependent constructs. Equality of variance with levene's test was used to examine the difference between the responses of the early and the late respondents. The constructs include, Facebook usage, political interest and online political participation.

Generally, the results from the table 1 suggest that there was no significant difference between the two groups. Consequently, this show that there is no presence of bias in the data collected. Table 1 presents the independent t-test result.

Table 1
T-test Result for Non-Response Bias

Variable	Grouping	No	mean	Std. D	Std. Error	F	Sig
FBU	Early Respondent	270	3.56	.628	.038	.518	.472
	Late Respondent	203	3.59	.636	.045		
PI	Early Respondent	270	3.55	.680	4.251	4.251	.478

Variable	Grouping	No	mean	Std. D	Std. Error	F	Sig
OPP	Late Respondent	203	4.22	.769			
	Early Respondent	270	3.19	.801	.035	2.409	.121
	Late Respondent	203	3.21	.872	.035		

Note; FBU=Facebook usage, PI= political Interest, OPP=Online political participation.

As indicated in Table 1, the Levine's test indicated that the responses did not violate the equality assumption of variance as the p-value for each of the latent construct is greater than 0.05 (Field, 2009; Pallant, 2011). As a result, the assumption of equal variance between early respondents and late respondents is not violated, so, it can be concluded that non-response bias was not an issue in this research.

1.4.2 Common Method Bias Test

The study data was examined for the assessment of common method bias (CMV). Researchers usually employ a single survey source for the collection of both endogenous and the exogenous variables (Eichhorn, 2014).

CMV is a systematic error variance observed among variables through a single method and source (Richardson, Simmering, & Sturman, 2009). In most circumstances, the method for the collection of the survey data may subject the respondents to some form of prejudice. The present study also use a cross sectional form of data collection, where the variable both independent variable and dependent variable were obtained with the same instrument, at the same time and this could lead to CMV problem.

As a result, scholars have agreed that CMV constitutes major issues in behavioral research and need to be examined (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) Hence, we conducted a CMV test to find out if there is a variance in the observed scores. We examined the CMV using Harman's single factor suggested by Podsakoff and Organ (1986) in order to detect the presence of CMV among the study variables. Under this approach, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the study variables by the use of unrotated factor check, this is to check out what factors are necessary in accounting for the variance in the variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The assumption is that if a significant amount of CMV exists, a single factor may account for most of the covariance in the independent variable and dependent variables. In this study, Harman's single factor check was conducted on all the items of the study. The result of the CVM analysis of this study extracted five different factors with a cumulative variance explained of 31.95%. Consequently, this result has revealed that there is no single factor that contain of the most shared covariance in the independent variable and dependent variables. Therefore, this study has no problem of shared method bias and no relationships between variables measured could be inflated (Podsakoff et al., 2012)

1.4.3 Normality Test

The preliminary analysis also include checking for the normality of the data which is a critical step in almost every multivariate analysis (Hair et al., 2010). Previous researchers do not seem to care about data normality since SmartPLS can handle non-normally distributed data (Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009). However, recent studies showed that for a better estimation in SmartPLS, the data ought to be approximately normally distributed. The recommendation of Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle and Mena (2012) showed that the need for researcher to perform normality test is because a highly skewed data can inflate the bootstrapped standard error estimate. Examining the skewness and kurtosis is one of the most efficient approaches to detect normality (Field, 2009; Pallant, 2011; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). According to Hair et al. (2014), the absolute value of skewness and kurtosis of greater than one is indicative of non-normal data. Also, some scholars have showed that when the value of skewness greater than 3 the data has problem, similarly when the value of Kurtosis is greater than ten it may also may indicate a problem (Kline, 2011). Following Hair et al. (2014), the total values of skewness and kurtosis of all the items are less than one. The following diagram clearly indicated that the data is approximately normally distributed as all the bars on the histogram indicate some level of symmetry.

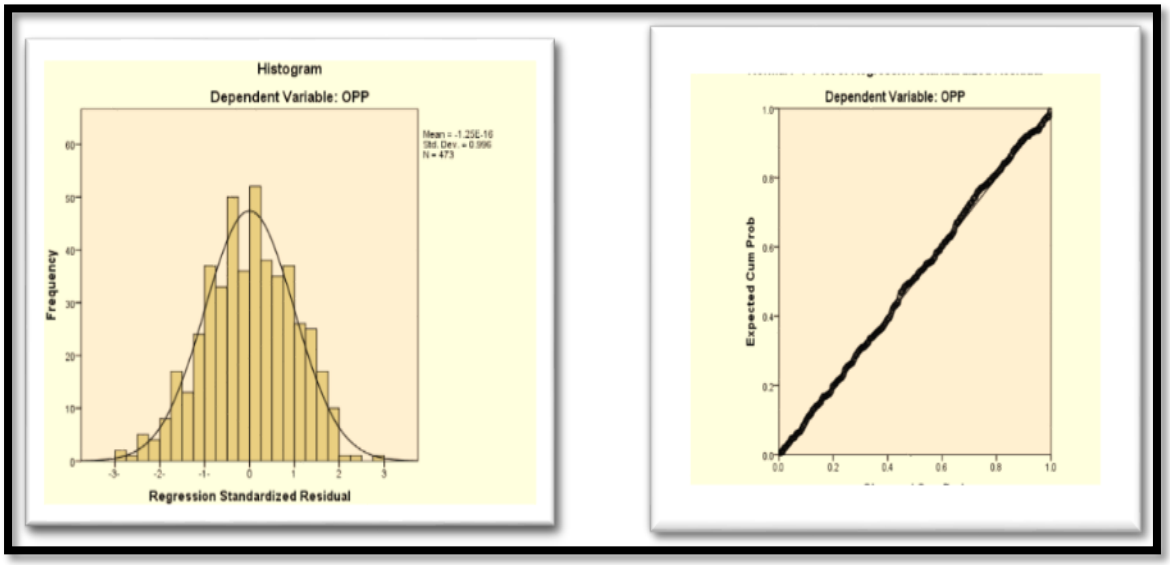

Figure 1
Histogram of Normality Plots

1.4.4 Multicollinearity Test

Another data screening issue is multicollinearity, it is a problem that arises in the correlation matrix when variables are too highly (i.e. 0.90 and above) correlated. (Pallant, 2011; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). It point to a situation when a relationship between two or more independent variables of sufficient magnitude that has the potential of adversely affect the regression parameters Hair et al. (2014) asserted that a multicollinearity among variables exists when the level of tolerance is below 0.20, and the value of variance inflation factor (VIF) is above 5. Therefore, the correlation matrix was checked for identifying the value of VIF and the tolerance against all the exogenous variables. After examining the correlation matrix, it revealed that none of the predictor variables are highly correlated.

Table 2
Result of VIF and Tolerance Value

Constructs	Tolerance	VIF
Facebook Usage	.952	1.051
Political Interest	.951	1.051

1.4.5 Cross Loadings, Convergent Validity, Internal Consistency Reliabilities

After screening the data in SPSS, the data was also ran through PLS for inferential analysis approach. In Partial least square-Structural modelling analysis (PLS-SEM) analysis, an assessment of the measurement model (outer model) is the first fundamental step. It is the step that proves how good indicators (items) measure a respective construct (variable). Therefore, measurement model refers to the examination of relaiability and validity, these are the two fundamental requirement in examining measurement model in PLS-SEM (Ringle) As a result, the data of the study was ran in Smart PLS 3.0 for examining the reliability issue and the validity issue of the data to ascertain the fitness of the measurement model. We measured reliability and inter consistency, first by looking at the cronbach alpha to identify the inter-correlation of the observed items with the assumption that all items have equal loading on the variable. Second, by looking at the composite reliability (CR) for identifying the loading of each item differently as against the cronbach alpha. Consequently, scholars have set a minimum threshold value of 0.7 and above for the examination of cronbach alpha and 0.7 and above for CR (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009 Hair, et al, 2012). As a result the Cronbach alpha of this

study model is between0.747 and 0.902. While the CR is between0.840 and 0.920.

Furthermore, convergent validity was also examined to assess the extent to which indicators (items) correlates positively with an alternative measures of the same constructs(Fornell & Lacker 1981). In this assessment, the average variance extracted (AVE) was used. Thus, the AVE of this model as shown in table 3.1 is between 0.516 and 0.658, which is an acceptable AVE (Hair et al 2012).

In PLS-SEM analysis, the result of the validity issue and reliabity issue of the measurement model and how good and fit they are, is the determinant factor for proceeding to the next level of analysis as shown in Table 3

Table 3
Cross Loadings, Convergent Validity, Internal Consistency Reliabilities

Items	Loadings	AVE	C R	Cronbach's Alpha
FBCU1	0.801	**0.623**	**0.868**	**0.797**
FBCU2	0.844			
FBCU3	0.777			
FBCU4	0.731			
FBAU1	0.814	**0.640**	**0.877**	**0.812**
FBAU2	0.822			
FBAU3	0.815			
FBAU4	0.748			
FBPIU1	0.733	**0.603**	**0.859**	
FBPIU2	0.795			
FBPIU3	0.787			
FBPIU4	0.791			
FBSIU1	0.827	**0.658**	**0.885**	**0.826**
FBSIU2	0.835			
FBSIU3	0.827			
FBSIU4	0.752			
FBEU1	0.707	**0.568**	**0.840**	**0.747**
FBEU2	0.806			
FBEU3	0.775			
FBEU4	0.723			
OPPO1	0.749	**0.555**	**0.909**	**0.885**
OPPO2	0.746			
OPPO3	0.777			
OPPO4	0.778			
OPPO5	0.762			
OPPO7	0.696			
OPPO8	0.735			
OPPO9	0.712			
OPPP1	0.712	**0.539**	**0.920**	**0.902**
OPPP2	0.763			
OPPP3	0.838			
OPPP4	0.796			
OPPP5	0.791			
OPPP6	0.813			
OPPP7	0.740			
OPPP8	0.615			
OPPP12	0.604			

OPPP13	0.619			
PI1	0.772	0.516	0.841	0.777
PI2	0.705			
PI3	0.743			
PI4	0.756			

1.5. Conclusion

Missing values and outliers were well examined to ensure that the study meets the assumptions of parametric statistics. Various tests that include nonresponse bias test, common method variance test, normality test, multicollinearity, cross-loadings, convergent validity and internal consistency reliabilities have been conducted to ascertain the suitability of the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Hence, the preliminary analysis has provided the opportunity for checking and complying with the assumptions of structural equation modeling. Therefore, we concluded that the collected data was screened and was found fit for further multivariate analysis, such as, the assessment of the structural model as well as post hoc analysis.

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