

**New Media Technologies and Democracy: The Influence  
of Social Networking Sites on Political Attitudes and  
Behaviour among the Urban Youth in Kenya**

**By Samuel Kamau**

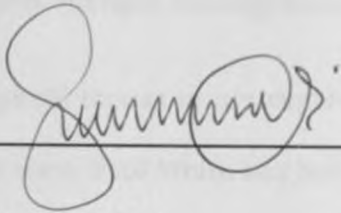
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Award of a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Communication and  
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**DECLARATION**

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other University.



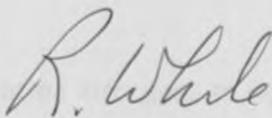
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## DEDICATION

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## ABSTRACT

The study sought to investigate the influence of social networking sites on political participation and civic engagement among the Kenyan urban youth. Social networking sites (SNSs) like Facebook and twitter have become important avenues for political participation among the youth showing great promise for increasing political interest and participation among the disengaged youth. They have created an easily accessible, interesting, convenient and rewarding platform for young people to be engaged in political discourse.

Different candidates have used social media in political campaigns with mixed results. Different studies have also yielded mixed results on how social network sites influence political and civic participation. This area is clearly in need of theoretical and empirical examination. The study broadly looked at how social media are currently being used in the political arena in Kenya. More specifically, the study focused on the effects of usage and reliance on social networking sites on political engagement and democratic participation among young adults ; the extent to which social networking sites facilitate political discussions among the urban youth in Kenya; whether reliance on social networking sites is related to increased civic and political participation and the extent to which social networking sites influence political attitudes and knowledge among the urban youth .

The study was guided by Habermas theory of public sphere examining SNS as an extension of the public sphere facilitating a vibrant discussion of politics online and facilitating political mobilization of the youth.

A cross-sectional survey targeting urban youths was conducted in two Universities in Nairobi in which 600 questionnaires were administered to the targeted respondents aged between 18-35 through a combination of cluster and stratified random sampling techniques. 512 questionnaires were returned dully filled and used for analysis. Focus group discussions were also conducted with sampled youths from the two universities. Besides a descriptive analysis of the data, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in which data was analyzed in several blocks to isolate the relationship between the various variables.

The study found that reliance on social networking sites is positively associated with political participation but not civic participation. This influence on political participation is significant but limited, it adds value but does not radically transform political engagement. Young people frequently engage in internet based political activities like blogging, posting and distributing campaign information and videos which have a bearing on political participation. Reliance on social networking sites has an important though limited role in shaping political opinions and decisions.

The study concluded that SNSs are important in the political campaigning process, however, online SNSs campaigns must be utilized together with other campaign activities and media in complementarity and mutual dependency to supplement offline campaigns because mobilization of voters must primarily be done offline.

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## Definition of Key Terms

**Blogs-** (a contraction of the term "web log") is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order.

**Civic participation-** refers to activities that address community concerns through non-governmental or non-electoral means, such as volunteering for building a homeless shelter or working on a community project.

**Political participation** concerns the activities that aim at directly or indirectly influencing the selection of elected officials and/or the development and implementation of public policy.

**Public Sphere-** This refers to a discursive space in which individuals and groups congregate to discuss matters of mutual interest, and where possible, reach a common judgment. It's a space where, political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. A public sphere is also a realm in which **public opinion** can be formed and which is accessible to all.

**Public Opinion-** Refers to views and perceptions held in common by young people among the social media users.

**Online Public Sphere-** This refers to an online space made possible by the internet and social networking sites where users engage in discussion of different issues with the aim

of reaching a mutual understanding. Online groups and social media pages make this possible.

**Facebook-** Facebook-a social networking website launched in February 2004,owned by Facebook Inc.Ca. It has certain features like: the Wall , Pokes, Photos (where users can upload an unlimited number of pictures), Status, News Feed, Instant Messaging(Chat), Gifts, Marketplace.

**Political Interest-** a citizen's willingness to pay attention to political phenomena at the possible expense of other topics. In this study, it is captured by the attention people pay to news items touching on politics and people's expression of their level of political interest.

**Social Capital-** social resources that facilitate social action to produce desirable benefits like better public health, better social services from the government. The resources are accumulated through relationships among people. In this study, it's the resources accumulated when people come together in formations online that enable them to yield collective influence.

**Social media-** Social media are primarily Internet- and mobile-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings. The term most often refers to activities that integrate technology, telecommunications and social interaction, and the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio files. Facebook, YouTube and Twitter were selected for inclusion as social media.



**Social networking**-new means of communicating and sharing information between two or more individuals on an online community in this case, social media sites.

**Social networks**-social structures made of individuals or organizations called "nodes", which are tied by different types of connections, relationships. In this study, it's the online connections between users of the different social media.

**Twitter**-a free social networking and micro-blogging website that allows users to send and receive messages known as tweets (text-based posts that can have up to 140 characters).Users can send and receive tweets via the Twitter website, Short Message Service (SMS) or external applications.

**YouTube**-is a video sharing website on which users can upload and share videos. People that don't have accounts on the website can only watch videos while the users ( who hold accounts) can watch, upload, rate and comment.

**MySpace**-a social networking website launched in 2003, owned by Fox Interactive Media. The contents of a MySpace profile are: Moods, Blurbs, Blogs, "interests" section, "details" section. It also has the possibility to upload music, photos and receive comments from other users. A user can even modify his/her profile however they want.

**LinkedIn**-a business-oriented social networking site founded in December 2002 and launched in May 2003 mainly used for professional networking. The purpose of the site is to allow registered users to maintain a list of contact details of people they know and trust in business.

## **Abbreviations**

AFP- Agence France- Presse

ICT- Information Communication and Technology

SNS- Social Networking Sites

BBC- British Broadcasting Corporation

CAJ – Commission for Administrative Justice

CCK- Communications Commission of Kenya

CNN- Cable News Network

CORD- Coalition for Reform and Democracy

ICT- Information Communication Technology

IEA- Institute of Economic Affairs

IEBC- Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission

KNBS- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

MOA- Media Owners Association

MOYA- Ministry of Youth Affairs

OFA- Obama for America

SCORK- Supreme Court of Kenya

SNS- Social Networking Sites

STPS- Structural Transformation Public Sphere

TCA- Theory of Communicative Action

USAID- United States Aid

USA- United States of America

ODM- Orange Democratic Movement



POA -Party of Action

TNA- The National Alliance

URP- United Republican Party

NARC- National Rainbow Coalition

KNC- Kenya National Congress

UNDP- United Nations Development Programme

SPSS- Statistical Packages for Social Scientists

MP- Member of Parliament

IED- Institute of Education and Democracy

TV- Television

VIPA – Vijana Progressive Party

## **I. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0. Introduction**

This study sought to examine the influence that social Networking Sites (SNSs) like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are having on political participation and civic engagement among the Kenyan urban youth. Social networking sites are now seen as places of political conversations and debates (Zhang et al. 2010). This has naturally drawn the attention of politicians, campaign strategists and other political actors. SNS have been integrated into the political campaigning process in many countries especially after the US President Barack Obama effectively used them in both the 2008 and 2012 US presidential campaigns. Scholars too have taken an interest in the possible impact of these sites. Some scholars believe they will play a major role in political mobilization of younger voters (Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen & Wollebaek 2011), while others are worried that SNSs users might only interact with friends who share and reinforce their political views (Pew Research, 2012).

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) though a relatively new phenomenon have become very popular especially among the youth. Sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter have become a must visit on a daily basis for most people. Facebook in a period of seven years from inception has grown from a paltry one million followers to a staggering 1.1 billion monthly users who spend about 900 billion minutes per month on the site. In addition, Facebook boasts 125 billion friendship connections ([www.facebook.com/press/info/factsheet](http://www.facebook.com/press/info/factsheet)).

Similarly, 4 billion videos are watched on YouTube every day. Every minute, 60 hours of video are uploaded on YouTube around the world ([www.socialbakers.com](http://www.socialbakers.com)). YouTube

boasts 92 billion views per month ([www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com)). On Twitter, about 175 million tweets are sent out every day. Indeed, social networking sites are leading among the top most visited sites on the internet. Inevitably, the concept of social networking has become the subject of academic investigation as scholars explore how SNSs sites affect democratic engagement.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is a fast evolving field. The emergence of Social Media has radically altered peoples' interactions. These sites have now become a fundamental communications tool. Social networking sites have revolutionized the internet by making the cyberspace more interesting, more convenient and more rewarding. This technological innovation is creating new opportunities and new realities. It is offering a platform with little or no filter for the exchange of information and opinions. The new technologies offer communication capabilities to a much larger base of people. Some see this trend as contributing to increased political democratization (Ghareeb, 2000).

### **1.1. Background to the Study**

There has been a growing recognition and appreciation of the importance of Social Media in the political campaigning process. In the presidential campaigns of the 2013 General elections in Kenya, Social Media played a prominent role in the campaigns. All the presidential candidate and major political parties had a presence on Social Media especially Twitter, Facebook and YouTube and they utilized the platform to update supporters and potential voters on their campaign activities, important news, upload photos and videos of campaign activities and respond to voters' questions and

criticisms. Indeed, some presidential candidates set aside scheduled time where they engaged with social media participants on various campaign issues. Through these forums, people were able to ask questions and comment on important issues regarding a candidate, political party or national political news. Martha Karua, the NARC-Kenya presidential candidate set aside every Thursday to engage with people on social media, through a forum called *AskMartha*.

The Presidential Debates organized by the Media Owners Association (MOA) received significant coverage and commentary on social media specifically, twitter and Facebook. Indeed, ordinary citizens who do not consider themselves political actively engaged each other on social media as they gave their views about the debate. The second debate ended up trending worldwide on Twitter. Indeed, the most 'tweeted' and "Facebooked" events on both twitter and Facebook in Kenya are the political events in the period immediately before and after the General elections of 2013.

There have been concerns and claims among people that the post-election war of the Kenyan 2013 elections was fought on social media. In the period leading to the election, the counting of votes, the final announcement by IEBC, the subsequent petition that was filed by Coalition for Reform and Democracy (CORD) at the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kenya (SCORK) and until and after the court delivered its ruling, there were torrents of updates on social media, some of them bordering on hate speech. There were fiery exchanges as supporters from either side of the divide traded unguarded barbs. Those who felt aggrieved accused the IEBC and the Supreme Court of colluding to deny them victory while those who believed they won taunted the losers on SNSs. This

inevitably created tension. Social media can be said to be a good thermometer to gauge public opinion.

Increasingly, more and more people are flocking the social media sites to get information on campaign activities, candidates and political parties (Smith, 2013, Horrigan, 2004). On social media, it is possible to get political news real time as they happen and also comment and provide feedback to journalists and media organizations. In the January 2013 party nominations (primaries), it was possible to get results real time on social media even before mainstream media gave the official results. Ordinary people were able to provide commentary on political issues and occurrences and also engage in discussions and heated debates with other social media users.

Social media has also become an important platform for social activism even in non-political but important societal issues. During the doctors' strike of the year 2011, doctors effectively used social media to make their grievances known and to organize their protests. They formed an online movement labeled, *Peremende movement* in which they put pressure on the Minister for Medical services and the government to address their grievances. They were also able to use twitter to update each other on the strike and even mobilize their followers for the industrial action. There are other examples of citizens using social media to agitate for their rights and press for government action on certain grievances. Through an extensive media campaign, social media was used in the non-political *Bring Zack Home* campaign to raise funds to build a hospital to deal with spinal injuries. The campaign brought on board ordinary Kenyans.

The Government has equally not been left behind, in 2012, the Commission for Administrative Justice (CAJ) also known as Ombudsman office launched a social media



platform ( Facebook and Twitter) as a way of engaging with the public and receive complaints against the government as they also 'receive uncensored' feedback from the public on their performance. The Chief Justice of the Republic of Kenya has himself been very active on twitter, receiving and responding to complaints and issues raised by members of the public about the Judiciary.

This growing popularity and recognition of social media as an important campaign tool would therefore warrant an academic investigation to establish the value of social media as a platform for political campaigns and civic engagement.

According to [www.socialbakers.com](http://www.socialbakers.com) and [www.allin1social.com](http://www.allin1social.com) ,websites that monitor the usage and growth of social media across the globe, Kenya currently has 3.6 million users on Facebook. It is worth noting that, 88.8 % of all Facebook users in Kenya are aged between 18-30 years. Also, 63% are male while 37% are female which contrast with the global distribution by gender where we have 57% female and 43% male.

According to a joint research by TNS and the Kenya ICT Board in 2009, when old and new forms of media are compared, 65% of young people prefer to use the new forms of media like the internet and cell phones. In the same survey, the internet is the most prioritized form of new media ([www.ict.gov.ke](http://www.ict.gov.ke)).

A recent research by a popular Kenyan blogger ([www.wamathai.com](http://www.wamathai.com)) found that the Kenyan youth visit social networking sites more than their mailboxes. When asked how often they visit the internet and what they do when there, 94% of the respondents indicated that they visit social networking sites compared 91% who indicated they check their emails. This has further been strengthened by the fact that there has been an

increase in access to the internet coupled with the fact that people are now able to cheaply access these sites via their mobile phones especially the smart phones.

The research by TNS and Kenya ICT Board (2009) indicates that 85% of internet users in Kenya use it to access social networking sites and 93% use it to access news. Even though most young people visit these SNS sites primarily to engage and connect with friends (network), express their thoughts, feelings and comment on occurrences and events in their lives, there are growing indications that discussions of political nature also take place within these sites. Historically, new technologies have led to major political, social and economic transformations. Social media appears to herald a new era of representative democracy.

Part of US President Obama's success in the both the 2008 Presidential Primaries and 2012 elections is attributed to his understanding and utilization of the cyberspace (Pew Research, 2008 & 2012). In 2008, Obama had 1 million Facebook followers during that period compared to McCain's 100,000. Obama effectively used the internet through his [www.mybarackobama.com](http://www.mybarackobama.com) website to mobilize funds for his campaign from small donors. He was also actively involved in most of the social networking sites and would engage with people via these sites. Obama for America (OFA) effectively used Facebook and other community blogs to raise money, encourage voter turnout and support a grassroots approach to election campaigning. Social media served as the foundation for overarching plan that attempted to connect online networking with offline campaign participation (Zhang et al, 2010).

More recently, in the 2012 US Presidential Elections, Obama effectively engaged Facebook and other Social Media Sites to run a successful campaign targeting the young



people. On Facebook, Obama had 34.5 million followers. His victory photo made history by being the most liked photo ever on Facebook and his victory tweet was retweeted 800,000 times also breaking the record. Over the course of the election day, there were more than 71.7 million election related posts and comments on Facebook in the United States and 88.7 million around the world ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)).

In an article titled, "*people love talking about elections on facebook*", CNN revealed that the election was the most talked about event in 2012. It was especially popular among 25- to 34-year-olds. The article goes on to state that, 'Obama was mentioned 10 million times on Facebook during Election Day. In just one hour, from 11 p.m. to 12 a.m., he was mentioned 4.1 million times on Facebook -- more than Romney's 4 million total for the entire day.' Twitter, recorded more than 31 million election-related posts on the election Tuesday, easily making the vote the most-tweeted political event in the site's six-year history. At one point, as election results were unfolding, users tweeted at a rate of 327,452 per minute ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)). Social media was an integral part of Obama's ground game in mobilizing people to come out and vote on Election Day.

In the age of 21st century technology, social media is being credited for igniting the protests that happened in Egypt, Tunisia and other parts of the Arab world. These protests have highlighted the powerful effects of social media. Facebook and Twitter became important channels of communication among the protesters. Social media services acted as a catalyst, helping to spread information about the protests and providing a way to share details about what was happening where (Storck, 2011).

The information supplied by SNS sites has played an important role in modern day activism. In the Arab spring, the activists who played crucial roles used social media as a

key tool to express their thoughts ([www.policymic.com](http://www.policymic.com)). Being able to share uncensored and accurate information, SNSs contributed to the cause of the activists especially the creation of underground movements. One activist noted that "We use Facebook to schedule protests, and twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world". ([www.policymic.com](http://www.policymic.com)).

Social media broke the psychological barrier of fear by helping many people to connect and share information. People were able to quickly disseminate information while bypassing government restrictions. However, it is important to consider that social media did not cause the Arab spring but it played the communication role that aided the revolution.

The rising popularity of social media among young people and the growing presence and prominence of Social networking sites in political spaces warrants an academic investigation into the value of these technologies in the political campaigning process.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

There is a growing use of web-based news sources, relative to traditional sources, especially among young people (Pew Internet Research, 2010 p7). This trend may suggest that the significance of social media as a source of political information relative to traditional media will continue increasing over time.

It is clear that social networks are engaging people in the democratic process in a new way (Smith, 2013). Significant attention has been paid as to how social network sites affect and influence political and civic participation and political attitudes and behavior (Zhang et al, 2010, Baumgartner & Morris, 2009). However, since this is a relatively new

field, debate still exists on how SNSs usage might be correlated with political engagement and research by different scholars has produced mixed results.

Some scholars like Williams and Gulati , (2007 &2008) have argued that higher support for candidate on Facebook led to a higher share of the vote in US elections, however, they do not provide causal evidence to support this argument. There are other scholars like Espina-Letargo (2010) and Gueoguieva (2007), who have examined the use of SNS in presidential campaigns by candidates and citizens, however, the data used in their study is merely descriptive and the discussions speculations without any causal evidence being presented. Given the potential of internet innovations to contribute to democratic discourse and participation, this area is clearly in need of theoretical and empirical examination (Baumgartner & Morris, 2009).

In the Kenyan context and of particular significance, Martha Karua and Peter Kenneth, two presidential candidates who were particularly active on social media during the 2013 campaigns registered a dismal performance in the actual elections. Several online polls conducted on social media indicated Peter Kenneth was the most popular candidate garnering support among 57% of the Facebook community with Martha Karua having a huge number of followers on twitter. However, in the actual polls, both candidates got far less votes that the number of supporters they had on social media platforms prompting questions on whether online popularity on social media can translate to actual support offline.

On the other hand, the candidate who was declared the eventual winner of the elections by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) President Uhuru Kenyatta had the most 'liked' (popular) Facebook page in Kenya and running an active

campaign on social media giving rise to suggestions that social media may have helped him in the campaigns just like President Obama did in the 2008 and 2012 US presidential elections.

These two contradictory scenarios described above make even more complex the question whether 'virtual support' online is correlated to offline actual support. Some scholars believe social media has no bearing on the actual support while others argue online support is a positive predictor of offline support (Zhang et al , 2010).

The purpose of this study therefore is to attempt to unravel the extent to which reliance on social networking sites is related to the youths' political participation and civic engagement and to point both the importance of new media technologies and the trend towards their exploitation in the current political settings in Kenya.

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

1. To investigate how the social networking sites are currently being utilized in the political arena in Kenya.
2. To examine the effects of usage/reliance on SNSs such as Twitter and Facebook on political engagement and democratic participation among the Kenyan youth.
3. To determine the extent to which Social Networking sites facilitate political discussions among the urban Youth in Kenya.
4. To determine the extent to which social networking sites influence political attitudes, knowledge and behavior among the Kenyan urban youth.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

1. How are social networking sites currently being utilized in the political arena in Kenya?
2. What are the effects of usage/reliance of SNS such as Twitter and Facebook on political engagement and democratic participation among young adults in Kenya?
3. To what extent do social networking sites facilitate political discussions among the urban youth in Kenya?
4. To what extent do social networking sites influence political attitudes, knowledge and behavior among the urban youth?

#### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

With the rapid growth and acceptance of Social networking sites, and with the active involvement of the youth in social media, this study sheds important light to political actors, political parties and candidates on the value of this platform, if any, in political mobilization and campaigning.

The study is also of great interest to scholars and the academic world in expanding the debate on the relationship between emerging media trends and the future of democracy in Kenya and beyond ,how technological advancements are affecting political and democratic processes and most important, how they can be exploited in the political campaigning process.



With the Social media credited with the recent successful protests and regime change in the Arab world, election victories in the US and Asia, this study pioneers debate in an exciting area that is likely to become a stage for future democratic engagements.

Again, due to the concerns raised by various stakeholders about the role of social media in propagating hate speech, this study forms the foundation on which a closer examination of this concept can be explored and effectively managed.

### **1.6. Scope and Limitations of the study**

In spite of the important contributions made by this study, the study has several important limitations.

The sample for the study involved undergraduate students from two Universities in Nairobi. This is a unique population and the participation habits of students are definitely not generalizable to the broader Kenyan population even among the youthful population. However, it was not the aim of this study to create a generalizable picture of the social media habits of Kenyan youth in general but this would be an important undertaking for future investigations. This study focuses on creating important insights and pointers into the political habits and experiences of young people when they engage in politics through social media.

The sample for this study was of young college students. I acknowledge that not all young people in Kenya attend college and even those who do not are less likely to participate on social media political debates.

Although the focus of this study is to examine the effects of social networking sites on political attitudes and behavior, there is need to focus on the role of specific or

individual social networking sites to delineate their differential effects on political attitudes and participation.

Internet penetration levels are still very low with only about 19% of the Kenyan population having access to the internet (CCK Sector Report, 2013) and about 8 % on Facebook. Internet is also still relatively expensive for many people with the most common mode of access being mobile phones (CCK). It therefore means this study may need to be conducted again with higher internet penetration and social media adoption levels.

The data in this study is cross sectional and as such, it is hard to establish causality, we can only establish associations. The fact that the study was carried out immediately after the general elections, views and participation levels were heightened than it would be outside campaign or electoral season.

### **1.7. Assumptions of the Study**

This study proceeded on the basis of several assumptions that are important and have a bearing on the findings and conclusions.

The study assumes the presence of a relatively high level of political information on social networking sites vis-à-vis other content. Secondly, with the study having been conducted several months after the elections, the researcher assumed that the respondents would be able to remember their online political activities and respond accurately. Third, the study assumes that the study participants are all urban dwellers, that attending a University in Nairobi means one lives in the city or its suburbs.



### **1.8. Hypotheses**

H1. Reliance on social networking sites is associated with political and civic participation.

H0: There is no relationship between reliance on social networking sites and political and civic participation.

H2. Reliance on social networking sites is associated with a higher level of Political knowledge and political interest.

H0. There is no relationship Reliance on social networking sites and political knowledge and political interest.

H3. Interpersonal discussion of politics is associated with increased civic and Political participation

H0: There is no relationship between interpersonal discussion of politics and civic and political participation.

### **1.9. Conceptual Framework**

Social networking sites have created a platform for interpersonal discussion of political information. Reliance on these sites facilitates acquisition, discussion and exchange of political news, information and ideas thereby creating an online public sphere. Heavy reliance on social networking sites and interpersonal discussion are the two independent variables made possible by the existence of this SNS platform. The result of these interactions is increased political knowledge, interest, efficacy and civic and political participation and emerging political attitudes, and behavior which are the dependent variables.

Interpersonal discussion about politics leads to an increase in political involvement as well as factual knowledge about politics; this enhances the level of political participation and makes citizens better able to judge alternative policies. Political conversations also facilitate an increased desire to participate in political activities.

The relationship between media sources and political attitudes is not always a direct one as other factors such as a person's personality trait or affective state at the time of media consumption may serve as intervening variables. These factors include political interest, political efficacy (the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change), political trust, and party identification.

### Conceptual Framework



Source: Self

## **II. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0. Introduction**

This chapter presents the theoretical framework guiding this study and provides critical reviews and summaries of literature in the area of social media and politics. The chapter examines the key arguments and critical debates on the public sphere theory advanced by Habermas. The chapter then explores the relationship between media and democracy to appreciate the role of mass media in the democratic process. The role of internet in political communication is also examined, tracing the key arguments in the different schools of thoughts. The chapter concludes with an exploration of social networking sites, young people and political engagement.

### **2.1. Jurgen Habermas' Theory of the Public Sphere**

#### **2.1.1. Introduction**

Many social and political theorists have argued that a strong democracy requires a public sphere of informal citizen deliberation enabling the formation of rational public opinion that can critically guide political systems (Young, 2000; Dryzek, 2000).

Jurgen Habermas pioneered this view by providing important insight critical to our understanding of the public sphere. He described the public sphere as an "intersubjectively shared space" reproduced through what he called "communicative rationality". In this context, participation in rational critical discourse is coordinated through acts of researching and understanding (Dahlberg 2005). He offers the most systematic critical theory presently available of the public sphere in a democratic society.

Habermas initially developed this concept in his book *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (STPS)* which is essentially a historical analysis of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century public sphere (Calhoun 1992a). He has severally revised and to an extent abandoned his original propositions and moved more towards formal pragmatics which identifies and clearly explains the conditions of argumentation of those engaged in a communicative interaction (Eley, in Calhoun,1992). Together, these conditions constitute an idealized conception of public sphere which is useful in determining the democratic quality of everyday discursive practices.

Habermas' original ideas in STPS have received detailed critique and have equally 'promoted productive discussions of liberal democracy, civil society, public life and social changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century' (Kellner, 2000). There are many theorists who agree with Habermas on the importance of citizen debate as a precondition for strong democracy, however, there are also many critics of his ideas.

Habermas developed his study and ideas in the Institute for Social Research, he investigated how a new public sphere emerged during the time of the enlightenment and the American and French revolutions and how it promoted political discussion and debate. He compared the various conceptions of democracy from the Greek democracy, the bourgeoisie democracy to the current conceptions and contrasted them (Habermas, 1962).

In his earlier studies, he defended principles of 'popular sovereignty, formal law, constitutionally guaranteed rights and civil liberties as part of the progressive heritage of bourgeoisie society' (Kellner, 2000). His intention was to develop a normative



concept of democracy which could be used as an 'immanent critique' of existing welfare state democracy. He was of the opinion that Marx and the Frankfurt School had underestimated the principles of universal law, rights and sovereignty, and that a re-democratization of radical social theory was thus a crucial task.

The theory of the public sphere is part of a normative theory of political communication (Gestrich, 2006). Concern with the public sphere and the pre-requisite conditions for true democracy appear to be the central focus of Habermas work and therefore deserves more scrutiny (Kellner, 2000).

According to Habermas, the prerequisites of democracy are linked to the inculcation of reason, truth, morals and justice in political life. To him, the main thrust and foundation of a democratic political culture is the creation of an environment where the individual is able to speak freely in public political reasoning and his views should not be hindered or distorted by fear of political or social power (Habermas, 1989).

In capturing Habermas views, Andreas Gestrich notes that '...in organized capitalism, the state and the private economies have become intertwined. The welfare state's care for all individual hardship blurs divide between private and public interests which were so dear to nineteenth century liberal political theory'(Gestrich 2006).

Gestrich further observes that modern political parties are neither 'independent of state power nor of the private economic interests of big business and capital'. The media on the other hand have also lost the critical edge and are more concerned with winning viewers and advertisements than being the platform for debating questions of the public good. To a large extent, it's these big businesses and the state that dominated the public

sphere while ordinary citizens were content as consumers of goods, services and political administration.

Habermas in acknowledging the corruption of the public sphere constructed an ideal type which he called the 'bourgeoisie public sphere'. The major purpose of his book STPS was to create an understanding and criticize the threat to democracy that had risen from the decline of such a critical public sphere in late capitalist society (Habermas, 1962).

According to Habermas, the public sphere was a social space where propertied people reasoned in public on private interests that had a general relevance such as rules of market and economic production and they referred these interests back to the state (Gestrinch, 2006). They openly debated and even used the media for their purpose without fear of political persecution or censorship.

Habermas notes that in the early modern period people were merely an environment for the rulers' demonstration of power and people were mere bystanders in the streets. In the same way, today, 'public participation in political power' is limited to sporadic acts of acclamation or disapproval through general elections whose outcome is not primarily a result of rational political discourse but of publicity campaigns presenting images rather than arguments to the people'(Habermas, 1966). Habermas presents the capitalistic public as being void of any rational communication.

Although there has been massive criticism of Habermas original ideas, there has been no convincing alternative put forward and 'majority of critics seem satisfied with his basic line of argument' (Gestrinch, 2006). Habermas focus on democratization dwells on

political participation as the core of a democratic society and necessary for individual development. His work in STPS has two major themes. One of them is the historical genesis of the bourgeois public sphere and then the account of the structural change of the public sphere in the contemporary era following the emergence of state capitalism, the culture industries and the powerful positions of economic corporations and big business in public life (Kellner, 2000).

Habermas in his book STPS, analyzes the social structures, political functions, and the concept of the public sphere before depicting the social-structural transformation of the public sphere and the changes in its functions and the shift in the concept of public opinion (Habermas 1962).

### **2.1.2. Key Arguments of the Public Sphere Theory**

According to Habermas, the public sphere emerged in the 1700s and its primary role was to mediate between the private concerns of individuals contrasted to the concerns of social and public life. In other words, rising above the private interests and opinions to discover common interests and reach societal consensus.

Habermas visualized the public sphere as consisting of organs of political debate such as newspapers and journals, as well as institutions of political discussions such as parliaments, political clubs, literary salons, coffee houses, meeting halls and other spaces where social political discussions took place. This implies that individuals could shape public opinion, give direct expression to their needs and interests while influencing political practice (Habermas 1962).

Habermas concept of public sphere depicts a space of institutions and practices between the private interests of everyday life and the realm of state power. In other words, the public sphere mediates between the domains of the family and the work place where private interests prevail and the state which often exerts arbitrary forms of power and domination. In this public sphere, individuals could gather to discuss common public affairs and mobilize to counter oppressive forms of social and public power (Kellner, 1989; Habermas, 1988).

The principles governing the public sphere as envisioned by Habermas, involved a transparent discussion of all issues of general concern and 'discursive argumentation' was employed to ascertain general interests and the public good. This therefore presupposes freedom of speech and assembly, free press and the right to participate freely in political debate and decision making. The premise of his argument is that of transformation of the public sphere from a space of rational discussion, debate, and consensus, to a realm of mass cultural consumption and administration by corporations and dominant elites (Habermas, 1962). This transformation involved 'private interests assuming direct political functions as powerful corporations came to control and manipulate the media and state'. On the other hand, the state began playing a more fundamental role in the private realm and everyday life thereby blurring the dichotomy between the private and the public or the state and the civil. As the public sphere declined, citizens became consumers thus dedicating themselves to private concerns than to issues of the common good and democratic participation (Kellner, 1992).

A key of observation in the Habermasian analysis, in the bourgeois public sphere, public opinion was formed by political debate and consensus while in the debased public sphere of welfare state capitalism, public opinion is administered by political, economic and media elites which manage public opinion as part of systems management and social control. This represents a shift from the earlier formation of public opinion in open debate focusing on common interests to the contemporary position of capitalism where public opinion was driven by dominant elites presenting their private interests as public (Habermas, 1962).

This also represents a shift from rational consensus among individuals and groups in the articulation of common or shared interests to a struggle among groups to advance their own private interests which now defines contemporary politics. In an analysis of the culture industry, giant corporations have taken over the public sphere and moved it away from a sphere of rational debate into one of manipulative consumption and passivity (Kellner, 1989a, 1989b).

In Habermas transformation, public opinion shifts from rational consensus arising out of debates and discussions to the manufactured opinion of polls or media experts. Rational debate and consensus has thus been replaced by managed discussion and manipulation by the machinations of advertising and political consulting agencies. For Habermas, the function of the media have thus been transformed from facilitating rational discourse and debate within the public sphere into shaping, constructing and limiting public discourse to those themes validated and approved by media corporations (Kellner, 2000).

Habermas sees the role of the media being transformed from facilitating this rational discourse and debate within the public sphere into shaping, constructing and actually



limiting public discourse to those themes that have been approved by media corporations. The public debate and individual participation has translated into political information and spectacle where citizens consume information passively and are therefore mere spectators of media presentations and not active shapers or participants in the public opinion process. Habermas offered proposals to revitalize the public sphere through public communication.

### **2.1.3. Critical Debates on the Public Sphere**

Habermas critics argue the earlier bourgeois public sphere is highly idealized. When he depicts it as a forum of rational discussion and debate when in truth, certain groups were excluded and therefore participation is limited. He even concedes that he should have made it clear that he was establishing an ideal type and not a normative ideal (Habermas, 1992). However, Kellner argues that the 'normative aura of the book inspired many to conceive of more oppositional democratic spaces as site of the development of alternative cultures to established institutions and spaces. He provided 'impetus for deliberations on the public sphere and civil society and the normative dimension that helped generate productive discussions of the public sphere and democracy' (Kellner, 2000).

Modern era politics are driven more by interests and very few societies have reached the levels of discussion and debate fronted by Habermas. In any case, critics of Habermas have pointed out that many voices such as those of women and the working classes were excluded from the bourgeois public sphere. Scholars like Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge argued that Habermas neglected 'plebeian and proletarian public

spheres' (1996). Habermas was accused of downplaying the richness and vitality of the public sphere in his analysis. Kellner argues that rather than conceiving of one democratic public sphere, it is more productive to theorize a multiplicity of public spheres, sometimes overlapping but also conflicting. These include public spheres of excluded groups, as well as more mainstream configurations. Moreover, the public sphere itself shifts with the rise of new social movements, new technologies and new spaces of public interaction (Kellner, 2000).

Habermas analysis points to an increasingly important function of the media in politics and everyday life and the ways that corporate interests use the media and culture to advance their own interests.

#### **2.1.4. Evolution of Habermas Public Sphere**

Habermas in his later work shifted his focus from the initial social historical paradigm to focus more on language and communication indicating that its meanings and uses are socially constructed to serve certain hegemonic interests. He made language and communication the basis for social critique and democratization (Habermas 1973).

In this post- structuralist/ constructivist view, 'language is related to power and it is the instrument of particular social interests that construct discourses, conventions, and practices...' (Kellner, 2000). Language serves the interests of domination and manipulation as much as enlightenment and understanding (Habermas, in Calhoun, 1992). In this sense, through the media, the state and large business have a greater control over the processes of everyday life which in itself undermines democracy and the public sphere.

Habermas argues that the economy and state are impossible to transform democratically because they follow certain imperatives and that all that one can do is to protect the communicative spheres of the life world from encroachment by forces and imperatives of money and power and preserving the spheres of humanity, communication, morality, and value in the practices of everyday life (Habermas, 1992).

Habermas emphasis now is the formation of political will through the process of deliberative democracy which is undertaken through reflection, argumentation, public reasoning and consensus (Habermas, 1992). He focuses on the power of communication and public discourses to uncover topics of relevance to all of society, interpret values, contribute to the resolution of problems, generate good reasons and debunk bad ones. However, there is an acknowledgement that discourses do not govern, instead they generate a communicative power that cannot take the place of administration but can only influence it (Habermas, 1992, in Kellner, 2000).

In his latter works, Habermas work has taken a philosophical turn that focuses on the discursive conditions of "rational discussion" anchored in face-face communication in interpersonal relations of everyday life (Calhoun, 1992).

#### **2.1.5. The Shift from a Social-Historical To a Linguistic-Philosophical Analysis**

There is a general agreement among democratic theorists that a public sphere of informal citizen deliberation is important for a strong and vibrant democracy (Young, 2000; Dryzek, 2000). However, what has been lacking is a criterion for identifying and specifying a public sphere that allows for democratic deliberations. Habermas theory of

communicative rationality is an attempt to set out certain normative conditions of public sphere discourse.

Habermas shifts from a social-historical to linguistic-philosophical basis for the public sphere. As noted earlier, Habermas' STPS marked the beginning of his long association with the public sphere. However, much later, he agreed with his critics on the fundamental flaws of his classical ideology critique (Habermas, 1992a). He instead shifted to 'formal pragmatics' which aims to unearth the general structures of action and understanding drawn from everyday communicative practice instead of attempting to derive critical norms from specific historical moments ( Dahlberg 2004 ). In formal pragmatics, all communication is oriented towards an understanding or agreement and contains a mode of communicative action.

#### **2.1.6. Theory of Communicative Action**

There have been attempts at empirical research to evaluate the democratic quality of everyday conversations and Habermas theory of public sphere has been a useful starting point. Habermas in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (TCA) 1984, 1987 and still drawing from STPS sets forth a more acceptable inter-subjective grounding of rationality (Dahlberg, 2004). He sees communicative action as cooperative action undertaken by individuals based upon mutual deliberation and argumentation.

Habermas places rationality as a capacity existing within language in the form of argumentation. He identifies the structures of argumentative speech as the absence of coercive force, the mutual search for understanding, and the compelling power of the better argument which make communication possible which will then lead to rational

action. Communicative action therefore is action arising out of out of a deliberative process.

In order to reach understanding and agreement, participants in communicative action, rely on certain mutual taken-for-granted interpretations, routines and established norms to get to a mutual interpretation. However, this does not always happen and therefore, the participants have to strive to reach a new definition through argumentation or communicative rationality which involves public use of reason (Habermas, 1984).

Habermas identifies public sphere as the social space of informal interactions involving communicative rationality (Habermas, 1996). By public sphere, Habermas is not referring to a specific public but rather all the complex networks of multiple and overlapping publics built through discourse of individuals, community groups, civic associations, social movements and media organizations and also the idealized form of public reasoning (Dahlberg 2004).

#### **2.1.7. Public Sphere Conditions of Democratic Communication**

Habermas indicates through formal pragmatic analysis of everyday communication, participants undertaking argumentation make reference to certain idealizing presuppositions. Dahlberg from a reading of Habermas work identifies and summarizes these idealizations which then provide the basis for normative conditions or critical standards of the public sphere.

- I. *Thematization and reasoned critique of moral-practical validity claims;*  
Participants presuppose the taking of reasoned positions on the validity of an



aspect of social life. In other words, arguments are addressed to the universal audience not just those present. (Habermas, 1984: 18, 25-26). Claims must be universalizable.

- II. *Reflexivity*; Positions and reasons, should be open to revision when found wanting. Participants question and transcend whatever their initial preferences may have been (Habermas, 1992a). This requires participants to have reached a certain level of communicative competence. This requires willingness to question and modify ones position in the light of all other relevant claims and reasons.
- III. *Ideal role taking*; in rational discourse, participants put themselves in the position of all those who are potentially affected by the claims under consideration, in other words, considering a situation from another's perspective (Habermas, 1996,228, 1990). Habermas insists that participants must be sensitive to how others perceive themselves and the world (Habermas, 2001). This would call for listening and neutrality. The aim of discourse here is to understand rather than to aggravate or ignore a difference (Habermas, 1984:99).
- IV. *Sincerity*. Honesty and openness is desired in argumentation. One must guard against deception. (Habermas, 2001:34). Rational communication presupposes that participants mean what they say and make a sincere effort to reveal all relevant information, including that which relates to their intentions, interests, needs and desires (Habermas, 2001). 'The manifest intention of the speaker is meant as is expressed'
- V. *Formal and discursive equality*; All participants affected by the claims under consideration should be able to participate in the argumentation (Habermas,

1996, 1990, 2001). Every participant requires equal opportunity to introduce and question any assertion and express by attitude, idea or even desire (Habermas, 1996:305, 2001:34). At times inclusion of all parties may be limited by inequalities within discourse where some voices are not heard and others dominate. Outside the discourse, material wealth and education may hinder inclusion. This presupposes that inequalities based of all types (based on money, education or status) do not impact upon participation. Substantive social equality is presupposed. (Dahlberg, 2004; Habermas, 1996, 308).

- VI. *Autonomy from state and corporate power*; Citizen Interaction in a public sphere should be free from state or corporate interests which undermine argumentation. The direction of force and influence should be from the public sphere to these systems of state and corporations and not the other way round (Dahlberg, 2004; Habermas, 1996). This will lead to formation of opinion through which citizens are able to hold the government to account.

The purpose of communicative rationality is to reach an understanding whose goal is to bring out an agreement based on mutual trust, shared knowledge with one another. Understanding here means that two participants understand a linguistic expression in the same way and make their intentions understandable to one another (Habermas, 1973).

Dahlberg concludes that to Habermas, it is 'communicative rationality' that enables the formation of a public sphere of 'reasoned deliberation' through which public opinion develops and can hold decision makers accountable.

Gimmler argues that Habermas model has an advantage over the other versions due to its normativity. It provides for a discursive practice that provides a framework for solving political issues rationally. It supports 'rational discourse and bound up in uncoerced consent for all those potentially involved'. She concludes by agreeing with other scholars that there does not exist an alternative to Habermas model of rational uncoerced discourse as the normative discourse for democracy (Gimmler, 2001; Kellner, 2000).

The advantage of pluralism is another strong point of Habermas model because it recognizes a sociological reality that in pluralistic societies, there is a distinction between the moral, legal and functional spheres. This diversity is important in a pluralistic society as an arena for expressing and consulting this diversity.

Legitimation is another advantage associated with the Habermas model. The parliamentary decision making procedures are connected with the public sphere and civil society. Popular sovereignty is expressed through the constitutional parliamentary and legal institutions on one side and the public sphere of civil society and its direct communicative and discursive foundations. A combination of representative democracy and rule of law and citizen participation are necessary to maintain a legitimate democratic society (Gimmler, 2001).

#### **2.1.8. Criticism of Habermas**

Many social and political theorists agree with Habermas on the importance of spaces of communication for strong democracy but they are critical of his specific formulation of communicative rationality. More importantly, they question whether this conception is

realizable in actual communications of contemporary culture. In defense of Habermas, Dahlberg insists that this conception can only approximate reality since it's an idealization that is only useful in critical evaluation of the democratic quality of everyday informal deliberations (Dahlberg, 2004).

To a great extent, it has been argued by many scholars that the Habermas project is undermined by the rigid categorical distinctions that he imposes between 'classical liberal and contemporary public spheres' between 'system and lifeworld' and between 'production and interaction' (Kellner, 1998, 2000). Such dualistic conceptions are limited and are unable to appreciate the emerging character and dynamics of the role of the media in democratic transformation.

In his book *Television and the Crisis of Democracy* (1990) Douglas Kellner argues that 'the media, state and businesses are the major institutional forces of contemporary capitalist societies, that the media mediate between state, economy and social life and that the mainstream broadcast media has not been serving the interests of the public equating them with Habermas' "steering media".

The criticism against Habermas is that he does not formulate a positive function of the media in a democracy due to his categorical distinctions. Even in his later works like *Facts and Norms* (1998), he still does not discuss the normative character of communication media in a democracy or suggest how a progressive media politics could evolve. Part of the problem is that his public sphere was grounded in the era of print media which fostered modes of argumentation that were characterized by linear rationality, objectivity and consensus. His conceptions do not adequately capture the

role of the internet and broadcast media in fostering democratic discussions (Kellner, 2000).

Democratic theory with time developed stronger notions of citizen participation to what is now popularly known as participatory democracy as expressed by theorists such as Rousseau and Dewey. However, for such a democracy to work, we must have an informed citizenry who are capable of argumentation and participation and they must be very active and organized for them to become a political force capable of impacting or transforming democratic practice. In this sense, Habermas restricts his analysis of democracy to the ability to engage in rational argumentation which is regarded as a key element of true democracy.

However, the weakness of his arguments is the fact that he does not consider or include an informed and intellectually competent citizenry as an important requirement for democratic deliberation and argumentation. This is made possible by education and the media in informing and enlightening the public to enable them to assess and appraise information and therefore enable citizens to effectively participate in democratic deliberations (Kellner, 1990, 1998).

The media therefore performs a critical role in cultivating and developing a citizenry capable of actively participating in democratic politics. Habermas limitation is that from his arguments, he only sees the media as only part of the public sphere for deliberations but he does not extend his notion to include how the issues discussed can be taken up and furnished with possible solutions. In this sense, to him, the media and public sphere



function outside of the actual political system, mainly as a platform of discussion and not necessary a platform of political organization and transformation (Habermas, 1998).

Again, it can be argued that Habermas does not outrightly acknowledge the role played by new media technologies as a basis for participatory democratic communication politics. He fails to perceive how new social movements use communication media to both educate and organize oppositional groups and thus expand the field of democratic politics. There is an argument that in an era of technological revolution where technologies are permeating and radically transforming every aspect of what Habermas terms as system and lifeworld, such dualistic categorization has been challenged as unsustainable.

He excludes democratization of the media from the realm of democratic politics and he fails to conceptualize how new media technologies could lead to an expansion and revitalization of new and more democratic spheres. As Kellner so correctly captures it, "Habermas does not simply theorize the functions of the media within the contemporary public sphere, deriving his model more from face-to-face communication and discussion, rather than from media interaction or communication mediated by the media and technology" (Kellner, 2000).

The development of new public spheres with the internet and new multimedia technologies requires a further development of the concept of public sphere today and reflection on the emerging importance of new technologies within democracy. One must therefore conclude that a democratic media system, a vibrant civil society and an open

government are necessary in order to strengthen citizen deliberation and public opinion.

In conclusion, Though initially Habermas in his book STPS was pessimistic about the return of a critical public sphere, in his later book *Between Facts and Norms* and new forward to STPS , he argues it is possible to have a critical public sphere, within a resurgence of civil society ( Habermas,1993a; Cohen & Arato, 1992).

## **2.2. MASS MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY**

In examining the effects of mass media on democracy Kenneth Newton notes that there are different schools of thoughts as to the exact role played by the media. He says that to some theorists, "the modern mass media have a malign effect on modern democracy, tending to induce political apathy, alienation, cynicism and a loss of social capital - in a word, 'media malaise'" The opposite view is held by others who argue that "the mass media, in conjunction with rising educational levels, help to inform and mobilize people politically, making them more knowledgeable and understanding" (Newton, 1999).

### **2.2.1. Negative Effects of the Media/ Media Malaise Theories**

Proponents of the media malaise theory argue that 'market competition and the search for bigger audiences and circulation figures force the media to dwell on dramatic news, especially bad news about crime and conflict, death and disaster, political incompetence and corruption, sex and scandal, anything else that is sensational' including the exaggeration of any conflict and attack journalism which undermines politicians and political institution and encourages politicians to campaign negatively by attacking opponents and not focusing on the key issues. All this is done at the expense of true

substance that would have any positive effect (Lang & Lang, 1968; Hallin, 1997; Hall-Jamieson 1992; Franklin 1994).

The inevitable consequences of this is cynicism, public distrust, disillusionment with politics and politicians among the people, voter apathy and suspicion (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, Norris, 1997).

News being a highly perishable commodity moves fast and is sold by catchy but shallow headlines and news bites and does not allow for in-depth coverage or analysis of issues and events. This 'fast forward' effect is said to create political confusion, fatigue, alienation and distrust among the many citizens who lack the information, understanding and the motivation to make sense of the news (Ranney, 1983).

The television has been accused by many scholars of undermining democracy, confusing and alienating people because of both its form and content and its tendency to focus on amusing and entertaining instead of educating and informing people. Putnam (2000) has accused the television of being behind the decline in social capital in the US. He claims that the "television pulls people out of the community and voluntary associations which leads to civic disengagement, loss of community and privatization of modern life"

Putnam argues that television in America has contributed decisively towards the erosion of social capital and civic engagement. 'Social capital' is understood as the dense networks of norms and social trust which enable participants to cooperate in the pursuit of shared objectives. Putnam argues that the more we connect with other people, on a face-to-face basis within the community, the more we trust them (Putnam 1994, 1995a).

Putnam is drawn into the whole investigation by the decline in social group membership and voluntary associations, and also the decline in many forms of collective political participation such as attending town meetings, or working for political parties which are all indicators of declining social capital (Putnam 1995a). Putnam connects these trends with the arrival of the television. He claims that the television has destroyed leisure and social activities outside the home.

In similar views to those of Putnam, Patterson argues that the press is unable to play a positive role in political socialization and mobilization. He claims that the press over-emphasizes change rather than consistency, criticism rather than government success, and questions of personal character at the expense of dry policy debate. Parties tend to be portrayed in an overwhelmingly negative light. Among the public it is argued this produces an excessively cynical, ill-informed, and negative view of politicians, which drives a wedge between candidates and voters, and increases mistrust of the electoral process. As a result, Patterson concludes, voters are poorly informed and ill-equipped to select the best candidate in a crowded nomination race: "A press-based electoral system is not a suitable basis for that most pivotal of all decisions, the choice of a president (Patterson 1993, 52 in Norris 1996)."

Despite all the loud claims, there has been little evidence to support these assertions. Pipa Norris in an attempt to reply to Putnam observes that similar research in Britain finds that television is associated with higher levels of political knowledge, participation and efficacy (Norris, 1996).

Norris argues that, "watching news, and particularly current affairs programs from Nightline to 60 Minutes does not seem to be damaging to the democratic health of society, and may even prove beneficial. In short, 'the charge that television is the root cause of the lack of confidence and trust in American democracy seems on this basis (in the weaker version) unproven, and (in the stronger claim) to be deeply implausible' (Norris 1996).

### **2.2.2. Positive Effects/ Mobilization Theories**

Mobilization theorists see the media as playing a central positive role in the growth of democracy. They argue that 'a combination of rising educational levels and easier access to even larger amounts of political information have helped to mobilize citizens, both cognitively and behaviourally' ( Newton , 1999).

Theories of mobilizing agency (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003) focus on the role played by organizations and social networks, such as political parties, trade unions, informal networks & voluntary associations in mobilizing, engaging and organizing citizens ( Steen-Johnsen et al., 2011).

Rosenstone &Hansen defined mobilization as the process by which candidates, parties, activists and groups induce other people to participate"(2003; p25). Indirect mobilization can occur when leaders contact citizens though social networks of friends, neighbours and colleagues.

A predominant feature of modern politics is the rising level of cognitive mobilization and is associated with higher levels of political participation, more political discussion, greater political information, heightened political awareness and more refined



ideological skills among the mass publics of the West (Inglehart 1990). Norris finds that watching television news is associated with rather higher levels of political knowledge, participation and subjective efficacy. (Norris 1998).

The argument here is that it is not the form but the content of the media that really matters. A serious, in-depth treatment of the news in both the electronic and the print media can inform and mobilize, whereas a superficial and sensational treatment may induce malaise. High levels of exposure of the citizenry to the mass media, especially the news media, including television news, will tend to inform people about politics, give them a better understanding of politics, heighten their subjective efficacy and, therefore, mobilize them politically (Norris 1998).

A major challenge to settle this debate is the difficulty of unraveling cause and effect relations. This is because of the interplay between the media and other variables that are independently related to mobilization and malaise (Newton 1999).

The fact that "audiences select their media, making it difficult to know whether the media create or merely reinforce attitudes and behavior coupled with the fact that the media go to enormous and expensive lengths to research their audiences and it is likely that they will do their best to reflect the attitudes and values of the markets they want to appeal to makes the chicken-and-egg problem of media impact research particularly acute, and also makes it easier to get away with broad and sweeping statements about the topic." (Newton 1999).

Newton concludes his study by cautioning against making cause and effect statements but rather focus on associations - variations in indicators of mobilization and malaise

that coincide with different types of media use. This is mostly because it is exceedingly difficult to untangle cause and effect relationships in mass media research.

### **2.2.3. Media and the Formation of Political Attitudes**

There is a shared belief among many scholars that the media plays an important role in the formation and development of political attitudes among people. However, there is no complete agreement as to the nature and extent of the influence.

In discussing how the media affects how people think, Robert Entman (1989) says that political messages carried in the media are associated with the political attitudes of their audiences. He further argues that the media make a significant contribution to peoples political preferences by affecting or influencing what they think about.

There was a long standing belief among a significant group of scholars in the 60s that the media have minimal consequences on people's opinions, attitudes and preferences (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Klapper, 1960). There is a significant group of scholars who still uphold this view today.

In the 1970s going into the 1980s, there was extensive research done by McCombs and Shaw that discovered that media influence is significant in shaping what the public considers to be the most important agendas (McCombs and Shaw, 1972).

There has been further research that has contradicted these two positions stated above and the area of media influence on political attitudes continues to elicit debate (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; and Page, Shapiro, and Dempsey, 1987).

Proponents of the minimalist view claim that people form political opinions independent of the media. This is due to the fact that audiences are able to screen out information they do not like or agree with, a process that is known as selective reception ((Klapper, 1960; cf. McGuire, 1985). There is also a view held by scholars such as Neuman (1986) that news cannot influence audiences due to the fact that they pay so little attention that they don't understand.

These positions hold that people listen and interpret persuasive communication according to their pre-existing beliefs and they resist or embrace change accordingly. Entman (1989) summarizes the selectivity and inattention hypotheses by stating that 'media messages tend only to reinforce existing preferences rather than helping to form new attitudes or change old ones. Thus the media have little net impact on politics.'

More recent research has shown that the media can play a much larger role in telling us what to think about, if not what to think" (Lau and Erber, 1985). This is a further development of the agenda setting theory.

Entman (1989) however does find a problem with the agenda setting position in the attempt to distinguish between "what to think" and "what to think about" which he considers misleading since it is impossible for anyone to successfully tell people what to think about. He argues that;

"The way to control attitudes is to provide a partial selection of information for a person to think about, or process. The only way to influence what people think is precisely to shape what they think about. No matter what the message, whether conveyed through media or in person, control over others' thinking can never be complete. Influence can be

exerted through selection of information, but conclusions cannot be dictated. If the media (or anyone) can affect what people think about-the information they process-the media can affect their attitudes' (Entman, 1989).

Entman concludes by noting that public opinion develops out of an interaction between media and what people make of them and he calls this, the interdependence model. The model predicts that media influence varies according to the way each person processes specific news messages. This interaction between the attributes of the message and the schemas of the audience shapes the impact of the news.

He identifies four key elements of the interdependence model as *message salience*, which may vary among the ideological groups, *relevance of the message* to peripheral or central attitudes since different groups appear to structure their ideas distinctively and process some media messages differently, *nature of the message* comes from an *editorial*, with its overtly persuasive intent, or from a *news* story that is ostensibly designed merely to inform and finally *how new or unfamiliar the reported topic is* since the less familiar the object of the news, the less likely a person will respond by fitting the report into an established category and maintaining a set attitude. Where the subject of the news is unfamiliar to all sets of ideological identifiers all will be susceptible to media influence. (Entman 1989)

#### **2.2.4. Information Processing and Media Impact**

Fiske and Kinder (1981) look at the formation and development of political attitudes from an information processing perspective. This theory recognizes and helps explain how attitudes emerge from a dynamic interaction of new information with peoples'

existing beliefs. In other words, external information coming from the media is received and interpreted by the internal schema existent in peoples' minds (Benet 1981).

From this perspective, people can either choose to ignore or heed to new piece of information depending on how it relates to their existing beliefs and perspectives. While people may resist knowledge that challenges their fundamental values (Axelrod, 1973), most can accommodate new information and even hold a set of specific beliefs that may appear dissonant, contradictory, or illogical to an outsider.

Entman in analyzing this information processing perspective concludes by saying "... a person first assesses a media report for salience. If salient, the person processes the news according to routines established in the schema system. Processing may lead the person either to store the information or discard it; if stored, the information may stimulate new beliefs or change old beliefs. Often people may screen out information that contradicts their current views; but other times they think about disturbing reports they find relevant."

At times and most frequently, the audiences might not have set attitudes and opinions on emerging issues or even leaders and as such, the media will have a greater influence on such. Similarly, media audiences often lack expert knowledge or strong opinions and as such, they will rely on the media for this, thereby giving room for significant media influence (Fiske, Kinder, and Larter, 1983)'. Attitudes toward unfamiliar matters are more susceptible to media influence than those toward the familiar.



## **Selective Exposure**

This view holds that people choose the media channel most likely to conform to their existing opinions. However, even if people with deep ideological feelings may seek and know how to find congruent media, majority of people are neither consistent ideologically nor sophisticated politically (cf. Neuman, 1985). Most people do not screen out information contrary to their ideological leanings, because they just do not have strong enough inclinations (cf. Kinder and Sears, 1985) and this low level of citizen interest creates conditions conducive to media influence

Entman argues that it may be more realistic to think of the media as contributing to but not controlling the structure of publicly available information that shapes the way people think politically. Instead of always attempting to find evidence that the media are persuaders, deliberate causers of public thinking.

The conclusion here is that media are the only important source of information or influence and some have suggested the amendment of the old phrase to read "The media do not control what people prefer; they influence public opinion by providing much of the information people think about and by shaping how they think about it."

Graber said that people who are exposed to the mass media already possess a fund of knowledge and attitudes which they bring to bear on new information.

### **2.2.5. Mass Media and Exposure to Contrasting Views**

Some scholars consider exposure to political messages that are contrary to ones beliefs as important and central in the development of valid opinions also learning to

appreciate the perspectives of others (Benhabib 1992). This is regarded central to maintaining a democratic citizenry with the freedom to make choices (Habermas 1989). There is near unanimous agreement that exposure to diverse political views is good for democracy and should be encouraged.

According to Mutz & Martin (2001), exposure to different views creates an opportunity for one to change their opinion and adopt a better more refined position also enables a better understanding of one's position acquired through interaction with different perspectives.

Most social scientists concur that political attitudes and opinions are formed through social interaction, political discussion, and personal reflection and these processes are of a higher quality when people are exposed to dissimilar perspectives. Some theorists propose that the future of communication across lines of political difference lies in technologies that transcend geographic space. As Calhoun (1988, 225) argues, "in modern societies, most of the information we have about people different from ourselves comes not through any direct relationships, even the casual ones formed constantly in urban streets and shops. Rather it comes through print and electronic media."

Mainstream news media play a more critical role in exposing people to diverse political views than interpersonal relations. This is mostly due to the availability of dissimilar views in the media and the fact that the media tend to illustrate their news stories with the views of people with conflicting political perspectives in the typical point-counter-

point format, and an appeal to large audiences tend to cover a range of opinions (Zaller 1992).

#### **2.2.6. Mass Media and Political Knowledge, Interest, and Behavior**

Media use has always been looked at as a predictor of political behavior in many instances. Many scholars have studied the relationship between the usage of a particular mass medium and political knowledge or interest and political participation that result from exposure that particular exposure (Kawakami and Feldman, 1991).

This view has been backed by numerous studies. Garramone and Atkin (1996) reported that broadcast news were key in shaping political knowledge. This is also confirmed by Furham & Gunter (1983) who found that watching television and reading the Sunday newspaper led to more political knowledge. Atkin et al (1976) also claimed that political knowledge and political interest are attributable to mass media usage patterns. According to Milbrath (1965) the media plays an important role in stimulating political interest among the people and quite often, interested people tend to vote in elections.

Some people claim that knowledge is the most significant factor which is shaped by the mass media while others argue that political behavior is the most important criteria for judging mass media effects. The importance of this is especially important in elective politics which are determined by voting behavior and election results (Kawakami and Feldman, 1991). Zaller (1992) suggests political awareness as a measure of reception and since awareness can be indicated by simple tests of objective political knowledge. Knowledge therefore is proposed as a better indicator of media reception of political information than exposure because knowledge is said to reflect reception not just

exposure (Price & Zaller). However, there is agreement that the effects of political news on mass audiences are usually difficult to establish empirically.

### **2.3. THE INTERNET AND COMMUNICATION ABOUT POLITICS**

For some time now, there has been a raging debate about the true value of the internet in the political campaigning process. The debate seems set to continue since there has been contrasting empirical evidence on the same. What is true and evident however, is that the internet has revolutionized the way organizations, individuals, governments communicate and talk about politics. Inevitably, there has been a significant and sustained academic research in this area.

Scholars, voters and political players have recognized the value, convenience and the potential of the internet in the political process. The expected growth and increasing popularity of the internet therefore means that as it continues to develop and mature, it will continue to take and occupy central stage in communication about politics and the political process itself (Selnow, 1998).

Wimmer and Dominick (2006) have identified new areas of focus in research on political communication focusing on the internet which include; the internet and public access, creation of an online public sphere, credibility of online political information, online campaigning and activism and online media ownership.

According to John Tedesco (2004), the internet's potential as a vehicle for reinvigorating democracy and increasing political participation has been met with both expectation and explicit skepticism. Scholars have been polarized into two camps of the optimists and skeptics. The optimists on one hand believe that the internet will stimulate and

increase political participation while the skeptics believe that the internet will only serve to reinforce the established political communication patterns. In other words, the traditional offline communication habits will be transferred to the online platform thereby adding nothing new to the whole process.

In the last two decades, the internet has managed to penetrate society at an exciting pace. As new aspects of the internet continue to emerge, the internet has evolved and continued to mature in form and content which means this debate cannot be fully resolved at this point (Tedesco 2004).

The optimists focus on the potential of the internet to bypass the grip of traditional mainstream media on the flow, tone and content of political communication. The internet is expected to provide a new horizontal flow of information thereby enabling the voters and political actors to directly engage with each other, this contrasts with the vertical, hierarchical nature of traditional media establishments (Barber, Mattson & Peterson, 1997).

This debate and research is taking place in the midst an acknowledgement among scholars of the declining participation in civic affairs and the increasing public cynicism (Capella and Jamieson 1997).

### **2.3.1. Characteristic Potential of the Internet in Political Communication**

There is still some level of debate on whether the internet should be categorized as a broadcast medium or a telecommunications medium (Carpini, 1996). Other scholars like Selnow (1998) have labeled the internet as the master medium because it effectively



creates a hybrid of the traditional vertical one way medium and also provides the opportunity for a two way communication feedback. At the same time, though in a technical sense, it overrides the strict controls and gatekeeping aspects that define traditional print and broadcast media (Margolis, Resnick & Tu, 1997).

The boundless nature of the internet provides the ordinary citizen, the politician, the campaign manager unlimited access to political information but more significantly, it provides unlimited political space to voice opinions, positions and political agenda to an expansive audience (Tedesco et al. 1999). To the optimists, the unmediated nature of the internet is an asset though skeptics would argue it is a potential disadvantage to those citizens who rely on the media to interpret and contextualize political information.

Barber et al (1997) identifies several possibilities for online and electronically enhanced democracy. These include; (a) Inherent interactivity (b) potential for lateral and horizontal communication, (c) point to point and non-hierarchical modes of communication (d) low cost to users; (e) rapidity as a communication medium; (f) lack of national or other boundaries and; (g) freedom from the intrusion and monitoring of government

### **2.3.2. Internet Access and the Digital Divide**

Central to the debate on the potential and role of the internet in stimulating political participation is the question of access to the internet and the digital divide. From an economic point of view, very few people especially in the developing world have access to the internet, and even fewer have access to reliable and fast internet.

A Pew internet research revealed that the US internet population is not representative of the national population. The results indicated that the internet population is younger, more educated and wealthier and more male than female (Pew Research, 2008,2010)

Some scholars like Anderson have argued that citizens who are politically active in utilizing traditional means of participation are also the same who are likely to use the internet for political participation. In other words, the internet does not necessarily bring in new people into the realm of political participation (Anderson, 2004).

Sparks (2001) observes that level of education, age, gender and income levels are important indicators of the divide between the information 'haves' and the information 'have nots'. This means the gap will continue to widen between the politically active and politically inactive, between the economically privileged and underprivileged and between Urban populations rural populations due to differences in infrastructural development (Garramone et al 1986 and Hacker 1996). However there are other scholars who argue that with time this gap is narrowing across the world especially due to increased internet access, government support and lowering of costs (Hindman, 2000).

### **2.3.3. Techno-optimists vs. Techno-pessimists**

There are several theoretical strands regarding the impact of new communication technologies on democracy. "*Techno-optimists*," a term suggested by Woody and Weare (2004), believe that the internet is making political information more compelling, lowering the costs of participation and creating new opportunities for involvement. The techno-optimistic view is illustrated by Coleman's assertion (2001) that the internet is

becoming a "*fifth estate*". According to him, the internet is having a transformative effect in at least three ways. First, it is opening up to public scrutiny a wealth of hitherto inaccessible information which may enable citizens to engage on a more equal basis with political authorities. Second, it is developing spaces for unmediated public deliberation in which citizens can interact with one another, with other communities and with elites that were once less vulnerable to such direct engagement. Third, it is changing the way that representatives perform because the very nature of the mandate for democratic representation is open to transformation (Coleman, 2001: 118).

On the other end are the 'techno-pessimists' who see the internet as a mere legitimizing force of mass democracy like the other media and offering no real chance of altering traditional politics but that it only serves to create a perception of government accessibility and responsiveness (Bucy & Gregson, 2001: 357).

#### **2.3.4. The Internet and the Creation and Extension of New Public Spheres**

Some scholars see the internet as having the ability to create a public sphere accessible to all people where diverse interests, opinions and political agenda can be open scrutinized and deliberated upon. Bennet and Entman (2001) argue that in the 'ideal public sphere, is a space where 'feelings relevant to politics are exchanged freely.'

It has also been argued that the internet is arguably the most important communication breakthrough of the last century. It has revolutionized how people communicate, access information and how they respond to and comment on social and political issues (Ubayasiri, 2008).

The central question still remains on what are the effects of the new form of mass communication known as the internet on democracy. With the emergence of new technologies like the internet and specifically social media, there is an emerging expansion and redefinition of the public sphere as a platform of information, discussion, contestation, political struggle and organization.

Previously, scholars saw the emergence of the media like newspapers, film, radio and television as having the potential to transform democracy (Dewey, in Czitrom 1982, Jean-Paul Satre, 1974). However, radio, television and the other electronic media tended to be closed to critical and oppositional voices.

The emergence of new technologies has created new public spheres and new spaces for information, debate, and participation that have the potential to invigorate democracy and the dissemination of new ideas. The idea here is that these new technologies serve the interests of the people and not corporate or state elites so that the new media is used to inform and empower the citizens and not necessarily to manipulate or control them.

These new technologies will enable individuals to articulate their own experiences and interests and engage in debates on issues and allow diverse and opposing voices to find expression and thus shape and refine public opinion. Some theorists like Kellner see the use of these new technologies as vital to the future of democracy (Kellner, 2000).

#### 2.3.4.1. Extending the Public Sphere: Minnesota E-Democracy

The internet is seen as having produced a global 'public sphere' where in theory, each individual has access to a global forum where they can express their arguments with no mediation, selection or censorship. However, there have been lingering question among scholars about the realization of the deliberative potential of the internet (Barber, 1998: 269). Habermas himself has been slow to speculate on the internet's role as a public sphere. In 2006, he said that "the use of the internet has broadened and fragmented contexts of communication".

Cyberspace is seen as virtual world comparable to the eighteenth century European cafés conducive to the creation of intellectual forum identified by Habermas as 'public sphere'. Ubayasiri argues that Habermas' public sphere never compelled anyone to participate and that similarly, the internet based public spheres, while providing the forum for those interested in engaging in critical debate, cannot anticipate all users of the web to engage in meaningful dialogue.

Dahlberg in his article *Extending the Public Sphere through Cyberspace* wonders whether online discourse can approximate the conditions of the public sphere set out in Habermas theory of Rational communication. However, Dahlberg claims that the exchanges on the internet fall short of the public sphere conception. In his own words...

..First, the colonization of cyberspace by state and (increasingly) economic interests is limiting the extension and autonomy of online discourse. Second, reflexivity is often a very minimal part of cyber-deliberations. Third, many online forums experience a lack of



respectful listening to others and minimal commitment to working with difference. Fourth, there is a difficulty verifying identity claims and information put forward. Fifth, extensive exclusions from online forums result from social inequalities. Finally, discourse tends to be quantitatively and qualitatively dominated by certain individuals and groups..(Dahlberg, 2001).

Dahlberg evaluated the Minnesota E-Democracy project and found that it helped to foster "online interactive public sphere" where people deliberated on issues relating to Minnesota politics. It involved questions sent to politicians and the responses and rebuttals. There were also E-Debates between political candidates and coverage and reporting of issues. The aim of the project was to build a civic space based on shared geography and localized politics and brings people into discussion of issues at stake, whether its pollution, education. The focus is on pressing material problems encourages meaningful and engaged intercourse that draws out participant's real needs , concerns and interests ( Clift, 1997).

When measured against the six conditions outlined by Habermas, the Minnesota E-Democracy initiative met those requirements as explained by Dahlberg and Aiken. The forum was mainly a non-partisan citizen-based organization which is volunteer based and not affiliated to any political party, interest group or private concern and does not accept commercial advertising or any other promotion unrelated to the forum. It is also protected from government control through the constitutional provision of freedom of speech and association (Dahlberg 2001).

The Minnesota E-Democracy aimed at building an online deliberative forum where reasoned claims relating to those living in Minnesota are put forward and critically assessed by others. Consequently, participants can challenge other participant's positions on all issues ranging from taxation, immigration etc. There is reciprocal critique of political claims.

Aikens (1997) found evidence of the moulding of opinions and hence *reflexivity*. Participants claimed that the discussions did affect their thinking in some way. Others claimed that the forum allowed them to become more informed in their decision making by getting a chance to hear 'other voices that they did not necessarily agree with at times leading to a change in opinion' ( Dahlberg , quoting Erik Hare's comments on the forum). Reflexivity was fostered through deliberations as participants are challenged to rethink their positions when confronted with strong critique and powerful alternate positions (Clift, 1997b).

Clift (1997 b; 1997c) observes that the Minnesota E-Democracy promotes the process of *ideal role taking*. Mutual respect is fostered and abuse is ruled out through moderator censure. People are expected to be civil and to respect other people's rights to express themselves. Personality conflicts are dealt with privately outside the group. Discussions are focused on policy issues not on participants themselves (Dahlberg 2001). Dahlberg notes that the 'most important things I have seen come out of these discussions is a willingness to open oneself to diverse opinions and perspectives as well as a growing respect for people with differing opinions.

Minnesota E-Democracy expects people to represent themselves and their interests truthfully. People must correctly identify themselves by their real names and, email contact and residential address. Clift (1998a) observes that "nobody has ever used a fake or borrowed identity effectively". The public sphere requirement for *sincerity* applies to both identity and the sources of information used to support one's claims. Dahlberg concludes that, 'overall, the level of deception of identity, interests and information on the forums of Minnesota E-Democracy is minimal.

Aiken (1997) notes that a key aim of the Minnesota E-Democracy is to encourage a situation in which full diversity of political views in everyday life can be expressed and respected. Certain efforts were put in place to encourage the participation of more people. However, even after enforcing a requirement limiting members to post two messages per day, there was still an uneven distribution of participation with about 28% of the project participants contributing 70% of all the messages. Gender was the most obvious demographic disparity between the participants and the larger population. Between 72 -80% of people posting in the forum were male (Aiken , 1997, p97). It was further noted that the active participants had above average educational background and professionals working in information sectors. This skewed representation means that not all possible positions and objections are heard on the forum.

It is worth noting that people with most access, time, skill and the right culture to participate in the online forums end up dominating these online forums.

Susan Herring's ( 1993, 1996, 1999) research shows that 'online communication remains gendered and dominated by the aggressive nature of the 'male style"' She

captures the male style as characterized by messages that are 'longer, and more frequent, issue oriented, assertive, authoritative, adversarial, sarcastic, and self-promoting'. In contrast, the female gendered style tends to be 'shorter, personally oriented, questioning, tentative, apologetic and supportive'. Soukup (1999) and Baum (1998) agree that the 'agonistic male style' dominating many online forums impedes women's participation which makes them withdraw from cyber-discourse and 'become passive observers, post self-censored messages or move to women-only groups' (Brail, 1996). In summary, the gendered differences indicate that online discourse tends to favour the interactive styles of certain participants.

Dahlberg observes that there should be efforts to structure online deliberations in a way that increases 'equality and inclusion, including offering subscribers equal opportunity to post, censoring direct abuse, fostering respectful listening ...' (Dahlberg , 2001)

Dahlberg's analysis of the Minnesota E-Democracy project was able to demonstrate how online discourse can extend the public sphere. He however notes that, there is still room for greater reflexivity, respectful listening and discursive equality to be developed. He notes that greatest challenge is the disparity between the online participants and the offline population. He argues that 'it will continue to be difficult to develop inclusive online forums as long as there are offline social inequalities limiting some individuals and groups from full participation' (Dahlberg , 2001). He recommends further research to identify ways to improve and extend online deliberations to further facilitate the requirements of the public sphere conception.

### 2.3.5. Deliberative Democracy and the Internet

Antje Gimmler, in an article titled *Deliberative Democracy, the public sphere and the internet*, defines the public sphere as an 'arena of political social relations, a field where individual and collective identities both are expressed and become integrated' (Gimmler, 2001). She claims that the model of deliberative democracy most suited to for activating the public in the political process is the one which recognizes both the functional and normative demands exerted on the modern pluralistic society.

The concept of deliberative democracy is based on the role of citizen-based civil society (Barber, 1984; Walzer, 1994, 1995) and social solidarity (Bellah, 1991; Etzioni, 1993). These theories and approaches have one unifying aspect- they emphasize the role of open discussion, the importance of citizen participation and the existence of a well-functioning public sphere (Gimmler 2001).

In a deliberative democracy model, public sphere is a designated public space within which citizens can raise and discuss issues they consider important and relevant and solve any disputes. Deliberative democracy espouses; equal access to available resources, openness in pursuit of particular issues, disclosure of the outer and inner and a public network of connected participants. All these are distinctive features of a critical public sphere (Peters, 1994).

Some scholars are of the view that the internet can hinder deliberative democracy (Buchstein,) this is because of assumptions that those who use the internet lack the competence and creativity to deal with new technology and to deal with its



consequences and also a view expecting those online to be homogenous in their views (Gimmler, 2001).

The internet creates a sphere of deliberating citizens where political and social issues are raised. The deliberative process relies on information and equality in access to it. The internet clearly can and does facilitate this. The internet is easily obtained by users and carries a lot of information mostly freely and easily available. Government records and information are freely available online and there is opportunity for feedback therefore providing citizens an opportunity to participate in the decision making process.

It has been variously demonstrated that the deliberative process can be protected under the auspices of the internet (Dahlberg, 2001). NGOs use the internet as a public platform of deliberation to discuss issues of interest to them.

The greatest challenge to the realization of this ultimate public sphere is the limited access to the internet by a majority of the citizens and the absence of the requisite skills for access to the internet (Hindman 2000; Gamson, 2001). True democracy should facilitate open discourse that empowers the ordinary citizens and gives them voice and ability to act in line with their values and interests.

### **2.3.6. The Civil Society and the Public Sphere**

Glimmer (2001) defines civil society as 'the totality of self-organized sphere of activities in the form of associations, organizations, cooperatives, and the like, in which members freely confer equal rights upon each other and through which, a public, social and political realm is established'. This view of civil society incorporates national and

international non-governmental organizations, citizen initiatives and roundtables. Therefore, public sphere and civil society overlap to produce the 'common good' through discourse and deliberation (Glimmer, 2001).

In this model of the public sphere can explain the political process as a whole. In this model, issues and problems are brought from the periphery, the public sphere to the center since the heart of the political process is the legislative process where legally binding rules are found. Habermas (1998: 354) and Peters (1993: 340). Therefore, the deliberative public sphere lies between the periphery and the centre.

Glimmer (2001) identifies the deliberative public sphere consists of the civil society associations who want to bring their ideas into a legally binding form. She further argues that the fundamental conditions of the deliberative public sphere include free access, equal participation and rules of procedure which have been fully disclosed to the participants.

Scholars like Tedesco (2004), still continue to pose questions about whether the internet will help build and increase political participation. He even questions whether scholars have perhaps placed too heavy a burden of expectation on the internet. The common view however, is that 'the effect of the internet on civic and political participation is contingent upon how individuals use the internet' (Zhang et al., 2010). Using the internet to gather and exchange information provides opportunities for 'civic recruitment' and political participation. On the other hand, using the internet for recreational activities like playing online games can erode civic engagement (Shah et al., 2002).

### **2.3.7. Mobilization vs. Reinforcement Theories**

Despite the great promise of the internet's contribution to political participation, there are obvious challenges that still loom large. Scholars like Sparks (2001) acknowledge that communication access is at the heart of modern democracy in defining power and equality. He further notes that communication can shape power and participation in society in both negative and positive ways by either promoting involvement or obscuring the motives behind political decisions. The debate about the role of the internet in communication about politics revolves around two central theories namely 'mobilization' and 'reinforcement' (Norris 2000).

According to Norris, mobilization theories envision a virtual democracy laden with citizen empowerment in a digital world whereas "reinforcement theories suggest that the use of the internet will strengthen, not radically transform, the existing patterns of social inequality and political participation". These two positions have continued to split researchers as people align themselves with the two different positions. The common denominator is whether the internet is energizing a new form of political engagement or whether it is fortifying established power structures (Tedesco, 2004).

So on one hand , the argument is that the internet will lower costs, increase access and contact and remove restrictions while on the other hand, the internet will continue to serve the interests of the minority who have access to a variety of media with the internet being but just one of them. These extreme positions are clearly illustrated by Rheingold (1995) who argued that the "internet offered promise and hope to transcend limitations of existing mass media". Neuman, (2001) insisted that the internet "will

fragment and polarize society, rob us of our political commons, and isolate us from each other”.

Even if it has been argued that the conventional forms of political participation have been on the decline (Putnam 1995), there is also evidence that new forms of activity like political activism are on the rise (Inglehart, 1997) and there is also evidence of the internet’s ability to impact group mobilization through political activism (Scammell, 2000). Thus, scholarly debate remains as to whether the internet will be realized of its potential for direct democracy and participatory politics or whether it will assume similar patterns of structure and control held by established print and broadcast media (Tedesco, 2004).

#### **2.3.8. The Internet, Young Adults, and Political Engagement**

It has been a concern among many scholars who have observed declining enthusiasm and growing apathy among the youth when it comes to political participation. Bennet (1997) noted the high levels of cynicism among the youth in regard to political involvement. At the same time, it’s the young people who report spending numerous hours on the internet and in a study, they indicated that they were likely to use the internet more than newspapers in seeking political information and avenues for involvement (Young voters, 1999).

Carpini (2000) compared young adults with the older generation and observed that the youth are significantly (1) Less trusting of their fellow citizens, (2)less interested in politics or public affairs(3) less likely to feel a sense of identity, pride or obligation associated with citizenship (4) less knowledgeable about the substance or processes of politics (5) less likely to read a newspaper or watch the news (6) less likely to register to

vote(7) less likely to participate in politics beyond voting (8) less likely to participate in community organizations designed to address public problems through collective action (9) less likely to connect individual efforts to help solve problems with more traditional, collective forms of civic engagement.

These disturbing observations demonstrate both the challenge facing the youth involvement in politics, but also highlight the opportunity and potential of the internet poses for youth engagement. According to Carpini (2000), what is most fundamentally troublesome about these findings is that they point to a decline in our "civic infrastructure" during formative years of political socialization when these young people are developing "civic habits".

Generally, the media habits of the youth are also different than those of older citizens. They are much less likely than their older counterparts to read a daily newspaper tune in to traditional evening television news broadcasts, or listen to news on the radio. Tedesco (2004) concludes by asserting that "what is not clear are ways to use the internet to interest, engage and activate the young voter".

#### **2.4. SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS)**

Online Social Networks like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and MySpace have been receiving a lot of media attention. Inevitably, this new concept of Social Networking Sites (SNS) has now generated a lot of interest among many scholars (Wills & Reeves, 2009). They have become important avenues for interpersonal communication especially among the youth (Thelwall & Wilkinson, 2009).

SNSs seem to have been adopted by a broad range of society in many countries particularly teenagers (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Lenhart et al. 2007). In a joint study by



TNS and the Kenya ICT Board, Facebook is the most popular SNS in Kenya. The research further revealed that top among social media uses was joining groups (56%), contributing to a discussion (56%), meeting friends (48%) and checking adverts (40%) (TNS & Kenya ICT Board, 2009).

Steinfeld & Lampe (2009) accurately describe the nature and purpose of social networking sites.

SNS allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish and maintain connections with others. They can be oriented towards work-related contexts (e.g. LinkedIn.com), romantic relationship initiation (the original goal of Friendster.com), connecting those with shared interests such as music or politics (e.g. MySpace.com) or the college student population (the original incarnation of Facebook.com)...Ellison et al., (2009).

Majority of scholars have tended to focus on the user characteristics and motivations while very few have focused on their role in engaging people in the democratic process (Zhang et al. 2010). SNS sites have managed to push the debate of the value of the internet in political participation a notch higher because of their immense popularity and unique characteristics. Theorists argue that democracy flourishes in societies where political discussion is frequent and SNS sites are able to facilitate this. The focus of researchers has been on the quality of online discussion and its impact on participants, including opinion change and quality, electoral engagement, social trust, community engagement, distortions and alienating effects.

The proliferation of new media including the internet and social media have multiplied information and discussion and therefore provide potential for a more informed

citizenry and more democratic participation, however, challenges like disinformation and misinformation that pervade the internet also undermines democratic information and discussion.

Munson & Resnick, (2009) hypothesize that, 'although political discussion is less frequent in spaces where people have connected for non-political reasons, when it does occur, the political discussion maybe closer to deliberative ideals. They further state that people who have come together for non-political reasons will be more open to other viewpoints and will be willing to formulate their opinions in ways they think will appeal to others who do not fully share their own political outlook.

#### **2.4.1. Social Capital**

Coleman (1990) defines social capital as 'social resources that facilitate social action to produce desirable benefits. The social relations in a community generate the necessary energy for social action within that community. Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) define social capital as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p 14).

Positive social outcomes like better public health, lower crime rates are associated with social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Growth in social capital enhances commitment to a community and improves the ability of that community to mobilize collective actions (Ellison, et al., 2009).

Access to useful information, personal relationships and the capacity to organize groups are some of the benefits an individual can draw from in a community. Psychological wellbeing is also a benefit of social capital (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004, Paxton, 1999).

#### **2.4.2. Social Capital and Civic and Political Participation**

Zhang et al. (2010) look at civic and political participation as consequences of social capital. Borrowing definitions from Delli Carpini (2004), they define civic participation as 'activities that address community concerns through non-governmental or non-electoral means', such as volunteering or working in a community project. Political participation on the other hand concerns the activities that aim at directly or indirectly influencing the selection of elected officials and/or the development and implementation of public policy (Carpini, 2004).

Studies suggest that both civic and political participation are related in many ways. Wilkins (2000) found that 'civic participation is a positive predictor of political participation. In most cases, it is hard to delink the two from each other since mostly civic activities have a bearing on the political process. Putnam (1995, 1997) argues that people are more likely to participate in civic and political activities when social capital is high and this happens when people are tightly bound in an association and their level of trust is high among each other (Brehm & Rahn, 1997).

#### **2.4.3. Social Networking Sites and Social Capital**

The internet has variously being associated with both the growth and the decline of social capital. Some people argue that the internet reduces face to face contact between people (Nie, 2001). Others claim that online interactions eventually lead to face-to-face contact between the people (Parks and Floyd 1996). Donath and Boyd (2004)

hypothesize that SNSs could greatly increase the weak ties one could form and maintain, since the technology is well suited to maintaining such ties cheaply and easily ( Cited in Ellison et al., 2009).

Trends indicate that people mostly use SNS sites to maintain contact and interaction with friends and acquaintances and also gather information about friends and people they meet in real life (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The question therefore is whether social network sites enhance a sense of community among the users or what is called social capital.

According to Putnam (2000), there are two types of social capital. 'Bonding social capital exists among closely knit, homogenous communities like family and friends while bridging social capital involves connections among heterogeneous groups' ( Putnam, 2000 , cf, Zhang, 2010).

Different scholars have credited social network sites with increasing both bridging and bonding social capital. Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe(2007) claim that users of social media are most likely to primarily use the platform to connect with people they already know in real life compared to dealing with complete strangers. However, the group function of the different SNS sites brings the users into contact with many people unknown to them (Westling 2007).

In a survey conducted in the US, about 80% of all Facebook users admitted they had joined a group (Royal, 2008). This is a clear demonstration that SNS sites create both bonding and bridging social capital respectively (Ellison et al., 2007). Papacharissi and Mendelson (2008) found that the need to share both personal and general information with others correlated with bridging social capital.

Most SNS sites allow the users to create an online profile and invite and connect with 'friends' with whom they can communicate, share content and view each other's profile. Members can also join virtual groups based on common interests (Ellison et al., 2007). Studies have indicated that users of SNSs mostly attempt to communicate with people with whom they have an online communication more than complete strangers (Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2006). However, initial research indicates that SNS support the maintenance of existing social ties and the formation of new connections (Ellison et al., 2009). There are many instances where online and offline social networks seem to overlap, where online connections resulted in face-to-face meetings (Parks and Floyd 1996).

Weak ties have been proven helpful in providing useful communication, exposing people to new perspectives, and fostering the diffusion of innovation (Granovetter, 1973). Ellison et al., (2007) in their study observed a robust connection between Facebook usage and social capital especially bridging social capital. They observed that "although use of internet alone did not predict social capital accumulation, intensive use of Facebook did". Such strong connections can prove beneficial in terms of jobs, internships and other opportunities.

Their study concluded that SNS sites do not necessarily remove people from their offline world but may indeed be used to support relationships and keep people in contact, even when life changes move them away from each other. SNS could support relations in a variety of populations like, a neighborhood community, organization employees among others (Ellison et al., 2009).



#### **2.4.4. Social Networking Sites and Political Communication**

SNSs emerged as a tool with potential for promoting political participation and re-energizing grassroots political organizing (Gulati & Williams, 2008). The question that has been asked is whether, the SNS can re-invigorate democracy especially among the youth. SNS have now become a fundamental communications tool and in every aspect of the community and a limitless source of information for campaign strategy. SNS demonstrate an uncanny ability to gather and communicate a targeted political message, raising the stakes in strategy.

In the US in 2008, it was estimated that about 40% of all SNS users had used them as a source of political information and some had used them to discover the political interests of their friends (Zhang et. al., 2010). Smith and Rainie( 2012) and Smith (2013) observed tremendous growth with 71% of all internet users using SNSs for political purpose. These trends indicate a reinvigoration of political interest among people connected to the use of SNS sites and therefore they should be considered an important part of any campaign.

With the internet having become a fast and low cost communication tool (Bimber 1998), campaign managers have seen the potential for increased fundraising and recruiting new volunteers (Gueorguieva 2007). SNS are said to have the potential to reach other groups because they provide users with 'unanticipated exposure to the profiles of candidates' (Utz, 2009). Sustain (2002) argues that, "democracy requires both a range of common experiences and unanticipated, unchosen exposures to diverse topics and ideas" p. 205).

In 2008 during the US presidential elections, the Barack Obama campaign raised \$55 million dollars in one month- 80% of which were online donations and 90% of those were under \$200 each (Walmsley 2008). This is clear evidence that SNS present a great potential to political campaigns to raise large sums of money within a short time through micro-fundraising.

The new communication channels have also created numerous challenges for politicians in the media spotlight. Added exposure poses new risks which leads to greater accountability. One can easily be filmed, uploaded on the internet and go viral within a very short period. YouTube allows for people to easily upload and distribute video content. With increasing use of SNS for political purposes, one can argue that this in itself is a form of political participation. According to Quitelier and Vissers (2008), 'internet use encourages higher levels of political participation, for example, forwarding emails with political content, online voting and so forth'.

According to a 2008 American Pew Internet and American Life study, 46% of American voters have used the internet, text messaging or email for political mobilization, discussion and to access political news and information (Walmsley 2008). There has been a growing increase in social media activism. More recent Pew survey found that as the US presidential primaries progressed, 62 % of Americans reported using the SNS to gather political information with majority being under 30 years of age and more Americans donated money online. This ease of access combined with new technologies enables campaigners to strategically target and customize their campaign messages and approaches (Pew Internet Research, 2012 and 2013).

Political observers perceive Barack Obama's understanding of Social networking sites as a key factor in his election success (Zhang et. al 2010). Crow describes 'mybarackobama' as 'the first 21st century platform for mobilizing political support'. Obama personally stated that the use of these online services allowed him to communicate without being filtered or edited through corporate media.

Social networking sites create opportunities for uncensored communication in countries with strict government control over media outlets. More significant is the fact that SNS have expanded the reach and accuracy of strategically targeted communication by political parties to potential voters.

Gulati and Williams (2008) sought to investigate the worth of social networks in elections. They focused on the role played by Facebook in the 2008 US presidential primaries. There has been widespread acknowledgement Obama's understanding and strategic use of social media part of the key reasons for his victory both in the 2008 primaries and elections (Cornfield, 2008).

The question remains on whether huge online support translates into actual support that can determine election outcomes. It has been difficult to empirically prove the relationship between 'online activity and vote share' Gulati and Williams (2008).

Social Networking Sites enable candidates and campaign managers to quickly disseminate information to their supporters and even mobilize for meetings and offer a platform for interaction and exchange between candidates, their followers and potential supporters. However, it has been argued that online campaigns alone are not enough but must be supplemented by offline efforts. The internet alone is not enough to win

elections, people on the internet must also organize on the ground for a campaign to be effective (Garofoli, 2008).

There has been no conclusive evidence on the actual impact of online campaigning. Williams and Gulati (2007) in an analysis of 2006 midterm elections found that in the congressional races, 'the size of the online supporter network had a significant effect on vote shares. They reported that a candidate were able to marginally increase their vote share by increasing the number of supporters on Facebook. However, there is very little corroborating evidence to support their claims.

D'Allesio (1997) in an analysis of 1996 US Senate elections found that 'candidates who launched campaign web sites won 9,300 more than candidates who had no online presence. However, the study did not take into consideration financial resources and competition which are correlated with web presence and votes and therefore one cannot draw reliable conclusions from that study.

Bimber and Davis explored the connection between website presence and vote choice. They did not find any empirical evidence to support the view that viewing a candidate's website had any impact on voting preference or choice (Bimber and Davis 2003).

Other studies have however revealed that membership in social networking sites correlates with increased 'issue knowledge, political efficacy, and willingness to participate in politics' (Min, 2007).

More recently, Zhang et al. (2010) in their study on the impact of social media on political participation did not find enough evidence to support the claims. They found that 'reliance on social media is significantly related to civic participation but not necessarily political participation' (Zhang et. al. 2010).

Baumgartner & Morris (2009) in their study of the role of social media on political participation concluded that the potential of SNS to increase youth political engagement has not been realized and that users of these sites were no more knowledgeable about politics than their counterparts. They found that users' participation was limited to internet activity and not necessarily actual voting. They concluded by stating that 'the contention that SN Web sites will spur a democratic revolution may be overstated'.

#### **2.4.5. Social Media, Politicians and political parties**

To politicians, social media are 'a means to disseminate political messages, learn about the interests and needs of constituents and the broader public, raise funds and build networks of support' (Clarke ,2010). She further points out that political figures and institutions communicate with the public in unmediated fora on social media. Across the world, most political parties, candidates and organizations are represented on social media and they are active in engaging with supporters and potential voters.

Social media are also used as campaign tools for mobilization of voters by encouraging them to vote (Westling, 2007). The strategy effectively utilized by the Obama campaign was to link online political activity with offline campaign participation (Wilcox , 2010).

Campaigns on SNS present less hard news and more soft news, they personalize the candidate more, and one can even become a friend of the candidate (Utz, 2009). Soft campaigns have been found to be effective in influencing public opinion and knowledge about candidates (Moy, et al. 2005, Young, 2004).



#### **2.4.6. SNS and political discussions**

The process of interpersonal discussions on Social media is supposed to reflect several aspects as originally captured by Habermas. It's should be a 'rational, civil and reciprocal discussion among in principle, equal participants oriented towards problem solving' (Turnsek & Jankowski, 2000).

According to Westling (2007), a social networking site allows members to share personal information, opinions and media. People are able to share both public and private information through the various available features. Features like 'groups' and 'events' have a home page with descriptions, photos and a message board. They allow members to come together, for a common cause, interest or belief. The groups and events can either be private (open to invited and restricted members only) or public and open to everyone to join and communicate. Within the groups there is communication between the members and the forums. Through events, members can participate in rallies, meetings and other functions. People are able to support a candidate or show their stand on a particular issue. The Facebook feature mostly used for political work is the "groups" function where members can create their own themed groups on any topic and invite others to join and participate in the discussions (Westling, 2007).

Scholars acknowledge the potential of the SNS for achieving a public sphere. The mere fact that Facebook has over one billion followers across the world demonstrates its utility as an arena of communication. They allow members to 'connect and organize'. These SNS sites combine the features of bulletin boards, newspapers, television and town hall meetings 'in one location that is available at any time practically in any

location' (Westling 2007). Politicians use the SNS to communicate with members willing to listen without actively imposing their message on anyone. Community members are also able to express their opinions to political actors. SNS sites bring members of a community together and provide a means to share information through a single network.

Westling concludes his arguments by noting that, 'by providing an outlet for young people to interpret political information and participate in political discussions, SNS have become positive additions to the world of political communication...Facebook has the ability to exceed Habermas expectations of a public sphere and become a major hub for political action among community members.'

#### **2.4.7. Social Media and the Creation of a Public Sphere**

Some scholars have looked at the social media as a means of expanding the public sphere (Westling 2007). For politicians, campaigns on social media are seen as "conversations" with the electorate. He observes that, political strategists have woken up to the reality of the internet, specifically social media as providing new ways of gauging the public interest and opinion as well as engaging community members. He sees Facebook as providing a means of efficiently mobilizing and organizing supporters as well as providing members of the public with the 'ability to voice their opinions and organize independently.'

Habermas (1974) sees a public sphere where citizens collectively form public opinion in an environment not controlled by the government. His model however, does not show how politicians and organizations fit into the arrangement, since community

participation requires participation from the political actors the media and the public (Westling 2007).

In the ideal model, politicians and political actors should be able to get their message directly to the community, the media should bring information to the community and the community members should also be active in engaging both the media and the political actors through the available spaces and forums. Social media offer innovative opportunities for political actors, political institutions and the public to interact with one another (Dewing, 2010; Westling 2007).

#### **2.4.8. SNS and the Fostering of pluralism and political discourse**

Many scholars agree that social media create an ideal platform for political discourse and also encouraging diverse views to be expressed (Zhang et al. 2010, Gulati 2008, &Clarke, 2010). Issues that maybe ignored by the mainstream media can receive public attention through social media. Minority and marginalized views are can find expression on the social media platform. Research has shown that heterogeneous networks increase the chance to encounter conflicting viewpoints, and such encounters are essential for democracy (Mutz, 2002). SNS provide the platform for individuals to be exposed to conflicting political views.

However, it is also worth noting that at times, the imbalances experienced in traditional communication channels can also be replicated online due to unequal access, digital divide and the involved costs. Established political parties, organizations have the resources to maintain a professional, well executed online presence (Small, 2006).

Studies suggest that greater media choice simply makes it easier for individuals to consume more of the types of content that they already prefer whether political news or entertainment. In other words, social media could be a platform where the existing differences between those who have access and are knowledgeable about politics and are more likely to vote and those who are not are exacerbated (Prior, 2005).

#### **2.4.9. Transformation of citizens into effective political actors**

There are arguments that social media removes the barriers that hinder collective action and empowers citizens to influence and monitor policy makers by offering a low cost forum to participate (OECD, 2007).

The flipside to the argument is that, in most cases, the predictors of political participation like gender, income, education and socio-economic status influence the participation of the citizens. The argument is that, 'those who are traditionally absent from politics abstain from active participation, and those who are already engaged turn to the internet as a new forum for participation' (Lusoli et al. 2006).

Studies have shown that interactivity can enhance political knowledge and result in a better evaluation of a candidate (Gastills, et al., 2005). Tedesco (2007) found that interactivity increased political information efficacy. A candidate's reactions to the comments of the users are an example of responsive dialogue, one in which a two way communication takes place but the message sender (the candidate) has a higher level of control (McMillan, 2002). This response shows the candidate listens to potential voters and enhances issue recall (Tedesco, 2007). Utz (2009) found that a candidate who reacted to comments was evaluated more positively on social media than a candidate who did not.

Citizens and civil society organizations use social media to connect with the public, engage decision makers and also hold governments to account. (Clarke 2010). Civil society actors are able to use SNS sites to raise awareness and generate support for particular causes, express criticism for certain government actions.

To a limited extent, governments have embraced social media as a tool to engage the public on policy debates. They are able to solicit citizen's input in policy making and encourage public debate on policy issues. Government officials, departments and ministries are also utilizing social media to engage with the citizens and receive feedback from the citizens

#### **2.4.10. Mass Interpersonal Persuasion**

According to Fogg (2008), Facebook and other social network sites has made a new form of persuasion possible. He calls it Mass Interpersonal Persuasion (MIP). The advances in social networks now allow individuals to change attitudes and behaviours on a mass scale. He argues that this new phenomenon will change the future of persuasion by bringing together the power of interpersonal persuasion with reach of mass media.

In a paper titled "*Mass Interpersonal Persuasion: An Early View of a New Phenomenon*", Fogg argues that MIP became possible recently because Facebook, a social networking service, created a new way for third parties to create and distribute interactive applications to the millions of people in an online portal network. This became possible when Facebook launched the Facebook Platform in 2007.

Fogg identifies six components essential in mass interpersonal communication.



*Persuasive experience:* An experience that is created to change attitudes, behaviours or both. For example, a political party could design an experience to win support for their candidate by asking people to watch a video online and then to add their name to a public petition.

*Automated structure:* Digital technology structures the persuasive experience. MIP relies on computer to automate the experience because software can deliver a persuasive experience repeatedly.

*Social Distribution:* The persuasive experience is shared from one friend to another helping it spread rather fast.

*Rapid cycle.* The persuasive experience can distributed quickly from one person to another. The time between invitation, acceptance and a subsequent invitation needs to be small for momentum.

*Huge Social graph.* The persuasive experience can potentially reach millions of people connected through social ties or structured interactions.

*Measured impact:* The effects of the persuasive experience are observable by users and creators.

## **2.5. YOUTH, SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICS**

There has been an acknowledgement that the youth compared to the older generation, are more disengaged from politics. The youth are less likely to participate in voting, contributing money, volunteering time compared to their older counterparts (Bauerlein, 2008, Wattenberg, 2007). For example, in the US, youth voter turnout rates dropped by

15 % points between 1972 to 2000 (Baumgartner & Francia, 2008). In general, the youth are usually dismissed as not much involved in politics.

The media habits of the youth are also different from those of the older generation. "They are much less likely than older people to read daily newspaper, tune in to television news broadcasts or listen to the news on radio. The internet has however redefined young people's methods of learning about and participating about politics (Baumgartner & Morris, 2009). It has been shown that most young people rely on SNS sites for political information and that various internet related

The overrepresentation of the youth online has created the potential for mobilization of the youth (Quitelier and Visser 2008). Because young people are active users of social media, these technologies are often discussed as one possible means by which the youth may become more engaged in politics. Studies show that checking SNS has become a daily routine for many young adults (Steinfeld, Ellison & Lampe, 2008). This is mostly because social media facilitates immediacy and interactivity in communication, both of which are highly desirable among the youth (Bernard, Campbell & Smith, 2003).

According to Baumgartner & Morris (2009), "young adults who may not be interested in politics can get political information through their online network of friends and acquaintances, and this may generate greater political interest. " They also argue that the sense of 'virtual community' can generate a greater interest around a political idea or leader.

The Internet has been touted as a channel through which youth may become mobilized into politics and public affairs, but evidence in this regard is mixed. Modern research is

indicates that among the youth, there is a greater emphasis on non-political civic participation than actual political participation. The youth seem to care much about their community but not in the political sense (Dalton, 2008; Carpini et al., 2006).

Kann et al, (2007) focus on the emergence of a new participatory culture among the youth which has the potential to increase youth involvement in public life. The participatory culture exposes young people to political information and ideas (Kann et al 2007), It teaches them to apply knowledge to political problem solving. Kann and his colleagues however observe that this hope of youth participation must be tempered by the fact that virtual space is not actual space and that digital democracy amounts to nothing if not supported by offline activities like actual voting.

## **2.6. Social Media and Interpersonal Communication**

The emergence of the internet has created a popular avenue for discussion of political and social issues (Holt, 2004). There has been a wide adoption and acceptance of social across the world but mostly among the youth (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). With this rapid growth and popularization of SNS, the potential for individuals to engage in online discussion about social and political issues has also grown exponentially. The communication that takes place in the SNS is mostly informal exchange of short messages among friends (Thelwall, 2009b; Boyd, 2006). Nardi (2005) identifies affinity, commitment and attention as important components in online communication and are key in social networks.

There are scholars who look at online communication as 'networked individualism' and this concept is also applied to social media. Thorough SNS, people are able to

communicate with each other in many ways. The messages can be private or public (Liu, 2007).

According to Boyd (2006) & Thelwall (2008) on the SNS, 'friend' could actually mean close friend, more distant friend, acquaintance or nothing. A person does not necessarily have to know all those he/she is connected with. Wilkinson & Thelwall (2009) pose the question whether, SNSs support the formation of close knit communities or it's a forum and means used by networked individuals to manage their interpersonal communication. Research seems to indicate that much of what happens on these sites is interpersonal communication. SNS provide a forum on online for offline friends to continue with their interactions online (Boyd, 2006, Ellison et al. 2007, Lampe, et al. 2007). Most people use these social media sites to manage relatively loose network of friends (Steinfeld, Ellison & Lampe, 2008).

SNS networking therefore creates a platform for people to communicate with their friends but they also enable total strangers to meet and engage with each other through groups and events. However, according to Wilkinson & Thelwall (2009), social information gathering is more common than directly maintaining contact through social media.

Scholars argue that internet communication serves as an excellent portal for debate among persons of varied opinion and beliefs (Hlot, 2004, Bundidge, 2006).

However, the structure of the internet has also been found to create conditions conducive to selective exposure to media content (Bimber & Davis, 2003). People tend to self-expose to information that aligns with their views. Scholars have noted that virtual communities are fairly homogeneous in terms of values and viewpoints. (

Dahlberg, 2001) and that the participants in online discussions often hold comparable political perspectives (Wilhelm, 1999). Online political discussion has been criticized for isolating disagreeing persons from engaging in discussion and for having an uncivil discussion behavior (Kushin, 2009).

Kushin notes that the unique features of social media can serve to bring people of divergent political views together in online political discussion. SNS have a very wide reach and this enormous reach poses the potential for people with divergent views to relate. The ability of Facebook to provide embedded links and feeds can help stir interaction and discussion among varied people (Baron, 2008).

Civility of the discussions on SNS is also an area that has attracted some scholars. Uncivil behavior has been observed in some online forums that is sometimes characterized by "vigorous attack and humiliation" (Davis, 1999, Kushin, 2009). This can discourage the polite and respectful people from participating in the discussion and leaving it to the abrasive and belligerent. Davis (1999) use the term 'flaming' to describe posts made in online discussions that personally attack a participant or his ideas.

Anonymity is a key driver of flaming in online discussions since it affords people a level of freedom and power to act in an uncivil manner as well as avoid being held accountable ( Barber et al. 1997, Davis, 1999). However, the profile feature on most SNS limits the levels of anonymity (Kushin, 2009).

Beyond using SNS for recreational purposes, users are also harnessing the capabilities of SNS to engage in political discussions and express their view on issue they care about.



## **2.7. Conclusion**

At the core of the whole debate surrounding the political uses of SNS, is the question of what effect if any, these new technologies have on political participation. The optimistic supporters argue that social media technologies 'promote accountability, transparency and public engagement with political institutions and figures' (Clarke, 2010). Skeptics on the other hand argue that social media at best transform politics into a 'a marketing game dominated by special interests and well-resourced political actors' besides only reinforcing established patterns of political engagement (Clarke, 2010).

The Internet has been touted as a channel through which youth may become mobilized into politics and public affairs, but evidence in this regard is mixed. Modern research indicates that among the youth, there is a greater emphasis on non-political civic participation than actual political participation. The youth seem to care much about their community but not in the political sense. The hope of youth participation must be tempered by the fact that virtual space is not actual space and that digital democracy amounts to nothing if not supported by offline activities like actual voting (Kann et al., 2007).

## **2.8. Summary**

From the review of the relevant literature, it is obvious that youth participation in civic and political activities is contingent on a well-functioning public sphere. A functional public sphere will allow for open and rich debate and discussion of issues of interest to the youth whether directly political or civic. The outcome of rich interpersonal discussions is greater issue knowledge, political interest and a desire to participate.

A combination of certain conditions and features are necessary to facilitate this youth participation springing out of a functional public sphere:

- Equal access for the participants in the public sphere. Access to the internet and the online forums (not having certain people at a disadvantage based on certain factors like socio-economic status).
- Necessary resources to facilitate the access- economic, connectivity to the internet, time to participate and technical skill to access and operate the online social media public sphere.
- A democratic media system where there is a free press, assembly, speech, expression. This includes freedom from state and corporate control.
- Openness of communication and discussions, healthy debates even where there are contrasting views this includes choices between different options.
- Informed and intellectually competent citizenry. This includes access to relevant information and is made possible through education and the media.
- Focus on relevant issues- when discussions are centered on issues relevant to the political process.
- Functional horizontal connections between the participants. This facilitates the creation of *bonding* (between those who already have a connection or relationship) and *bridging*(between people who don't have prior relationship or connection) *social capital*.
- Vibrant civil society that constantly engages the people and the government on civic issues and at the same time provides a platform for discussions.

- Open government that is open to receive and release information. On the same, there should be access to those in power and a channel of complaints or opinions.
- Agreement based on mutual trust and shared knowledge.
- Social interaction, political discussion, and personal reflection.

### **III. CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

#### **3.0. Introduction**

This chapter discusses methodological positions that were adopted in this study .It includes the research design, description of the area of study, target population, sampling design, data collection methods and instruments, procedures for data collection and data processing strategies.

This study relied on both primary data obtained directly from the field through the administration of questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions and secondary data derived from published reports, books and journal articles.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This study was conducted through a cross sectional survey targeting active and non-active users of social networking sites who are in two institutions of higher learning. In a cross-sectional survey, data is collected from the population at a particular point in time. The survey method is a very valuable tool for assessing opinions and trends. This involves collecting data from a cross section of respondents chosen to represent a larger population. This method was chosen for this study because it is an excellent vehicle for measuring attitudes and orientations in large populations.

#### **3.2. Area of study**

The study was conducted in Nairobi which is the capital city of Kenya. Nairobi sits on a 700 km<sup>2</sup>. Nairobi has a population of 3.2 million according to the 2009 nationwide census (KNBS, 2010).

Since the study targeted the urban youth in Kenya, the study was conducted in the Nairobi Metropolis specifically in the tertiary institutions of learning.

### **3.2.1. Rationale for the Choice of Nairobi**

Nairobi is ideal because of its cosmopolitan nature and, it is possible to find representation of the desired population from all parts of the country. Secondly, the Nairobi Metropolis is home to a significant number of public and private universities and colleges which were targeted for this study. Thirdly, since the study is targeting the urban youth in Kenya, Nairobi provides the best access to this group. Finally, Nairobi is ideal also because of its advanced infrastructural development in the ICT sector compared to other regions making access to these sites easier and more affordable to the youth. According to the Youth Fact book prepared by IEA, the youth living in urban areas have an advantage in accessing all kinds of media compared to their rural counterparts (IEA, 2010).

### **3.3. Target Population**

According to USAID Kenya, 46% of population in Nairobi is youth. This is slightly higher than the national youth population which is 35.39 % of the total population (IEA ,2010). In Kenya, 39% of the youth live in urban areas while 61% live in rural areas. The youth population consists 51% female and 49% male (IEA and KNBS 2010).

The target population for this study was the urban youth aged between 18-30 years who have access to the internet and use social media and those who access but are not so active. The government of Kenya has defined youth as those between 18-30 years (MOYA 2007, 9). Majority of these people are most likely to be found in tertiary institutions of learning like universities. They fall within the desired age for this study, have access to the internet, and are active on the social networking sites.



The study targeted mostly undergraduate students in two Universities in Nairobi. A public University and private University were chosen to ensure people from different socio-economic backgrounds are represented in the study. Most Undergraduate students fall between ages 18-24 while most postgraduate students fall between ages 25-35. Within these institutions therefore, we are likely to find the desired population.

#### **3.4. Sampling Design and Sample Size**

The sampling process started by purposively selecting two Universities within Nairobi namely, the University of Nairobi which is the oldest and biggest Public University in Kenya and Daystar University which is the oldest private University in Kenya. Since the study was targeting a homogenous population with many shared characteristics, probability sampling was used. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure students from across all disciplines were represented in the study.

According to Mugenda & Mugenda (1999), the sample must represent the salient characteristics of the accessible population. In estimating the sample size for this survey, a sample of 600 respondents was selected from the specified institutions. This number was preferred since the target population was highly homogenous and increasing the sample size would not have affected the outcome.

This sampling strategy had several advantages that answer common concerns about external validity. First, although our participants were college students, this age group corresponds to the target population (18 -30 year-old youths). Thus, the results of the research are more generalizable. Secondly, the youth in this study have access to free

internet and therefore represent a good chance of capturing the characteristics of social media users.

### **3.5. Data collection procedures and instruments**

Primary data was mainly collected through questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions.

#### ***3.5.1. Self-reported Questionnaires:***

A questionnaire is a pre-formulated set of questions to which subjects record their answers independently or with the help of the researcher (Maws J. ,2006). For this study, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents through selected and trained research assistants who were selected from the different Faculties and Schools within these institutions. The questionnaires had a combination of carefully constructed close-ended and open-ended questions to capture both qualitative and quantitative data. This method and tool was chosen because the target population is literate and capable of filling the answers.

#### ***Instrument Validity***

Cohen et al (2000) and Gorard (2001) suggest the need to conduct a pilot study before the actual research in order to ensure the relevance and clarity of the instruments. The questionnaire was pretested among first year students pursuing Bachelor of Arts in Project Planning and Management in the School of Open and Distance Learning, Department of Extra-Mural studies, University of Nairobi. The pretesting of the questionnaire proved very useful in eliminating ambiguities, identification of redundant questions and misunderstood items as well as providing feedback on the validity of the

instruments. Necessary revisions were done before the questionnaire was finally administered in the actual survey.

External validity was also achieved by using an international standard way of operationalizing the dependent variables (National Election Studies). Political and civic participation were measured using internationally accepted measures of political and civic participation. This ensures that these variables will always mean the same thing even in a different context.

### ***3.5.2. Key informant interviews***

The study also involved key informant interviews with key political campaign leaders as a way of gaining further insight on their utilization of social media in political campaigning and to understand the integration of social media in the presidential campaigns and the perceived impact on the political campaign process and the general outcome of the elections.

### ***3.5.3. Focus Group Discussions***

This is a discussion group involving 6-12 individuals who share certain characteristics which are relevant to the study. The discussion is carefully designed and planned to obtain information on the participants' beliefs and perceptions on a defined area of interest (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

This study conducted several focus group discussions from among the targeted respondents and which were used to gauge and explore in depth the beliefs, perceptions and opinions of the participants and the responses were compared with the data collected through the questionnaires.

Data from the FGDs was used in analysis and discussion of the study findings and proved very useful in shedding important light to help understand the deeper reasons for some of the responses captured in the questionnaire.

### **3.6. Data Analysis procedures**

Data analysis was done using updated statistical software, SPSS version 20. The completed questionnaires were edited and cleaned prior to data entry to minimize error. Data analysis for this study proceeded in two steps. First, the frequencies were run on demographic and political variables, reliance on social networking sites, and frequency of political discussion. Secondly, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to answer the research questions in which measurement occurs at different levels of aggregation.

Demographic variables were entered in the first block; political variables were entered in the second block. Reliance on social networking sites was entered as the third block followed by interpersonal discussion of politics as the fourth block. The hierarchical model allows us to examine the extent to which regression coefficients vary across different sub-populations, while borrowing strength from the full sample.

Correlation analysis was also conducted to test the relation between various variables.

### **3.7. The Response Rate**

The study had a response rate of 85.3%. A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed in two Universities in Nairobi, one private and one public. A total of 512 questionnaires came back duly filled. 350 questionnaires were administered in the University of Nairobi by sampling across various departments. Another 250 questionnaires were administered in Day Star University with the help of research assistants, again sampling

across departments. From Day Star University, 190 questionnaires came back while from the University of Nairobi, 322 questionnaires were filled and returned. University of Nairobi had a higher response rate because the researcher is based there and it was easy to do follow up with the research assistants.

After going through the returned questionnaires, 46 were found to have been incomplete with some missing crucial data and therefore unsuitable for analysis. Out of the 46 incomplete questionnaires, 24 were from female respondents while 22 were from male respondents. The total number of valid questionnaires that were used for analysis in this study was 466.

### 3.8. Respondents' Profile

Since this study was targeting a homogenous group, the two most important characteristics desired were age and gender. The study focused on young undergraduate college students of either gender aged 18-30 in the two institutions.

#### 3.8.1. Gender Distribution

Table 1-Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Valid Percent
Male	216	46.4
Female	250	53.6
Total	466	100.0

In the study, 53.6% of the respondents were female while 46.4% were male. This can be attributed the higher rate of enrollment by female students in the sampled Departments in the two Universities involved in this study. According to the 2009 National Census the gender distribution in Kenya stands at 50.3 % female and 49.7% male (Kenya national bureau of statistics [www.knbs.or.ke](http://www.knbs.or.ke)). According to [www.socialbakers.com](http://www.socialbakers.com) the gender

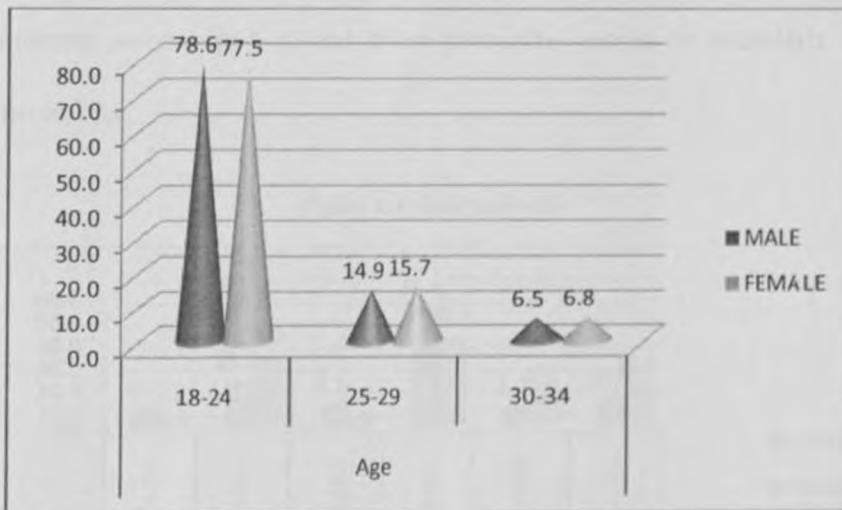


distribution on Facebook in Kenya is 63% male and 37% female. This study however decided to involve an equal number of either gender though this was not perfectly realized due to the higher number of female students in the sampled departments.

### 3.8.2. Distribution by age and gender

According to Figure 1, of those sampled, 78.6% of males and 77.5% of the females are between ages 18-24 while a further 14.9 % and 15.7% male and female respectively are between the ages 25-29.

Figure 1: Distribution by gender



This can be explained by the fact that this study targeted undergraduate students in two universities and majority of the students are within this age. However, there were a significant number of Undergraduate students who were between 30 and 34 constituting about 6.7%. According to [www.allin1social.com](http://www.allin1social.com) , 88.8% of all social media users in Kenya are aged between 18-30 years.

## IV. CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

### 4.0. Introduction

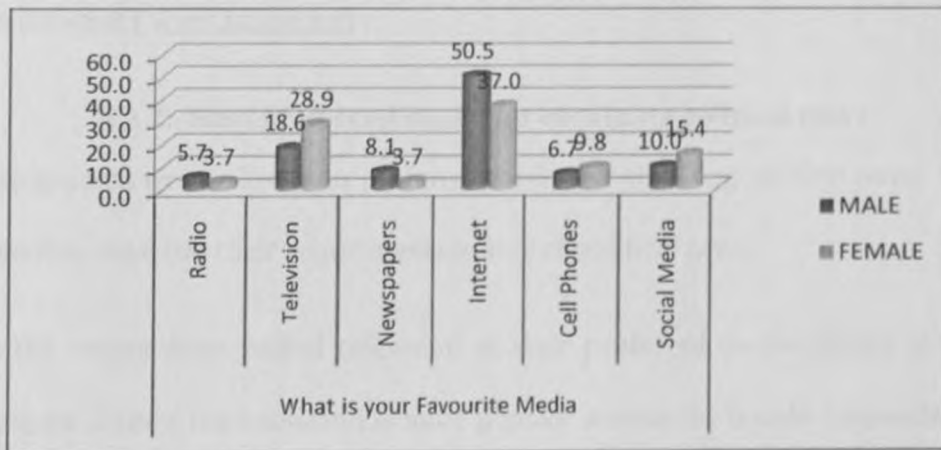
This chapter presents the first part of the findings from the data that was collected in the study. Data was analyzed using an updated version of SPSS. This section focuses on the descriptive data. Results from the correlation and regression analysis are presented in chapter six.

### 4.1. Youth Media Consumption Patterns and Habits

#### 4.1.1. Favourite media

The respondents were asked about their favourite media to establish their media consumption habits.

Figure 2: Favourite media



According to Figure 2 above, the Internet is the most popular media for most of the respondents with half of the males and 37% females identifying it as their favourite. Since in the study the choices were made mutually exclusive, if we were to consider Social Media and the Internet together, then more than half of the respondents, both male and female prefer using the internet over all other media. According to Kahne, J. et

al. (2012) young people spend a lot of time online and they engage in different activities compared to adults. When it comes to the internet, there is an obvious generational gap and Zhao (2006) claims that the internet is central to young peoples' interactions. That It's impossible to consider the life of young people outside of media, specifically, the internet. Madden (2006) notes that since 2004, the online presence of the youth has grown tremendously.

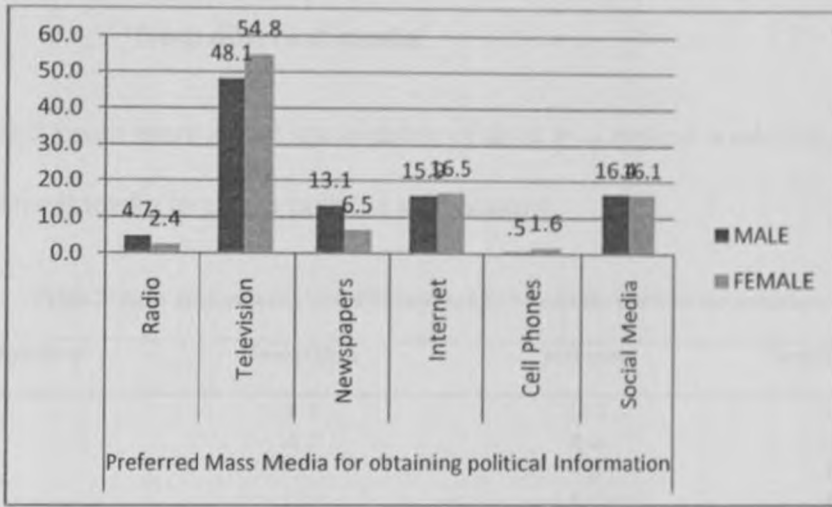
Scholars have noted that young people have been increasingly turning to the internet as a major source of news and other information (Brohisnky and Shulman , 2008). CCK quarterly reports have shown a consistent trend of growth in internet usage in Kenya (CCK, 2013). This finding is supported by an earlier research by Kenya ICT Board and TNS research in 2009, which found that young people prefer to use new forms of media like the internet ( [www.ict.gov.ke](http://www.ict.gov.ke) ) .

#### **4.1.2. Most preferred media for obtaining political news**

The respondents were asked their preferred media for obtaining political news. This was meant to establish their major media source of political news.

Half of the respondents picked television as their preferred media source of political news. Figure 3 show the television is more popular among the female respondents. The Internet and social media are a distant second with 16.1 % each. This agrees with the traditional view that the Television is the most influential medium. For a long time, television has been dominant as a leading source of political information for most people (Pew internet Research, 2010).

Figure 3: Preferred media for obtaining political news



Social media and the internet are becoming an important source of political information for young people especially after the US presidential elections of 2008. According to a study conducted by Pew Research Centre in December 2007, the internet and social media are gaining an ascending role in providing campaign information for young people. Another survey by Pew Internet Research in 2010 found that internet use among young adults (18-29) had grown tremendously in America with 93% of all American young adults using the internet. The study found that among the young people, the internet was the second most commonly mentioned source of campaign news ahead of newspapers but trailing only television (Pew Research, 2010). In Kenya, internet penetration is still low but there is a steady growth mostly driven by mobile phone subscription (CCK Sector Report, 2013).

#### 4.1.3. Number of days they use media to get political information from different media

The surveyed youth were asked the number of days in a typical week the respondents use the different media to obtain political information.

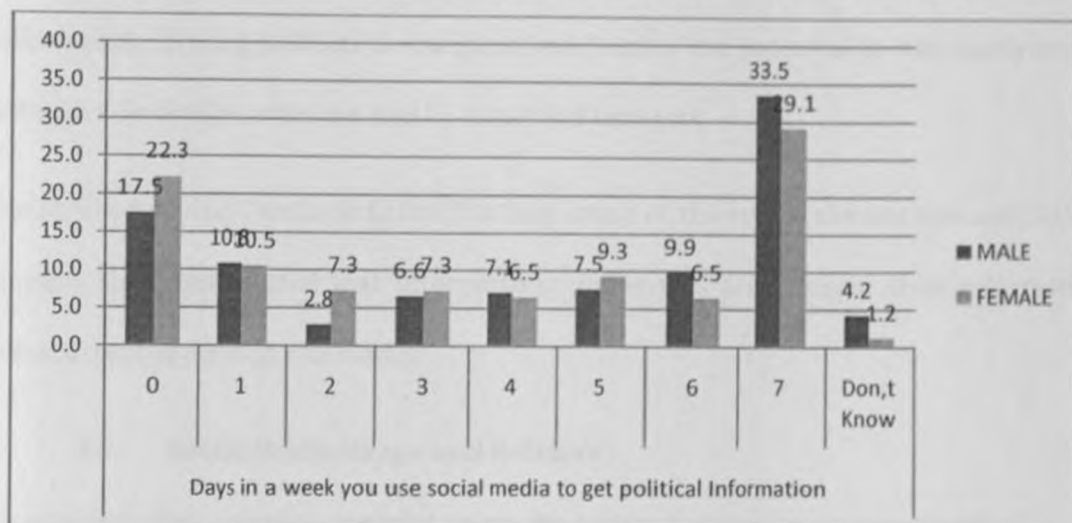
Table 2: Days respondents use different media to obtain political information

No. of Days in a week	Television	Internet	Social Media
0	9.1	24.5	19.9
1	6.7	8.9	10.6
2	12.1	5.9	5.2
3	13.6	6.1	6.9
4	13.4	6.1	6.7
5	12.1	8.0	8.4
6	6.0	6.5	8.0
7	21.3	30.8	31.0
Don't Know	5.6	2.4	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Close to a third (31%) of the respondents indicated they did so on a daily basis for both the internet and the social media and close to a half used social media and the internet to obtain political information at least four days in a week. This indicates that the social media and the internet are both important sources of political information for the youth. A high level of exposure to political information is important for the exercise of democratic choice.



Figure 4: Days in a week respondents use social media to obtain political information



#### 4.2. Other Sources of Political Information besides the media.

The respondents were asked their other sources of political information besides the media. This was to establish the other agents of political socialization besides the media.

Table 3: Other sources of political information besides the media

	church	Political Meetings	Friends	Colleagues	Relatives	Community Meetings
Yes	2.8	11.7	61.8	26.6	14.5	1.9
No	96.8	87.9	37.4	72.7	84.8	97.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Majority of the respondents indicated friends as the most important sources of political information at 62 %. Colleagues came second at 27 %. This is consistent with theory that shows the value of interpersonal relations in influencing political knowledge and behaviour. Studies have emphasized the role of interpersonal connections (Horrigan et al, 2004) in providing political information. It is a major argument of this study that

interpersonal connections on social media play an important role in providing political information, driving political discussions which have the potential to ultimately shape political knowledge, attitudes and by extension behavior.

Karan, Gimeno and Tandoc Jr (2008) in their study of the role of the internet and SNS in election campaigns noted that interpersonal influences are stronger than information communicated through the media.

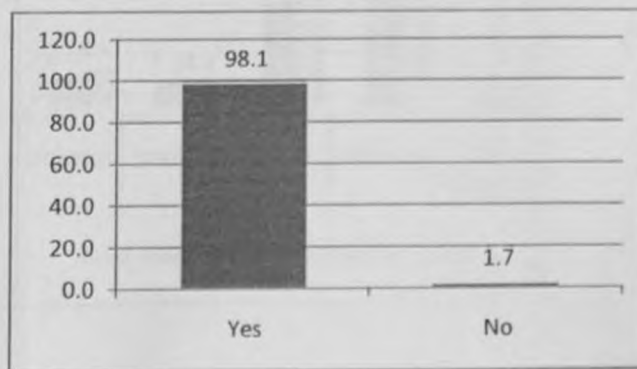
### 4.3. Social Media Usage and Reliance

To establish their reliance on social networking sites, the respondents were asked several questions related to social media usage.

#### 4.3.1. Social Media Usage

The respondents were asked if they used social media which was the basis of this study and the criteria for filling the questionnaire.

Figure 5: Social media Usage and reliance



Close to everyone (98%) who was surveyed indicated they use social media. This shows that most college students are actually using social media. According to two websites that track social media use in the world; [www.socialbakers.com](http://www.socialbakers.com) and

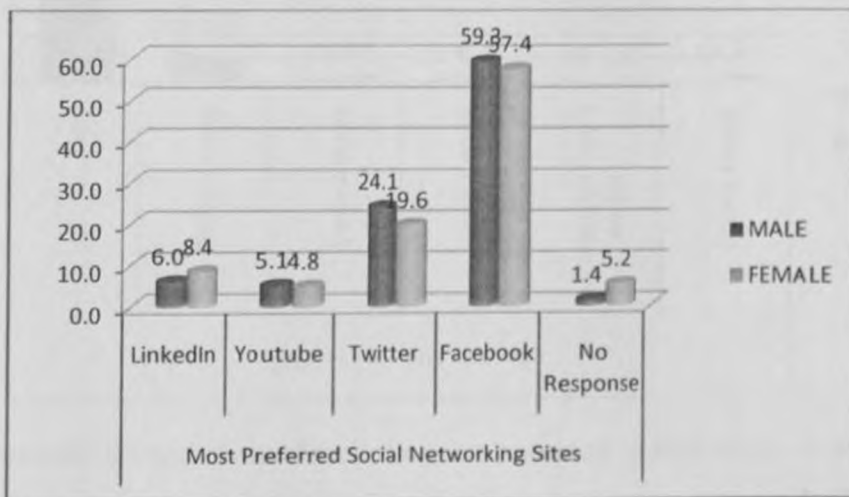
[www.allin1social.com](http://www.allin1social.com) , the current population of Facebook users in Kenya stands at 3.6 million which is 8.8% of the total Kenyan Population. 88.8% of Facebook users in Kenya are aged between 18-30 years.

Even though social media penetration is still very low in Kenya, it has been growing at a tremendous rate. Facebook currently has 1.11 billion followers. Between 2009 when this study started and 2013, its year of completion, Facebook has gained approximately 600 million new followers (Facebook Factsheet).

#### 4.3.2. Most preferred Social Networking Site

The youth were asked their most preferred social networking site. This was to gauge the popularity of the different SNSs.

Figure 6: Most preferred Social Networking Site



According to Figure 6 above , Facebook is by far the most preferred Social networking Site with more than half of the respondents (58%) choosing Facebook as their preferred SNS. This could be attributed to the fact that Facebook is also the most popular SNS globally, it's easy to use and it provides an opportunity to connect and even reconnect

with one's friends in a virtual space. A quarter (25%) of the male respondents and a fifth (20%) of the female respondents identified twitter as their preferred SNS. A small percentage of the respondents identified LinkedIn and YouTube as their preferred SNSs. This justifies the decision to pick three SNS sites for this study with special focus on Facebook.

### 4.3.3. Frequency of Using Facebook

The study sought to know how frequently the youth involved in the study use Facebook. This was meant to establish reliance on Facebook as a SNS.

Figure 7: Frequency of using Facebook

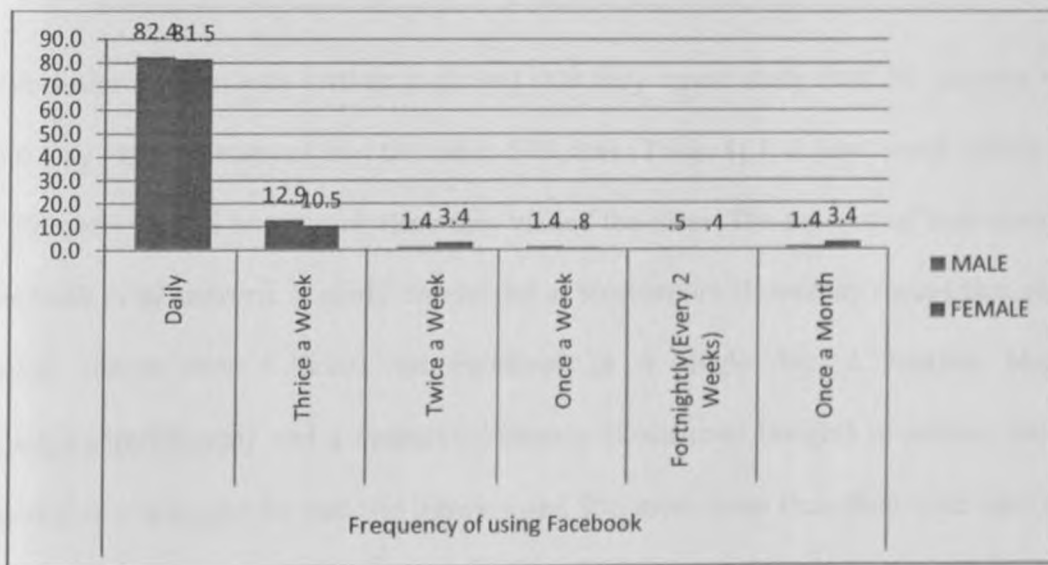


Figure 7 reveals that out of the Facebook users sampled in this study, 82% both male and female indicated they use Facebook daily while 11 % indicated that they use Facebook at least three times a week. These two combined constitute 91% which indicates a high degree of reliance on Facebook. In the case of Twitter, its only 46 % of the users who reported using it more than three times a week

#### 4.3.4. Time spent on Facebook during each visit

The study sought to establish the time spent on Facebook during each visit by the respondents again to establish how reliant the respondents were on the SNS.

Table 4: Time spent on Facebook during each visit

Time Spent during each visit	Valid Percent
Less than 30 Minutes	33.7
At Least 1 Hour	26.9
At Least 2 Hours	12.0
At Least 3 Hours	7.2
At Least 5 Hours	5.5
More than 5 Hours	10.5
No Response	4.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

61% of the respondents further indicated that they spent more than 30 minutes each time they visited Facebook and the other SNS sites (Table 4). It is also worth noting that 15 % spent up to 5 hours each time they visited the sites. The amount of time spent on Facebook is of concern. A study conducted at Strathmore University found that young people spend over 6 hours on Facebook in a single day. A Kenyan blogger ([www.wamathai.com](http://www.wamathai.com)) and a research company (Consumer Insight) in similar studies found that young people visit the internet and SNS sites more than they visit their mail boxes. The research commissioned by the Kenya ICT Board found that 85% of all young internet users in Kenya use it to access social networking sites.



#### 4.3.5. Major reason for visiting/using SNS

The respondents were asked their major reason for visiting or log On to SNS.

Table 5: Major reason for visiting SNS

	Networking	Information seeking	Entertainment	Employment /Business	Inspiration
Yes	81.1	82.2	53.5	7.7	8.4
No	15.9	14.7	43.2	88.7	88.1
No Response	3.1	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

An overwhelming majority of those who use SNS networking sites indicated they used them for networking or connecting with friends (81%) and to seek information (82%). This presents a fertile ground for SNS users to be exposed to political information. It is also further evidence of both bridging and bonding social capital as users get to connect online with people they know and also strangers.

It is also worth noting that more than half of the respondents 56.2% indicated that they had more than 400 friends (connections) on Facebook which shows the level of interpersonal connections on social media. Facebook alone has over 125 billion friendship connections ([www.socialbakers.com](http://www.socialbakers.com)).

#### 4.5. Reliance on Social Networking Sites

The respondents were asked how reliant they were on SNS networking sites. Reliance is an important independent variable in this study and measured using several items.

#### 4.5.1. Reliance on SNSs.

The respondents were asked how reliant they were on SNSs sites.

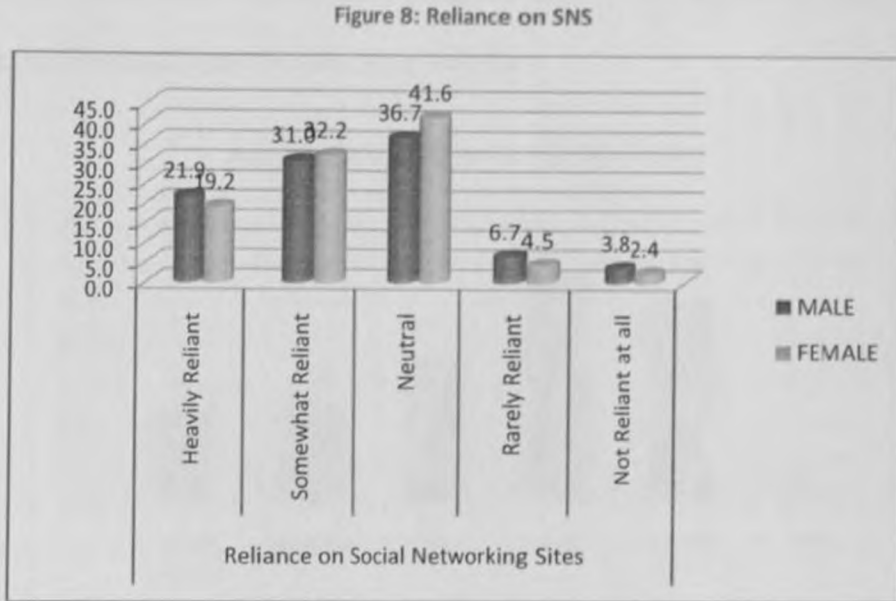
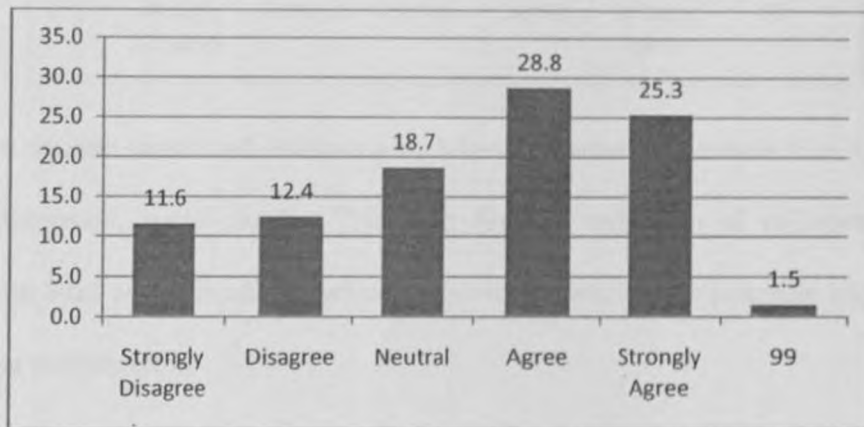


Figure 8 shows that at least half of the respondents consider themselves either highly reliant or somewhat reliant on Social SNS with 20% indicating they are heavily reliant on them. It's only about 8 % who were definite that they are not reliant on SNS sites. This indicates a significant level of reliance on Social Media among College students. Reliance on SNS is important since it helps to predict the value people attach to SNS and the role these sites play in an individual's life. Some people rely on the SNS sites for information while for others, it is to stay connected with friends.

#### 4.5.2. Emotional Connection to Facebook

The study sought to establish the Level of emotional connection to Facebook among the respondents which is also a measure of reliance on SNS. The respondents were asked if they felt Facebook was part of their daily activity.

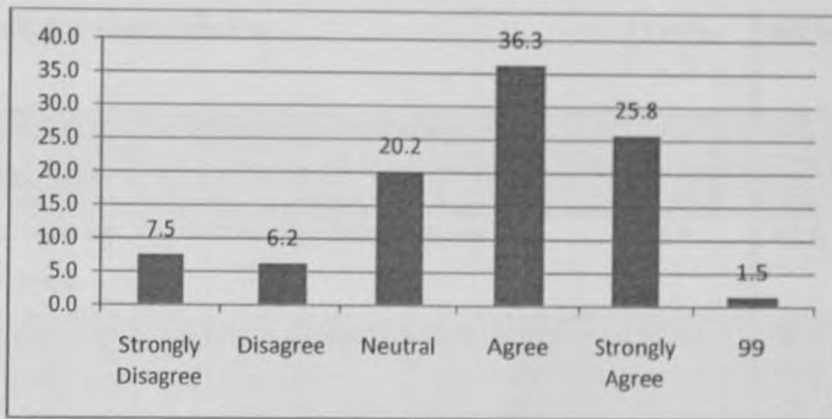
Figure 9: Facebook is part of my daily activity



According to Figure 9, about 54% of the respondents indicated that they felt Facebook was part of their everyday activity while only 24% indicated that they did not consider Facebook part of their daily activity. This is consistent with the other finding in this study, that most of the respondents use the SNS site daily.

The respondents were also asked if they felt part of the Facebook community. According to Figure 10 below, 62% of the respondents agreed they feel they are part of the Facebook community while it's only 13.5% who did not feel part of the Facebook community.

Figure 10: I am part of the Facebook Community



These two aspects combined indicate a high level of emotional connection to Facebook and by extension, social media. This is a further reflection of reliance on Social Networking Sites which is an important factor in measuring the possible impact of SNS on political participation.

#### 4.6. Political Activity on Social Networking Sites

This section explores political campaign activity on SNS sites just before, during and immediately after the 2013 elections. The respondents were asked if they participated in a range of specific activities on social media.

Table 6 below captures young people's scope of political activity on social media. The respondents were asked about their political activity on social media over a period of three months. The responses point to heightened political activity within the period before and after elections.

More than half (55%) of all the respondents indicated that they had engaged in the listed activities on SNSs.

Table 6: Summary of political activities on SNS

<i>In the last three months, did you ....</i>	YES %	NO %	NOT SURE %
Come across information of political nature on Facebook?	91.0	4.7	2.1
Post information that is of political nature on Facebook	55.9	40.6	1.3
Join any group on Facebook that is political in nature?	50.1	46.6	1.7
'Like' or join the Facebook page of a politician or political party?	63.3	33.2	2.2
Engage in political discussions on Social Media?	54.5	40.5	3.7
Invite a friend to join a political group on Social Media?	18.2	78.1	2.2
Comment on another person's political post or status?	69.2	26	2.2
My 'friends' posted political content/information on my Facebook wall?	55.9	38.4	3.9
Discover a new political event/ occurrence on Social media?	61.4	31.5	5.8
Participate in an online opinion poll conducted on Facebook?	26.6	69.7	2.2
Follow a link of political story posted on YouTube, Facebook or Twitter?	60.8	33.5	3.7
Share another person's interesting political post ?	51.1	44.5	3.3
Watch a political video posted on YouTube, Facebook or Twitter	64.7	33.3	1.3
Share/ upload a political video or photograph?	32.8	64.6	1.5
Deliberately look for political information on social media?	58.7	36.7	3.2
Total (Average)	55%	41%	4%



These results agree with the most recent study by the Pew internet Research on SNSs and political engagement found that 66% had engaged in similar activities on SNSs (Smith, 2013). An earlier Pew Research in 2012, Rainie et al. found that younger social media users are 'more likely to post their own thoughts about issues, post links to political material, encourage others to take political action, belong to a political group on a social networking site, follow elected officials on social media and like or promote political material others have posted' (Rainie et al., 2012, pg. 2).

#### **4.6.1. Presence of Political information on SNSs**

An overwhelming 91% indicated they had come across information of political nature like campaign updates, photos, videos, speeches, and links to political websites among others, on Facebook. Only a very small percentage indicated they had not encountered any political content on social media. This points to a significant factor, that social media is an important platform for exposure to political information for young people. Candidates and their campaign managers including supporters were actively involved in posting campaign related information which reached almost everybody on social media. Campaigns posted photos, videos, posters and other material designed to bolster their campaigns. Supporters were also creators of content as they posted to express support for their candidates or criticize an opponent.

This agrees with previous research conducted in this area. According to Baum (2003 a, pp. 111-112) SNSs contribute to democratic discourse by providing current information and news about politics to otherwise disengaged individuals. Baum focuses on the

incidental encounter of political news and information which is likely to influence an individual's political views.

Baumgartner and Morris (2009) consider political information available on social media as soft news. They further argue that young people are likely to filter any incidental information they come across on social media. In their research, Baumgartner and Morris found that SNS sites were an important and unique source of political news for young people.

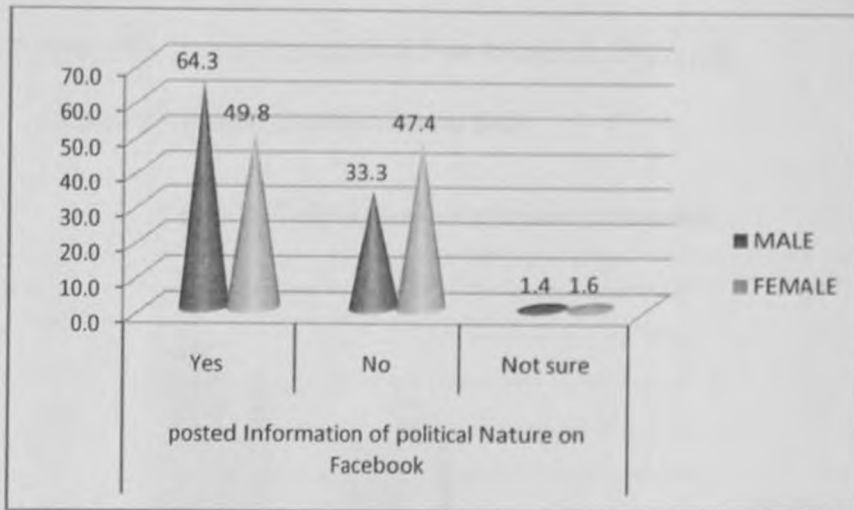
#### **4.6.2. Posting political information**

The respondents were asked if they had posted any political content on social media. This was meant to gauge their role as creators of political content and the extent to which they were involved in sharing political information.

According to Figure 11, a significant aspect is that about two thirds (64%) of male respondents and about half of the female respondents (50%) had posted political campaign information on social media and a similar number had also shared interesting political content posted by their friends.

This shows that a majority of social media users are active creators of political content which they distribute on social media. Social media creates a platform for citizen journalism and alternative voice for people. It is important to note that males are more active in posting political content on SNSs than female respondents. This agrees with the results of the Minnesota E-Democracy projects that found three quarters of those posting political content online were male ( Aiken,1997 997,Dahlberg,2001).

Figure 11: Posting political information



Madeline Storck in analyzing the role of social media in political mobilization observes that, social media has low entry barriers and therefore creates an easily accessible medium for ordinary people to post and upload stories, videos & photos, some of which are picked by the mainstream media (Storck, 2011). Even if there are accuracy and credibility issues related to social media and citizen journalism, it at least provides an outlet for alternative voices and people are able to shape their own narrative of events.

During the election campaigns of 2013 in Kenya, social media specifically Facebook and Twitter provided a platform for people to post their observations, thoughts, comments and interpretation of what was happening including encouraging people to vote for a particular candidate.

The results of this study indicated a higher level of online SNSs political activity than in the US. Smith and Rainie (2012) found that 35% of all SNSs users in the US had used social media to encourage other people to vote in the 2012 general elections, 31% had

encouraged people to take action on a political matter and 34% had posted their thoughts or comments on political issues ( Pew Research, 2012, p2).

#### 4.6.3. Political Discussions on SNS

Figure 12: Engaging in political discussion on Facebook

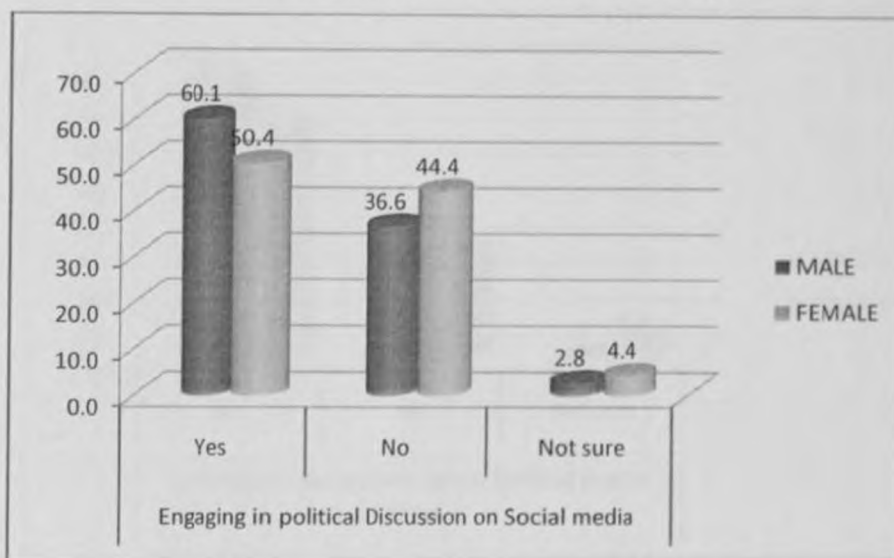


Figure 12 shows that male respondents are more active than females in discussing politics on social media. About 60% of the men and half of the ladies among the surveyed youth indicated they had engaged in political discussions on Facebook. SNSs provided a platform where users could engage on the different political issues. There were heated exchanges between supporters of opposing camps as each tried to present their camp as having the best ideas.

This domination of SNSs political discussions by males is consistent with Susan Herring's ( 1993, 1996, 1999) research that found that 'online communication remains gendered and dominated by the aggressive nature of the 'male style'' She captures the male style as characterized by messages that are 'longer, and more frequent, issue

oriented, assertive, authoritative, adversarial, sarcastic, and self-promoting'. In contrast, the female gendered style tends to be 'shorter, personally oriented, questioning, tentative, apologetic and supportive'.

Figure 13: Commenting on other people's political status

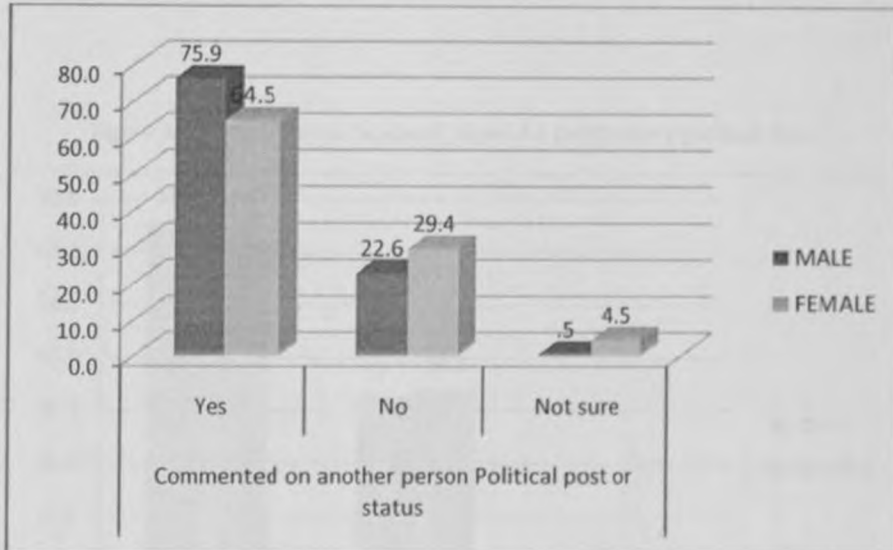


Figure 13 shows three quarters (75.9%) of all male respondents and about two thirds (64.5%) of all female respondents indicated they had commented on another person's political status or post. Again, the male youth are more active than female youth in commenting on other peoples' status. Already a pattern can be seen where male respondents are more active politically than the female respondents.

#### 4.6.4. Joining Political Groups on SNS

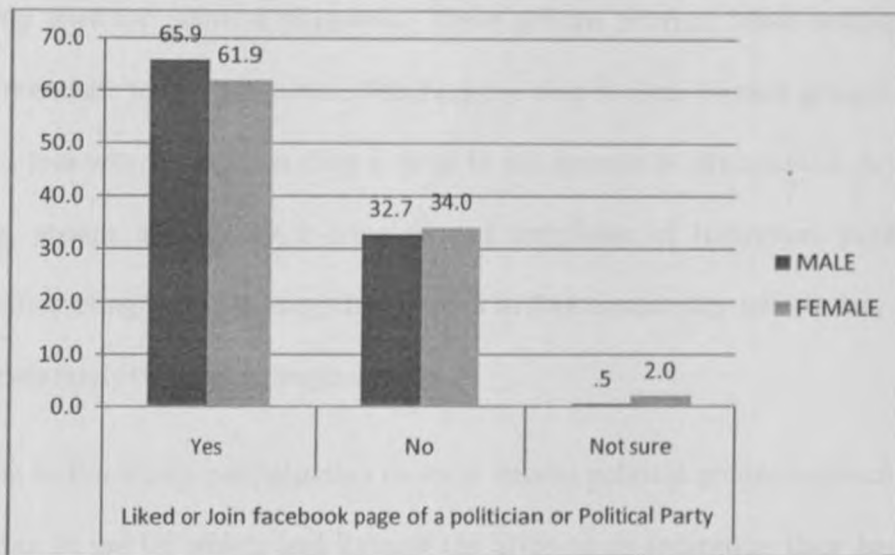
The respondents were asked if they had joined a Facebook page of a politician or a political party. The groups function is one of the most important features that is used for political participation on social media.



According to figure 14, close to two thirds of the respondents both male and female indicated that they had 'liked' or joined political groups, pages of politicians or political parties on social media.

Slightly more than half of the respondents engaged in political discussions on social media.

Figure 14: Joined/liked a Facebook page of a politician or political Party



Groups facilitate consumption and discussion of political content in a common platform where people are able to both read and post content on the group 'walls'. This again points to the fact that there exists an online public sphere on social media where young people are able to actively participate in political discussions.

There were many political groups formed on SNSs sites. Some of the groups include: CORD 254 , Friends of Raila (FORA), Kikuyus for Change, Bunge la Mwananchi, Raila for President, CORD Effect , One Million strong for Uhuru 2012, My 4<sup>th</sup> President Uhuru Kenyatta among others. These groups were used as platforms for expressing support,

opposition and above all campaigns. These groups were not necessarily formed by the official campaigns of the candidates but rather enthusiastic followers eager to advance the cause of their preferred candidate.

The 'groups' and 'events' function on Facebook is important in fostering political discussions and social capital. Groups allow members to come together, for a common interest, cause or belief. Westling (2007) notes that the groups feature is the most commonly used for political purposes. These groups provide 'ideal settings for like-minded members to discuss issues. Members are able to form themed groups and invite others to join where they can then engage in all manner of discussions. According to Westling, groups are simply a creation and extension of Habermas public sphere because they bring members together into an online community where they can share information freely through a single network.

According to this study, participation in social media political groups is much higher in Kenya than in the US which had 21% of the SNSs users indicating they had joined a political group on SNSs (Pew Internet Research, 2012).

#### **4.7. Consuming Political Content Posted On Social Media**

Having established the presence of political content on SSNs, the study sought to establish the extent to which SNSs users were consuming this political content by asking if the respondents had watched a political video posted on SNSs, followed links to stories among others.

#### 4.7.1. Watching political videos posted on SNSs

The surveyed youth were asked if they watched political videos posted on social networking sites.

Figure 15: Watching a political video posted on SNSs

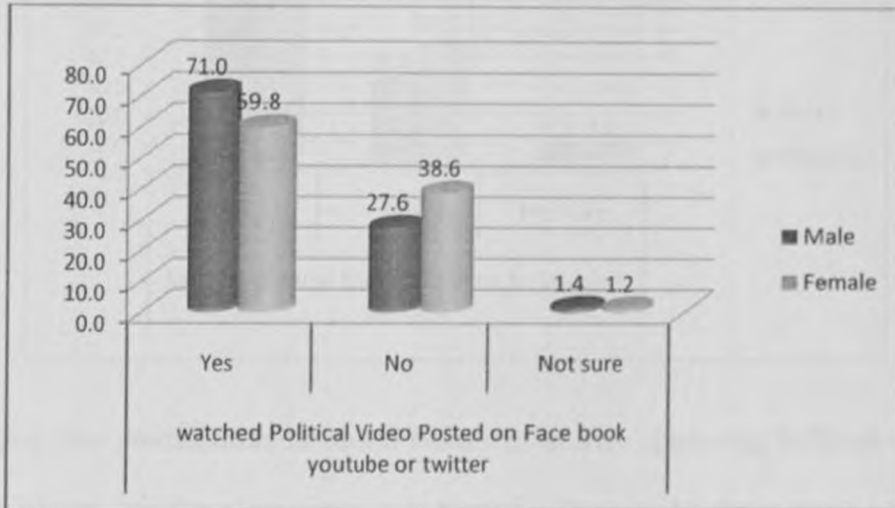


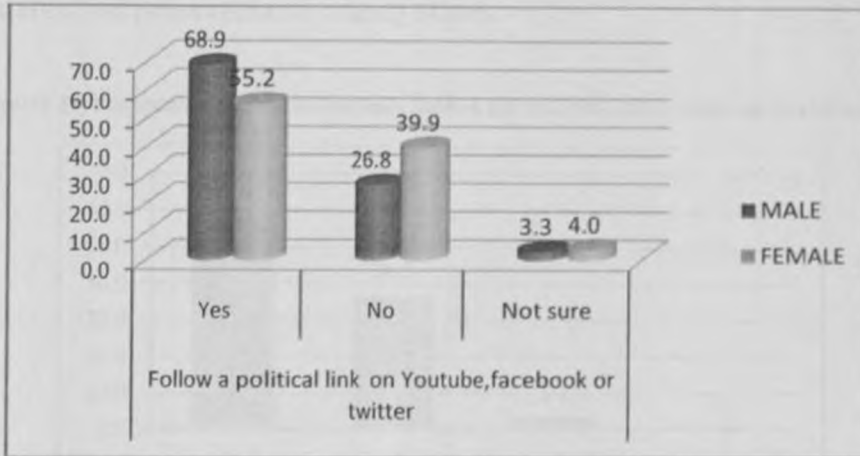
Figure 15 above shows that, 71% of male respondents and 60% of female respondents indicated that they had watched political videos posted on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. This implies that young people on social media are active consumers of political content. Social Networking Sites provide opportunities for young people to be both creators and consumers of content. They act as an outlet for young people to interpret political information.

#### 4.7.2. Following links to political stories posted on SNSs.

The respondents were asked if they had followed a link to a political story or website posted on SNSs. 69% male and 55% female indicated they had followed such links.

Campaigns posted uploaded literature and other campaign material that could advance their campaigns.

Figure 16: followed a link to a story or website posted on SNS



Quite often, they posted links to media stories or stories appearing in blogs and other websites on social media. Supporters also posted and opened links to news articles that either supported their candidates or criticized their opponents. It was rare for a day to pass without people coming across political posts on SNSs. Again, male youth are more active politically online than females.

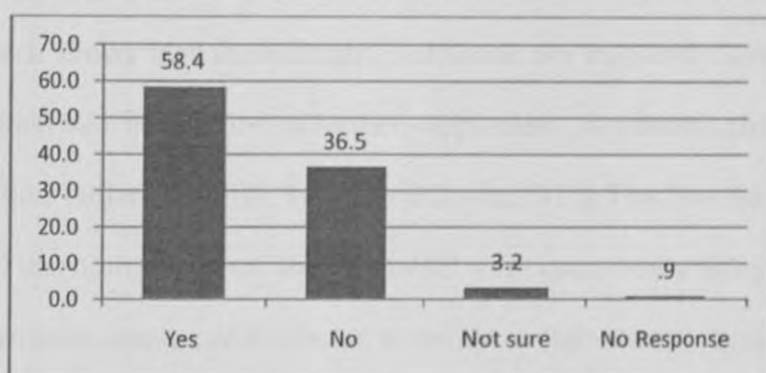
#### 4.7.3. Seeking Political Information on Social Media.

Respondents were asked if they had deliberately sought political information on social media.

Figure 17 indicates that 58.4% of the respondents had deliberately visited social media sites to seek information of political information. This coupled with the fact that seeking information was the highest motivation for visiting SNS sites (Table 7).

We can conclude that SNS media provides an important platform for political mobilization and campaigns. This information was available in the form of campaign videos and photographs, campaign posters, adverts, manifestos, links to news websites, status updates, and press releases among others.

Figure 17; Respondents who deliberately looked for political information on Social media



This study established there was a huge presence of political content and campaign information on SNSs. It was common for many people to log in to these sites to get the latest in the political sites. Due to the unregulated nature of information on SNSs, it is possible to find information that mainstream media would not be willing to publish or broadcast mostly due to strict gatekeeping.

One key aspect of Facebook and other social media sites is the ability to 'share' news stories, video or webpage with other members. Westling notes that once a story, link, video or photo is 'shared', other people are able to comment or share the link further with others on their 'wall' or other groups. This feature on social media has realized the potential to move stories around networks and indeed the world in a viral manner (Westling, 2007).

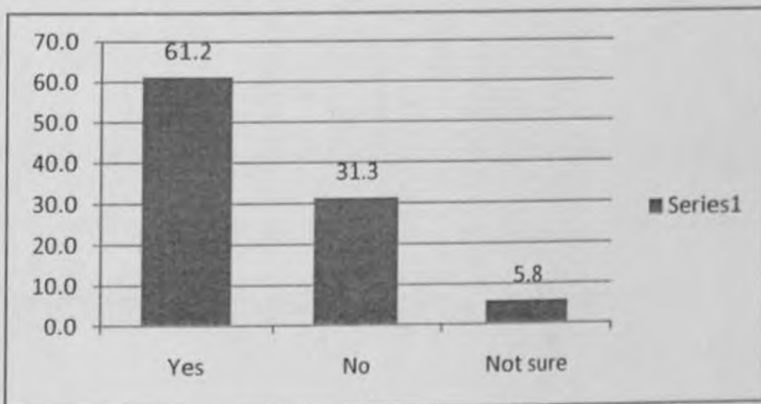
Due to their popularity and ease of use, SNS sites provide the motivation and platform for young people to consume content posted on them. One characteristic of online information is that it is free from the strict restrictions and gatekeeping characteristics of traditional media, therefore one is able to get unedited and uncensored information. It is the reason young people are likely to seek for information on social media.

Recent research shows that increasingly, audiences are frequently turning to online sources to obtain information and to further supplement information they receive from traditional offline outlets (English, Sweetser & Ancu, 2011). The Pew Internet Research of 2010 found that online political users in the US were consistently using the internet to look for information about candidates or to verify or 'fact check' claims made during campaigns (Pew Research, 2010). The study found that 31% of all users went online to watch political videos in the run up to the 2010 midterm elections in the US.

#### 4.7.4. Discovering a political event on social media.

The respondents were asked if they had ever discovered a political event on social media.

Figure 18: Discovered a new political event on social media





According to Figure 18, the study indicated that 61.2 % of the respondents had discovered a political event or occurrence for the first time on social media.

Again this indicates the value of social media as a forum for consumption of political news and information and a valuable campaign platform. Political campaigns used social media to inform their supporters or potential voters about the different campaign events or scheduled activities.

SNS sites have an 'events' function which allows people, candidates or political groupings to post information about specific events or meetings that they are planning. Through events members can participate in rallies, meetings, fundraisings etc. The recent protest against the clamour by members of parliament to increase their salaries dubbed '*Occupy Parliament*' was mostly organized through social media. Majority of the people got to know about it through SNSs especially twitter. The mobilization for the event was effectively done through social media and many people were able to follow online.

People also get to learn many significant events because social media act as a source of news for young people. In the run up to the elections, breaking news of major events first appeared on social media before they got to the mainstream media.

#### **4.8. Using social media to follow significant political events**

The study sought to establish the extent to which people used social media to track the significant political events before, during and after the campaign period.

#### 4.8.1. Most followed or viewed political events on social media during and after the 2013 presidential elections.

Table 7: Most followed or viewed political events on social media during and after the 2013 presidential elections

Activity followed on SNSs	Party Nominations %	Presidential Debates %	Manifesto Launches %	Coalition Formation %	Election Results %	Supreme Court Ruling %
Yes	30.6	70.0	33.9	32.7	71.3	63.0
No	68.1	28.7	64.8	65.9	27.4	35.4
99	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 7 presents the most followed or viewed political events on social media around the 2013 general elections in Kenya.

##### 4.8.1.1. Presidential debates

The two Presidential debates were the most followed political events before the elections.

Figure 19: Followed Presidential Elections on SNS

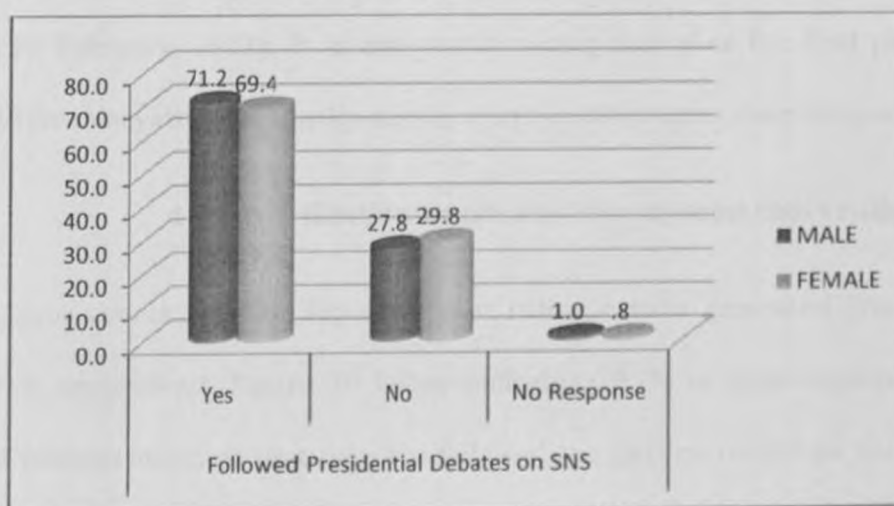


Figure 19 shows they were followed in equal measures by both genders. In this study, 70% of the respondents indicated that they followed the Presidential debates via social media. Majority of the people posted something related to the debate on social media.

At some point, the two presidential debates and related issues under discussion were trending on Twitter globally with over 100,000 tweets posted on the site (<http://www.humanipo.com/news/3892/>) and ([www.the-star.co.ke/news/article-107192/](http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/article-107192/)). BBC Africa service announced via their twitter handle that the Kenya Presidential debate was the top trending topic on twitter at the time (<https://twitter.com/BBCAfrica/status>). The debates were followed live on YouTube over a three and a half hour period and still continued to dominate online conversations days after they were over.

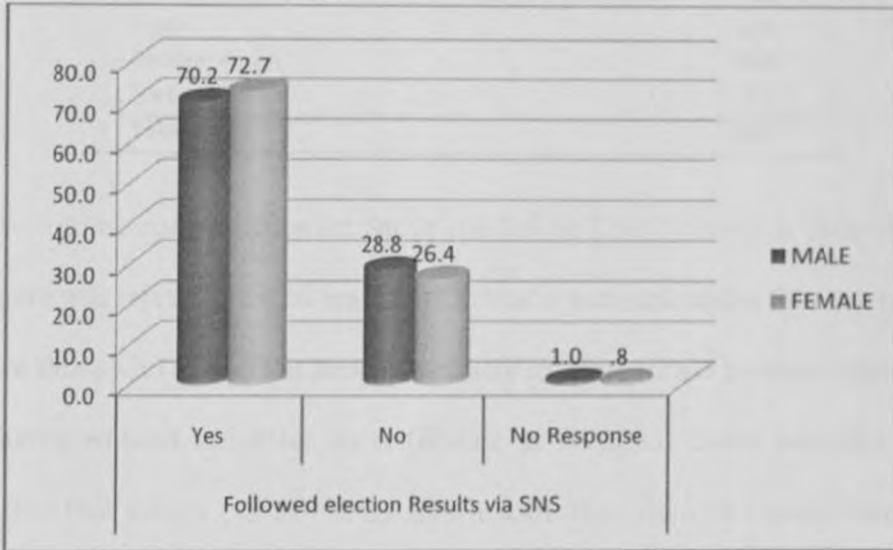
The debates were reported in the Kenyan media as having helped some undecided voters to make up their minds (Nation Newspaper 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013 and Standard media 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2013). It is also worth noting that after the first presidential debate, Uhuru Kenyatta's popularity among voters is said to have risen marginally.

#### **4.8.1.2. Election results and the supreme court ruling**

The elections results and the Supreme Court ruling equally generated great interest among the respondents. Figure 20 below indicates 70.2% of male respondents and 72.7% of females indicated that they had followed the election results on Social media. Another 63% indicated they followed the Supreme Court proceedings via social media. This shows that social media was an important platform for acquiring political information and also commenting on various political issues among the users. The fact

that political events ended up trending globally also indicates that people were actively participating and engaging each other politically on social media.

Figure 20: Followed Election results on SNS



#### 4.9. Users attitude towards political content on social media

The study has thus far established the presence of political content on social media. The study sought to know what young people felt about the content.

The respondents were asked if they felt there was too much political information on SNS. According to Table 8, about 61% indicated they agreed or strong agreed that there was too much political information on SNS sites. This reinforces the notion that political content is easily available on social media.

Table 8: There is too Much political information on Social networking sites

Respondents View	Valid Percent
Strongly Disagree	7.8
Disagree	10.0
Neutral	19.8
Agree	32.4
Strongly Agree	28.9
No Response	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

This however, is a contrast to what Smith and Rainie (2012) found in their study. They found there was a relatively small amount of political material among those they sampled. There are those who argue that people are likely to come across political information on social media without soliciting for it (Rhaine et al. 2005). Some scholars, however, believe that that people can select the information they want to expose themselves to and therefore they are likely to focus on information that agrees with their views (Mutz & Martin, 2001).

Table 9: Friends are too political on Social Media

Respondents' View	Valid Percent
Strongly Disagree	14.7
Disagree	25.4
Neutral	28.4
Agree	19.5
Strongly Agree	11.2
No Response	.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The respondents were asked if they felt their friends were too political on SNS. About 40% of the respondents do not consider their friends too political on social media while 30% agree their friends are too political on social media. Tables 9 & 10 can act as a good gauge of the nature and presence of political content on social media.

Table 10: Can't Stand information posted on Social media

	Valid Percent
Strongly Disagree	25.8
Disagree	27.3
Neutral	30.1
Agree	7.4
Strongly Agree	8.9
No Response	.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 11: Political information should be banned on social media

	Valid Percent
Strongly Disagree	27.4
Disagree	30.2
Neutral	22.0
Agree	9.6
Strongly Agree	9.8
No Response	.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

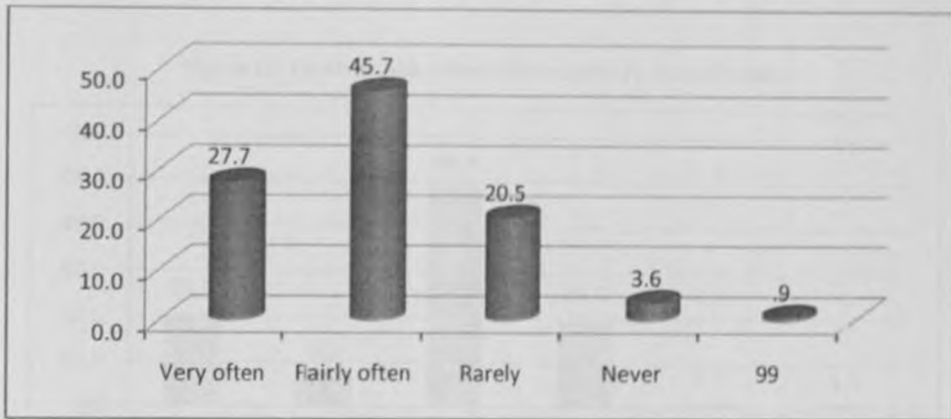
Tables 10 and 11 indicate that majority of the respondents are comfortable with the presence of political content on social media. When asked if political content should be blocked/banned from social media, 57% said no while only 19 % felt it should be banned. Again only 16.1% felt they can't stand political content on social media while 52.5 % felt comfortable with political messages on social media. This can partly be explained by the fact that social media allows for selectivity. One is able to determine the information they want to consume (Farrel et al. 2008)

#### 4.10. Exposure to diverse political views on SNSs.

The study was keen to establish the extent to which social media expose people to diverse political views which is an important feature of democratic engagement.



Figure 21: Come across information contradicting one's views

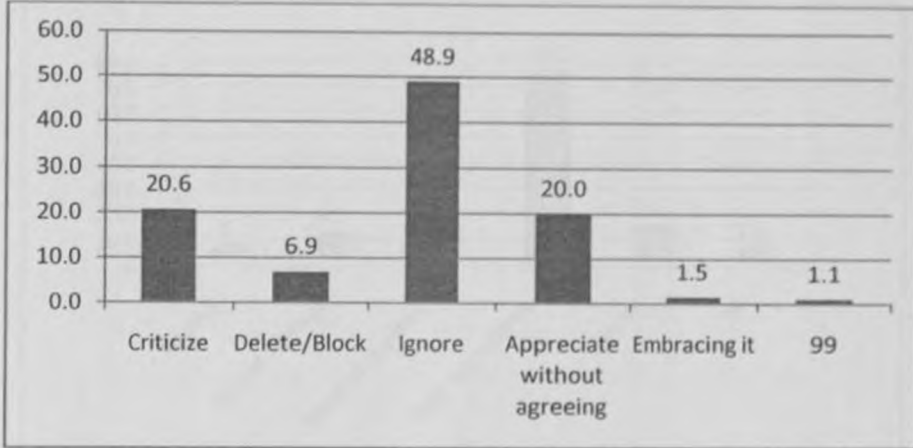


According to Figure 21, most of the respondents indicated that they had come across information that challenged their views and opinions. 28 % indicated that they came across such information frequently. Another 46% indicated that they came across contradictory information fairly often. Exposure to information contrary to pre-existing opinion and beliefs is important in making political choice.

Raine et al. (2005) in a study found that about half of all internet users had reported coming across campaign information by chance when they were online for different reasons. There are other studies that suggest that the internet is related to greater exposure to diverse political views compared to face-to-face connections like family, friends and coworkers (Horrigan et al., 2004 & Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010). Pew Internet research also found that 61% of online adults in the US agreed that the internet exposes people to a wider range of political views than they can get in the traditional media ( Pew Research, 2010 p 3)

#### 4.10.1. Dealing with information that contradicts one's views

Figure 22: Dealing with information contrary to one's views



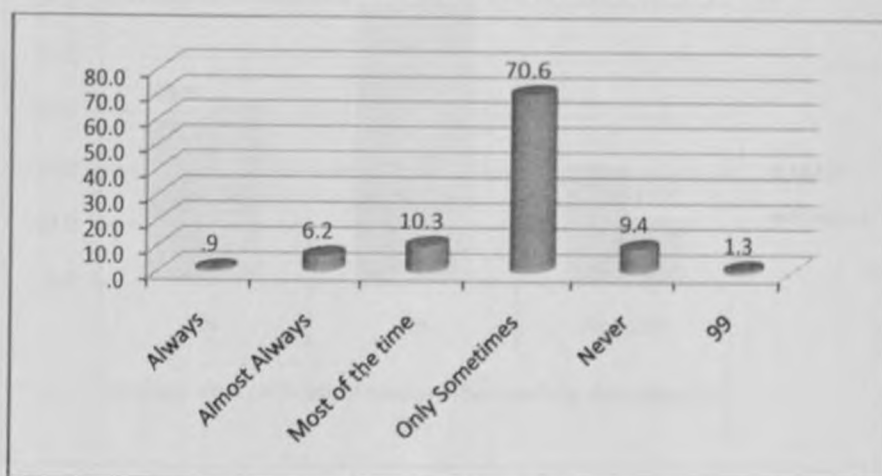
According to Figure 22 above, 76% of those polled indicated that their way of dealing with information that contradicted their opinion was to ignore (49%), criticize (21%) or delete/ block (7%). This is in line with the theory of selective processes especially selective retention and perception. As a result of too much barrage of information that bombard us, we tend to attend to media messages that we feel are in accord with our already held attitudes and interests, while we filter those ones that do not cater for us (Entman, 1989).

#### How often they agree with information posted on SNS

For democracy to function and for people to be able to make an informed choice, they must be exposed to diverse political views (Benhabib, 1992). Democratic choice involves making a decision on the basis of available information.

According to Figure 23, out of those who participated in the study, 70% indicated they rarely agreed with information posted on social media.

Figure 23: How often they agree with information posted on SNS



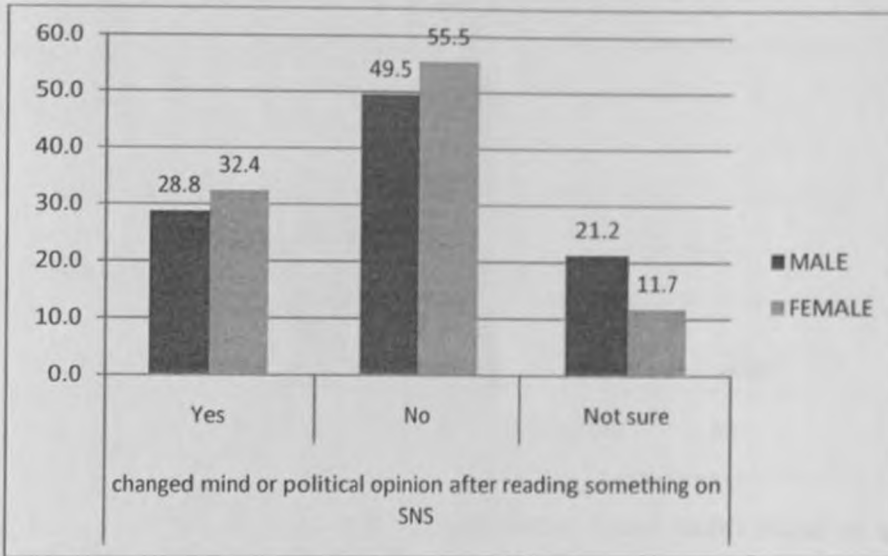
It has been argued that the structure of the internet creates conditions particularly conducive for selective exposure to media content (Bimber & Davis, 2003). Scholars have noted that online communities tend to be homogenous in terms of values and viewpoints. (Dahlberg, 2001) which means people tend to gravitate to groups that agree with their views. However, this study shows there is also evidence of the potential of online discussions to lead persons of contrasting viewpoints to engage in political discussions online. The earlier mentioned study conducted by Pew Internet Research found that the internet exposes people to both similar and divergent viewpoints (Pew Research, 2010).

#### 4.11. Social Media and Political opinion change.

##### Changed mind or political opinion after reading something on social media

The respondents were asked if they had ever changed their minds after reading something posted on social media. This was meant to establish whether SNSs played any role in opinion change.

Figure 24: Changed mind or political opinion after reading something on social media

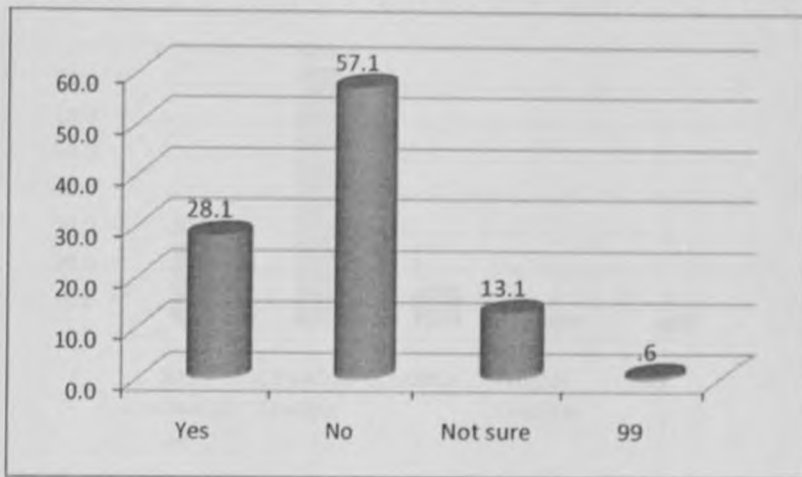


According to Figure 24 above, about half of those who participated in the study indicated that social media have never influenced their political opinion. 50 % male youths and 56% female youths indicated that they have never changed their mind or political opinion as a result of anything posted on social media. However, about a third in both genders (30%) admitted to having changed their mind as a result of something posted on social media..

### **Started or stopped supporting a candidate after reading something on social media**

Figure 25 reveals that 57.1% of the respondents indicated that they had never decided to support or stop supporting a candidate on the basis of information posted on social media. 28.1% indicated they had changed their mind after reading a post on social media. This points to a significant fact, that social media have a significant but limited influence on political opinions and decisions among young people.

Figure 25: Started or stopped supporting a candidate after reading something on social media



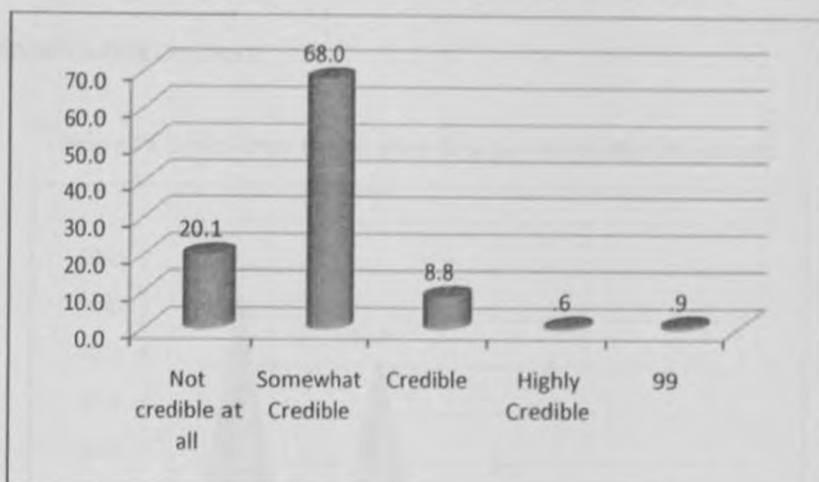
The above two findings are consistent with what Aaron Smith found in a study on the use of the Internet in the 2010 US elections found that a significant number of online political users found material online that encouraged them to vote during the 2010 US campaigns. 42% said they came across online material that material that encouraged them to vote for or against a specific candidate (Smith, 2011 in Pew Research 2010).

#### 4.12. Credibility of information posted on social media

The respondents were asked how credible the information posted on social media was. 68 % of the respondents felt that the information posted on social media was Credible to an extent. However, a significant percentage (20.1%) felt the information posted online not credible at all. Only a small percentage (8.8%) felt the information was credible (Figure 26)

Credibility has a great impact on persuasion. People are more likely to believe and act on a message or information if they believe it's credible. Credibility refers to the consumers' (of the message) perception of the truthfulness and believability of the message in general.

Figure 26: Credibility of information posted on social media



The higher the credibility of a message, the higher the believability. Credibility of messages, usually studied in communication, psychology and computer science focuses on the collection of message attributes that make the content or their senders valued relative to the information imparted. The focus here is on the sources of the message's content or the authenticity of their meaning. Historically, credibility has been studied almost exclusively on persuasion- whether messages or speakers can change people's beliefs (Wolfgang, 2008).

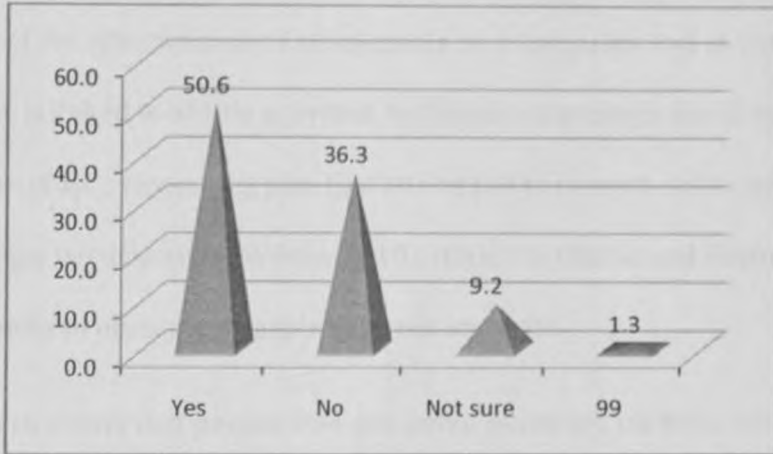
#### **Decided not to post something for fear of offending others.**

According to Figure 26, the study also found a relatively high level of self-censorship. About half of the respondents had decided not to post something to avoid offending someone. This self-censorship may point to a high filtering mechanism on social media where people evaluate messages before they post them. However, about a third of the SNS users did not have a problem posting anything and they did not fear that it could offend anyone. Since messages on social media are not necessarily subject to the



traditional gatekeeping restrictions, at times people can post too liberally at times bordering on offending content.

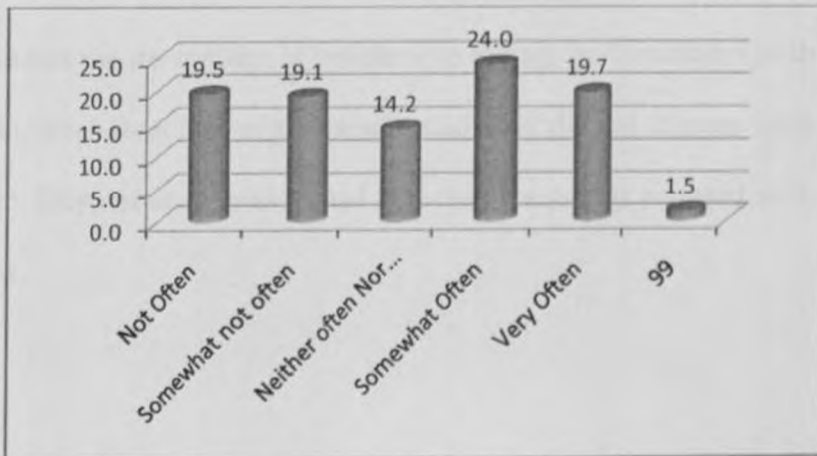
Figure 27: Decided not to post something for fear of offending others.



#### 4.13. Discussing offline something learnt online

The surveyed youth were asked if they had ever discussed offline, anything that they might have learned online.

Figure 28: Discussing offline something learnt online



According to Figure 28, a significant number, about 44% indicated they done so very often or somewhat often. About 38% indicated they had not done so frequently. This is

important to show that online information somehow makes it way to offline discussion. The fact that information posted online eventually becomes the subject political discussion offline points to the potential of social media to shape political opinion.

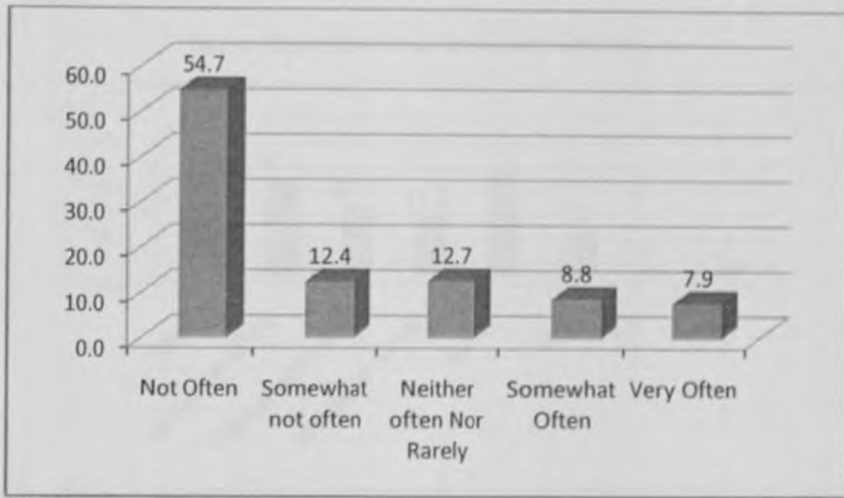
A key aspect of the effectiveness of social media as a campaign tool is determining how online activity is linked to offline activities. In Obama's campaign, social media served as the foundation of an 'overarching plan that attempted to connect online networking with offline campaign participation (Wilcox, 2010). Both the Obama and Romney campaigns used social media to encourage people to go out and vote.

Recent research shows that people who are active politically on SNSs, also actively take part in a range of activities that occur outside the boundaries of social networking sites. Smith (2013) found that 83% of SNSs users also get involved in political or social issues outside the bounds of SNSs themselves.

#### **4.14. Discussion with strangers on social media**

Figure 29 shows the percentage of people who engage in discussions with strangers on social media. More than half of the people said they did not discuss with strangers on social media. Only about 15% indicated that they frequently engaged with strangers on social media.

Figure 29: Discussion with strangers on social media



This shows that social media is important in enhancing bonding social capital which is strong connections between people who know each other and less on bridging social capital which refers to connections between people who don't know each other. This further indicates that on social media, users are likely to engage with people they already know offline. This might also mean people tend to discuss more with people who they might share political opinion or persuasion. The exception here is those people who are members of political groups on social media in which case then, they end up discussing with people who are unknown to them in real line.

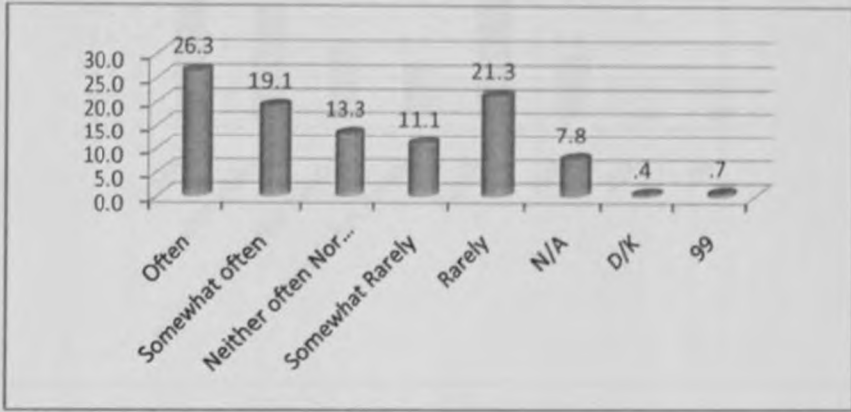
#### 4.15. Interpersonal Discussion of Politics

The study sought to establish the level of interpersonal discussion of politics that the youth engaged in with different people in their lives.

When asked how often they engage in political discussions with parents, a significant percentage indicated they had done so on a frequent basis. 26 % indicated they did so rather often while another 19 % did so somewhat often.

#### 4.15.1. Interpersonal Discussion with Parents

Figure 30: Interpersonal Discussion with Parents

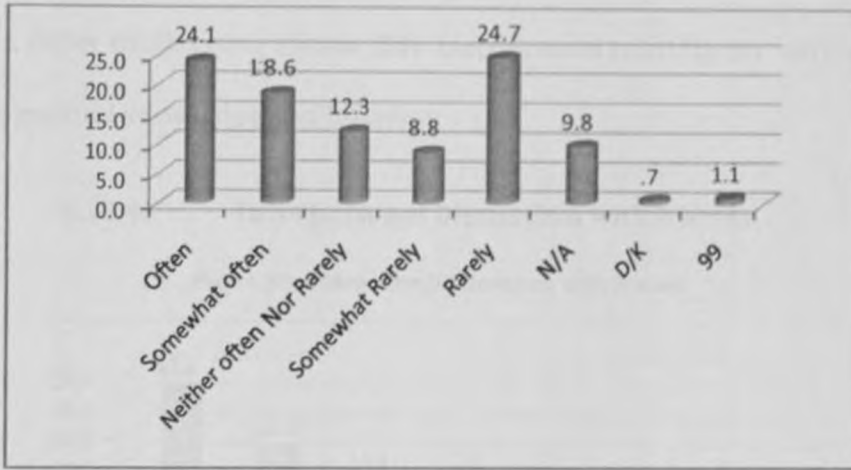


About a fifth of the surveyed youths indicated they rarely discussed politics with parents. Some scholars have argued that the family is the basic structure of social mobilization when it comes to making important decisions including political choices (Connell, 1972).

#### 4.15.2. Interpersonal Discussion with siblings

Figure 31 shows how frequently the surveyed youth discuss politics with their siblings. It is interesting to note that almost a quarter of those surveyed discussed politics with their siblings rather often while also a similar number of respondents indicated they did not. However a closer look at the data indicates that many of the surveyed youth were involved in discussion of politics in varying degrees. Siblings are also quite influential in people's lives and could influence the choices people make.

Figure 31: Interpersonal Discussion with siblings



#### 4.15.3. Interpersonal Discussion with colleagues

Figure 32: Interpersonal Discussion with Colleagues

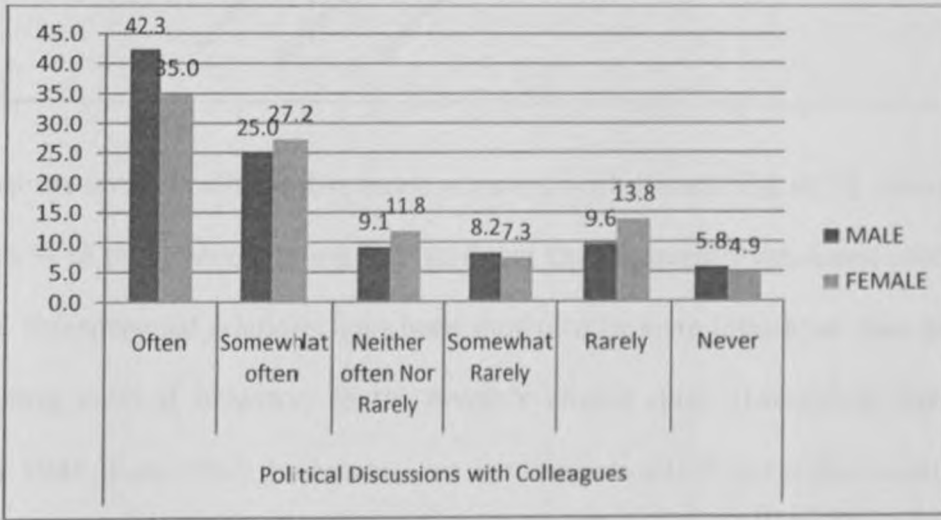
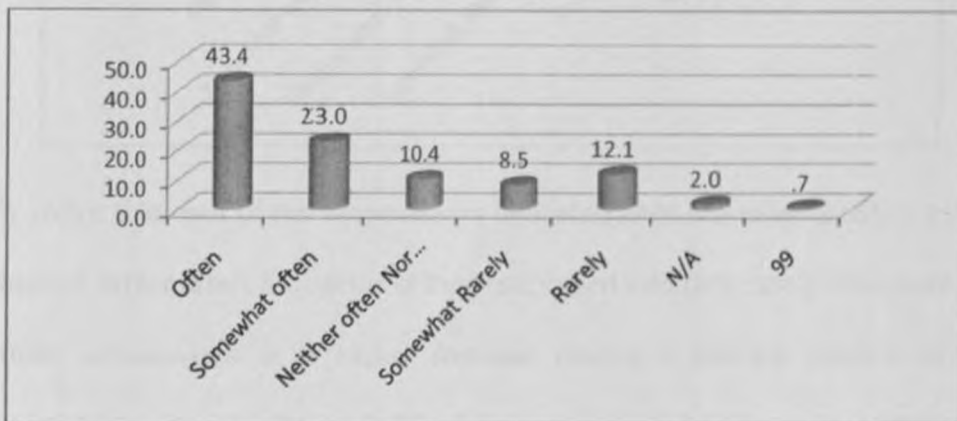


Figure 32 indicates a high level of political discussions with colleagues. About two thirds of the surveyed male youths, 67.3 % and 62.2% of the female youths indicated they were involved in some level of political discussion with their colleagues.

About a fifth or 19% of either gender indicated they rarely discussed politics with colleagues. Other studies have shown that interpersonal relations are very important in informing political knowledge and behavior.

#### 4.15.4. Interpersonal Discussion with friends

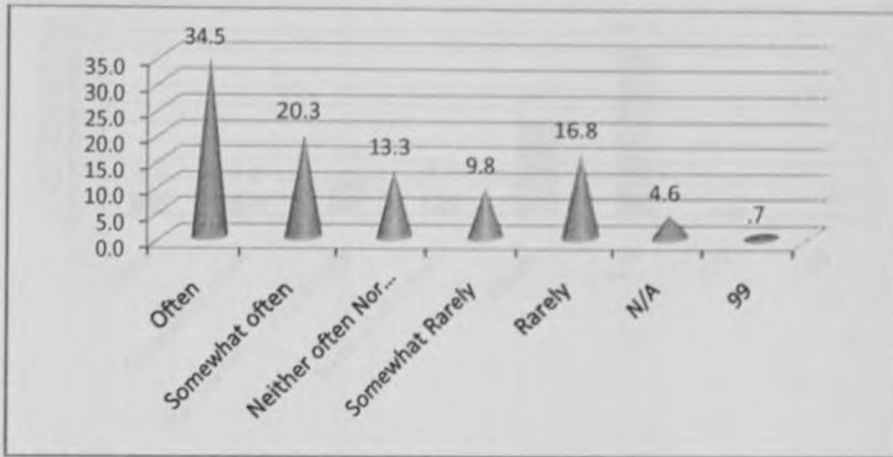
Figure 33: Interpersonal Discussion with Friends



The highest level of political discussion occurred with friends. Figure 33 shows that at least 66 % of the surveyed youth indicated that they frequently discussed politics with friends. Interpersonal relations have been shown to be more influential than the media in shaping political behavior. In the people's choice study (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1948, Katz, 1957) the researchers were surprised to discover that interpersonal connections were mentioned more than the media as the leading influence on political choice.



Figure 34: Interpersonal Discussion with Schoolmates

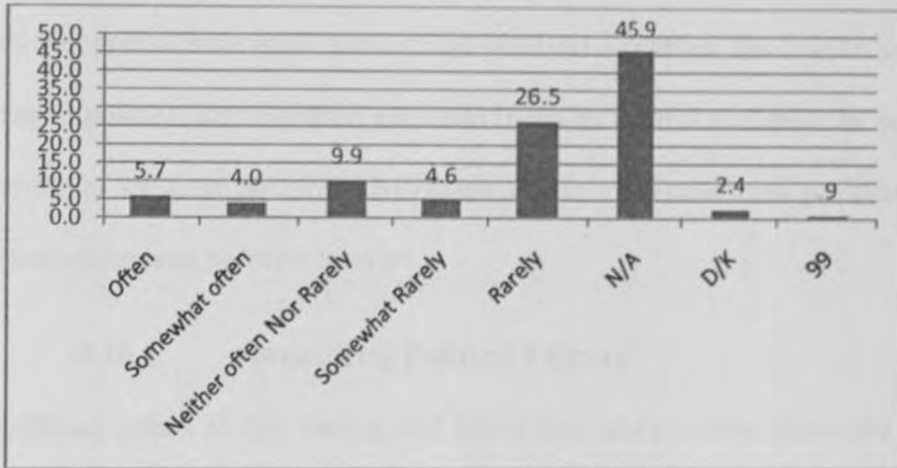


Slightly more than half of the respondents indicated they discussed politics with their schoolmates rather often. A quarter of those surveyed said they rarely discussed politics with their schoolmates. It is rather common during a political season for college students to be involved in vibrant political discussions and debates among each other.

#### 4.15.5. Interpersonal Discussion with Politicians and civil society

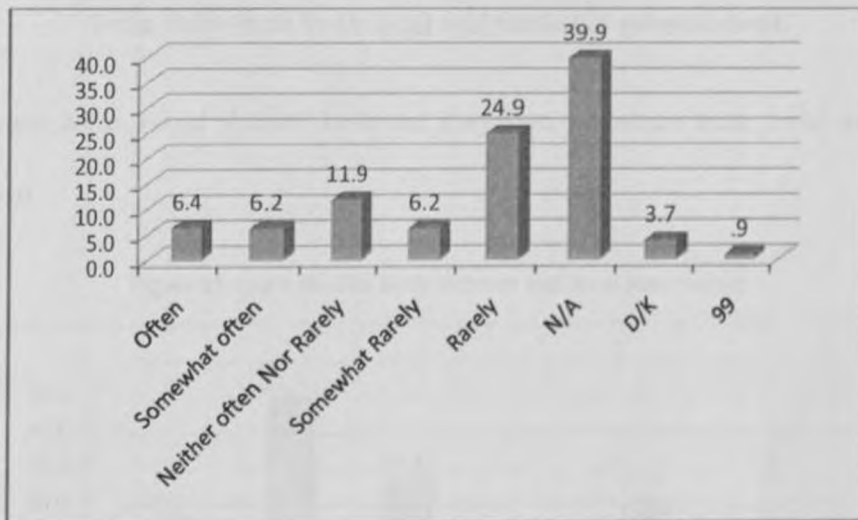
Figures 35 and 36 below indicate a very low level of political discussion with politicians or civil society leaders. Only a paltry 5.7% and 6.4% indicated they had frequent political discussions with politicians and civil society respectively. Around two thirds of those surveyed indicated they either rarely engaged politicians and civil society actors or it has actually never happened. This can be partly explained by the inaccessibility of politicians and civil society whose most common point of access is through rallies and the media.

Figure 35: Interpersonal Discussion with Politicians



#### 4.15.6. Interpersonal Discussion with civil society workers

Figure 36: Interpersonal Discussion with civil society workers



#### 4.16. Political Variables

The study integrated individual factors and political variables that could account for differences in political participation and used them as control variables to help isolate the influence of SNSs on political participation. These variables are political efficacy, political knowledge and political interest.

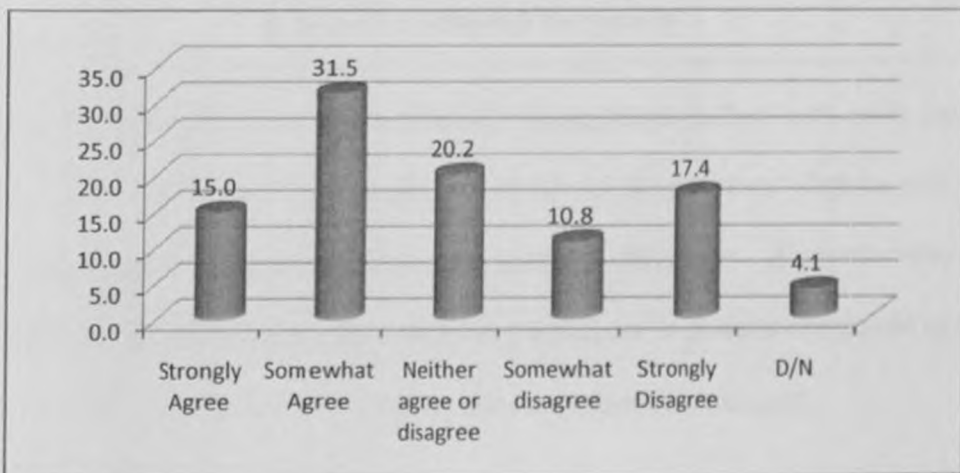
##### 4.16.1. Measuring Political Efficacy

Political efficacy refers to the feeling and belief that one's actions have the ability to affect or effect change in the national or local government. That individual contribution has a bearing on a wider political scale.

#### I can influence both local and national government.

Respondents were asked if they believed they can influence both local and national government.

Figure 37: can influence both national and local government



According to Figure 37, close to a half of those polled indicated that they believe they can influence both local and national government. Only a small percentage felt they can't

influence the government. This depicts a relatively highly level of political efficacy which is the feeling that one can make a difference. People with a higher level of political efficacy have a higher inclination to participate in politics because they believe it matters and their actions will have a level of impact.

**My vote made a difference in the elections**

Figure 38: My vote made a difference in the elections

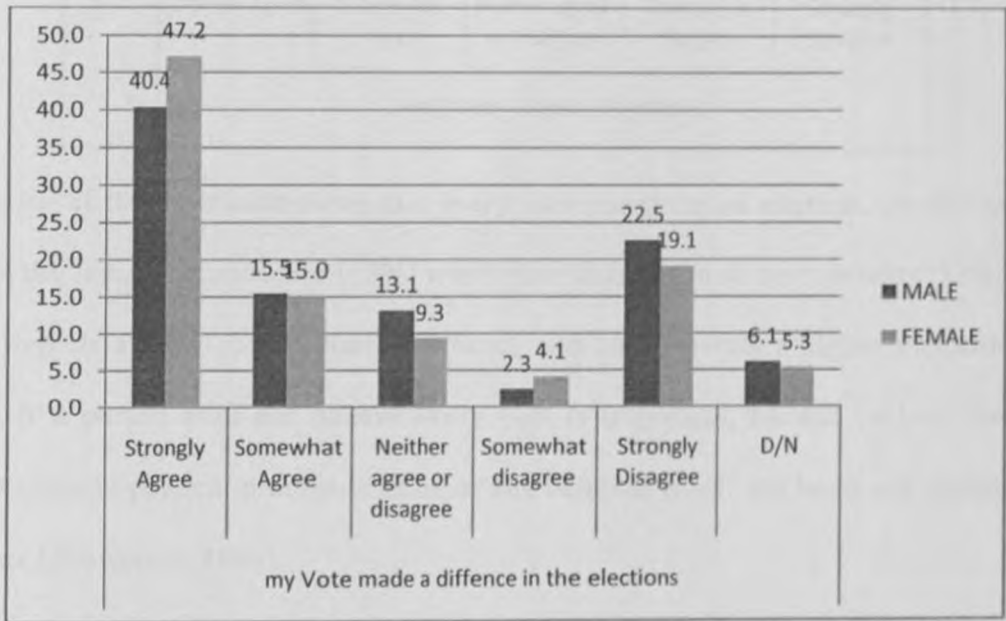
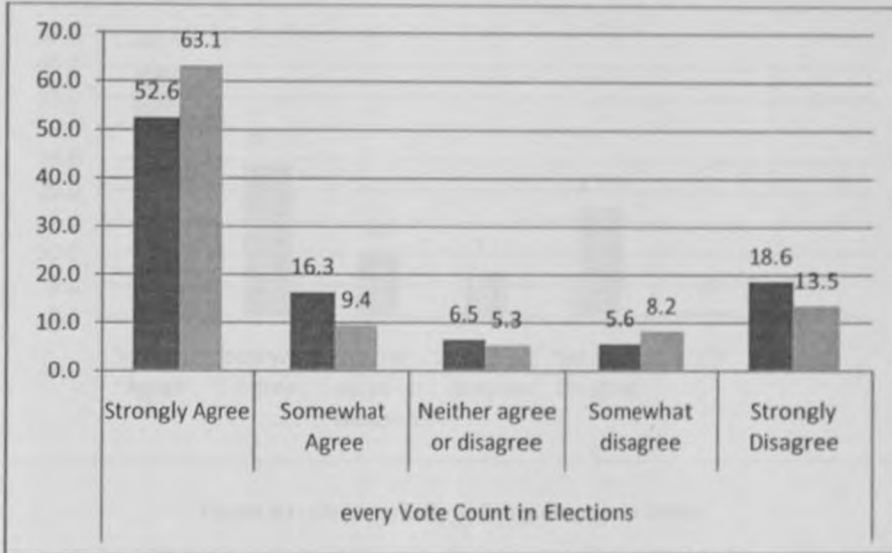


Figure 38 also shows a high level of efficacy among those polled, both male and female. Close to 60% believe their vote made a difference in the elections. Slightly more women (47%) than men (40%) believe their vote made a difference. A person who believes their vote made a difference is also likely to participate in politics compared to a person who believes voting is vanity and cannot have any significant impact.

Figure 39: Every vote counts in an election



Majority of those polled believe that every vote counts in an election. On this aspect, again the female respondents (63%) were more than the male respondents (53%). This also depicts a high level of political efficacy and consequently a higher inclination to vote. If a person does not believe every vote is important, he will be less likely to participate in political processes as he or she believes it will not have any meaningful impact (Zhang et al. 2009).

Figure 40: Campaigns help voters make an informed choice

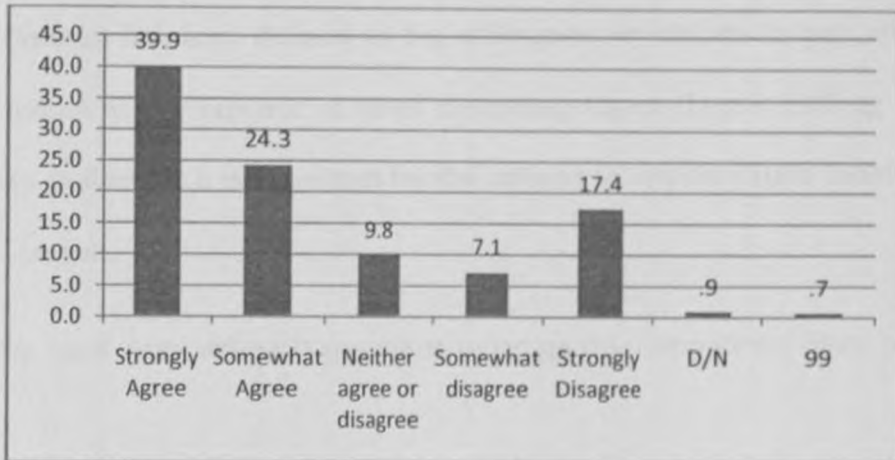


Figure 41: Elections help to bring change in Kenya

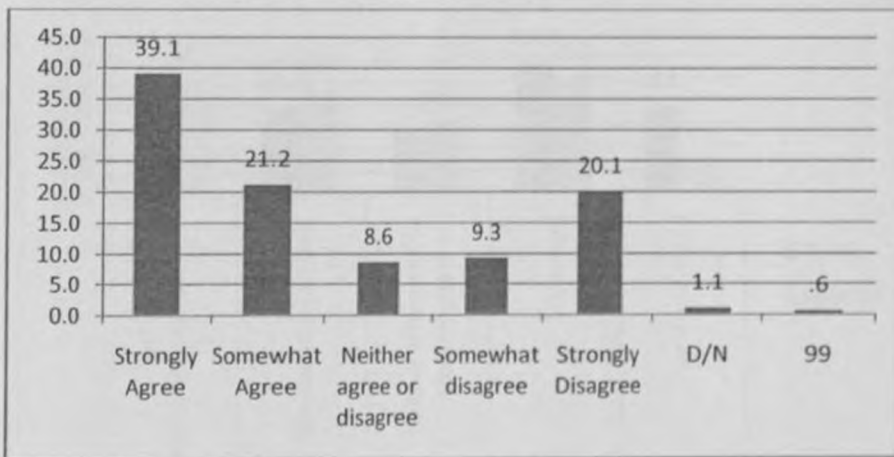


Figure 41 shows that approximately 60% of the respondents hold the view that elections help to bring change in Kenya. This contrasts with the about 30% who are convinced elections do not help to bring change in Kenya. This is evenly spread across either gender. This also signifies a relatively high level of political efficacy. If one believes elections can facilitate change, they are more likely to participate in voting compared to those who don't believe elections can bring change in a country.

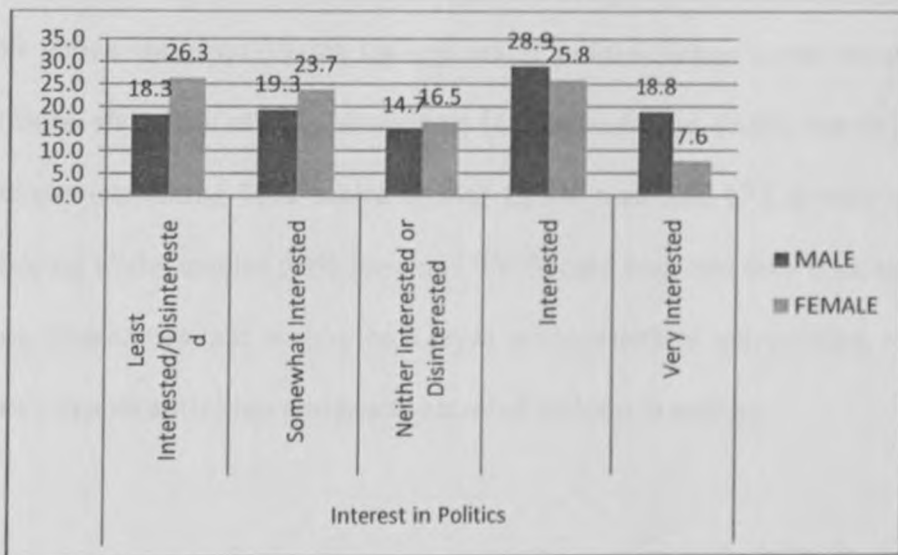


#### 4.16.2. Political Interest

Political interest has been defined as the willingness by citizens to pay attention to political issues at the expense of other competing topics (Lupia, 2005,pg 112). For democracy to flourish, it is important for the citizens to demonstrate a healthy level of political interest.

This study used three different questions to gauge the respondents' level of political interest.

Figure 42: Interest in politics



According to Figure 42, when the respondents were asked about their level of interest in politics, they were divided. About 47% of the men indicated a definite interest in politics while 39% indicated a low interest in politics. Among the female respondents, 32% indicated a definite interest in politics while half (50%) indicated low interest.

This shows that the level of political interest among male youth is higher compared to the female youth.

Figure 43: Feeling about politics

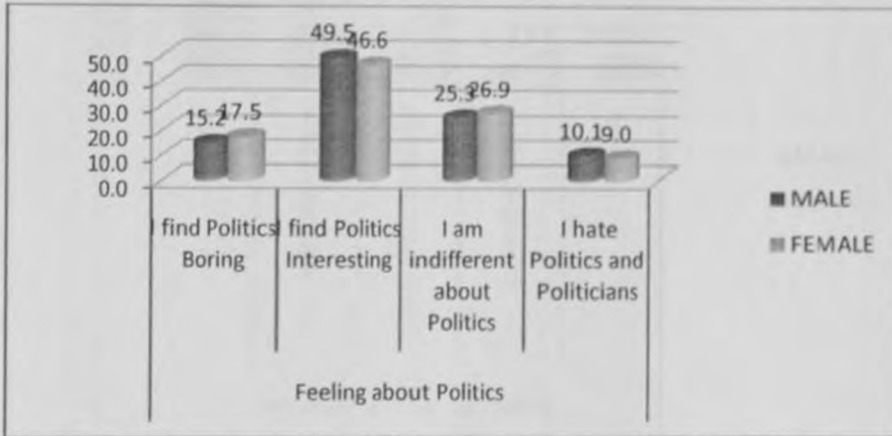
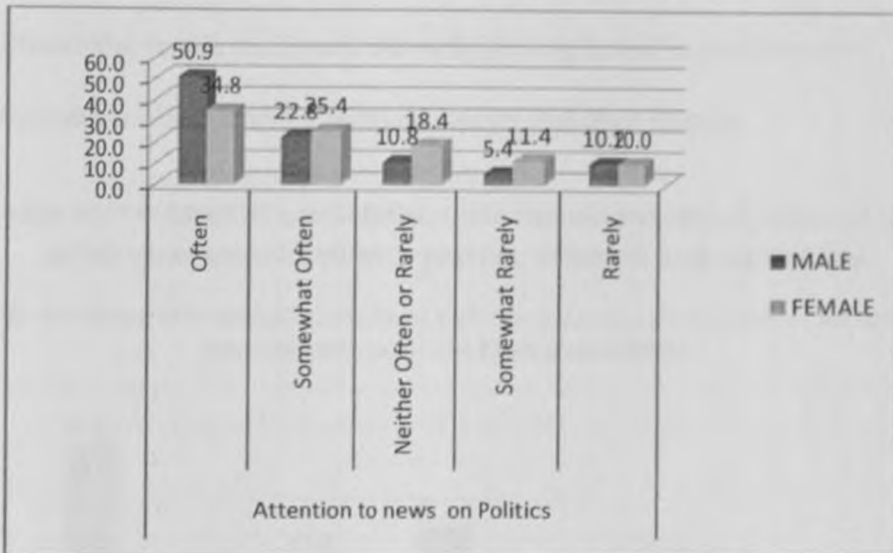


Figure 43 shows the respondents feelings about politics. When asked what they felt about politics, about half of the respondents (49.5% male and 46.6% female) said they found politics interesting. This contrasts with 15.2% male and 17.5 female who found politics boring while another 10% male and 9% female who said they hate politics and politicians. This shows that within the Kenyan urban youth in universities, majority of them have a significantly high and healthy level of interest in politics.

Figure 44: Attention paid to political news



Attention paid to political news is an important indicator of political interest. Paying attention to political news is correlated with a higher level of political interest. This study revealed that male youth pay more attention to political news than female youth. 74% of the males sampled indicated they pay attention to news on politics often or quite often while half of the female youth (50%) indicated they often or somewhat often paid attention to news touching on politics. 15% and 21.5% of male and female respondents respectively indicated they rarely or paid attention to news touching on politics.

This shows that a healthy proportion of Kenyan urban youth pay attention to political news.

### 4.16.3. Political Knowledge

Political knowledge in this study was tested by asking factual questions about government and political leaders, political parties and their slogans.

#### Knowledge of Presidential candidates, their running mates, alliances/coalitions and slogans associated with parties, alliances and candidates.

Figure 45: Knowledge of Presidential candidates, their running mates, alliances/coalitions and slogans associated with parties, alliances and candidates.

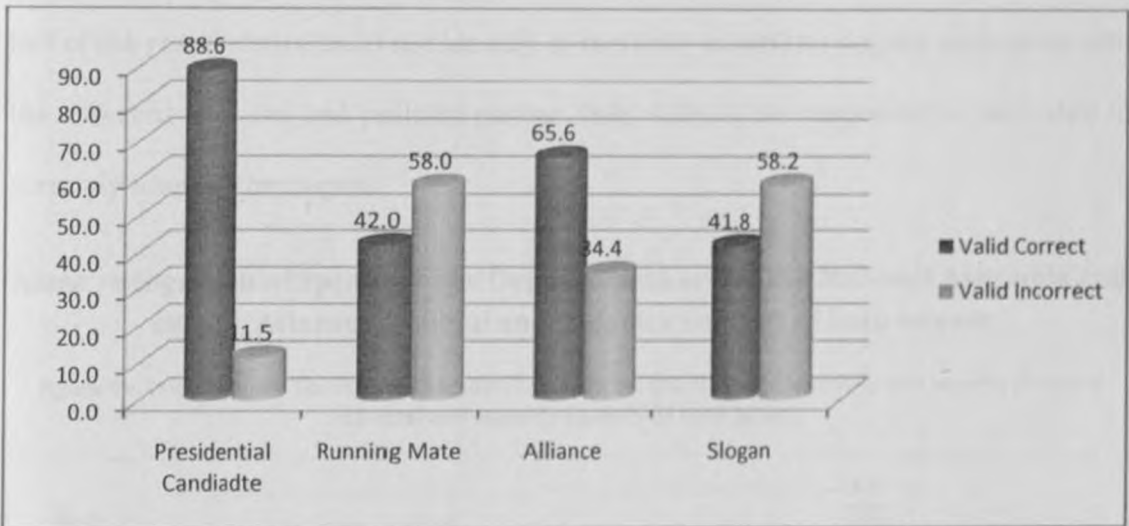


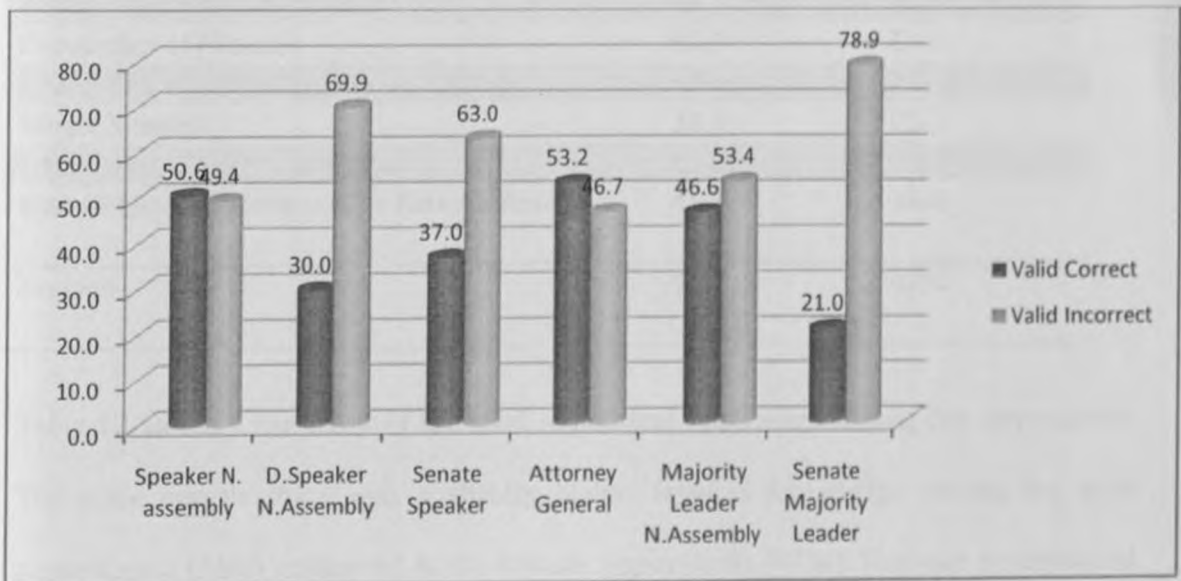
Figure 45 shows the level of political knowledge among the respondents. They were asked a series of factual questions about politics mostly focusing on name recognition of candidates, their running mates, alliances and their slogans. For a person to be considered knowledgeable, they had to mention at least five of the eight presidential candidates. For the running mate, a person was supposed to identify at least three out of the eight running mates. With Coalitions, one was supposed to identify at least three out of the four coalitions that were participating. This standard was chosen to distinguish between those with common knowledge of things that everybody was expected to know and those who were politically knowledgeable.

An overwhelming majority 89% of the respondents had clear knowledge of most of the candidates running in the 2013 general elections in Kenya. However, more than half of the respondents could not identify their running mates. Only about 42% were able to correctly identify at least three running mates.

65%, representing about two thirds of those polled were able to correctly identify by name the coalition's participating in the 2013 general elections. However, more than half of the respondents could not identify or correctly match the slogans associated with the different alliances and political parties. Only 42% of the respondents were able to correctly identify the slogans.

### Name recognition of Speakers and Deputy Speakers on the National Assembly and senate, Attorney General and Majority Leaders of both houses

Figure 46: Knowledge of Speakers and Deputy Speakers on the National Assembly and senate, Attorney General and Majority Leaders of both houses



When it came to name recognition of various offices, the results were varied. The study found that at least half of the respondents knew by name the Speaker of the National

Assembly and the Attorney General and close to a half of the respondents knew by name the majority leader of the national assembly. However, the study found there was very little awareness of the senate and the important office holders like the speaker of the senate and the senate Majority leader. Only a third knew the speaker of the senate by name while only a fifth of those polled knew the majority leader in the senate by name.

This can be partially explained by the fact that Senate is creation of the new constitution of 2010 and majority of the citizenry still have limited knowledge about the Senate, its roles and the office holders.

### Summary of Political Knowledge

Table 12: Summary of Political Knowledge

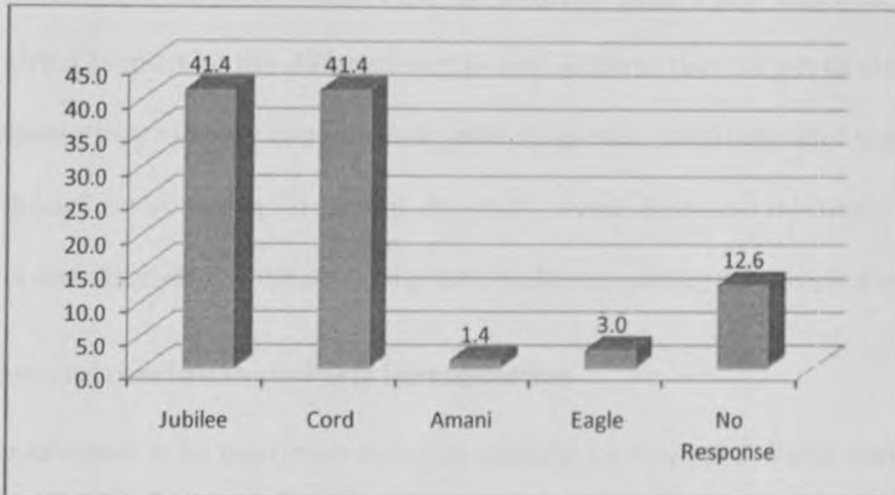
	MALE %	FEMALE %
Knowledge of Presidential Candidates	83.3	89.6
Knowledge of Running Mates	43.7	38.0
Knowledge of Alliances	62.3	64.0
Knowledge of National Assembly Speaker	48.8	41.2
Senate Speaker	38.6	25.2
Knowledge of Attorney General	55.8	40.4
Knowledge of Majority Leader National Assembly	45.1	36.8
Average	54%	47%

Table 12 shows a summary of the level of political knowledge among the respondents. The table reveals there was a slightly higher level of knowledge among the male respondents (54%) compared to the female respondents (47%). This can be explained by the fact that the male youth were more active in political discussions and they had a higher level of interest in politics as portrayed in previous sections of this study.



## Party Identification

Figure 47: Political alliance identified with



## Level of support for political parties and alliances

Figure 48: Level of support for political parties and alliances

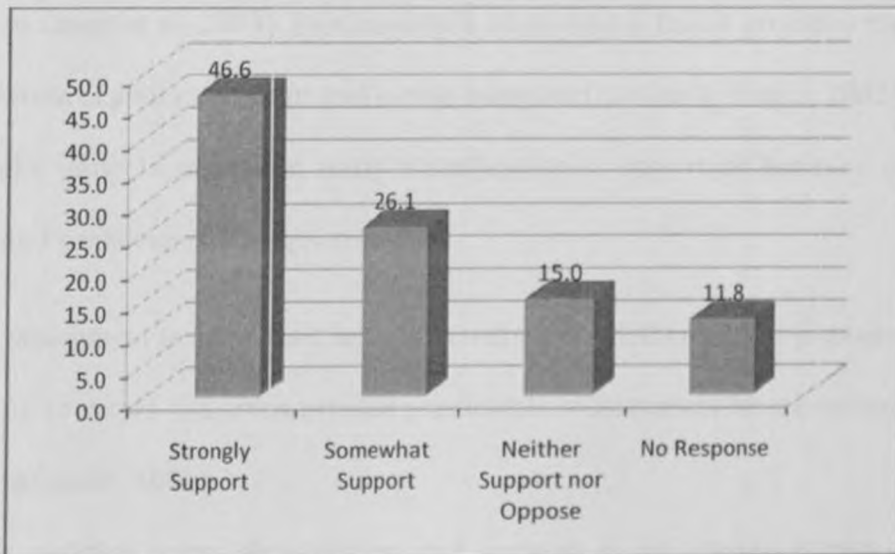


Figure 47 indicate the political parties and coalitions the respondents identify with. There seems to be an even split between identification with Jubilee and CORD coalitions

at 41.4 % for each which is consistent with what opinion polls was reflected in opinion polls covering the same period.

Figure 48 shows the level of support for the political parties and alliances. The data shows a string support for the different parties and alliances that the youth identify with 46% indicating they strongly support their political parties. 26% indicated some level of support though not so strong. In general, the study reveals there is a relatively high level of support and association with political parties in Kenya among the sampled youth.

### **Discussion and conclusion on Party Identification**

Party identification is an important factor in political participation. Party identification has been defined as “a sense of personal, affective attachment to a political party based on feelings of closeness to the social groups associated with the parties” (Goren, 2005, pg. 881, in Zhang et al., 2009). Partisanship is important in that it provides the basis for the formation of policy decisions and voting behavior (Alvarez & Brehm, 2002) When an individual’s party is in power, party identification is important because it leads to support and confidence in the government.

Partisan attachment is important because it indicates whether parties express concerns meaningful to voters and often provide predictable indicators of future voting behavior (Resnicki&Casale , 2011)

In Kenya, political party identification and support is not usually strong especially outside of political season. This mostly because parties are normally formed in the run up to the elections after which, most of the parties die or disappear only to resurface close to the next election. Another factor that accounts for the weak support and

identification for parties is the changing nature of coalition formation and building. Most coalitions never survive beyond five years. The NARC coalition formed in 2002 did not even last five years. The PNU coalition formed in 2007/2008 struggled to survive and eventually died before the 2013 general elections. Currently, there are two major coalitions namely Jubilee and CORD which are still holding together although it's barely five months after the elections. This makes it hard for the citizenry to develop strong attachment with the parties and the coalitions.

#### **4.17. Forms and Levels of Political Participation among the Urban Youth**

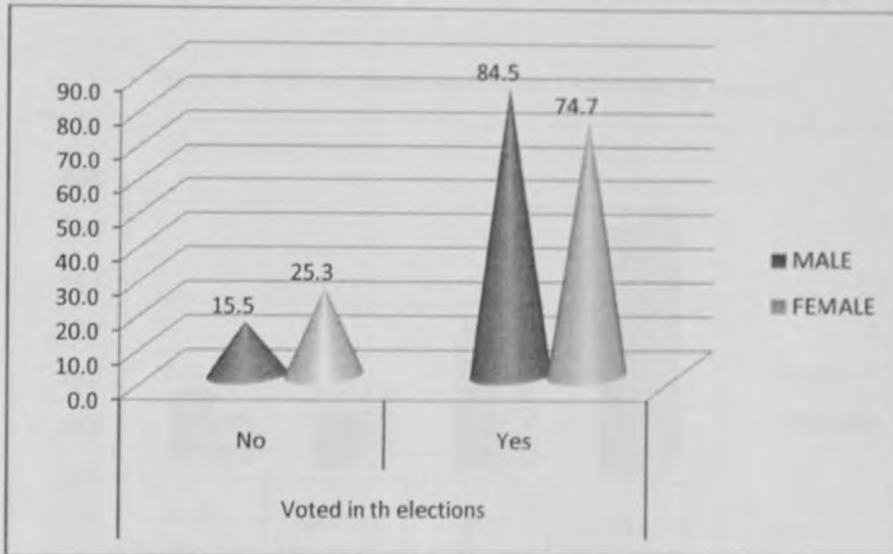
The respondents in this study were asked about their participation in certain defined political activities in a period of six months between December 2012 and May 2013. This period covers the time immediately before and after the 2013 general elections in Kenya.

The youth in this study participated in various political activities in varying degrees like working for political parties, distributing campaign literature, displaying campaign paraphernalia, persuading others to vote for their preferred candidates, working as party nomination or election officials. These forms of participation were measured on a six point scale.

##### **4.17.1. Voting**

Out of the 466 youths polled in this study, 84.5% of the male respondents voted while 74.7% of the female respondents voted in the 2013 general elections. About 15.5% of the men and 25.3% of the females indicated they did not vote and they gave varied reasons.

Figure 49: Voted in the last general elections

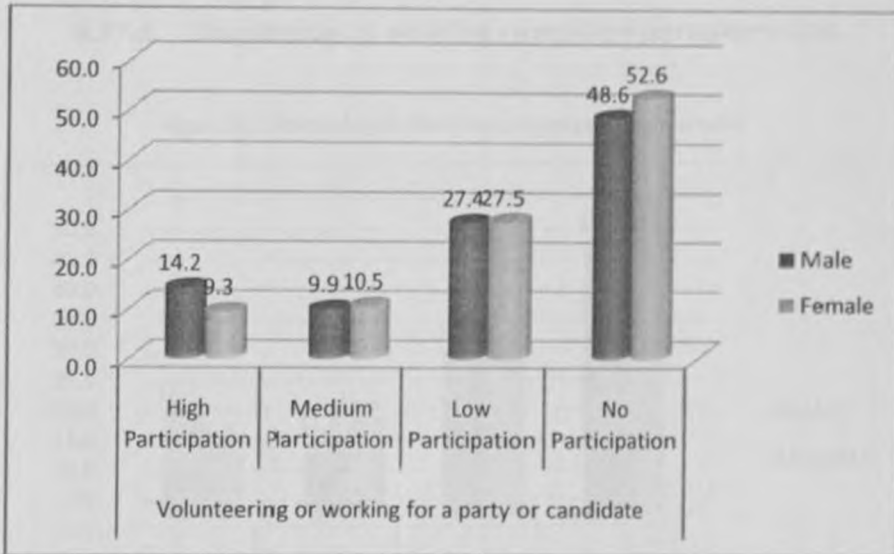


Most of those who did not vote is because they do not have the national identity cards, others did not vote because they were working as IEBC officials and were posted in a different station from the one they registered in, still, others did not vote because they did not register as voters and few indicated its because they were not interested at all.

Voter turnout captures whether an individual views elections as a meaningful way of expressing preferences with respect to how his/her country is managed (Resnicki&Casale , 2011). Voting is the true test of political participation. In Kenya voter turnout during elections in Kenya has ranged between 60% and 70%.

#### 4.17.2. Volunteering or working for a candidate or a party

Figure 50: Volunteering or working for a candidate or a party



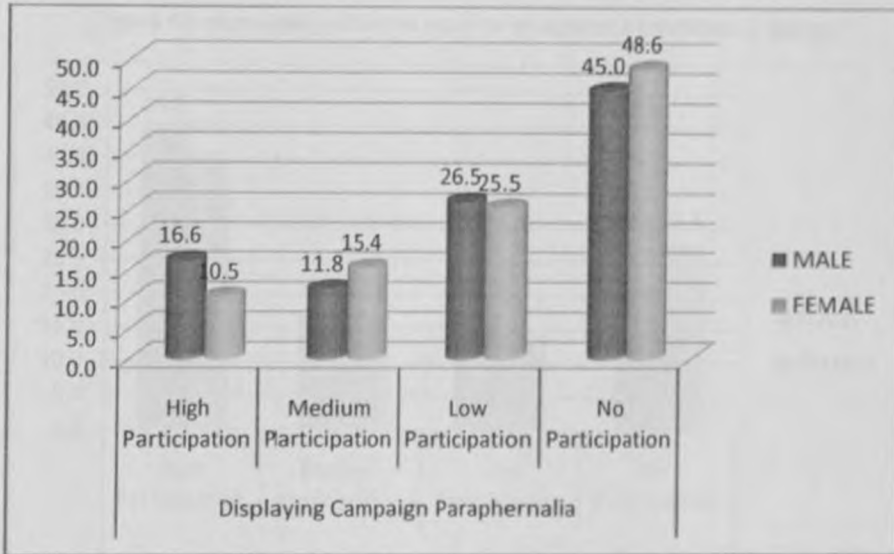
The respondents were asked whether they volunteered for a political party or candidate. Figure 50 indicates a low level of participation at this level. Very few (14.2% male and 9.3% female) among the respondents indicated they had actively volunteered for a candidate or political party, about a third indicated they had volunteered but in a limited sense. Around half of the respondents both male and female they did not in any way volunteer for a candidate or a political party.

This low level of volunteerism can be explained by the fact that money plays a key role in Kenyan politics. Previous studies show that the Kenyan youth expect financial reward for any service rendered to a politician or political party including attending political meetings (Kagwanja, 2006). This can partly be explained by poverty levels among the youth but also the prevailing political culture of heavy spending during campaigns and most people expect to benefit financially from participating in any campaign activity.

This high level of unemployment and the poverty emanating from lack of opportunities makes election time a highly rewarding time for the youth (Youth Agenda, 2008).

#### 4.17.3. Displaying or wearing campaign paraphernalia.

Figure 51: Displaying or wearing campaign paraphernalia



On the question of whether they were involved in wearing or distributing any campaign paraphernalia like wearing a t-shirt, cap or displaying a sticker of poster, again only 15% males and a tenth of the ladies indicated high participation. Close to three quarters (71.5% male and 74.1 % female) of the respondents indicated either they did not participate at all or they rarely participated.

This can be explained by the fact that the youth involved in this study are in the University where this form of participation is limited and people tend to exercise restraint on displaying their political affiliation. The results would be different if this study was carried out in a rural area where people value campaign paraphernalia.



#### 4.17.4. Persuading Others and Attending Political Rallies

When the respondents were asked if they had attempted to persuade people to vote for or against certain candidates, more than half of the surveyed youths indicated they had talked to others seeking support for their candidates.

Figure 52: persuading others to vote for or against a candidate or party

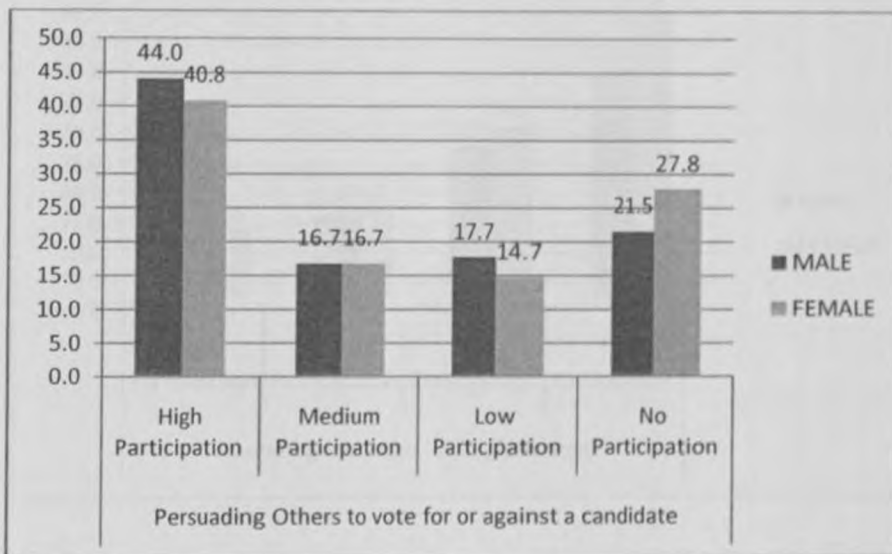


Figure 52 shows 44% male and 41% female indicated a high level of participation in attempting to persuade others to support one's candidate.

About a fifth of the males (21.5%) and a quarter of the females (27.8%) of those polled did not in any way attempt to persuade anyone to vote for or against a particular candidate.

In previous elections in Kenya, the youth have been used as instruments of political mobilization. In all the elections held under the multiparty democracy system in Kenya, youth lobby groups have played a prominent role in the elections in mobilizing votes. Groups such as Youth for KANU 92 (YK92), Vijana na Kibaki, Youth for Raila, Waremo

na Kibaki were involved in direct political mobilization of votes for their candidates. (Okombo , 2008 & Kagwanja, 2006).

#### 4.17.5. Attending a campaign function or rally

Figure 53: Attending a campaign function or rally

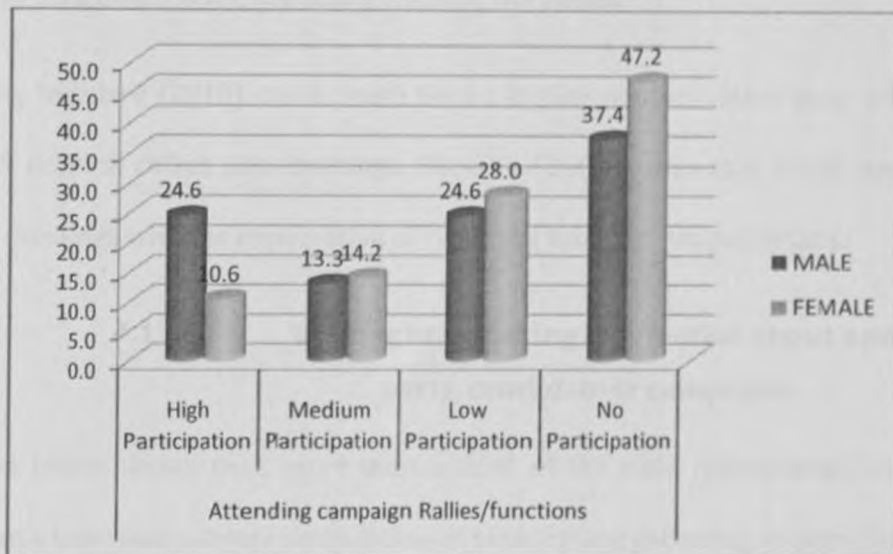


Figure 53 also shows the number of youth who attended campaign rallies and political meetings. Among the surveyed group, the study shows a low participation in attendance of political meetings. About a quarter of the surveyed youth indicated low participation while 37% male and 47% female indicated they had not attended a political rally or meeting of any kind. Only a quarter of the male respondents and a tenth of the female respondents had attended a rally or a political meeting.

The female respondents recorded a lower level of participation in attendance of political meetings compared to the men. This can be explained by the patriarchal nature of the Kenyan society that tends to limit women participation in politics (Chesoni, 2006, 195-201).

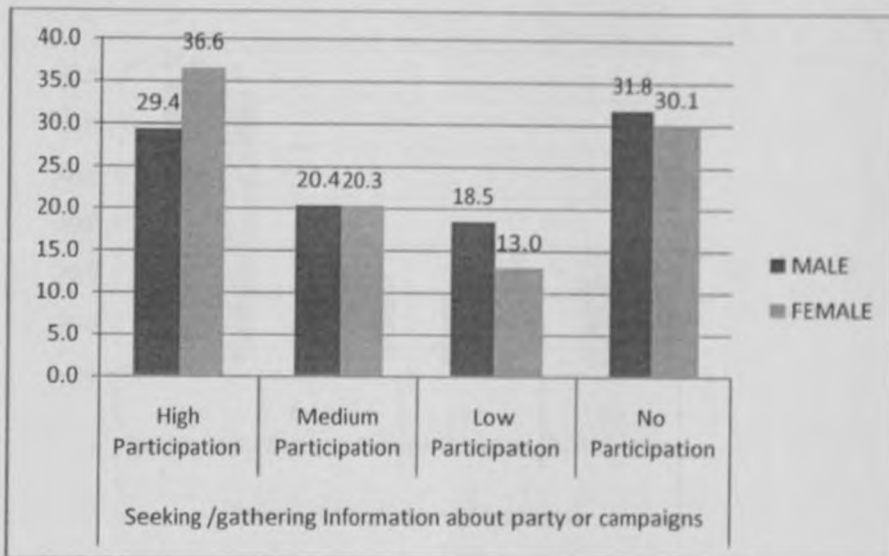
Multiple studies have shown youth participation in political activities in Kenya has been low partly due to marginalization and a higher level of apathy (Kanyinga ,1997). The results would be different if this study was conducted in the rural area. It is not the character of urban educated youth to attend political meetings since they have other ways of getting information especially through the media.

According to Oriare (2010), rural youth have a higher predisposition than urban youth to attend political rallies and meetings. Okombo (2008) notes that, rural youth attend political meetings with the expectation of receiving money from politicians.

#### **4.17.6. Seeking or gathering information about a political party, candidate or campaigns**

Figure 54 below shows that, more than a third of the male respondents and slightly more than a third had actively participated in seeking and gathering information about a political party or campaigns. About a fifth of the respondents indicated medium participation in seeking information.

Figure 54: Seeking or gathering information about a political party, candidate or campaigns



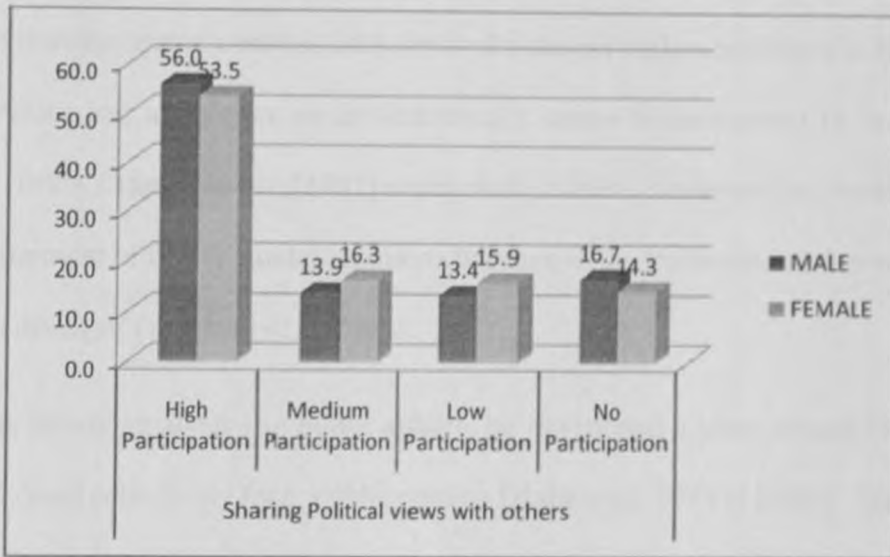
A third of the respondents both male and female indicated they had not sought or gathered information about campaigns. However, slightly more people had attempted to seek information than those who had not.

Seeking and gathering information is an important form of political participation. This form of participation indicates the youth are seeking to make an informed choice by sourcing for information that would help them. It is also an indicator of the level of political interest.

#### 4.17.7. Sharing Political Views with others

Figure 54 also shows the level of participation by sharing political views. This is the highest form of participation displayed by the youth involved in this study. More than half of the respondents 56% male and 53.5% female indicated they were actively involved in sharing their political views with others. In fact, only about 17% male and 14% female said they had not engaged in sharing political views in any way.

Figure 55: Sharing Political Views with others



A combined 83% male and 86% indicated they shared political views in varying degrees. Gender does not seem to have an impact on this level of participation.

Interpersonal discussion of politics is associated with increased political knowledge and political interest and the propensity to actually vote in an election. Huckfeldt & Sprague (1995) argue that political discussions play an important role in political learning, attitude formation and behavior. Previous studies have also shown that interpersonal discussion of politics leads to an increase in political participation and also factual knowledge about politics (Calhoun, 1998, Scheufele, 2000).

MacLeod et al. (1999) in their study found that when people engage in frequent, issue specific political discussions, they are likely to have a better understanding of politics and they are also likely to be more politically sophisticated. Katz (1992) observed that political discussions are important in crystallizing political opinion and they create a desire to participate in political activities. Some scholars have observed a positive

relationship between political discussion and political knowledge. Eliasoph (1998) had observed that discussion about politics fostered a deeper understanding of political facts and therefore had an impact on an individual's desire to participate in the political process. Price, Capella, & Nir (2002) noted that political conversations contributes to the development of higher quality opinions because of the 'refinement inherent in back and forth dialogue' (in Zhang et al. 2009).

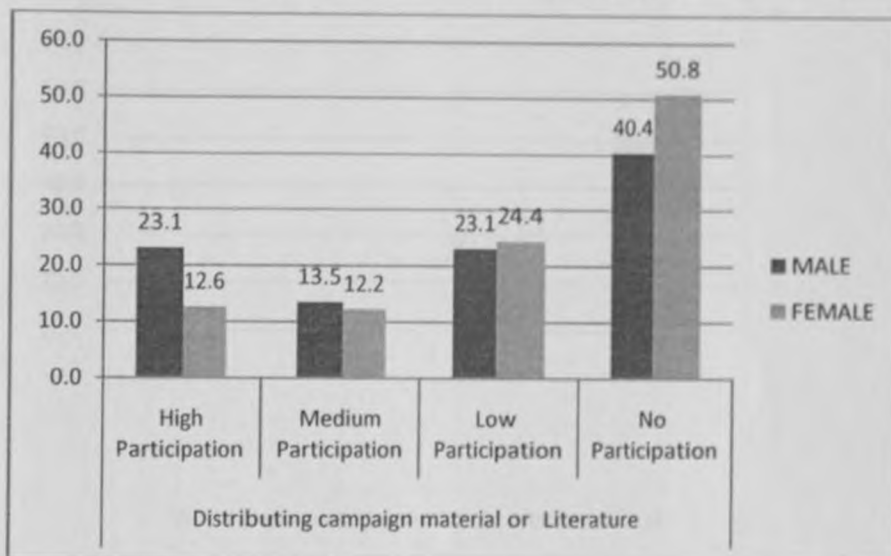
Habermas in talking about the public sphere, he envisioned a place where community members could collectively form public opinion (Habermas, 1974 cf 2004). Ellen McGirt (2007) observes that Facebook is a perfect arena for communication given its huge numbers around the world that incorporates mostly the youth (McGirt,2007 p74).

#### **4.17.8. Distributing Campaign Literature and Working For a Political Party**

When asked about their participation in distributing campaign literature, the respondents displayed a low level of participation. Only 17% of the respondents indicated they had actively participated in distributing campaign literature. A huge percentage (42.7%) indicated they had not distributed campaign literature in any way.



Figure 56: Distributing Campaign Literature and Working for a Political Party



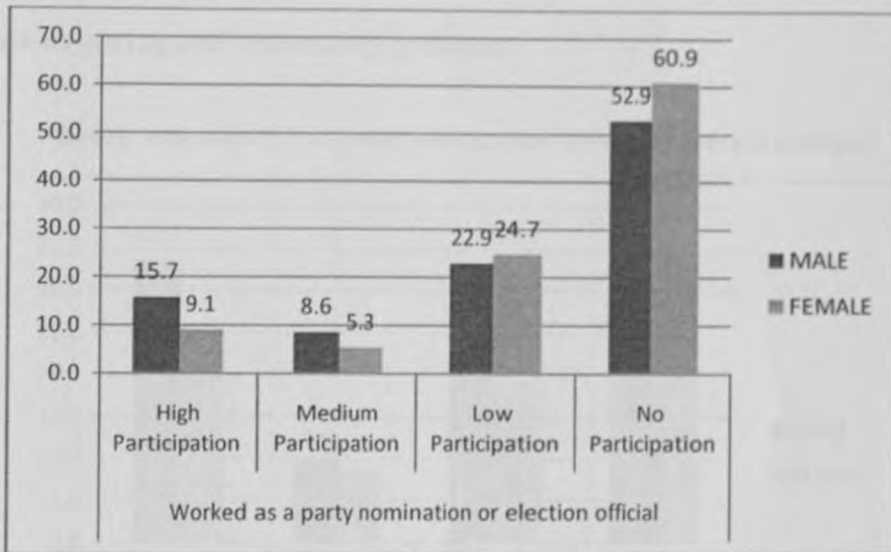
Politicians often use the youth to distribute campaign literature which includes pinning posters, distributing flyers, putting up banners, writing graffiti on walls and public spaces.

#### 4.17.9. Working as a party nomination or election official

About working for a party as nomination or election official, again only about 16 % male and 9% female indicated they worked for a political party. More than half of the respondents (52%) said they had not worked as election or nomination officials for political parties.

Oriare (2010) noted that politicians traditionally use the youth as party agents and election officials to monitor elections. The successive electoral bodies in Kenya have a history of recruiting young people to work as polling and counting clerks during elections.

Figure 57: Working as a party nomination or election official



It is however important to note that this form of participation is limited by the fact that there are not very many opportunities or positions available to work as an election or nomination officials. A better way of gauging this participation is to focus on the number of people who have applied or expressed interest to work as election officials for political parties and electoral bodies.

#### 4.18. Forms and levels of civic participation

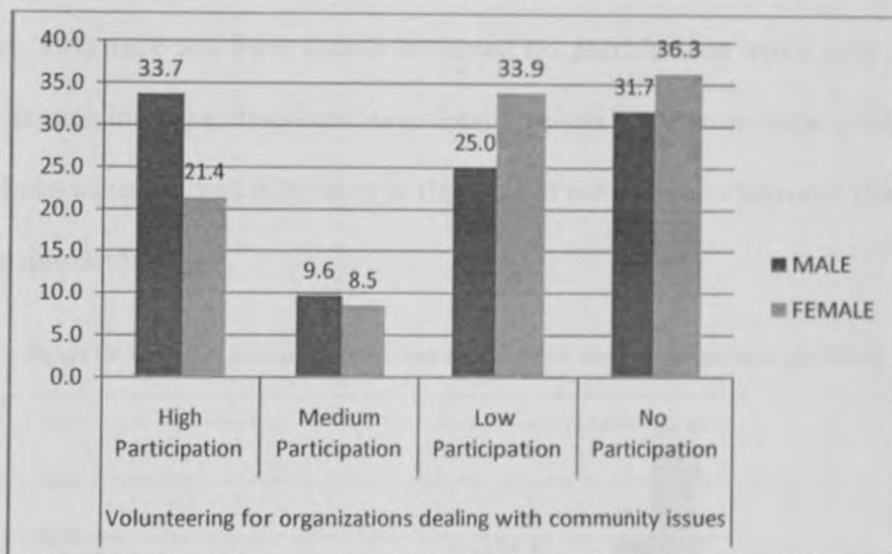
Civic participation has been defined as activities that address community concerns through non- governmental or non-electoral means, such as volunteering for building a homeless shelter or working on a community project.

##### 4.18.1. Volunteering in organizations dealing with local needs and problems

The surveyed youth were asked if they had volunteered in organizations that deal with local needs and problems. Figure 58 below shows the level of participation. A third of

the sampled male youth and a fifth of the female youth indicated they had volunteered in organizations dealing with community problems.

Figure 58: Volunteering in organizations that deals with local needs and problems



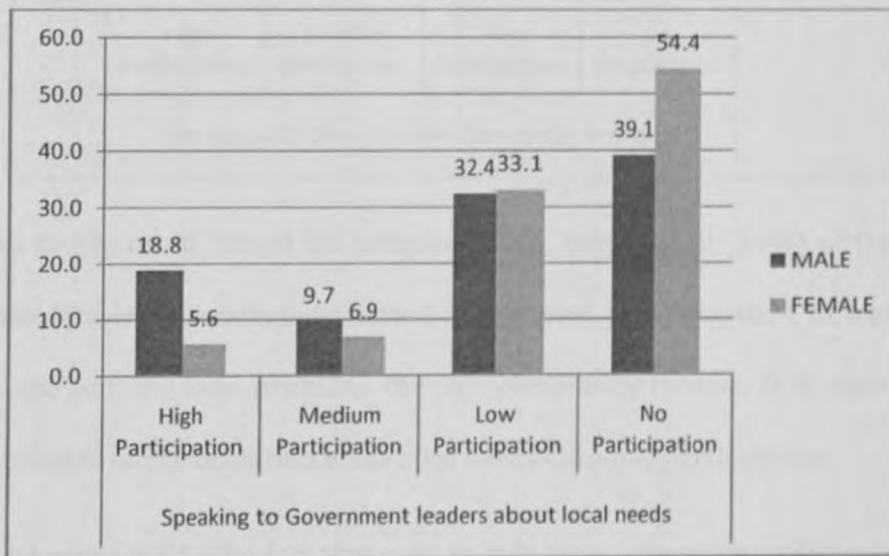
A third of the men and women indicated no participation in volunteer work while another third among the male youth and a quarter of the female youth indicated a low level of participation.

Generally, the volunteering culture is not very common in Kenya (Kagwanja, 2006). This can be explained by two reasons. First, people expect to be paid for any activity they are involved in. The concept working for the common good is not very popular. Secondly, most people expect the government to do all the work of solving community problems and therefore they do not see any role they can play for the common good.

#### 4.18.2. Lobbying government leaders and workers about local needs or problems

On lobbying by speaking or writing to local government leaders about local needs and problems, 39% male and 54% female indicated no participation while only 19% male and 6% female indicated they had ever lobbied local leaders on local problems and needs. There was a marked difference in the level of participation between the male and female respondents.

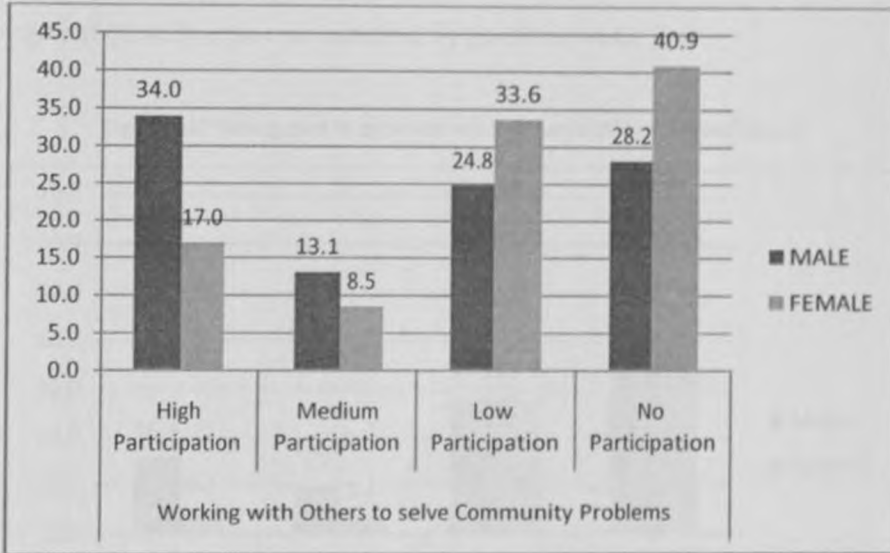
Figure 59: Lobbying government leaders and workers about local needs or problems



Majority of the female respondents indicated they have never spoken to government officials or leaders to address local needs. This can again be attributed to the patriarchal nature of society where leadership and problem solving has largely been left to the men and women are mere spectators (Kasomo, 2012 pp)

### 4.18.3. Working with others to solve community problems and engaging in protests or demonstrations

Figure 60: Working with others to solve community problems and engaging in protests or demonstrations



According to Figure 60, out of the sampled youth, only a third (34%) of the men and 17% of the female respondents indicated a high level of participation in working with other people to solve local problems through community forums. 28% male and 41% female indicated no participation while 29% indicated a low participation.

This can be explained by the fact that most people expect the government to address all problems. This can be explained by the common cry of *"tunaomba serikali"* (we are requesting the government) whenever citizens are confronted with challenges and problems that they can adequately handle on their own.

The findings also show a low participation among the female students compared to the male students. Again this is explained by historical and cultural factors that hinder active participation by women in civic affairs (Kasomo 2012; Kariuki 2010).

#### 4.18.4. Taking part in protests and demonstrations on local issues

The respondents were asked if they have ever participated in demonstrations to urge or pressurize government leaders and other players to act on local issues or taking part in protests against certain action or inaction by government.

Figure 61: Taking part in protests and demonstrations on local issues

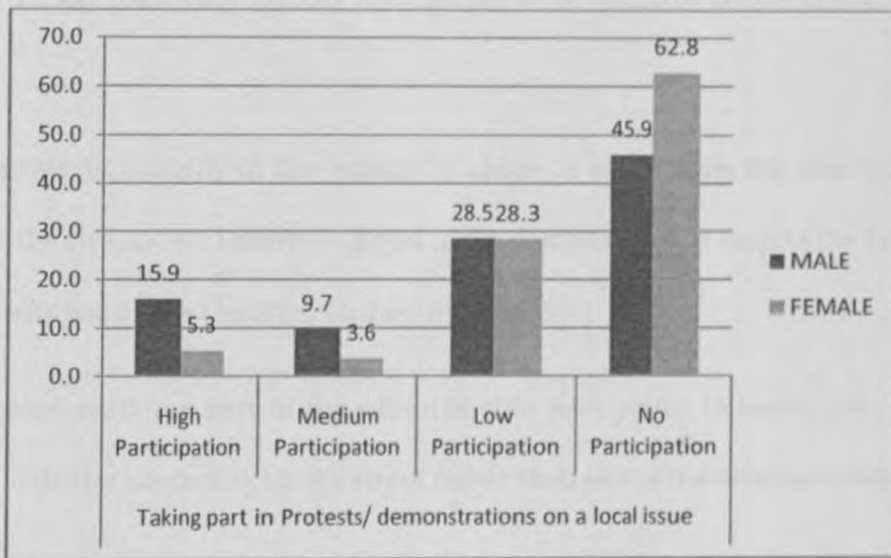


Figure 61 shows that 16% male and 5% female had high participation in such demonstrations. More than half of the respondents indicated zero participation in such demonstrations with a huge 63% of female respondents indicating zero participation in such protests. This shows the limited or low participation of women in the civic and political space.

Protest activities tend to occur when people want policy makers to address pressing social, economic or political concerns in a more timely fashion than other modes of participation might allow (Resnick & Casale, 2001).



In Kenya, there is a tendency by most of the citizens to leave such demonstrations to civil society activists. Most of the people prefer to watch such demonstrations in the media. There have been a number of high profile demonstrations most notably "*occupy parliament*" movement which was a protest against the parliamentarians' move to increase their salaries. The "*Unga Revolution*" is another protest that was organized by the civil society protesting against the high prices of essential commodities like maize flour.

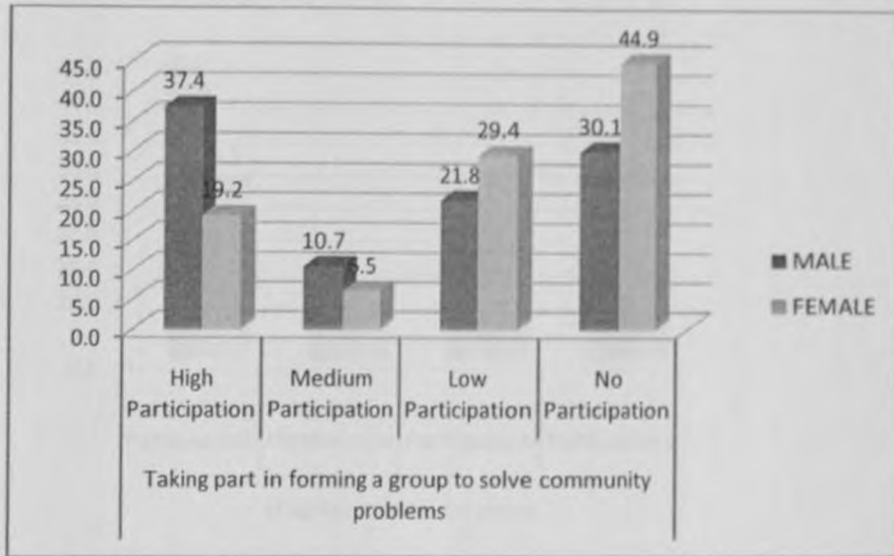
In both protests, majority of the 'wananchi' chose to watch from the sidelines and the media as the civil society leaders engaged in the demonstrations despite the fact that the two protests had a direct bearing on their livelihoods.

The sampled youth are part of the educated elite who prefer to tweet and post about political activities happening on the street rather than join in the demonstrations.

#### **4.18.5. Taking part in Forming An Action Group**

The respondents were asked if they had participated in the formation of a group to address local issues. Figure 62 shows that close to a half of the male respondents and a quarter of the female respondents have participated in forming a group to solve or address community problems in varying degrees.

Figure 62: Taking part in Forming An Action Group

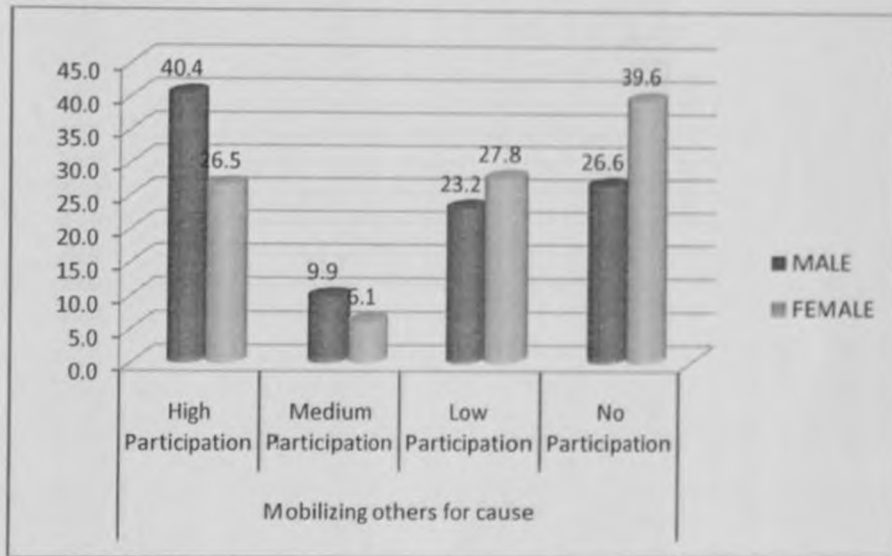


It's only 37% male and 19% female, among the sampled youth who indicated a high level of participation. 30.8% male and 44% female indicated no participation in forming action groups while another 21% male and 29% female indicated low level of participation in forming such groups.

#### 4.18.6. Mobilizing others for a worthy cause

On mobilizing other people for a worthy cause, Figure 63 below shows that, 40% male and 27% female among the respondents indicated they were involved in mobilizing other people for a worthy cause. 27% male and 40% female indicated no participation in mobilizing others for a cause. These results still point to a low level of participation when it comes to collective action to address local problems or needs. This can still be explained by the tendency to sit down leave the government to handle every problem in society.

Figure 63: Mobilizing others for a worthy cause

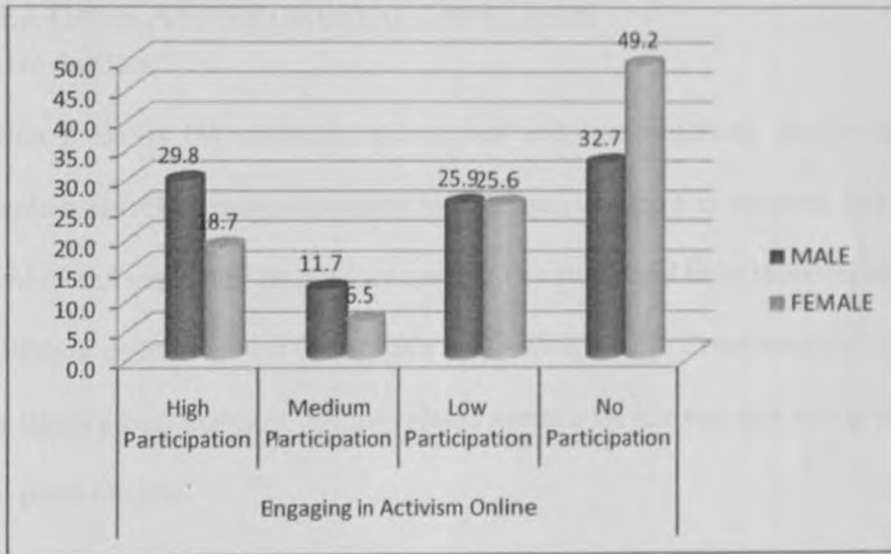


#### 4.18.7. Engaging in online activism

The respondents were asked if they had engaged in online activism in the last three months. According to Figure 64, half of the female respondents and a third of the male respondents indicated zero participation in activism online. 30% male and 19% female indicated a high participation.

Online activism is an emerging trend where people take to the social media, blogs and the internet in general to express their views against issues or leaders of the day. The attempt by parliament to raise their salaries or the action by the Nairobi Governor of slapping a female politician received great condemnation on social media. The misrepresentation in coverage of Kenya by CNN received condemnation on twitter and Facebook until CNN had to apologize on social media and their webpage.

Figure 64: Engaging in online activism



## V. CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF CORRELATIONS AND REGRESSION ANALYSIS

### 5.0. Introduction

This section presents the statistical operations and manipulations performed on the data to explain the relationship between the different variables of interest. The variables are presented and explained as they are used in the study and their internal consistency and reliability is checked using Cronbach's alpha which is the determination of whether or not the items group together or how related items a set of items are as a group from a statistical point of view.

Cronbach's alpha is the most common measure of internal consistency and mostly used when you have multiple likert questions that form a scale. The higher the alpha number, which ranges from 0-1, the stronger the items group together statistically. A high alpha indicates that the items measure an underlying construct. The formula for the standardized Cronbach's alpha is stated below.

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N - 1) \cdot \bar{c}}$$

Here N is equal to the number of items, c-bar is the average inter-item covariance among the items and v-bar equals the average variance.

Correlations between the different variables are presented testing the nature, direction and significance of the relationship between the variables of interest. Finally, the results of the regression analysis are presented and explained

### 5.1. Description of the variables

To facilitate proper statistical operation with data, the variables had to be coded and reduced to a meaningful form.

#### a. Dependent Variables

- i. *Political Participation*: Political participation refers to the nature and frequency of involvement in political activities. It was measured using an index of 13 items on a 6 point scale. It was coded as PoliPart. The internal consistency on Cronbach's alpha was 0.72.
- ii. *Civic Participation*: This refers to the nature and frequency of involvement in civic (non-political) activities. It was measured using an index of 7 items on a 6 point scale. It was represented as CivPart. The internal consistency on Cronbach's alpha was 0.90

#### b. Independent Variables

- i. *Reliance on social networking sites*. Reliance on social networking sites here refers to how much an individual uses is attached to and dependent on SNS. This has been measured by several items within the questionnaire. It has been coded as SNSREliance. The internal consistency on Cronbach's alpha was 0.85
- ii. *Interpersonal Discussion of politics*. This refers to the frequency of political discussion with different people like family, friends, colleagues, schoolmates. This was measured using an index of 12



items on a 5-point scale. The internal consistency on Cronbach's alpha was 0.85

### **c. Control Variables**

- i. *Political Interest*; Refers to the level of attention paid to political news and events by an individual. It was measured by asking individuals to describe their interest in politics on a scale ranging from least interested to very interested. It was represented as Politics\_Interest.
- ii. *Political Knowledge*; Refers to level of knowledge about politics. It was measured by asking 12 factual questions about politics with the responses. It was represented as PolKnw.
- iii. *Political Efficacy*; Refers feelings of capacity to wield political influence. It was measured by an index of 6 items on a 5 point scale. It was represented as Political Efficacy. The internal consistency on Cronbach's alpha was 0.87.

## **5.2. Association between the various variables**

This section focuses on the nature of relationship between the various variables. The association between these variables is expressed through the Pearson Correlation analysis. Correlation indicates a systematic relation but does not in itself necessarily indicate causality.

As a general rule correlation values between 1 and -1 in which case, a correlation of 1 indicates a perfect correlation. Values that are closer to 1 or -1 indicate a strong positive

or negative correlation while values close to (0) zero indicate a weak correlation. Values less than 0.2 or -0.2 indicated a very weak positive or negative correlation, values between 0.2 to 0.4 and -0.2 to -0.4 indicate a weak positive or negative correlation .values between 0.4 to 0.6 and -0.4 to -0.6 indicate a moderate correlation, values between 0.6 to 0.8 and -0.6 to -0.8 indicate a strong positive or negative correlation while values above 0.8 and -0.8 indicate a very strong positive or negative correlation.

### 5.2.1. Association between SNS Reliance and Political participation.

A 2-tailed correlation analysis was run using the Pearson correlation.

Table 13: Correlation between SNS Reliance and Political participation

		SNS Reliance	Political Participation
<b>SNS Reliance</b>	Pearson	1	.361**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	457	453
<b>Political Participation</b>	Pearson	.361**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	453	462

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As seen from Table 13, there is a weak positive correlation (0.361) between Reliance on Social networking sites and political participation. An increase in reliance on social networking sites is associated with a small increase political participation.  $P \leq 0.01$  which means the relationship is statistically significant.

This finding is consistent with a recent study found that individuals who are politically active on SNSs are also highly active in offline spaces (Smith, 2013). He also found that

'those who are politically active offline tend to have relatively high rates of engagement in social networking spaces' (p8).

This study wanted to see establish whether reliance on social networking sites has any impact on political participation.

**5.2.2. Association between Reliance on SNS and Civic participation.**

Table 14: Correlation between Reliance on SNS and Civic participation

		SNS Reliance	Civic Participation
<b>SNS Reliance</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.116
	N	457	448
<b>Civic Participation</b>	Pearson Correlation	.074	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.116	
	N	448	456

According to table 14, there is a very weak positive correlation between Reliance on SNS and civic participation. A correlation of 0.074 is very weak and is not statistically significant as sig. 0.116, in which case  $P \geq 0.005$ . On this basis we accept the null hypothesis  $r=0$ , and conclude, there is no significant association between Reliance on SNS and Civic Participation. From this data, we can conclude that SNSs do not have a significant impact of influence on civic participation as defined in this study.

This finding contradicts some previous studies that found reliance on SNSs has a significant influence on civic participation (Zhang et al. 2010). This may be explained by the fact the level of civic participation is particularly low among the surveyed youth and therefore may not bring out the effect, if any, of SNSs on civic engagement.

### 5.2.3. Association between civic participation and political participation

The study sought to establish the relationship between civic and political participation. As pointed out earlier, the study found very low levels of civic participation among the sampled youth.

Table 15: Correlation between civic participation and political participation

		Civic Participation	Political Participation
Civic Participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.563**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	456	456
Political Participation	Pearson Correlation	.563**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	456	462

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From table 15 there is a moderate positive correlation between civic and political participation, 0.563, ( $p=0.000$ ) which is statistically significant, since  $p \leq 0.01$ . This means that an increase in the levels of civic participation there is a moderate increase level of political participation. This agrees with what some scholars have argued, that civic participation is a positive predictor of political participation (Wilkins 2000). Indeed it may be wise to interrogate the rationale of distinguishing between the two concepts.

Civic and political participation tend to go together and impact each other together and the distinction is only useful for academic analysis. Civic activities have a direct bearing on politics. In the Kenyan scenario, individuals who actively participate in events organized by civil society are mostly political and many of them end up in politics.

#### 5.2.4. Association between interpersonal discussion of politics and political participation.

Table 16: Correlation between interpersonal discussion of politics and political participation

		Interpersonal Discussions	Political Participation
<b>Interpersonal Discussions</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.415**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	461	459
<b>Political Participation</b>	Pearson Correlation	.415**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	459	462

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From table 16, there is a moderate positive correlation between interpersonal discussion and political participation, 0.415, ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) which is statistically significant. In other words, the more people discuss politics, the more they are likely to participate in political activities. An increase in the level of interpersonal discussion is associated with a moderate increase in political participation.

It has been argued that democracy functions best when people consider a range of arguments, including those that challenge their viewpoint (Horrigan et al., 2004). People who often discuss politics with friends and family are more likely than others than to use SNSs for political purposes and say the use of SNSs has affected them politically (Rainie & Smith, 2012 pp3-4). In a September 2012 study, Pew Internet Research found that people who frequently discuss politics with friends and family post about politics, rely on the SNS sites for political information, use the sites to engage in political activities and use the SNSs sites to engage politically with friends (Pew Internet Research, 2012).

### 5.2.5. Association between interpersonal discussion of politics and civic participation

Table 17: Correlation between interpersonal discussion of politics and civic participation

		Interpersonal Discussions	Civic Participation
<b>Interpersonal Discussions</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.257**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	461	454
<b>Civic Participation</b>	Pearson Correlation	.257**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	454	456

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 17 shows a weak positive correlation between interpersonal discussion and civic participation, 0.257, ( $p=0.000$ ) which is statistically significant, since  $p \leq 0.01$ . This indicates that an increase in the level of interpersonal discussion is associated with a very small increase civic participation.

This means interpersonal discussion of politics has a minimal impact on civic participation though the low level of civic participation might hinder a meaningful inference.

### 5.2.6. Association between SNS reliance and interpersonal discussion

Table 18: Correlation between SNS reliance and interpersonal discussion

		Interpersonal Discussions	SNS Reliance
<b>Interpersonal Discussions</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.080
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.091
	N	461	452
<b>SNS Reliance</b>	Pearson Correlation	.080	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.091	
	N	452	457



From the table there is a very weak (almost negligible) correlation between reliance on SNSs and interpersonal discussion, 0.080, ( $p=0.091$ ) which is not statistically significant since ( $p \geq 0.05$ .) This means there is no significant relationship between SNS reliance and interpersonal discussion of politics

### 5.2.7. Association between SNS reliance and the political variables.

Table 19: Correlation between SNS reliance and the political variables

		SNS Reliance	Political Efficacy	Political Knowledge	Interest in Politics
SNS Reliance	Pearson Correlation	1	.024	.006	.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.613	.890	.184
	N	457	454	457	425
Political Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.024	1	.077	.170**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.613		.100	.000
	N	454	463	462	432
Political Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.006	.077	1	.279**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.890	.100		.000
	N	457	462	465	433
Interest in Politics	Pearson Correlation	.065	.170**	.279**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.184	.000	.000	
	N	425	432	433	433

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

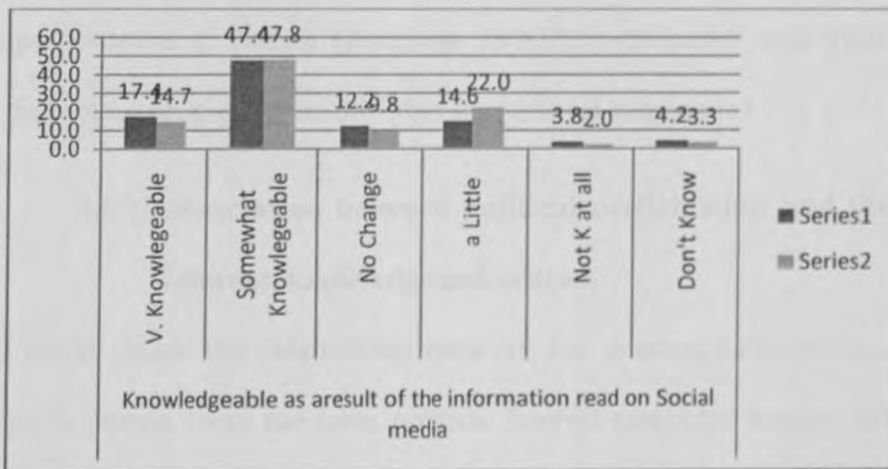
Table 19, row 1 shows the correlation between SNS Reliance and political efficacy, Political Knowledge and Interest in Politics all of which is not significant Since  $p = .613$ ,  $p = .890$  and  $p = .184$  respectively all of which  $p \geq 0.05$ . There doesn't seem to be any

significant association between SNS Reliance and political efficacy, political knowledge and political interest.

Row 3 shows correlation between political knowledge and other variables. There is a weak positive correlation between political knowledge and interest in politics which is significant at  $P \leq 0.01$  ( $p=0.000$ ). If a person has interest in politics, he is likely to develop political knowledge and if a person is politically knowledgeable, his interest in politics is high.

### 5.2.8. Political Knowledge after using social media

Figure 65: Political Knowledge after using social media



According to Figure 64, almost two thirds of social media users consider themselves more knowledgeable as a result of using social media. 16% indicated that they were very knowledgeable as a result of using social media while another 47% felt they were somewhat knowledgeable as a result of using social media. Only a negligible 2.8% said they did not consider themselves knowledgeable at all as a result of social media use. This points to the growing significance of social media as an important source of political information and knowledge for young people. Elsewhere in this study, over

82% of social media users indicate their major reason for visiting SNS sites is to acquire knowledge or gather information.

John Horrigan in a 2006 study found an increasing use of the internet as means of obtaining political information. The study observed sharp growth in dependence on the internet and specifically social media as a source of political information (Pew Research, 2006).

The use of the internet enables quick and easy aggregation of political information among potential voters (Bimber, 1998). A study in the UK, found that young people are more likely to use the internet to acquire political information than people in the older age groups (Gennaro & Dutton (2006, pp. 299-313). Quinteleir and Vissers (2008) observe that young people rely on SNS sites for political information

#### **5.2.9. Association between political participation and the political interest, knowledge and efficacy.**

Table 20 below shows the relationship between the selected political variables and political participation. From the table, political interest exerts the biggest influence on political participation. There is a positive moderate correlation (0.417,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) between political participation and interest in politics. A high level of interest in politics is associated with a higher level of political interest.

Table 20: Correlation between political participation and the political variables

		Political Participation	Interest in Politics	Political Efficacy	Political Knowledge
Political Participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.417**	.207**	.234**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	462	431	462	461
Interest in Politics	Pearson Correlation	.417**	1	.170**	.279**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	431	433	432	433
Political Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.207**	.170**	1	.077
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.100
	N	462	432	463	462
Political Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.234**	.279**	.077	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.100	
	N	461	433	462	465

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 20 also shows a positively weak correlation between political participation and political efficacy and a positively weak correlation between political participation and political knowledge, all significant at  $P \leq 0.01$ . It means that an increase in the level of political efficacy and political knowledge leads to a marginal increase in the level of political participation.

### 5.2.10. Association between civic participation and political interest, knowledge and efficacy

According to Table 21 below, there is a positive very weak correlation between civic participation and interest in politics, very weak correlation between civic participation and political efficacy and positive very weak correlation between civic and Interest in politics, all significant at  $P \leq 0.001$ , ( $p=0.000$ ),  $P \leq 0.05$ , ( $p=0.028$ ) and  $P \leq 0.01$ , ( $p=0.005$ ) respectively.

This means that an increase in political knowledge, efficacy and interest leads to a marginal increase in civic participation. Consequently, it implies the political variables have a significant but minimal impact on civic participation.

Table 21: Correlation between civic participation and political variables

		Correlations			
		Civic Participation	Interest in Politics	Political Efficacy	Political Knowledge
Civic Participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.181**	.103*	.132**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.028	.005
	N	456	431	456	456
Interest in Politics	Pearson Correlation	.181**	1	.170**	.279**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	431	433	432	433
Political Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.103*	.170**	1	.077
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.028	.000		.100
	N	456	432	463	462
Political Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.132**	.279**	.077	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.000	.100	
	N	456	433	462	465

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### 5.3. The influence of social networking sites on civic and political participation.

#### 5.3.1. Hierarchical regression model for political participation

Hierarchical regression was performed to test the hypothesis that there was a relationship between the dependent variable "political participation" and the predictor independent variables "reliance on SNS sites" and "interpersonal discussion" after controlling for the effect of the demographic variables "age" and "gender" and the political control variables of "political efficacy" , "political interest" and "political knowledge".

Table 22: Model summary of political participation

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.151 <sup>a</sup>	.023	.016	1.40096	.023	3.237	3	414	.022
2	.267 <sup>b</sup>	.071	.062	1.36739	.049	21.580	1	413	.000
3	.315 <sup>c</sup>	.099	.088	1.34851	.028	12.645	1	412	.000
4	.411 <sup>d</sup>	.169	.157	1.29697	.070	34.395	1	411	.000
5	.450 <sup>e</sup>	.203	.189	1.27161	.034	17.558	1	410	.000
6	.605 <sup>f</sup>	.367	.354	1.13484	.164	105.780	1	409	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), level of Education, Gender, Age

b. Predictors: (Constant), level of Education, Gender, Age, Political Knowledge

c. Predictors: (Constant), level of Education, Gender, Age, Political Knowledge, Political Efficacy

d. Predictors: (Constant), level of Education, Gender, Age, Political Knowledge, Political Efficacy, Interest in Politics

e. Predictors: (Constant), level of Education, Gender, Age, Political Knowledge, Political Efficacy, Interest in Politics, Interpersonal Discussion

f. Predictors: (Constant), level of Education, Gender, Age, Political Knowledge, Political Efficacy, Interest in Politics, Interpersonal Discussion, SNS Reliance



In hierarchical regression, the interpretation for overall relationship focuses on the change in  $R^2$ . If change in  $R^2$  is statistically significant, the overall relationship for all independent variables will be significant as well.

In the model summary, based on model 6, where the predictors were added ( $F(1,409)=105.78, P>0.001$ ) the predictor variable, "Reliance on Social networking sites" contributed to the overall relationship with the dependent variable (political participation). Since the probability of the F Statistic ( $P<0.001$ ) was less than or equal to the level of significance, (0.05) the null hypothesis that the change in  $r^2=0$  was rejected. The research hypothesis that reliance on SNS sites reduced the error of predicting political participation was accepted.

In the Model, R adjusted improves significantly its explanation of the independent variable (Political participation) with marginal addition of an explanatory variable. The inclusion of SNS Reliance explains 16.4% more of the model with F test significant at  $p\leq 0.001$  level (sig 0.000). The increase in  $R^2$  by including the predictor variable (Reliance on SNS Sites) in the analysis was 0.164. This means that the information provided by the predictor variable (Reliance on SNS) improved our ability to explain political participation by 16.4 %.

In same model, the inclusion of the predictor variable "interpersonal discussion" explains only 3.4 % of the model. Interpersonal discussion contributed marginally to the overall relationship with the dependent variable "political participation" since the F statistic ( $p<0.001$ ) was less than or equal to the level of significance.

**Table 23: Regression Coefficients (Political Participation)**

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.479	.268		12.992	.000
	Age	.129	.120	.052	1.079	.281
	Gender	.385	.138	.136	2.800	.005
	level of Education	-.006	.010	-.030	-.619	.536
2	(Constant)	4.933	.408		12.100	.000
	Age	.214	.119	.087	1.809	.071
	Gender	.344	.135	.121	2.554	.011
	level of Education	-.007	.010	-.033	-.694	.488
	Political Knowledge	-.945	.203	-.223	-4.645	.000
3	(Constant)	5.814	.472		12.310	.000
	Age	.195	.117	.079	1.669	.096
	Gender	.373	.133	.132	2.802	.005
	level of Education	-.011	.010	-.051	-1.091	.276
	Political Knowledge	-.882	.201	-.209	-4.380	.000
	Political Efficacy	-.222	.062	-.168	-3.556	.000
4	(Constant)	6.115	.457		13.376	.000
	Age	.207	.113	.084	1.835	.067
	Gender	.248	.130	.087	1.909	.057
	level of Education	-.012	.010	-.058	-1.290	.198
	Political Knowledge	-.596	.200	-.141	-2.985	.003
	Political Efficacy	-.165	.061	-.125	-2.715	.007
	Interest in Politics	-.287	.049	-.281	-5.865	.000
5	(Constant)	4.951	.527		9.388	.000
	Age	.193	.110	.078	1.747	.081
	Gender	.283	.127	.100	2.219	.027
	level of Education	-.008	.009	-.040	-.893	.372
	Political Knowledge	-.568	.196	-.134	-2.900	.004
	Political Efficacy	-.129	.060	-.098	-2.154	.032
	Interest in Politics	-.190	.053	-.185	-3.551	.000
	Interpersonal Discussion	.231	.055	.212	4.190	.000

6	(Constant)	3.998	.480		8.335	.000
	Age	.128	.099	.052	1.295	.196
	Gender	.295	.114	.104	2.596	.010
	level of Education	-.008	.008	-.037	-.940	.348
	Political Knowledge	-.498	.175	-.118	-2.847	.005
	Political Efficacy	-.129	.054	-.098	-2.414	.016
	Interest in Politics	-.202	.048	-.198	-4.244	.000
	Interpersonal Discussion	.266	.049	.244	5.389	.000
	SNS Reliance	.230	.022	.407	10.285	.000

**a. Dependent Variable: Political Participation**

The table of regression coefficients showing the changes in the coefficients as predictors is added into the model. The t column tests the significance of individual predictor in the model, that is, the regression null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable. In model number 6, all the control variables are included and SNS Reliance predictor is added and is represented in the following way in regression equation.

$$Y(35.4\%) = 3.998 + 0.128A + 0.295G - 0.008E - 0.498PK - 0.129PE - 0.202IP + 0.266ID + 0.230SR$$

Where:

Y=Political Participation

A=Age

G=Gender

E=Education Level

PK=Political Knowledge

PE=Political Efficacy

IP=Interest in Politics

ID=Inter personal Discussion

SR=SNS Reliance

Based on the statistical test of the b coefficient ( $t = 10.285$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) for the independent variable "reliance on SNS sites", the null hypothesis that the slope or b coefficient was equal to 0 (zero) was rejected. The research hypothesis that there was a relationship between the reliance on SNS sites and political participation was supported.

With the control variables in the model, the further inclusion of SNS reliance improves the model by explaining 16.4% more of the variations in political participation. The predictor is significant at  $p \leq 0.001$ , ( $p = 0.000$ ), meaning that there is a significant relationship between the predictor (SNS Reliance) and the dependent variable (Political Participation).

The  $b$  coefficient for the relationship between the dependent variable "political participation" and the independent variable "Reliance on SNS" was 0.23 which implies a weak direct or positive relationship because the sign of the coefficient is positive. An increase in numeric value of the independent variable is associated with a slight increase in in the numeric value for the dependent variable. Stated differently, a 1% change in SNS Reliance rate leads to 0.23% change in Political participation. It means that reliance on social networking sites has a minimal or limited impact on political participation.

The  $b$  coefficient for the relationship between the dependent variable "political participation" and the independent variable "interpersonal discussion" was 0.26 which implies a weak positive relationship. An increase in the numeric value of interpersonal discussion is associated with a marginal increase in political participation.

### **Conclusion**

As seen in the Table 23, the more people use and rely on social networking sites, the more they participate in politics ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) and the more the respondents discussed politics with others, the more they participated in politics ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). This indicates reliance on SNSs and interpersonal discussions of politics have an impact on political participation.

### 5.3.2. Hierarchical regression model for civic participation

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to test the hypothesis that there was a relationship between the dependent variable "civic participation" and the predictor independent variable "Reliance on SNS sites" after controlling for the effect of the demographic variables "age" and "gender" and the political variables "political interest", "Political interest" and "political knowledge".

Table 24: Model summary of Hierarchical Regression (Civic Participation)

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.254 <sup>a</sup>	.065	.060	1.381	.065	14.381	2	417	.000
2	.325 <sup>b</sup>	.105	.095	1.355	.041	6.307	3	414	.000
3	.387 <sup>c</sup>	.150	.138	1.323	.045	21.690	1	413	.000
4	.394 <sup>d</sup>	.155	.141	1.320	.005	2.653	1	412	.104

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender

b. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Political Efficacy, Political Knowledge, Interest in Politics

c. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Political Efficacy, Political Knowledge, Interest in Politics, Interpersonal Discussion

d. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Political Efficacy, Political Knowledge, Interest in Politics, Interpersonal Discussion, SNS Reliance

In hierarchical regression, the interpretation for overall relationship focuses on the change in  $R^2$ . If change in  $R^2$  is statistically significant, the overall relationship for all independent variables will be significant as well. In the model summary, R square adjusted improves significantly, in its explanation of the independent variable (Civic participation) with each marginal addition of a control variable. However, the inclusion of SNS Reliant explains 0.05% more of the model which is not statistically significant since F test change significance level is 0.104 which is not equal or less than  $p \leq 0.05$ . Since F is a frequency distribution parametric test that tests the significance of the entire model (R

square adjusted), addition of SNS reliance in the model accepts the regression null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between civic participation and SNSs reliance.

Table 25: Table of Regression Coefficients (Civic Participation)

Model		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.308	.262		12.612	.000
	Gender	.726	.135	.254	5.363	.000
	Age	-.029	.118	-.012	-.243	.808
2	(Constant)	4.868	.473		10.293	.000
	Gender	.680	.135	.238	5.021	.000
	Age	.005	.117	.002	.047	.963
	Political Efficacy	-.155	.063	-.117	-2.460	.014
	Political Knowledge	-.324	.207	-.076	-1.564	.119
	Interest in Politics	-.113	.051	-.109	-2.215	.027
3	(Constant)	3.567	.540		6.609	.000
	Gender	.719	.132	.252	5.434	.000
	Age	-.011	.115	-.005	-.099	.921
	Political Efficacy	-.117	.062	-.088	-1.893	.059
	Political Knowledge	-.298	.202	-.070	-1.471	.142
	Interest in Politics	-.001	.055	-.001	-.016	.987
	Interpersonal Discussion	.265	.057	.242	4.657	.000
4	(Constant)	3.740	.549		6.813	.000
	Gender	.717	.132	.251	5.428	.000
	Age	.001	.115	.000	.005	.996
	Political Efficacy	-.117	.062	-.088	-1.896	.059
	Political Knowledge	-.310	.202	-.073	-1.534	.126
	Interest in Politics	.001	.055	.001	.026	.979
	Interpersonal Discussion	.259	.057	.236	4.546	.000
	SNS Reliance	-.042	.026	-.074	-1.629	.104

a. Dependent Variable: Civic Participation



Table 25, above, shows the changes in the coefficients as predictors are added into the model. The t column tests the significance of individual predictor in the model, that is, the regression null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable. In model number 6, all the control variables are included and SNS Reliance predictor is added and is represented in a regression equation in the following way.

$$Y(35.4\%) = 3.740 + 0.717G - 0.001A - 0.117PE - 0.310PK + 0.001PI + 0.259ID - 0.42SR$$

Where:

- Y=Political Participation
- A=Age
- G=Gender
- PK=Political Knowledge
- PE=Political Efficacy
- IP=Interest in Politics
- ID=Inter personal Discussion
- SR=SNS Reliance

With the control variables in the model, the further inclusion of SNS reliance improves the model by explaining 0.05% more of the variations in civic participation. The predictor is however not significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ , (Since  $p = 0.104$ ), meaning that there is no significant relationship between the predictor (SNS Reliance) and the dependent variable (Civic Participation).

Based on the statistical test of the b coefficient ( $t = -1.269$ ,  $P = 0.104$ ) for the independent variable "reliance on SNS sites", the null hypothesis that the slope or b coefficient was equal to 0 (zero) was accepted. The research hypothesis that there was a relationship between the reliance on SNS sites and civic participation was rejected.

The b coefficient for the relationship between the dependent variable "civic participation" and the independent variable "Reliance on SNS" was -0.42 which implies a

weak inverse or negative relationship. Higher numeric values for the dependent variable are associated with a slight decrease in the numeric value for the dependent variable. Stated differently, a 1% increase in SNS Reliance rate leads to 0.42% reduction in civic participation.

The b coefficient for the relationship between the dependent variable "civic participation" and the independent variable "interpersonal discussion of politics" was 0.26 which is also statistically significant ( $P \leq 0.01$ ). This implies a weak positive relationship between the two variables. Higher numeric values for interpersonal discussion are associated with a marginal increase in the values of civic participation. It means interpersonal discussion of politics has a marginal or limited impact on civic participation.

### **Conclusion**

According to Table 25 above, reliance on social networking sites was not significantly related to civic participation, however, the more people discuss politics with others, the more they are likely to participate in civic activities ( $\beta=0.24$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). This implies that reliance on SNSs does not have a bearing on civic participation as defined in this study but interpersonal discussion has a positive impact on civic participation.

## **VI. CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS: IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERATURE AND THEORY**

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the study findings, with supporting postulates from literature, drawing their implications and contextualizing them within existing literature.

### **6.1. Social media Use**

The study established that the Internet is the most popular media for most young people (Figure 2). The internet and SNSs have become so central to young peoples' interactions that it's now impossible to consider the life of young people outside internet (Zhao, 2006). Young people have been increasingly turning to the internet as a major source of news and other information with the online presence of the youth growing tremendously (Madden, 2006). Its popularity among young people can be attributed to the fact that the internet provides interactivity and immediacy, two things that are highly desirable to young people and makes the internet very appealing to them.

Social media have gained a rapid acceptance and popularity among young people especially those within the 18-30 years age group. Almost everyone who was surveyed indicated they use social media. This is mostly because social media helps to connect friends on an interactive platform that provides creative ways for people to communicate and share information. Facebook is by far the most preferred Social networking Site for most young people. The current population of Facebook users in Kenya stands at 3.6 million which is 8.8% of the total Kenyan Population and 88.8% of Facebook users in Kenya are aged between 18-30 years ([www.allin1social.com](http://www.allin1social.com))

Majority of Facebook users log in to the site on a daily basis and they end up spending up to five hours in a day. This points to the immense popularity and centrality of Facebook and other social media sites to the users. This popularity can be explained by the utility value of social media in connecting friends and providing relevant and interesting information.

Young people mostly use SNSs to seek information and to connect with friends. This presents a fertile ground for SNS users to be exposed to political information. It is also further evidence of both bridging and bonding social capital as users get to connect online with people both known and unknown to them.

## **6.2. Reliance on SNS**

The study established there is a relatively high level of reliance on SNSs with at least half of the respondents indicating they are reliant on SNSs (Figure 8). Reliance means young people are dependent on social networking sites for relevant information, connecting with others, entertainment among others. SNSs have now become an important part of young peoples' lives. More than half of the youth felt Facebook was part of their everyday activity (Figure 9) and therefore had to log in daily. A good majority (62%) of the youth feel they are part of the Facebook community (Figure 10).

This is important because it means young people rely on these sites to fulfill social and information needs. These online interactions also help create a virtual community where people log in and connect with each other (Zhang et al. 2010).

### **6.3. SNS Political Activity**

It is clear from this study that social media help to expose people to political information whenever they log in. An overwhelming 91% indicated they had come across information of political nature like campaign updates, photos, videos, speeches, and links to political websites among others, on Facebook. This means that SNSs are increasingly playing an important role in politics especially political campaigning, Social media is now an important platform for distributing political content and many people rely on them as an important source of campaign information. According to Baum (2003 a.), the internet contributes to democratic discourse by providing current information and news about politics to otherwise disengaged individuals.

Candidates in the 2013 general elections in Kenya and their campaign managers strategically used social media as platform to engage with their supporters and potential voters. Information about campaign activities was posted on SNSs almost on a daily basis. Most notably, the Jubilee coalition leaders updated their fan pages on Facebook with photos of campaign rallies immediately they took place. The Facebook pages of both Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto were updated daily with campaign information. Peter Kenneth, one of the presidential candidates was very active on both Facebook and Twitter and he used the platform to post campaign information and activities. Martha Karua responded to tweets from her supporters and followers on her official Twitter page and she engaged people on different campaign issues. Campaign speeches and manifestos were also posted on the social media pages of the presidential candidates. Videos of speeches delivered during special campaign activities like manifesto launches were also posted on YouTube and links provided on both Twitter and Facebook.

Political engagement online has become commonplace among young adults particularly among 18-24 year olds. Evidence from recent studies supports this view. Smith (2013) found two thirds of all young adults engage in some sort of 'social network-related political activity'. He observed there is a consistent growth in political activity on SNSs which is linked to actual political engagement (Smith, 2013).

Social media have inevitably become part of politics even with the low internet penetration rates, politicians and other political players have come to acknowledge the value of SNSs in campaigning. There is a growing reliance on SNSs as a source of political information and a platform to engage in political discussions. However, questions still remain on whether social media can contribute to political engagement like the traditional media (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010).

In the Philippines elections of May 2010, social media played a key role in the campaigns. According to a study by Justine Espina-Letargo, Facebook was the medium of choice for the presidential candidates in the campaigns. Dedicated campaign staff teams were deployed to manage the online campaigns whose work was to ensure supporters were kept informed about the campaign activities as they also responded to questions and requests from supporters ( Espina-Letargo in Philip Behnke 2010). The study notes that SNSs were highly effective in the online campaigns of the leading candidates Aquino and Villar.

A study done by Pew Internet in 2008 found that, social media is mostly the territory of younger internet users and even though as a group they have been regarded as less



interested in political activities, they are more likely than any other demographic to use SNSs to engage in political discussion (Pew Internet, 2008).

#### **6.4. Online Political discussions**

Besides exposure to political information, this study found that young people are actively engaged in political discussions on social media (Figures 12 and 13). Majority of those surveyed indicated they were part of social media political groups (Table 6 and Figure 14). Groups on social media are quite effective in facilitating discussions on different topics. Discussions also happen in the form of posting and commenting on other peoples' 'walls' or 'handles' on social media as they also respond and counter, agree or offer a different perspective on the issue under discussion. Online political discussions are important in developing one's political knowledge, crystallizing political opinion and increasing the desire to participate.

Scholars agree that the emergence of the internet, created a popular avenue for discussion of political and social issues (Holt, 2004). SNS sites are important avenues for interpersonal communication among the youth (Wilkinson & Thelwall, 2009). This is because these sites allow individuals to express themselves and establish or maintain connections with others. Research indicates that social media users who talk about politics on a regular basis are the most likely to use social media for civic and political purposes (Rainie et al., 2012, Pew Research).

SNSs platforms provide an important platform for discussion of political issues. It is not uncommon to see fiery discussion on some sensitive political issue on social media. A common trend is to see a discussion on social media of issues carried in traditional

media. Warner, Turner & Hawthorne (2012) credit SNSs with accelerating political discussions. Social media has created a platform for engagement for People-especially the younger citizens - who are not known to follow political talk on other media (Albarran et al., 2007). Because of the interactive nature of SNSs, engagement can mean political talk that involves friends and acquaintances on social media. This supports the view that social media broadens participation in the political debate.

This study found that SNSs have changed the way political communication occurs both in the interpersonal and online contexts. This view is supported by other scholars in their research on the same (Benoit & Hansen, 2004; Smith & Rainie, 2008; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). The SNSs provide a platform where people engage each other directly without the restrictions of gatekeeping common with traditional media. People are also able to directly engage politicians and other campaign actors.

Political discussions play an important role in political learning, attitude formation and behavior (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995). 30% of the respondents indicated they had changed their mind on a political issue, on account of something they read on social media (Figure 24).

Previous studies have also shown that interpersonal discussion of politics leads to an increase in political participation and also factual knowledge about politics (Calhoun 1998, Scheufele 1999, 2000). The study found that two thirds of all the surveyed youth consider themselves more knowledgeable as a result of using social media (Figure 64). This is because internet discussions contributes to a wider awareness of political arguments (Horrigan et al., 2004). MacLeod et al. (1999) in their study found that when people engage in frequent, issue specific political discussions, they are likely to have a

better understanding of politics and they are also likely to be more politically sophisticated.

Political discussions are important in crystallizing political opinion as well as creating a desire to participate in political activities (Katz, 1992). Some scholars have observed a positive relationship between political discussion and political knowledge. Eliasoph (1998) had observed that discussion about politics fostered a deeper understanding of political facts and therefore had an impact on an individual's desire to participate in the political process. Price, Capella, & Nir, (2002) noted that political conversations contributes to the development of higher quality opinions because of the 'refinement inherent in back and forth dialogue' (in Zhang et al. 2010). This is what Habermas was talking about the public sphere, he envisioned a place where community members could collectively form public opinion (Habermas, 1974 cf 2004). Some scholars view Facebook as a perfect arena for communication given its huge numbers around the world that incorporates mostly the youth (McGirt, 2007 p74).

Westling (2007) notes that in an ideal public sphere, the media, political leaders and citizens should be able to engage each other constructively in a horizontal communication structure, without either group imposing their views on the other. The key advantage of Facebook and other SNS sites is the fact that they allow members to connect and engage with each other.

This study found that the political conversations on social media are characterized by casual and informal political tone. People exchange political jokes on social media as they also post funny political videos and anecdotes. People generally do not take social

media as a serious forum for deep and formal discussions, rather, to many, social media is a place to engage in soft political conversations (Baumgartner and Morris (2009).

Social media provide anyone with internet access an opportunity to share their ideas. This ensures that mainstream media do not monopolize information channels. Consequently, new issues and ideas that might otherwise be ignored by the mainstream media can receive public attention' (OECD 2007,pg 65).

### **6.5. Exposure to Diverse political Views**

This study found that social media help expose people to views that are different from one's beliefs. 73% of the surveyed youth indicated they had come across information that contradicts their political views. This is important in refining political opinions and facilitating informed political choices. Exposure to political messages that are contrary to ones views is important in developing and maintaining a democratic citizenry. Most often, opinion change is dependent on exposure to new information. There is a near unanimous agreement among scholars that exposure to diverse political views is good for democracy (Benhabib 1992; Habermas, 1989; Mutz& Martin, 2001). Horrigan et al (2004) argued that 'democracy functions best when people consider a range of arguments including those that challenge their beliefs' (p1). He goes on to say that when people screen out information that disputed their beliefs, then the chances for meaningful discourse on issues will be stunted entrenching polarization.

It has been argued that the structure of the internet creates conditions particularly conducive for selective exposure to media content (Bimber & Davis, 2003). Scholars have noted that online communities tend to be homogenous in terms of values and

viewpoints. (Dahlberg, 2001) which means people tend to gravitate to groups that agree with their views. However, this study shows there is also evidence of the potential of online discussions to lead persons of contrasting viewpoints to engage in political discussions online.

Calhoun (1988) noted that technologies that transcend geographical space are key in facilitating communication across lines of political differences. According to the theory of cognitive dissonance, people have a tendency to seek out information that supports their interest, confirms their beliefs and boosts their ego while avoiding those that are contrary to their predispositions (Entman, 1989; Axelrod, 1973). In other words, receivers choose exposure to ideas that reinforce and confirm already held beliefs and attitudes.

Khane et al. (2011) observe that emerging body of research indicates that on one hand, the internet provides access to highly partisan websites and blogs related to civic and political life but on the other hand, many of its features tend to broaden 'exposure to diverse views, especially for individuals who do not have partisan leanings (pg 496).

Social scientists concur that political attitudes and opinions are formed through social interaction, political discussion and personal reflection and these processes are of a higher quality when people are exposed to dissimilar perspectives (Mutz& Martin, 2011).



## 6.6. Social media and political opinion change

About half of those who participated in this study indicated that social media have never influenced their political opinion (Figure 24). However, about a third in both genders (30%) admitted to having changed their mind as a result of something posted on social media. Social media indeed do contribute to opinion change but not among the majority. This is because people tend to respond to persuasive communication according to their pre-existing beliefs and opinions. This means the usefulness of social media to the political process may not be so much opinion change but other areas instead like accumulation of political knowledge or even crystallization of opinion.

Another possible explanation for the limited impact on opinion change could be the fact that political conversations on social media are casual and informal and do not focus on deeper and more serious arguments but rather consist of jokes and personal opinions.

Some studies have found that social networking sites do not have a big impact on people's political decision. This is because SNS are primarily focused on maintaining relationships with their friends (Zhang et al., 2010) as opposed to driving the political process. Other studies have found social media have the ability to affect political opinion, albeit in limited measures. A 2013 Pew Internet Research found that 43% of SNSs users had decided to learn more about an issue because of something they had read about on Social networking sites while another 18% decided to take action of a political nature because of something they read on SNSs (Smith, 2013)



A study of the use of the Internet in the 2010 US elections found that a significant number of online political users found material online that encouraged them to vote during the 2010 US campaigns. 42% said they came across online material that that encouraged them to vote for or against a specific candidate (Smith, 2011 in Pew Research 2010).

Even though social networking sites are increasingly being utilized in campaigns, it has yet been fully established that they can directly and significantly affect election results or even political support; however, there is a trend of positive contributions from these sites that has some measure of impact on political choice (Conners 2005).

#### **6.7. Social Media, Political Efficacy and Political Participation**

This study noted a high level of political efficacy among the surveyed youth (Figures 37 and 38). 60% of the youth believe their votes made a difference in the elections. Of particular significance and interest, female respondents recorded a higher level of political efficacy than the male respondents. Campbell, Gurin, and Miller (1954) define efficacy as "the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that individual citizen can play a part a part in bringing about this change" (pg. 187).

Political efficacy is one of the political factors that are correlated with political participation. Citizens need to believe they are capable of effecting change before they see the value of engaging in the political process. Data in this study suggests political efficacy is associated with political participation (Table 20), this is consistent with what other scholars have said, that political efficacy is a prerequisite for political participation (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982 in Zhang et al., 2010).

The 2013 general elections in Kenya witnessed a high turnout with 86% of the registered voters coming out to vote (IEBC Website). This turnout was the highest ever witnessed in the country with 12.2 million out of the 14.3 million voters casting their ballot (Oyunga, 2013, [www.kenyaelectionsdatabase.co.ke](http://www.kenyaelectionsdatabase.co.ke))

The youth were an important factor in this year's elections with the Jubilee coalition running on the promise of a generational change and deliberately designing its campaign to target the youths. The CORD coalition also targeted the youth promising change and the full benefits of the new constitution. There was a feeling among the youth that this election was an opportunity to bring change in this country heralding a new era in Kenyan politics. This may explain the unprecedented high voter turnout not experienced before in Africa.

This study did not find evidence to support the notion that social media are associated with a higher level of political efficacy. Studies are not conclusive on the extent to which the internet can facilitate political efficacy. On one hand, Lee (2006), found the internet can facilitate political efficacy by providing an opportunity for the youth to interact and also creating a platform through which the youth can apply pressure to social and political institutions.

On the other hand, there are other studies that did not find any connection between internet use and political efficacy (Jennings & Zeitner, 2003). However, these studies were focusing on the general character of the internet and not necessarily on social media. Social networking sites especially twitter and Facebook have a unique way of providing a platform for applying pressure on political leaders and government to act.

There have been instances of people using social media to agitate for certain things and the pressure has yielded results. An example is the Doctor's strike of 2011 where doctors used twitter to pressure the Cabinet Minister for Health to act on their grievances.

#### **6.8. Social media, Political Interest and Political Participation.**

This study found a relatively high level of political interest among the youth. Half of the youth find politics interesting and 72% pay attention to political news (Figures 42, 43, 44). People with a high level of political interest are more likely to participate in politics. According to Zhang et al. (2010), 'a healthy democracy depends on an electorate that exhibits interest in the political process. This study found that political interest is positively related to political participation (Table 20). Verba et al., (1995) observed that increased interest in politics has been associated with higher levels of political participation.

Scholars have expressed concern about the declining levels of political interest among the youth (Norris, 2000, Carpini, 2000). Traditional political institutions have not only failed to engage the youth meaningfully but they have also tended to ignore issues that are of concern to them (Carpini, 2000). Many governments have been seen to be out of touch with the youth. This in turn has alienated the youth who have lost interest in politics and consequently, the desire to participate in politics.

A debate however, still exists on whether the internet and SNS networking sites can actually stimulate political interest. Social networking sites and online communication have been touted as having the ability to stir political interest among the youth because

they provide a more engaging, exciting and creative way for young people to communicate about politics. However, this study did not find evidence to support this view (Table 20). One explanation maybe that those likely to use the internet for political purposes are those who already exhibit a high level of political interest and therefore the internet will only provide an online platform for them to continue with their already established online behavior (Carpini & Keeter, 2003).

#### **6.9. Social media, Political Knowledge and political participation.**

Political knowledge is an important factor in political participation. In Table 20, political knowledge is positively related to political participation. The findings show a correlation between political knowledge and political participation. The study also found a relatively high level of political knowledge among the youths. Carpini & Keeter (2000) identified political knowledge as important for promoting active participation in political processes. The drivers of political knowledge mostly are education, media exposure and interpersonal discussion of politics (Dahlberg, 2001 & Kellner, 1998). It has been argued elsewhere in this study that interpersonal discussion of politics leads to factual knowledge of politics and by extension, an increased desire to participate.

This study found that most of the youth have a healthy level of political knowledge. This can be partially explained by the fact that the youth polled in this study are in college and therefore have a higher level of education than the ordinary youth. The two Universities involved in this study are in Nairobi with one of them having a bias for media and communication. This points to a higher level of media exposure for the respondents which can explain the level of knowledge exhibited by the respondents.

Social media create the conditions for 'rapid spread of information as salacious stories can be captured in real time, posted online and shared rapidly through twitter and Facebook'. It has been observed that many citizens turn to social media as a supplement for online news coverage (Kohut, 2008). In 2007, it was found that 40% of all SNS users had used them as a source of political information in the US (Zhang et al., 2010). Johnson (2012) found that SNSs users rely on social media to be entertained, to control their media experience and to gather information. This aspect of interactivity with other media channels is able to powerfully influence political information efficacy (English et al., 2011).

Warner et al. in a 2012 study found that the confidence that comes from political knowledge was important factor in political participation. If people believe they know enough about politics, they develop the necessary confidence to express their views. In the study, the political knowledge confidence (political information efficacy) yielded greater participation through social media (Warner et al., 2012).

The use of the internet enables quick and easy aggregation of political information among potential voters (Bimber, 1998). A study in the UK, found that young people are more likely to use the internet to acquire political information than people in the older age groups (Gennaro & Dutton, 2006, pp. 299-313). Quinteleir and Vissers (2008) observe that young people rely on SNS sites for political information'

However, there are studies that have indicated that even with the proliferation of new media as a source of information, political knowledge and voter turnout have not visibly improved. A US study found that greater media choice simply makes it easier for



individuals to consume more of the types of content that they already prefer (Prior, 2005, pp 577-592).

According to other studies, social media stand out as efficient channels for information about events for large groups of the population through which they achieve higher levels of knowledge about political affairs (Steen-Johnsen et al., 2011). Indeed, new ICTs are seen as an avenue to provide information to 'citizen-consumers' (Needham, 2004). They allow the political actors to bypass the traditional outlets of information and engage directly with their respondents in communication that is unfettered and unconstrained by the norms and restrictions of traditional journalism (Stromer-Gallery & Jameison, 2011)

#### **6.10. Young People and Political Participation in Kenya**

Verba et al., (1978) defined political participation as citizen's activities that are aimed at influencing the selection and decisions of government personnel such as voting in elections, as well as more informal modes of engagement, such as contacting political representatives, meeting with community members or involvement in political action.

The youth were major players in the 2013 general elections in Kenya. One of the coalitions campaigned on the platform of generational change and pitched their campaign message to mobilize the youth to actively participate by voting in youthful leaders. This active mobilization by political parties and the emotive and competitive nature of the 2013 elections caused the youth to turn out in large numbers to vote.

Traditionally, ethnic alliances have played a dominant role in Kenyan politics to an extent of blurring youth participation. Even with their huge numbers and forming a



large population of voters, they have continued to be marginalized and their central concerns relegated to the periphery. However, according to a joint report by the Ministry of State for planning and UNDP, the youth are increasingly yearning for 'quality leadership that can put their interests at the fore of the development arena'. They are now developing a political culture to demand their space in society and interrogate issues affecting them (GOK & UNDP 2009).

In all the elections held under the multiparty democracy system in Kenya, youth lobby groups have played a prominent role in the elections in mobilizing votes. They have been used as instruments of political mobilization. Groups such as Youth for KANU 92 (YK92), Vijana na Kibaki, Youth for Raila, Waremba na Kibaki were involved in direct political mobilization of votes for their candidates (Okombo , 2008 & Kagwanja, 2006 in Oriare, 2010).

Youth involvement in politics is now increasing as more young people begin to understand the relationship between political power and resource distribution in Kenya. They now want to improve social justice and address the many challenges affecting their generation especially job prospects, improved livelihoods, service delivery and basic rights. The study found that the sampled youth were involved in various forms and aspects of political participation. However, there were varied levels of participation in regard to the various political activities.

#### **6.10.1. Areas of High Political Participation**

The youth surveyed in this study demonstrated high levels of political participation in voting, seeking campaign information on political parties and candidates, sharing

political views and opinions and trying to persuade others to support one's preferred candidate (Figures 49, 52, 54, and 55).

The youth recorded a high turnout in actual voting which is the true test and the most direct form of political participation. 73% of the surveyed youth voted in the just concluded elections (Figure 49). About 20% did not vote due to varied reasons some legitimate and others not genuine. The high voter turnout can be attributed to the active mobilization by the political formations, the aggressive mobilization by civil society actors and the coordinated media campaigns.

Voter turnout has received the attention of many scholars when looking at youth political behavior. Many scholars identify age as an important influence on voter turnout in industrialized nations. Overwhelming evidence has pointed to low voter turnout among the youth (Blais, 2000, Wattenberg, 2003). Norris (2002) found that young voters have a lower inclination to vote compared to their older counterparts. However, the 2008 US presidential elections challenged this perception with many new young voters turning out to vote and propelling Obama to the presidency.

The surveyed youth actively participated in trying to persuade others to vote for their preferred candidates or party, sharing political views with others and seeking or gathering campaign information. Most social scientists concur that political attitudes and opinions are formed through social interaction, political discussion and personal reflection and these processes are of a higher quality when people are exposed to dissimilar perspectives (Calhoun, 1988, 225).

The high participation in these areas which involve interpersonal contact and discussion is significant. It can partially be explained by the level of education which is an important factor in interpersonal discussion of politics, political knowledge and interest. The youth involved in this study are mostly undergraduate students in two public universities at different levels of study. Their level of education may have played a part in making them active in political discussions. Education is seen as important in fostering civic attitudes and cultivating rational informed opinions (Chong & Gradstein, 2009). In some studies, education has been shown to demonstrate an important and positive influence on youth voter turnout and protest activities (Howe 2006 , McVeigh and Smith 1999). This is partly because, more educated people are better able to process complex political information (Dalton 2008). However, there are cases where education has been shown to have minimal bearing at all on overall political participation. Bratton (1999) observes that in Zambia, education demonstrated no impact on political participation.

Another factor that could explain this high participation is the nature of the 2013 general elections. The 2013 general election generated many talking points for many young people. Key among them were the deliberate efforts to target the youth and branding the election a generational change. The presidential debates were an effort to move the campaigns to issue based politics, the growth of the internet and social media also served to excite discussions.

The Afrobarometer survey of 2005 found the Kenyan youth to be actively engaged in political affairs with a healthy 63% indicating they are very interested in politics. 71% of

those polled in that study indicated that they discuss political matters frequently. The study noted, the youth were mostly 'educated and networked' with literacy levels of about 80%.

### **6.10.2. Areas of Low Participation**

The study found low levels of participation among the youth in the distribution of campaign literature, volunteering to work for political parties and candidates, giving money or donations, displaying campaign paraphernalia, attending campaign functions and rallies and offering oneself for political office (Figures 50, 52, 53).

This low level of participation was also reflected in a study done in 2009 by the Education Development Centre focusing on the youth in Kenya. The study found that when it comes to civic and political participation, the youth are largely excluded and they exhibit 'a deep sense of distrust and despondency; they do not feel they can currently change the system from within (EDC, 2009).

Low participation can also be explained by the fact that youth political engagement in Kenya has rarely assumed organized forms (Youth Agenda, 2008). The youth have not been given any meaningful roles. More often than not, they have been deployed as party foot soldiers where their roles are limited to acting as party agents, providing security and being ferried to political rallies to swell the numbers and at times cause chaos. Investigations into the post-election violence of 2007/2008 have found that the youth were involved in planning only about 7% of the violence but they were responsible in the execution of about 55% of the violence (ICG,2008).

Another factor explaining the low level of participation among the youth in Kenya is the fact that the central concerns of the youth have largely been ignored. Aspects like employment, security and political representation are given minimal consideration (Muhula, 2009).

The low level of volunteerism can be explained by the fact that money plays a key role in Kenyan politics. Money is used in voter bribery, ferrying youths to meetings, paying them to act as security among others. Previous studies show that the Kenyan youth expect financial reward for any service rendered to a politician or political party including attending political meetings (Kagwanja, 2006).

According to Oriare (2010), rural youth have a higher predisposition than urban youth to attend political rallies and meetings. Okombo (2008) notes that, rural youth attend political meetings with the expectation of receiving money from politicians.

Ethnicity plays a major role in youth participation and is often a major reason for participation. Youths from a particular region are likely to support a candidate based on ethnicity and not necessarily based on good policies for the youth. This undermines the articulation of 'a decisive youth platform as well as a collective attempt at organized claim making' (Muhula, 2009). Karuti Kanyinga and Murimi Njoka (1999) in studying political participation of the youth in the early days of multiparty democracy observed that the Urban youth are able to provide support to individuals on account of a broad criteria unlike their rural counterparts who support their ethnic elite with the hope they will share the benefits of having one of their own in power. Urban youth also comprise



an informed population who are multi-ethnic, as such, they tend to organize politics around national issues.

Generally, in all forms of political participation, the study found low participation levels among the young women compared to the young men. This can be explained by the patriarchal nature of the Kenyan society that tends to limit women participation in politics (Chesoni, 2006, 195-201). Women are often victims of cultural bias, intimidation and at times violence which hinder their participation in political affairs.

#### **6.11. Social Networking Sites and Political Participation**

The results of this study reveal that reliance on SNSs is positively related to political participation. This study has established that indeed SNSs indeed have a significant though not huge influence on politics and the political campaigning process. This influence is manifested in political engagement, evaluation of issue appeals, levels of political information efficacy, civic engagement, political interest, political trust, political efficacy and political participation.

There are instances where the power of social media has been demonstrated in political spaces. Social media have been credited with the organization and coordination of protests in the Arab spring of 2011 which led to regime changes in several North African countries. Some argue social media was the driving power behind these popular revolutions as protestors used social media especially Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to coordinate their activities. However, a more accurate view would be the fact that social media provided an outlet for the feelings of discontentment and anger among the



people. Social media only acted as a channel to carry messages that resonated with majority of the people

For most users, the world of politics on SNS is not a separate domain of political activity but rather, SNSs users are also frequently but not universally active in other aspects of civic life (Smith, 2013p8). It means that active political participation on SNSs by users is likely to have an impact on how they participate offline.

In the Philippines elections of May 2010, social media played a key role in the campaigns. According to a study by Justine Espina-Letargo, SNSs were highly effective in the online campaigns. He notes that ' the extensive use of Facebook and Twitter , by political campaign teams and the online community are shaping social networking platforms into something bigger' He further observes that 'these popular sites have enhanced the dynamics of electoral campaigns and integrated the political consciousness of the people' (Justine Espina-Letargo in Philip Behnke 2010).

There has been a long standing debate on the impact of the internet on political participation and political campaign process (Tedesco, 2004). Some scholars have insisted the internet has a positive impact on democracy by facilitating a horizontal flow of information, low cost and inherent interactivity (Barber et al 1997) .Other scholars believe the internet merely provides a platform for people who are already politically engaged to continue participating and therefore has no significant impact on the unengaged but only increases the gap between the politically inactive and politically active (Sparks 2001 & Anderson, 2004). They argue that the internet and SNSs will only

serve to reach and empower those who are already politically engaged (De Maggio et al., 2004; Norris , 2001).

This study however found evidence that SNSs have a positive impact on political variables and different aspects of political participation. Indeed previous studies by different scholars have found evidence that supports this view that SNSs have a considerable impact on political engagement (English, Sweetser & Ancu, 2011; Katz et al., 2001; Wang, 2007, Williams & Gulati, 2007 & 2008). Their popularity especially among the younger generations has led to many individuals to use them as a platform for political participation (Hesseldahl et al., 2008; Marchese, 2008; Owen, 2008). Smith & Rainie (2012) found that campaign and policy related material on SNSs had a moderate role in influencing most users' views and political activities. About 35% of those they sampled indicated that SNSs were important in keeping up with political matters.

This study further found that a majority of young people are very active on Social media in terms of consuming, posting and sharing political content on SNS (Table 7). Others have looked at Social media as representing an alternative structure along traditional ways of political mobilization and recruits in different ways, different types of people (Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen & Wollebaek 2011). Pew Internet Research in a 2012 investigating social media and political engagement found that 66% had used social media for civic and political activities which points to the growing significance of SNSs as an important feature in civic and political engagement among Americans.

With the growing popularity of social media among the youth sampled in this study, It is becoming clear that SNSs help to mobilize specific demographic segments within society

by creating a new platform for political mobilization which works alongside traditional structures of mobilization. SNSs cannot replace the existing traditional structures of political campaigning and mobilization but on the other hand, campaign strategists and politicians cannot ignore the opportunity provided by SNS s in the mobilization process. Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen & Wollebaek (2011) observed that participation in Facebook groups has strong and independent effects on political mobilization, they also found that SNSs are in the process of transforming the conditions of civic and political mobilization. However, they also acknowledge that SNSs will not replace the traditional voter mobilization strategies but rather work in 'complementarity and mutual dependency'. They conclude that 'social media...must be conceived as supplements to both established organizational society and to mainstream media as information structures for mobilization' (Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen &Wollebaek, 2011 ; Smith & Rainie (2012) .

Not all scholars agree with the findings of this study that SNSs have a significant impact on political participation. Earlier studies found online political participation does not significantly affect the democratic process (McChesney, 2000). In another study, (Zhang et al., 2010) did not find evidence to show that the internet facilitates greater political engagement especially for the younger citizens. Baumgartner and Morris (2010) in their study found SNSs users were not more inclined than users of other media to participate in politics. One possible explanation for this difference could be the fact that those studies were conducted in the earlier stages of social media growth and development. Since then, social media sites have doubled their followers and grown in prominence. There is enough current evidence to support the view that SNSs are having a measurable impact on political participation (Pew Internet Research, August, 2013).

The results also show that Social media have created a platform through which people are able to engage in political conversations. Other studies have noted a consistent growth in political activity on SNSs which scholars link to actual political engagement (Smith, 2013). With increased political talk, people share their perspectives as they also learn about the opinions of other people within the social media network which causes the diffusion of different views. (Smith & Rainie, 2008).

Katz et al. (2001) observed that the mere act of going online to engage in political discussion has a positive influence on political participation including participation in rallies, campaign donations and voting. Online political engagement is therefore seen as resulting in actual offline political action. Individuals who are politically active on SNSs are also highly active in offline spaces. Smith (2013) found that 'those who are politically active offline tend to have relatively high rates of engagement in social networking spaces' (p8).

Candidates in the 2013 general elections in Kenya and their campaign managers strategically used social media as platform to engage with their supporters and potential voters. Information about campaign activities was posted on SNSs almost on a daily basis.

As this study reveals, political engagement online has become commonplace among young adults particularly among 18-24 year olds. This is consistent with other current studies on the same that have found two thirds of all young adults engage in some sort of social network-related political activity (Smith 2013).

Social media have inevitably become part of politics even with the low internet penetration rates, politicians and other political players have come to acknowledge the value of SNSs in campaigning.

The rapid growth in popularity and acceptance of social networking sites have created a new battle front for political campaigning and political mobilization of young people. Though this study has found evidence that shows the increasing importance of social media to the campaign process and the impact on political participation, SNSs do not work alone but in combination with other factors. The regression model shows that online campaign account for 36% of political participation,(Tables 22 & 23) and therefore, the remaining 64% is dependent on other offline campaign activities.

#### **6.12. Civic Participation**

Civic participation refers to activities that address community concerns through non-governmental or non-electoral means, such as volunteering or building a homeless shelter or working on a community project. Civic participation has been viewed as a positive predictor of political participation ( Wilkins 2000) and in some cases , some scholars do not see the value of differentiating between the two since most civic activities have a bearing on the political process ( Putnam, 1995). It is then possible to argue that low levels of civic participation could also predict low level of political participation.

The study found an alarming low level of civic participation among the surveyed youth. The civic activities measured in this study were; volunteering in organizations to address local issues, mobilizing others for a worthy cause, forming groups to address



community concerns, lobbying local and national leaders about local needs and taking part in demonstrations on local issues.

In general, only about a third of the surveyed youth were actively engaged in civic activities with the other two thirds appearing uninvolved. This points to a detached youth who are disengaged from the civic and political process. The culture of expecting monetary reward for any kind of service rendered in the society could be the key reason for this low participation levels. The youth would only want to engage in formal civil society organizations because of the monetary gain (Kagwanja, 2006, Okombo, 2008)

The study found that the youth were not actively involved in forming action groups to address local community problems. This can be partly explained by the fact the youth involved in this study are in School where books might be keeping them busy. However, even in a school setting, there is still the requirement for community service where students are able to organize themselves into groups and reach out to the community.

These findings also point to a low level of participation when it comes to collective action to address local problems or needs. This can still be explained by the tendency to sit down leave the government everything to handle every problem in society.

A 'glass ceiling mentality' accounts for this low level of civic participation .The educated youth prefer to remain unaffected by the issues in society as long as those issues do not directly touch on them. They also prefer to leave the burden of solving all community problems to the government and civil society organizations. There are indications from other studies (GOK & UNDP, 2009) that the youth from the slum areas in the urban centres are much more involved in civic activities compared to their elite counterparts



like those sampled in this study. The youth in the university are elitist and disconnected from the societal concerns. Previous studies found more educated people having a higher likelihood to participate in civic activities like public demonstrations (Pettersen & Rose, 1996; Aardal, 2007) but this is not replicated in this study.

This general low level of civic participation can be explained by several factors. One is the tendency by people to leave all civic action to political, religious and civil society leaders. Not many private citizens bother about engaging the government leaders about local problems and needs. Secondly, the absence of structured forums where such engagement can take place. Many young people do not get avenues to express their views and grievances to the government. Thirdly, people generally expect the government do everything and solve all problems. Citizens are always eager to cry out for government's help even in issues that do not require the government to intervene. Finally, the period referred to in the study was a campaign /political season and most of the elected local leaders were either campaigning or had just been elected or re-elected and therefore had not fully settled in office while the other government administrators were caught up in the uncertainty that characterizes the electioneering period and therefore were mostly unavailable.

The findings also show a low participation among the female students compared to the male students in all civic activities. Again this is explained by historical and cultural factors that hinder active participation by women in civic affairs (Kasomo 2012; Kariuki 2010; Chesoni, 2006).

### 6.13. Social Networking Sites and Civic Participation

Social media have been utilized as effective platforms of social mobilization for citizens. Kenyans on social media especially twitter are very active in using social media to mobilize for action on a variety of issues.

In Kenya, social networking sites have been used in several prominent and highly effective campaigns and movements. The most notable was the 'Occupy Parliament' protests that were organized and conducted through social media. Citizens used social media especially twitter, to express their support for the movement and condemn the move by members of parliament to increase their salaries. The Doctors' strike in 2012 was also supported by an online movement dubbed '*Peremende Movement*'. The doctors used twitter to plan and coordinate their protests and to put pressure on the government to act on their grievances. Social media was also used in a highly successful campaign dubbed '*Operation Bring Zack home*' whose aim was to raise money to build a hospital catering for spinal injury patients.

This study did not find evidence that supports the research hypothesis that reliance SNSs is positively related to civic participation. Previous studies have associated reliance on SNSs with civic engagement (Zhang et al., 2009; Smith, 2013).

A possible explanation for this discrepancy in findings could be the fact that the culture of civic participation is not entrenched in the Kenyan society compared to the US where the other studies were conducted. Politics play a dominant role in all affairs of the Kenyan society. The structures of civic engagement are also not very developed and people do not find readily available avenues for civic participation. However ,social

media have been found to provide citizens with an effective platform to engage, lobby and mobilize for causes aimed at social change.

#### **6.14. Kenyan Political culture, systems and Youth Political Participation**

The Kenyan youth have faced numerous challenges that continue to discourage them from playing a positive role in politics. They have remained at the periphery of electoral politics in Kenya (Kagwanja, 2005, Wanjala, 2002). The political environment in Kenya often precludes the youth from participating in policy discussions (Youth Agenda, 2008). The youth lack resources to campaign effectively. They also have to contend with negative cultural perception towards them which keeps many aspiring leaders from party lists. Other challenges faced by the youth include Ignorance of political issues, intolerance to opposing views, lack of identification cards and by extension voting cards and a high level of apathy towards the electoral process with many viewing it as an exercise in futility. Then there are the impure motives for voting like ethnicity, political patronage by senior politicians and falling prey to voter bribery (Youth Agenda Kenya, 2008).

The Kenyan political system throughout history has not always encouraged youth participation in politics. The history of dictatorship under the first two presidents, the one party state system (KANU) that dominated the government and the illegal voting systems like queuing coupled with rigging of elections have all conspired to limit youth participation in politics (KEDOF, 2008).

The age hierarchy of Kenyan society like most countries across the world limit the youth expression and participation in the social and political life of the society. Young people tend to be frequently excluded from the national public debates on account of inexperience (UNDP Kenya Report, 2009). The culture of political repression saw many young upcoming politicians detained, banished and forced into exile with some losing their lives in the process. Youth participation for a long time was limited to executing political violence (KNHCR, 2008, KEDOF, 2008), being ferried to political rallies and mostly serving as security with no substantive roles. Cronism and political patronage further complicated the effective participation by the youth as political parties and systems were controlled by powerful elite (CAPF, 2008) who would not allow 'inexperienced' real opportunities.

As people begin to understand the relationship between power and resource distribution, youth participation in politics seems to be on the increase (UNDP Kenya Report, 2009). Aggressive campaigns by civil society have continued to encourage the youth to participate in politics (IED, 2007). The Youth Agenda through the Young Leaders Development Programme (YLDP) have continued to equip the youth and empower them for political engagement. It is such efforts that saw youthful politicians elected into political offices in the 2007 General elections in Kenya ( Youth Agenda, 2008). Other organizations also run programmes aimed at empowering the youth include, National Democratic Institute, Centre for Multi-Party Democracy, the National Youth Council among others (CAPF, 2008).

These programmes were driven by the understanding that limited youth participation is a threat to democracy and leads to the underrepresentation of the youth thereby undermining the principle of popular sovereignty and legitimacy ( CAPF, 2008, Oriare,2010).

Against this backdrop, this study explored ways in which political mobilization of the youth can be enhanced and specifically focused on the role of social media. Technological advances have created new opportunities and spaces for political mobilization especially among the youth (Zhang et al., 2010). Political formations deliberately put in place policies to reach the youth and make them active in politics. Parties like the Party of Action (POA) and the Kenya National Progress (KNC) as well as Vijana Progressive Party (VIPA) primarily targeted the youth in their approach to campaigning.

In the 2013 General Elections in Kenya, Political Parties engaged technology as platforms to engage the youth. They hired competent people to run their social media campaigns using language that the youth understand. The 2013 elections saw a highly visible participation of the youth with some of them holding senior positions in political parties most notably, nominated MP and Chairman of TNA party Mr. Johnson Sakaja who is below 30 , the treasurer of UDF, Martha Wangari is also below 30, Onyango Oloo , Secretary General of TNA is also youthful.

Part of the outcome is that Kenya achieved the highest level of voter turnout never experienced in Africa before (82%). The current parliament has a relatively high number of elected and nominated youthful politicians in both the Senate and the



National Assembly which portends growing opportunities for the Kenyan youth to participate. There is also an ongoing clamour within the ODM party for the old guard to give way to youthful leaders as a way of revamping the party and preparing for the 2017/2018 general elections.

Social media came with the promise to reinvigorate democracy and citizen participation in politics especially among the youth. While this promise and potential is yet to be fully realized, there is growing evidence, as seen from this study that indeed SNSs are engaging the youth in civic and political activities and their role and influence will continue to increase as more people join social media with increased access to the internet. Even though this study found the level of influence and impact on civic and political participation is not very high, there is compelling evidence from other studies that social media are increasingly playing a prominent role in politics (Smith 2013). As internet access and penetration levels continue to increase and as more and more people continue to join social networking sites in Kenya, the potential of SNSs to mobilize the youth will continue to be realized and the full benefits of embracing these technologies will continue to manifest in the political sphere.



## **VII. CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.0. Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the most important findings of this study and presents recommendations arising from the study. The chapter also presents the conclusions of the study as well as pointing out areas of further research.

### **7.1. Summary of Key Research Findings**

This section summarizes the findings of this research focusing on the four research questions that the study sought to answer in establishing the influence of social networking sites on political attitudes and behavior.

The study found that young people are actively using Social networking sites for political purposes. SNSs have become an important part of the political campaigning process playing an important role in driving political discussion and providing a platform for political engagement for young people. Reliance on SNSs is positively related to political participation but not to civic participation.

The main thrust of the study was to investigate the influence of social networking sites on political attitudes and behaviour among the Kenyan urban youth. Specifically, the study answered questions on the effects of usage of social networking sites on political engagement and democratic participation among young adults ; the extent to which social networking sites facilitate political discussions among the urban youth in Kenya; whether reliance on social networking sites is related to increased civic and political participation and finally the extent to which social networking sites influence political attitudes and knowledge among the urban youth .

### **7.1.1. General Patterns of media use**

The study found that the Internet was the most popular media for most of the young people with half of the males and 37% females indicating it is their favourite media (Figure 2). The online presence of the youth has grown tremendously with most youths increasingly turning to the internet as a major source of news and other information. It has become so central to young peoples' interactions that, it's now impossible to consider the life of young people outside internet (Zhao, 2006).

Television remains the most preferred source of political news with half of the respondents picking television as their preferred media source of political news (Figure 3). Television is more popular among young women compared to the young men.

#### **7.1.1.1. Time spent seeking political information**

The internet and social media are important sources of political information. 31% of the surveyed youth used the internet and social media on a daily basis to obtain political information. Close to a half of the surveyed youth use social media and the internet to obtain political information at least four days in a week (Table 2).

#### **7.1.1.2. Other sources of political information**

Besides the media, friends are the most important sources of political information (62%), followed by colleagues at 27% (Table 3). Interpersonal connections are important in providing political information (Horrigan et al, 2004) and play an important role in providing political information, driving political discussions which

have the potential to ultimately shape political knowledge, attitudes and by extension political behavior.

### **7.1.2. Social media usage**

Social media is very popular among young people with almost everyone who was surveyed indicating they use social media (Figure 5). Social media have gained a rapid acceptance among young people especially those within the 18-30 years age group. Further, the study found that , Facebook is by far the most preferred Social networking Site with more than half of the respondents ( 58%) choosing Facebook as their preferred social networking site (Figure 6).

Majority of SNSs users visit the sites quite frequently. 82% of Facebook users log in daily (Figure 7). On the same, 61% of young people spend more than 30 minutes during each Facebook visit and the other SNS sites (Table 5). It is also worth noting that 15 % of the users spend up to 5 hours each time they visit the sites.

Young people mostly use SNSs to seek information and to connect with friends. An overwhelming majority of the youth used them for connecting with friends (81.1%) and seeking information (82.2 %) thus presenting a fertile ground for exposure to political information. It is also further evidence of both bridging and bonding social capital as users get to connect online with people they know and also strangers.

### **7.1.3. Reliance on Social Networking Sites**

The study established there is a relatively high level of reliance on SNSs. At least half of the respondents consider themselves either highly reliant or somewhat reliant on SNSs with 20% indicating they are heavily reliant on them (Figure 8).

SNSs have become an important part of young peoples' lives leading to the creation of a virtual online community. More than half of the surveyed youth felt Facebook was part of their everyday activity while only a quarter indicated that they did not consider Facebook part of their daily activity (Figure 9). Similarly 62% of the respondents agree that they felt a part of the Facebook community while 13.5% who did not feel part of the Facebook community (Figure 10).

### **7.1.4. Political Activity on Social Networking Sites**

There is a heightened level of political activity on SNSs. More than half of the surveyed youth had engaged in at least one of the featured political activities on SNSs.

Almost every young person using social media is exposed to political information whenever they log in. An overwhelming 91% had come across information of political nature like campaign updates, photos, videos, speeches, and links to political websites among others, on Facebook. The internet contributes to democratic discourse by providing current information and news about politics to otherwise disengaged individuals (Baum, 2003 a, pp. 111-112).

The study also found that most young people are actively involved in posting political campaign information on SNSs though young men (64%) were more active than the young women (50%) in doing so (Figure 11).

Young people engage in frequent discussion of politics on SNSs with the SNSs providing a platform where users engage each other on the different political issues. Young men are more active than the young women in discussing politics on SNSs. Figure 12 shows about 60% of the men and 50% of the ladies among the surveyed youth had engaged in political discussions on Facebook.

Political discussions on SNSs mainly involve commenting on other peoples' status through which people react or respond to political posts by others mainly agreeing or disagreeing or offering different perspectives. Political discussions also involve sending and responding to political messages, posting and commenting on links to political stories, photos and videos. The study found that three quarters of all male respondents and about two thirds of all female respondents indicated having commented on another person's political status or post on SNSs(Figure 13).

Online political groups were an important feature of online campaigns and were used by majority of SNSs. They facilitate the creation of an online public sphere where young people are able to actively participate in political discussions. About two thirds of the respondents, both male and female had 'liked' or joined Political groups and 'fan' pages (Figure 14). The groups are very useful in facilitating consumption and discussion of political content in a common platform where people are able to both read and post content on the group 'walls'.



There is an active consumption of political content posted on SNSs. Social Networking Sites provide opportunities for young people to be both creators and consumers of content. They act as an outlet for young people to express and interpret political information. Young men are more active politically online than females. 71% of male respondents and 60% of female respondents indicated having watched political videos posted on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (Figure 15). Another 69 % of male respondents and 65% of female respondents indicated they had followed a link of a political story posted on social media.

Young people also intentionally visit social media to seek political information. 58% of the respondents had deliberately visited social media sites to seek information of political information (Figure 17).

This study established there was a huge presence of political content and campaign information on SNSs. Political campaigns used social media to inform their supporters or potential voters about the different campaign events or scheduled activities. This information was available in the form of campaign videos and photographs, campaign posters, adverts, manifestos, links to news websites, status updates, and press releases among others.

Social networking sites were used by young people to follow significant political events. The two Presidential debates, the election results and the Supreme Court ruling were the most followed political events before the elections. Figures 19 & 20 show they were followed in equal measures by both genders.



Social media played an important role in exposing people to diverse political views and beliefs which is important in making political choices (Figure 21). Most of the respondents (73 %) indicated that they came across such information quite often or fairly often. Studies suggest that the internet is related to greater exposure to diverse political views, compared to face-to-face connections like family, friends and coworkers (Horrigan et al., 2004 & Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010).

#### **7.1.5. Social Media impact on Political Opinions and Decisions**

Social networking sites have a significant but limited impact in terms of shaping or altering users' political opinion and influencing their choices. This can be attributed to the nature of online communication on social media. Conversations are mostly casual and not always based on real substance or factual knowledge of politics and therefore does not assist in decision making. Another factor is that political information on SNSs is highly partisan which is likely to alienate anyone with opposing views or reinforce opinions of like-minded SNSs users. A third (30%) of the respondents, both male and female, admitted to having changed their mind as a result of something posted on social media (Figure 24). About half of those who participated in the study indicated that social media have never influenced their political opinion.

Similarly, in Figure 25, 57 % of the respondents indicated that they had never decided to support or stop supporting a candidate on the basis of information posted on social media. 28 % indicated they had changed their mind after reading a post on social media.

Online discussions often end up forming part of offline discussions. 44% of the respondents often discussed offline something they discovered online (Figure 28) which

points to the effectiveness of social media as a campaign tool by linking and supplementing online activity with offline activities.

#### **7.1.6. Interpersonal Discussion**

Young people actively and frequently engage in political discussions with other people which is an important factor in shaping political views and knowledge. The highest level of political discussion occurred with friends. 66 % of the surveyed youth indicated that they frequently discussed politics with friends (Figure 33).

The study found that young people often discuss politics with colleagues. Conversations on politics usually revolve around major political occurrences and or political talking points of the day carried in the news. In Figure 32, about two thirds of the surveyed male youths, 67% and 62% of the female youths were involved in some level of political discussion with their colleagues. About a fifth or 19% of either gender did not discuss politics with colleagues.

Interpersonal discussion of politics with schoolmates was also frequent. Slightly more than half of the respondents indicated they discussed politics with their schoolmates rather often (Figure 33). A quarter of those surveyed said they rarely discussed politics with their schoolmates. It is rather common during a political season for college students to be involved in vibrant political discussions and debates among each other.

The lowest level of interpersonal discussion of politics was with family members. 46 % indicated they engage in political discussions with both parents and siblings parents rather often or somewhat often (Figure 31).

### **7.1.7. Political Variables**

#### **7.1.7.1. Political Efficacy**

This study noted a high level of political efficacy among the surveyed youth. Of particular significance and interest, female respondents recorded a higher level of political efficacy than the male respondents. Figure 37 also shows a high level of efficacy among those polled, both male and female. 45% of those polled believe they can influence both local and national government. Close to 60% believe their vote made a difference in the elections. Slightly more women (62%) than men (55%) believe their vote made a difference (Figure 38). Majority of those polled believe that every vote counts in an election which points to a higher inclination to vote. On this aspect, again the female respondents (63.1%) were more than the male respondents (52.6%).

Although political efficacy is an important factor of political participation, there is no evidence from this study showing reliance on SNSs is positively related to political efficacy.

#### **7.1.7.2. Political Interest**

A healthy proportion of Kenyan urban youth population is interested in politics and they pay attention to political news covered in the media. Young men are more interested in politics and they pay more attention to political news than young women. About half of the respondents (50% male and 47% female) said they found politics interesting compared to the 15% male and 17% female who found politics boring (Figures 42 and 43).

Male youth pay more attention to political news than female youth. 74% of the males sampled paid attention to news on politics often or quite often while half of the female youth (50%) indicated they often or somewhat often paid attention to news touching on politics. 15% and 21.5% of male and female respondents respectively indicated they rarely paid attention to news touching on politics (Figure 44).

Social media is touted as having the ability to reignite political interest among the youth by providing an exciting platform to discuss and share political ideas. Users of social media also have the advantage of incidental exposure to political information and ideas on social media which could draw their interest. This study however, did not find a direct association between social media usage and political interest.

#### 7.1.7.3. Political Knowledge

There is a relatively high level of political knowledge among the youth. Table 12 shows a summary of the level of political knowledge among the respondents. The table reveals there was a slightly higher level of knowledge among the male respondents (54%) compared to the female respondents (47%). The surveyed youth exhibited factual knowledge of campaign information and name recognition of political office holders.

An overwhelming majority 89% of the respondents had clear knowledge of most of the candidates running in the 2013 general elections in Kenya. However, more than half of the respondents could not identify their running mates. Only about 42% were able to correctly identify at least three running mates.

About two thirds (65%) were able to correctly identify by name the coalition's participating in the 2013 general elections but more than half of the respondents could not identify or correctly match the slogans associated with the different alliances and political parties. Only 42% of the respondents were able to correctly identify the slogans.

At least half of the respondents knew by name the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Attorney General and close to a half of the respondents knew by name the majority leader of the national assembly. However, the study found there was very little awareness of the Senate and its important office holders like the Speaker and the Senate Majority leader. Only a third knew the speaker of the senate by name while only a fifth of those polled knew the majority leader in the senate by name.

Social networking sites play an important role in political knowledge accumulation through exposure to multiple types of information available online. Political posts, opinions, links to news stories, political videos, and links to political blogs all play a role in informing knowledge on politics. This explains why majority of SNSs users felt more knowledgeable as a result of using SNSs.

#### **7.1.8. Forms and Levels of Political Participation**

This study assessed the forms and levels of political participation among the youth. This was based on the assumption that young people participate in politics based on rational choices. This study found that young people participated in various political activities in varying degrees before, during and after the 2013 general elections in Kenya.



### **7.1.8.1. High Participation levels**

The highest levels of participation demonstrated by the youth were in voting, seeking campaign information on political parties and candidates, sharing political views and opinions and trying to persuade others to support one's preferred candidate.

Majority of the youth participated through voting. 85% of the young men and 75% of the young ladies voted in the 2013 general elections as a way of expressing interested and preference about the way their country is managed (Figure 49).

The youth were very active in efforts to persuade others to vote for their preferred candidates and parties. About 60% were involved in trying to canvass for support of their candidates (Figure 52). The men were slightly more active than women in attempting to persuade others to support their preferred candidate.

A significant number of youths participated in seeking information on political parties, candidates and the campaigns. More than a third of the male respondents and slightly more than a third of the female respondents had actively participated in seeking and gathering information about a political party or campaigns. A third of the respondents both male and female indicated they had not sought or gathered information about campaigns. In general, however, slightly more people had attempted to seek information than those who had not (Figure 54).

Young people are actively involved in sharing their political views and opinions with others. Sharing of political views with others was the highest form of participation displayed by the youth involved in this study (Figure 55). More than half of the



respondents 56% male and 53.5% female indicated they were actively involved in sharing their political views with others. In fact, only about 17% male and 14% female said they had not shared political views in any way. A combined 83% male and 86% indicated they shared political views in varying degrees. Gender does not seem to have an impact on this level of participation.

#### **7.1.8.2. Low participation levels**

The study found low level of participation among the youth in the distribution of campaign literature, volunteering to work for political parties and candidates, displaying campaign paraphernalia, attending campaign functions and rallies and offering oneself for political office.

Very few among the surveyed youth volunteered for a political party or candidate (Figure 50). Only 14% male and 9% female among the respondents indicated they had actively volunteered for a candidate or political party, about a third indicated they had volunteered but in a limited sense. Around half of the respondents both male and female they did not in any way volunteer for a candidate or a political party.

Again, a very small number among the youth (15% males and 10% of the ladies) were involved in wearing or distributing any campaign paraphernalia like wearing a t-shirt, cap or displaying a sticker or poster. Close to three quarters (72% male and 74 % female) of the respondents indicated either they did not participate at all or they rarely participated.

The surveyed youth are not so active in attending campaign functions and political rallies. Slightly more men than women participated by attending campaign functions and rallies. Only a quarter of the male respondents and a tenth of the female respondents had attended a rally or a political meeting (Figure 53). 37% male and 47% female indicated they had not attended a political rally or meeting of any kind.

The urban youth were not actively involved in distribution of campaign literature or even working as campaign or election officials for parties. Only 17% of the respondents had actively participated in distributing campaign literature. A huge percentage (43%) indicated they had not distributed campaign literature in any way. About working for a party as nomination or election official, again only about 16 % male and 9% female indicated they worked for a political party. More than half of the respondents (52%) said they had not worked as election or nomination officials for political parties.

Results from the regression and correlation analysis indicate there is a relationship between reliance on social networking sites and political participation. However, this does not prove causality but just an association and the direction of this relationship can go either way, with those who are already political active using the SNSs as a new platform to engage politically while new or other users of SNSs developing a desire to participate as a result of the exposure to and discussion of political information on these sites.

#### **7.1.9. Civic participation**

The study assessed forms and levels of civic participation. In general, the study found limited or low participation in civic activities among the surveyed youth which points to

a level of disconnect or apathy to what is happening in society. The male youths were more active than their female counterparts in all the civic activities described here.

The study found that majority of the youth do not volunteer in organizations that seek to address community concerns (Figure 58). Only a third of the sampled male youth and a fifth of the female youth indicated they had volunteered in organizations dealing with community problems. More than half registered either zero or low participation in volunteering.

Lobbying local and national government leaders is also not so common among the urban youth. Only about 19% male and 6% female had ever spoken or written to local leaders on local problems and needs. 39% male and 54% female indicated no participation in lobbying. The young men were more active in lobbying than their female counterparts.

There is limited participation by the youth in community forums meant to address local problems. Only a third (34%) of the male respondents and 17% of the female respondents indicated a high level of participation in working with other people to solve local problems through community forums(Figure 60). 28% male and 41% female indicated zero participation while 29% indicated a low participation.

Demonstrations and organized protests to address local or national concerns are not very popular among the urban youth. Only 16% male and 5% female had high participation in such demonstrations (Figure 61). Majority of the respondents (63%) have never participated in such demonstrations.

Young men are more active than young women in taking part in the formation of groups to solve or address community problems. About a half of the male respondents and a quarter of the female respondents have participated in the formation of a group to solve or address community problems in varying degrees (Figure 62). 31% male and 44% female indicated no participation in forming action groups while another 21% male and 29% female indicated low level of participation in forming such groups.

Young people are relatively active in the emerging trend of online activism. In Figure 64, half of the male respondents and a third of the female respondents indicated high participation in activism online. 30% male and 19% female indicated a low participation.

Online activism is an emerging trend where people take to the social media, blogs and the internet in general to express their views against issues or leaders of the day.

In general, women are less active than men in the political space as shown by the lower participation levels among the sampled women.

### 7.1.10. The influence of SNSs on political participation

#### Results from the Hierarchical Regression and correlation analysis

Table 26 : Results of the Hierarchical Regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized	Coefficients	Standardized	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Age	.128	.099	.052	1.295	.196
Gender	.295	.114	.104	2.596	.010
level of Education	-.008	.008	-.037	-.940	.348
Political Knowledge	-.498	.175	-.118	-	.005
				2.847	
Political Efficacy	-.129	.054	-.098	-	.016
				2.414	
Interest in Politics	-.202	.048	-.198	-	.000
				4.244	
Interpersonal Discussion	.266	.049	.244	5.389	.000
SNS Reliance	.230	.022	.407	10.285	.000

#### a. Dependent Variable: Political Participation

Results from the hierarchical regression revealed that reliance on SNSs is significantly related to political participation. The more people use and rely on social networking sites, the more they are likely to participate in politics ( $\beta = 0.41, P < 0.001$ ) (Table 26).

The study set out to establish the impact of SNSs on political participation. In the hierarchical regression model, the addition of the predictor variable "reliance on SNSs" was able to explain the change in "political participation" by 16.5% more of the model with F test significant at  $p \leq 0.001$  level

A correlation analysis of the relationship between reliance on SNSs and political participation reveals that people who use and rely on social networking sites are more likely to participate in politics. Reliance on SNSs is positively related to political

participation. The study found a weak positive correlation (0.361,  $P \leq 0.01$ ) between Reliance on Social networking sites and political participation (Table 13). An increase in reliance on social networking sites is associated with a small increase political participation

#### **7.1.11. The influence of SNSs on Civic participation**

##### **Results from the Hierarchical Regression and correlation analysis**

Results from the regression analysis revealed that Reliance on SNSs does not have any impact on civic participation. According to table 25, reliance on social networking sites was not significantly related to civic participation. The analysis could not establish a significant relationship between “reliance on SNSs” and civic participation ( $P \geq 0.05$ ) and therefore, the research hypothesis that there was a relationship between the reliance on SNS sites and civic participation was rejected. The b coefficient for the relationship between the dependent variable “civic participation” and the independent variable “Reliance on SNS” was -0.42 which implying a very weak inverse or negative relationship.

A correlation analysis also reveals that reliance on SNSs is not significantly related to civic participation as defined in this study. The study could not establish a definite relationship between the two. Table 14, reveals a very weak positive correlation between Reliance on SNS and civic participation (0.074) which is not statistically significant ( $P \geq 0.01$ ).

This is attributable to the fact that structures of civic participation are not well developed in the country compared to the West where civic participation culture is well



entrenched. The youth involved in this study are students whose primary preoccupation is studies and therefore might not be exposed to opportunities for civic participation but do participate in voting and other political activities.

#### **7.1.12. Other relationships between variables**

Civic participation is a positive predictor of political participation. High levels of civic participation are associated with increased levels of political participation. The study found a moderate positive correlation between civic and political participation, 0.563, ( $p=0.000$ ) which is statistically significant, since  $p \leq 0.01$  (Table 15).

Reliance on SNSs does not seem to have any significant impact on the political variables of interest and efficacy. The correlation analysis does not reveal any statistically significant relationship between Reliance on SNS and these political variables (Table 19). However, almost two thirds of social media users consider themselves more knowledgeable as a result of using social media (Figure 64).

Interest in politics, political knowledge, and political efficacy, all have a definite influence on political participation. Political interest seems to have the greatest impact on political participation among the political variables. There is a positive moderate correlation (0.417) between political participation and interest in politics. A high level of interest in politics is associated with a higher level of political interest (Table 21)

#### **7.1.13. Interpersonal Discussion**

Regression analysis shows that the more the respondents discussed politics with others, the more they participated in politics ( $\beta=0.24$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). The b coefficient for the relationship between the dependent variable "political participation" and the independent variable "interpersonal discussion" was 0.26 which implies a weak positive

relationship. An increase in the numeric values for interpersonal discussion are associated with a marginal increase in political participation.

Correlation analysis also shows that people who are actively involved in Interpersonal discussion of politics are likely to engage in political activities. The study established a moderate positive correlation between interpersonal discussion and political participation, 0.415, ( $p=0.000$ ) (Table 17) which is statistically significant, since  $p\leq 0.01$ . An increase in the level of interpersonal discussion is associated with a moderate increase in political participation.

Interpersonal discussion of politics is positively related to civic participation. The more people discuss politics with others, the more they are likely to participate in civic activities ( $\beta=0.24$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). The b coefficient for the relationship between "civic participation" and "interpersonal discussion of politics" was 0.26 which is also statistically significant ( $P\leq 0.01$ ). This implies a weak positive relationship between the two variables. It means interpersonal discussion of politics has a marginal or limited impact on civic participation.

Frequent interpersonal discussion of politics has a limited impact on civic participation. An increase in the level of interpersonal discussion is associated with a very small increase civic participation. Table 17 reveals a weak positive correlation between interpersonal discussion and civic participation, 0.257, ( $p=0.000$ ) which is statistically significant, since  $p\leq 0.01$ .

## 7.2. Contextualizing the Findings to the Research Questions

### ***Research Question 1: How are social networking sites currently being utilized in the political arena in Kenya?***

SNSs have continued to grow in significance in the political process. The study found that Social networking sites have been incorporated in political campaigns and now form an important part of political strategy. The study found that most political parties and the leading presidential candidates all had a huge presence on social media. 63% of the surveyed youth indicated they had 'liked' or joined a political group of a candidate or political party on social media (Figure 14).

Young people were quite active in deliberately seeking and posting political information on social media (Figure 11, 17). They followed updates from political parties and candidates via social media. The summary of Political activities on social media in Table 6 adequately captures the heightened level of political activity on social media.

Political parties, candidates and other political actors are active in posting videos, photos and campaign posters on SNSs (See Appendix 40). Social media was/is also used as a platform to publicize the campaign activities of different candidates and parties. 61% of the respondents said they had discovered or learnt about a political event through social media (Figure 18). Links to relevant stories and candidates' campaign websites are also posted on SNSs.

Young people also used social media sites as avenues of political discussions (Figure 12). The study found that young men were more active than their women counterparts in

discussing politics on SNSs. People constantly engaged each other on political issues on these sites.

Results from focus group discussions revealed that social media was used more as a propaganda and counter-propaganda tool. Many people admitted to having encountered propaganda messages and other messages countering the same propaganda messages.

**Research Question 2: *What are the effects of usage/reliance of SNS such as Twitter and Facebook on political engagement and democratic participation among young adults in Kenya?***

Usage and Reliance on SNSs has a significant impact on political engagement among the young people. At a basic level, SNSs enable young people to seek, acquire and post political information (Figures: 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17&18). These in themselves are forms of democratic engagement. SNSs also provide a platform for young men and women to engage in political discussions on social media (Figure 12). More important, the results show that quite often, young people discuss offline what they learn online (Figure 28). It has been severally mentioned in this study that interpersonal discussions are important in shaping political opinion and enhancing political participation.

The study found that SNSs also facilitate exposure to diverse political views which is important in forming wholesome political views and choices and key in developing and maintaining a democratic citizenry.

At a deeper level, results from the hierarchical regression revealed that, the more people use and rely on social networking sites, the more they participate in politics (Table 26).

Reliance on social networking sites is significantly related to political participation which supports the research hypothesis that there was a relationship between the reliance on SNS sites and political participation was supported.

Results from the correlation analysis of the relationship between 'Reliance on SNSs' and 'political participation' reveal that, people who use and rely on social networking sites are more likely to participate in politics (Table13). An increase in reliance on social networking sites is associated with a small increase political participation.

Some respondents attributed their political decisions to information on social media. Close to a third of the respondents indicated they had changed their mind as a result of something they read on social media. A similar number said they decided to support or stop supporting a particular candidate based on something they read on social media (Figures 24 & 25). This shows that social media have a significant influence on peoples' political decision processes and opinion.

***Research Question 3: To what extent do social networking sites facilitate political discussions among the urban youth in Kenya?***

The results of the study reveal that social networking sites are indeed important in facilitating political discussions among the youth. Table 6 shows that social media provide a platform for young people to engage in political discussions. The table further reveals that more than two thirds of all respondents commented on another person's political post on social media. In the same table, 55 % of the surveyed youth indicated they had participated in political discussions online.



The emergence of social media , created a popular avenue for discussion of political and social issues. Figure 12 shows that 60% of the men and 50% of the ladies in the study had engaged in political discussions on social media.

In Figure 14, about two thirds of the respondents both male and female indicated that they had 'liked' or joined political groups, pages of politicians or political parties on social media which are important in fostering political discussions and social capital

SNSs facilitate an online discussion of politics which has a bearing on offline discussion of politics which in turn has an impact on political participation. Figure 28 shows that political discussions on social media end up forming part of political discussions offline. 44% of the respondents indicated that they often discuss offline, information they have acquired online (Figure 28). Results from the focus group discussions revealed that quite often, online political discussions shape offline political discussions and vice versa.

**Research Question 4: *To what extent do social networking sites influence political attitudes, knowledge and behavior among the urban youth?***

Social networking sites have varied influence on political knowledge, attitude and behavior. On one hand, social networking sites seem to have a minimal direct impact on the political attitudes among the youth in terms of political interest, political efficacy and the inclination to support or oppose a candidate. On the other hand, SNS seem to have a significant impact on the level of political knowledge and a definite but limited influence on political behavior.



### ***Political Attitudes***

Social networking sites provide opportunities for young people to engage in political discussion on various issues. Results from the study show that young people were able to post, comment and share political information on SNSs. The respondents further indicated that SNSs helped to expose them to views differing from their own. Indeed, focus group discussions revealed there were heated exchanges between supporters of opposing camps as each tried to present their camp as having the best ideas. Political discussions play an important role in political learning, attitude formation and behavior (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995).

Reliance on SNSs has a significant but limited impact on direct opinion change. Only about a third of both genders (30%) admitted to having changed their mind or political opinion as a result of something posted on social media (Figure 24). Half of those who participated in the study indicated that social networking sites have never influenced their political opinion 50 % male youths and 56% female youths indicated that they have never changed their mind or political opinion as a result of anything posted on social media. 28% of the respondents said social media influenced their decision to support or stop supporting a candidate. For the majority, (57%) information posted on social media had no bearing on their decision to support a candidate (Figure 25). The conclusion here is that social networking sites have some level of influence on peoples' political attitudes and decisions, but this impact is limited.

The study found a healthy level of interest in politics among the surveyed youth. Half among them indicated they found politics interesting. Male youths have more interest in

politics than the young women (Figures 42 and 43). The study also found that majority of the surveyed youth pay attention to political news. 74% of the young men and 50% of the young ladies pay attention to news touching on politics (Figure 44).

The study could not however find evidence for the direct influence or relationship between using SNSs and political interest. In Table 19, a correlation analysis of the relationship between reliance on SNS and political interest did not find a statistically significant relationship between the two. This seems to agree with the view by some scholars that the internet and by extension, social media only serve to reinforce those who are already politically engaged but cannot radically transform the patterns of political interest and engagement (Norris, 2000; Tedesco, 2004).

Again, even though the study found a high degree of political efficacy among the surveyed youth, there was again no evidence that social media had a direct bearing on the level of political efficacy among the youth.

### ***Political Knowledge***

SNSs create a platform for young people to seek, acquire share political information. Figure 17 reveals that 58% deliberately used social media to seek political information. This information was available in the form of campaign videos and photographs, campaign posters, adverts, manifestos, links to news websites, status updates, and press releases among others. Table 7 also shows that seeking information was the major motivation for young people to visit SNSs. This study established there was a huge presence of political content and campaign information on SNSs and it was common for many people to log on to these sites to get the latest in politics. Through the SNSs

especially twitter, people were able to follow important political events like the presidential debates and the announcement of election results (Figures 19 and 20).

The surveyed youth indicated that they considered themselves more knowledgeable as a result of using social networking sites. In Figure 64, almost two thirds of social media users consider themselves more knowledgeable as a result of using social media.

### ***Political behaviour***

Social networking sites have a considerable impact on political behavior among the youth. SNSs have provided young people with an interesting, convenient and rewarding platform for young people to be engaged in political activities. The study established that young people were actively engaging in political activities online like posting political information, seeking political information, engaging in political discussions, sharing or distributing campaign information and participating in online polls in expression of support for their preferred candidates or political parties (Table 6).

The study further established that online political activity has a bearing on offline political activity. 44% of the respondents said they often discuss offline information they acquired online (Figure 28). The focus group discussions revealed that quite often, online political discussions shape offline political discussions and vice versa. A key aspect of the effectiveness of social media as a campaign tool is determining how online activity is linked to or supplemented with offline activities.

Results from the hierarchical regression (Table 27) revealed that , the more people use and rely on social networking sites, the more they are likely to participate in politics ( $\beta=$

0.41,  $P < 0.001$ ). This shows that social networking sites have a direct, significant but limited impact on political behavior of young people.

### **7.3. Conclusions of the Study**

This study set out to investigate the influence social networking sites are having on political attitudes and behavior among the urban youth in Kenya. Naturally, the rapid growth and popularity of social networking sites like Facebook, twitter and YouTube among the youth across the globe has attracted the attention of many scholars as they seek to establish whether these sites add any value to the political campaigning process and whether they can influence political participation and the nature of such influence.

#### ***Promise and potential of social networking sites on political participation***

Some have placed too heavy a burden of expectation on social media, to invigorate democracy and drive political participation. The evidence from this study, points to an increasing importance of social media in the political processes. A careful analysis of the data in this study has indeed established that SNS networking sites are an important campaign tool and have a level of impact and influence on political participation and the campaign process. However, the great promise and potential that social media will radically transform political participation is yet to be fully realized with internet penetration in Kenya still very low.

The study established that SNSs have created a new exciting platform for political engagement and mobilization for young people. Social media have provided an easily accessible medium for people to find, absorb and distribute political information which in turn allows campaign strategists to easily target young voters with great

communication power. Young people are now able to directly engage with each and with candidates in an innovative avenue that is not under the limitation of traditional gatekeeping constraints. Political actors and campaign strategists have recognized this potential and therefore utilize these platforms in the campaign process.

### ***Utilization of Social Media in the Political Space in Kenya***

This study has effectively established that SNSs have/are indeed being used in the political arena. For politicians and campaign actors, they used the SNSs platform to target voters, distribute campaign information, recruit volunteers, mobilize support, update on scheduled events and to report on campaign activities. Most of the Presidential candidates and their campaigns had a detailed social media campaign strategy integrated into their overall campaigns in the 2013 general elections. Social media users on the other hand use SNSs to seek, acquire, absorb and distribute political information. They also use the sites to create, upload and share campaign information in the form of videos, photos among others. They also use the sites to discuss and engage with each other on political issues.

This clearly shows social networking sites were central to the campaigns and were utilized by the different campaign teams. Indeed, within the President Uhuru's Presidential strategic Communication Unit (PSCU) formed after taking office, there is a well-funded department known as Diaspora and Digital Communication headed by a renowned social media enthusiast and blogger, Dennis Itumbi.



### ***Social media and Youth Political participation***

The results of this study reveal that reliance on SNSs is positively related to political participation. This study has established that indeed SNSs indeed have a significant though not huge influence on politics and the political campaigning process. This influence is manifested in political engagement, evaluation of issue appeals, levels of political information efficacy, civic engagement, political interest, political trust, political efficacy and political participation.

President Obama's campaign effectively integrated social media as an important part of campaigning but the online political activities were supplement by equally organized offline campaigns. An overreliance on social media is not likely to achieve much if there is no overarching ground game to support the online campaigns. In Kenya's 2013 general elections, some candidates were very popular on social media which perhaps encouraged them in their campaigns but in the final election outcome, they got fewer votes than the number of followers they had on social media. This suggests that online popularity does not always translate to offline popularity and some effort has to be made to translate 'virtual support' into actual ballot box support.

### ***Social Networking Sites and Political Discussions***

Social networking sites are very effective in facilitating political discussions. The study established most of the young people sampled engage in political discussions on social media. They do this mostly through posting political information, commenting on other people's political status, commenting on videos and other links on social media. The



'groups' and 'fan-page' functions on most SNSs sites also help to facilitate political discussions among people.

This study looks at social networking sites as creating an online public sphere where citizens (young people) engage in discussion of political issues.

### ***Social media and political mobilization***

SNSs are effective in enhancing political knowledge, facilitating political discussions among users, enabling interaction between voters and candidates, diffusion of political messages and propaganda, targeting voters with campaign information and supporting offline campaign efforts all targeted at influencing voters' political decision at the ballot.

This study has established that social media indeed do contribute to political knowledge among users and have a significant but limited level of impact on users' political opinions and decisions. On one hand, Social media do not seem to have a major direct impact on political choices among the users, but on the other hand, they are important in shaping and driving public opinion. Social media platforms are very effective especially in spreading negative propaganda messages and politicians and campaign strategists ignoring its power would do so at their own peril.

With the growing popularity of social media among the youth sampled in this study, it is becoming clear that SNSs help to mobilize specific demographic segments within society by creating a new platform for political mobilization which works alongside traditional structures of mobilization. SNSs cannot replace the existing traditional structures of

political campaigning and mobilization but on the other hand, campaign strategists and politicians cannot ignore the opportunity provided by SNSs in the mobilization process.

SNSs are facilitators of political mobilization through which social leaders are able to engage people in political action (Steen-Johnsen et al., 2011). SNSs create a new type of social networks within the existing social networks. They are useful in lowering the cost of mobilization by offering low cost and open avenues for participation. This reduces the importance of socio-economic resources as a factor of political mobilization since they allow communication, coordination and information sharing at low costs. They also allow coordinated action towards a common goal without 'co-presence in physical time and space' like it happened with the Arab uprisings. People were able to mobilize and coordinate protests online with a high degree of success.

We can therefore conclude that mobilization of voters must be primarily done offline but SNSs must be utilized together with other media to supplement campaigns in complementarity and mutual dependency. Even though the nature of political communication and engagement on social media is casual and less formal, social networking sites can still play important role in politics and their potential needs to be fully exploited.

## **7.4. Recommendations for Regulators, Policy Makers, Political Actors and Educators**

### **7.4.1. Recommendations for Regulators**

This study has established that SNSs indeed have a significant impact on political participation among the youth. They have a great potential that is only getting realized with the increased growth and adoption by young people.

A major concern associated with the use of social media is the nature and scope of unregulated content. The delicate act of balancing between ensuring media freedom as enshrined in the Constitution, and the need to regulate information being posted on social media. People have abused social media by using them to spread falsehood, fear, hate messages and defame others in the name of media freedom. The regulators should engage all stakeholders to come with a regulatory framework to encourage responsible use of social media.

Another concern associated with social media is the level of access and penetration of the internet in Kenya today. Despite the realization that social media use has tangible benefits for democracy and other areas in society, the potential benefits are hampered by limited access to the internet among most of the Kenyans. Even though internet penetration has continued to grow steadily, for most people, it remains expensive and out of reach. The regulator specifically CCK and the relevant government ministries and departments should work hard to ensure most people have access to the internet through providing the necessary infrastructure so that more people can enjoy the benefits of social media.

The cost of internet is prohibitive in the country. Despite the laying of several undersea cables in the country, the ordinary persona is yet to enjoy the expected benefits of cheaper and faster internet. The regulator again can work with other stakeholders to ensure cheaper and affordable internet.

#### **7.4.2. Political Actors**

The study has highlighted the potential benefits for using social media in the campaign process. This study recommends that, politicians seeking public office and campaign strategists should put in place a social media campaign strategy that will harness the power of social media, for campaigns and voter mobilization, and use social media to supplement offline campaign efforts.

Recognizing that Social media provide a platform for citizens to interact with their political leaders and provide ideas and feedback on government performance, this study recommends that political leaders and other government leaders should embrace social media to engage the electorate, disseminate information and receive valuable feedback.

While acknowledging the potential influence of power of social media on political participation, this study recommends that political actors should maximally utilize social media but not over rely on social media to target voters. They can use the different features of social media like groups and events to support their campaigns but at the same time put in place an overarching plan to supplement online efforts with offline campaigns.

Since SNSs create a platform for people to find and absorb political messages, political actors should seek to harness the power of social media to diffuse political messages by establishing a heavy social media presence and saturate the sites with targeted messages for consumption by social media users. They can take advantage of these sites' ability and amplify political messages.

#### **7.4.3. Social Media Users**

Having established the presence of hate speech on social media and other material bordering on defamation and slander, social media users ought to be careful and exercise caution to avoid legal challenges. Responsible use of social media is important to protect and guide freedom of expression on social media. There have been instances of bloggers and social media enthusiasts finding themselves in court over material posted on social media.

#### **7.5. Recommendations for Further Research**

This study was conducted during a political period, that is, immediately after the 2013 general elections. There is need to carry out a similar study outside an election season and see how SNSs contribute to various forms of political participation outside voting like political discussions.

This study focused on all SNSs specifically Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Since they are all very different, a different study is required to isolate the contribution of individual sites instead of looking at them together.

The sample for this study involved undergraduate students from two Universities in Nairobi. This is a unique population and the participation habits of students are



definitely not generalizable to the broader Kenyan population even among the youthful population. There is need for a future study that will target other urban youth who are also using social media to establish whether the results of this study are generalizable to all urban youths.

The study found low level of civic participation among the surveyed youth and also found no significant impact relationship between reliance on social networking sites and civic participation. This contradicts the early studies conducted in this area. There is need to further investigate this finding.

There is need to explore the role of social media in propagating hate speech and negative propaganda during electioneering times. Due to the unrestrained and unregulated nature of online communication, social networking sites have become a fertile ground for the propagation of hate speech and these concerns should be explored in thorough study.

Finally, the data in this study is cross sectional and as such, it is hard to establish causality and the fact that the study was carried out immediately after the general elections, views and participation levels were heightened. There is need for another study or a causal comparative study to establish causality.

#### **7.6. Contributions to Theory and Research**

The study sought to establish the impact of social networking sites on political and civic participation. There have been back and forth argument between scholars on this with the debate currently unresolved. This study has made several important contributions



to theory and research by providing answers to several questions in political communication.

First, earlier studies exploring this area, especially those done by scholars from the west found that reliance on SNSs was not related to political participation but had a considerable impact on civic participation (Zhang et al., 2010; Baumgartner and Morris, 2010; Utz, 2009). This study found the opposite and established there was a significant association between reliance on SNSs and political participation but no relationship between social networking sites and civic participation. Results from both the regression and correlation analysis found there was a significant relationship between social networking sites and political participation. This work is therefore among the few that begin to highlight and appreciate the true value of SNSs to the political process. Newer studies are beginning to find increased impact of the role of SNSs on political participation.

This study also established the nature of impact SNSs have on political participation. Political activity online leads to accumulation of political knowledge and crystallization of political opinions. In other words, it's the impact of SNSs is not so much political opinion change but rather , the crystallization of political opinions in the light of information that either agrees or contradicts one's pre existing opinions.

Just like many studies on mass communication research, most studies focusing on the role of social media on political participation are from the US ( Williams& Gulati, 2007, 2008 ; Baumgartner and Morris, 2009, Zhang, et al., 2010, Smith and Rainie, 2008, 2010, 2012 and Smith, 2013) a few in Europe ( Utz, 2007, Clark, 2010) and very few from Asia (Behnke, 2010, Ghareeb, 2000). These regions have a more established internet

infrastructure where access and penetration levels are higher. Very few if any, studies on this area have been done in Africa. This is one of the few studies emerging from Africa investigating the effect of social networking sites on political participation. It therefore provides a basis for comparison with results from other studies done elsewhere.

This study was able to identify and describe the nature of political communication that takes place within social networking sites. Previous studies in this area have not explored the nature of online communication that takes place on social media. Social media is mostly associated with casual and informal conversations about politics including the exchange of political joke. In fact, social media users abhor very serious content which is the domain of mainstream media. Unverified information, propaganda and personal attacks also characterize the political conversations on social media. This partly explains why SNSs do not seem to have a huge impact on political opinions since people will either take such conversations lightly or harden positions in the face of propaganda. Hate speech and flaming also form part of content on social media. This important discovery has important implications for the regulation of social media content.

Of particular significance and interest, the study found that political interest has a greater bearing on political participation than political efficacy. In the correlation analysis, the study found both political interest and political efficacy were positively related to political participation but the relationship was stronger between political participation and political interest compared to political efficacy. Further, the study found a higher level of political efficacy among the female respondents compared to the men. On the other hand, male respondents had a higher level of political interest.

However, when it came to political participation, men recorded a higher level of participation in all the identified measures of political participation including voting. This indicates, political interest has a greater effect on political participation. This has implications for further investigation since it's not captured in existing literature. The finding that captured a higher level of political efficacy among the female respondents is peculiar and signifies a departure from what is commonly accepted. It provides a justification for further investigation into the whole area of gender differences in political efficacy.

In relation to theory, this study utilized the works of Jurgen Habermas on public sphere and communicative rationality and action. Habermas ideas were advanced in the age of print media and focused more on face to face conversations. By applying Habermas ideas to new media technologies, this study extends the concept of public sphere beyond Habermas' original conception to an entirely new area of new media technologies which has formed the basis of frequent criticism of his ideas.

In regard to his assertions that citizens engage in rational discussions leading to informed action, the findings of this study indicate that Habermas model was highly idealized and cannot be strictly applied to practical day to day conversations about politics which are not formal and rational so as to facilitate informed action as advanced by Habermas. In other words, Habermas notion that political conversations in the public sphere are rational and lead to reasoned action need to be modified to accept the informal and casual conversations which limit the impact and level of public opinions formed within the online public sphere.

Finally, this work represents the early views of a new phenomenon. It forms the basis for further research and theory development in this area. Future studies can base their studies on the major findings emanating out of this study.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1- Questionnaire

My name is Samuel Kamau, a PhD Candidate from the University of Nairobi. Kindly fill this questionnaire for an academic study I am conducting on Social media and youth involvement in politics. Your responses will be treated confidentially and will only be used for the purposes of this study.

### SECTION ONE: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Gender (i) Male (ii) Female
2. Age (i) 18 – 24 (ii) 25- 29 (iii) 30- 34
3. Current Level of Education (i) college Diploma (ii) Undergraduate (ii) Masters

### SECTION TWO: MEDIA USE AND POLITICS

1. Which is your favourite media among the ones listed below?  
(i)Radio (ii) Television (iii) Newspapers (iv) Internet (v) Cell phones (vi) Social Media (V) Other
2. Which is your preferred mass media for obtaining information on election campaigns or politics?  
(i)Radio (ii) Television (iii) Newspapers (iv) Internet (v) Cell phones (vi) Social Media (vii) Blogs

In a typical week, how many days do you do the following to obtain news about Politics/ Campaign?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Never	Don't Know
3. Watch TV news									
4. Listen to radio news									
5. Read newspapers									
6. Surf the internet									
7. Use social media									
8. Use cell phones									

9. Apart from the mass media mentioned above, what are your other sources of political information?  
(i)Church Meetings (ii) Political meetings and rallies (iii) Friends (iv) Colleagues (iv) Relatives  
(v) Community meetings (e.g. women or youth meetings) (vi) others (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION THREE: SOCIAL MEDIA RELIANCE AND USAGE

1. Do you use social media/ Social Networking Sites?



- (i) Yes (ii) No

2. Which among the following Social networking sites do you normally use or have an account?  
(Tick all that apply)

(i) YouTube (ii) Twitter (iii) Facebook (iv) LinkedIn (v) Hi5 (vi) Others (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which is your most preferred Social Networking Site? \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately, how frequently do you normally use the following social networking sites?

	Daily	Thrice a week	Twice a week	Once a week	Fortnightly (Every 2 weeks)	Once a month
4. Facebook						
5. YouTube						
6. Twitter						
7. LinkedIn						
8. Others						

Related to the question above, on average, and combined (whether daily, weekly etc) how much time do you spend each time you visit these sites? (Tick the one that applies most).

	Less than 30 minutes	At least 1 hour	At least 2 hours	At least 3 hours	At least 5 Hours	More than 5 hours
9. Facebook						
10. YouTube						
11. Twitter						
12. LinkedIn						
13. Others						

14. What is your major reason/motivation for visiting/using social networking sites

- (i) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (ii) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (iii) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (iv) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (v) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (vi) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (vii) \_\_\_\_\_

15. About how many total Facebook friends do you have?

- (i) 50 or less (ii) 50-100 (iii) 101-200 (iv) 201-300 (v) 301-400 (vi) More than 400

16. How reliant are you on these social Networking Sites?

- (i) Heavily Reliant (ii) Somewhat Reliant (iii) Neutral (iv) Rarely Reliant (iii) Not reliant at all



**EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO FACEBOOK**

On a scale of 1-5 To what extent do you agree with the following statements (Tick where applicable)

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
17. Facebook is part of my everyday activity					
18. I am proud to tell people I am on Facebook					
19. Facebook has become part of my daily routine					
20. I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while					
21. I feel I am part of the Facebook community					
22. I would be sorry if Facebook is shut down					

**SECTION FOUR: SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND POLITICS**

In the last **three** months, have you... (Tick one in each question)

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. Have you come across information of political nature on Facebook?			
2. Have you posted information that is of political nature on Facebook			
3. Have you joined any group on Facebook that is political in nature?			
4. Have you 'liked' or joined the Facebook page of a politician or political party?			
5. Have you engaged in political discussions on Social Media?			
6. Have you invited a friend to join a political group on Social Media?			
7. Have you commented on another person's political post or status ?			
8. Have your 'friends' posted political content/information on your Facebook wall?			
9. Have you discovered a new political event/ occurrence on Social media?			
10. Participated in an online opinion poll conducted on Facebook?			
11. Followed a link of political story posted on YouTube, Facebook or Twitter?			
12. Shared another person's interesting political post ?			
13. Watched a political video posted on YouTube, Facebook or Twitter			
14. Sharing/ uploading a political video or photograph?			
15. Have deliberately looked for political information on social media?			

In a typical week, how often do you do the following?

	Daily	Thrice a week	Twice a week	Once a week	Not even once	Don't Know
16. Share political videos & photos						
17. Comment on other peoples political status						
18. Post on political groups you are part of on FB						
19. Engage in political discussions on Facebook						
20. Follow the updates of candidates and political parties						
21. Respond to political comments on Social media						
22. Post political information on your status						

On a scale of 1-5 , do you agree with the following statements

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strong Agree
23. There is too much political information on Social Networking Sites.					
24. I enjoy engaging in political discussions on Social media.					
25. Political messages should be blocked/stopped on social media					
26. My friends are too political on Social media					
27. I enjoy reading and sharing political messages on social media					
28. There should be more political information on social media					
29. Most of my friends post political information on social media.					
30. I can't stand political information posted on social media.					

**SECTION 5A: OFFLINE INTERPERSONAL DISCUSSION**

In the last two months, how often did you engage in discussions of political issues with the following?

	Often	Somewhat often	Neither often nor rarely	Somewhat rarely	Rarely	Never	Don't Know
1. Parents							
2. Siblings							
3. Colleagues							
4. Friends							
5. Schoolmates							
6. Government Officials							
7. Politicians							
8. Religious Leaders							
9. Civil society workers							

**SECTION 5B: INTERPERSONAL DISCUSSION ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 10. How much of the information posted on SNS is related to politics or the 2013 elections  
(i) All or almost all of it (ii) Most (iii) Some (iv) Just a little (v) None at all (vi) I don't read
- 11. How often do you agree with the political opinions or political content your friends post on Social Networking Sites?  
(i) Always (ii) Almost Always (iii) Most of the time (iv) Only sometimes (v) Never
- 12. How often do you find political information of Social media that contradicts your opinion?  
(i). Very Often (ii) Fairly often (iii) Rarely (iii) Never
- 13. How do you deal with opinions/comments that you disagree with on social media?  
(i) Criticize (ii) Delete/Block (iii) Ignore (iv) Appreciate without agreeing (v) Embracing it
- 14. Have you ever changed your mind or political opinion after reading something on social media?  
(i). Yes (ii) No (iii) Not sure
- 15. Have you ever decided to support or stop supporting a candidate after reading something on Social media?  
(i). Yes (ii) No (iii) Not Sure
- 16. Have you ever received a negative reaction after posting something political on social media ?  
(i) Yes (ii) No, has never happened (iii) Don't Know

17. Have you ever decided not to post a political comment or link on social media because you were worried it might upset or offend someone?  
 (i). Yes (ii) No (iii) Not Sure
18. How credible/trustworthy is the political information available on social media?  
 (i). Not credible at all (ii) Somewhat Credible (iii) Credible (iv) Highly credible
19. How knowledgeable do you consider yourself as a result of the information you read/consume on social media?  
 (i) Very knowledgeable (ii) Somewhat knowledgeable (iii) No change (iv) A little knowledgeable (v)Not knowledgeable at all (vi) Don't know
20. When posting political information on social media, how freely do you express yourself?  
 (i) Not freely (ii) Somewhat not freely (iii) Neither freely nor not freely (iv) Somewhat freely (i) Very freely
21. How often do you discuss with other people offline information that you might have come across online?  
 (i). Not often (ii) Somewhat not often (iii) Neither often nor not often (iv)Somewhat often (v) Very often
22. How often do you discuss politics with strangers on social media?  
 (i). Not often (ii) Somewhat not often (iii) Neither often nor not often (iv)Somewhat often (v) Very often

**SECTION 6: POLITICAL EFFICACY AND CYNICISM**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements ( Tick one in each question)

	Strongly agree	Somewh at agree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewh at disagree	Strongly disagree	D/N
1. Those elected to parliament lose touch with people pretty quickly						
2. I can influence both local and national government						
3. My vote will make a difference in the coming elections						
4. Every vote counts in elections						
5. Campaigns help voters make informed decisions						

6. Elections help to bring change in Kenya							
7. The Kenyan media presents an accurate picture of issues during campaigns							
8. Political parties or candidates are interested only in votes							
9. Political parties or candidates care about the voters							
10. It matters which party is in power							

### SECTION 7: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

How often did you do the following during the last three months?

	Hi Participation		Medium Participation	Low Participation			D/N
	Often	Somewhat often	Neither often or rarely	Somewhat rarely	Rarely	Never	
1. Working for or volunteering for a political party or candidate.							
2. Wearing a campaign t-shirt, badge, or put up a campaign poster							
3. Trying to persuade someone to vote for or against a candidate or party							
4. Attending a campaign function or rally to support a candidate or party							
5. Giving money to a candidate or party.							
6. Signing a petition for a cause or candidate.							
7. Seeking or gathering information about party or campaigns							
8. Sharing political Views with others							



9. Distributed any literature or campaign materials							
10. Worked as a party nomination or election official							
11. Done any work to help a candidate or party during these campaigns							
12. Offered self for political office							

11. Did you vote in the just concluded elections? (i) Yes (ii) No

12. If you answered no in the previous question, why? \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION 8: CIVIC PARTICIPATION

How often did you do the following during the last two months?

	Often	Somewh at often	Neither often or rarely	Somewhat rarely	Rarely	N/A	D/N
1. Volunteering for any local governmental board dealing with community issues							
2. Going to see, speak to, or write to members of local government about needs or problems							
3. Working with others in the community to solve community problems through community forums.							
4. Taking part in a protest or demonstration on a local issue.							
5. Taking part in forming a group to solve community problems							
6. Mobilizing Others for a cause							
7. Engaging in Online activism							

**SECTION 9: POLITICAL INTEREST**

1. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being least interested and 5 being very interested, how interested are you in politics? (Tick One)
  - (i) Least Interested/ Disinterested
  - (ii) Somewhat interested
  - (iii) Neither interested of disinterested
  - (iv) Interested
  - (v) Very interested
2. Generally speaking, which statement below describes you feeling about politics?
  - (i) I find politics Boring
  - (ii) I find politics Interesting
  - (iii) I am indifferent about politics
  - (iv) I hate politics and politicians
3. How often do pay attention to news touching politics
  - (i) Often (ii) somewhat often (iii) Neither often or rarely (iv) Somewhat rarely (v) Rarely

**SECTION 10: POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE**

Who were the presidential candidates and their running mates who were vying in this years(2013) General Elections? (List them in the spaces provided below)

	PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE	RUNNING MATE
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

9. How many alliances were competing in this year's elections? ( List them in the spaces provided below).
  - i) \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii) \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii) \_\_\_\_\_
  - iv) \_\_\_\_\_
  - v) \_\_\_\_\_
  - vi) \_\_\_\_\_

The following slogans are associated with which parties?

Slogan	Political Party/ Alliance
10. <i>Kusema na kutenda</i>	
11. <i>I believe</i>	
12. <i>Chungwa moja Maisha bora</i>	
13. <i>Tuko tayari</i>	
14. <i>Tunawesmake</i>	

15. Who is the new speaker of the national assembly? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Who is the new deputy speaker of the national assembly? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Who is the new speaker of the Senate? \_\_\_\_\_
18. Who is the current Attorney General of Kenya? \_\_\_\_\_
19. How many members of parliament will be there in the National Assembly? \_\_\_\_\_
20. Who heads the Electoral body in Kenya (IEBC)? \_\_\_\_\_

#### SECTION 11: POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION

1. Which political party do you identify with? Tick one  
 (i) ODM (ii) TNA (iii) URP (iv) UDF (v) NARC-K (vi) KNC (vii) Others \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which Political alliance do you identify with?  
 (i) Jubilee (ii) CORD (iii) Amani (iv) Eagle (v) Others \_\_\_\_\_
3. How much do you support the political parties/ alliances listed above?  
 (i) Strongly support (ii) somewhat support (iii) Neither support nor oppose

#### SECTION 12: MEASURES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

	Strong Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on equal plane with others					
2. I feel I have a number of good qualities					
3. All in all, I feel that I am a failure					
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people					
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of					
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself					

## **Appendix 2- Focus Group Discussion Questions**

Is social media very important for you as a person? Why?

What is your major reason/motivation /using social networking sites

Do you come across information of political nature on Facebook?

Do you post information that is of political nature on Facebook/ Why?

Are you part of a group on Facebook that is political in nature?

Do you enjoy reading political information or watching political videos on social media?

Do you discuss politics with others on social media? What do you discuss?

Do you rely on SNS information in making decisions

Do the messages on SNSs influence your political decisions in any way?

Ever changed your mind after reading something on SNS.Ever decided to support someone as result of SNS content.

Do you discuss offline something you came across online?

Political interest – Are you always looking for political information on SNS

Political knowledge- Do you think one can become politically knowledgeable because of social media?

What political activities do you engage in on social media

Do you think social media are useful for political campaigning?

### Appendix 3: Uhuru Kenyatta's Facebook and Twitter pages

**Uhuru Kenyatta**  
President of the Republic of Kenya

684k Likes

Post  
With the Russian Ambassador to Kenya Alexander Mironenko

120 Friends

Invite Your Friends to Like This Page

Recent

Uhuru Kenyatta Timeline 2013

Uhuru Kenyatta February 28

Hey guys. Please make this your cover image until election day. Ask your friends to do the same as well. Help us make this a first round win. God Bless you all.

**ON MARCH 4<sup>TH</sup> VOTE FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

Party Symbol	Presidential Candidate	Deputy Presidential Candidate	Voter's Mark/ Ahoma ya Kura
<b>TNAY</b>	<b>UHURU KENYATTA</b>	<b>WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO</b>	

**GET OUT & VOTE UHURUTO 2013**

Like Comment Share 7,007 3,563 2,478

Uhuru Kenyatta changed his cover photo February 27

Uhuru Kenyatta changed his cover photo February 24

Sponsored  
Tom Yala Africa

Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world. It is our mission to bring you the best of education in Africa.



**Uhuru Kenyatta** Timeline 2013 Like Create Page

Uhuru Kenyatta changed his cover photo January 13 at



Like Comment Share 1,399 523 252

Uhuru Kenyatta shared a link January 12 at

The website is up guys - [www.uhuru.co.ke](http://www.uhuru.co.ke)



Like Comment Share 148 252 117

Morning guys... Today, together with Hon. Ruto and Hon. Ngilu, we will tour Kitui and Makuani Counties to sell our Development Agenda. We will start with rallies at Zombe and Kisasi markets in Kitui followed by Wote in Makuani. Thank you all and see you there.

Like Comment Share 5,915 4,467 126

Uhuru Kenyatta January 10 via mobile 3/4

The clashes in Kibisu in Tana River earlier today serve as a reminder that the underlying issues still stand unresolved. It also shows that in our pursuit of peace across this country; peace is ultimately a personal responsibility which despite the measures the govt and security forces have taken; we must take ownership for it to be meaningful and long-lasting. I urge you to be an agent of peace where you are even as we continue to preach peace across the country. Our prosperity as a country can only be possible on the solid foundation of unity. God Bless you all.

Like Comment Share 2,241 1,716 117

Recent

- 2013s
- 2013
- 2012
- 2011
- 2010s
- 2009s
- 2008s
- 2007s
- 2006s
- 2005s
- 2004s
- 2003s
- 2002s
- 2001s
- 2000s

Sponsored by

**Pandairall Jewelry**  
Kisumu



Over 400,000 Jewelry Beads & Findings for Jewelry Making. "Like" us to Get \$20 Free Coupon  
Like · Prudence Taku · Bess Pandairall

### Uhuru Kenyatta's Twitter Page

Home @ Contact # Discover Me

**STATE HOUSE KENYA**  
Stay Connected

**Uhuru Kenyatta**  
@UKenyatta  
President of the Republic of Kenya  
Nairobi, Kenya · [uhuru.co.ke](http://uhuru.co.ke)

1,897 TWEETS 76 FOLLOWERS 287,414 FOLLOWERS

Followed by Mwanda Mwaaya, Julie Ochieng, Joseph Ochiengo and 31 others.

**Tweets** All / No replies

**Uhuru Kenyatta** @UKenyatta 1/11  
With the Russian Ambassador to Kenya Alexander Mararenko after our meeting at State House earlier today pic.twitter.com/sY2ZnFJpV  
View photo

**Uhuru Kenyatta** @UKenyatta 1/10  
Today I also held a meeting with CEO's of mobile phone service providers who called on me at State House.  
pic.twitter.com/19K3pERBP4  
View photo

Who to follow · Refresh

**Walt Roseberg** @walmartroseberg  
Follow

<https://twitter.com/UKenyatta>

## Appendix 4: Martha Karua's Twitter and Facebook Pages

The screenshot shows the Twitter profile of Martha Karua. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for Home, Connect, Discover, and Me, along with a search bar and settings. The profile header features a banner image of a woman with a cow, the name "Martha Karua" with a verified badge, and the handle "@MarthaKarua". Below the name, it states "Mother of two and granny. Advocate for social justice. National Chair Narc Kenya Party." and "Kenya joinmarthakarua.com".

Statistics for the profile are displayed: 15,693 TWEETS, 73 FOLLOWINGS, and 183,308 FOLLOWERS. A "Following" button is visible. Below the statistics, it says "Followed by Citizen TV Kenya, ASAPH GATUNDU MWANGI, Smriti Vidyarthi and 24 others".

The "Tweets" section shows two tweets from Martha Karua:

- Tweet 1:** "Do not use me to despise women!" @KipchrisKip: @MarthaKarua Your the best this other women are embarrassment to the society" (19h)
- Tweet 2:** "Attended the requiem mass for the late Rtd Anglican Archbishop Dr David Mukuba Gitari at all saints cathedral . RIP" (19h)

On the left sidebar, there are navigation options: Tweets, Following, Followers, Favorites, Lists, and a "Tweet to Martha Karua" section with the handle @MarthaKarua. Below that is a "Photos and videos" section showing several images, including one with the text "GET 4 PEOPLE VOTE 4 MARTHA". At the bottom of the sidebar, there is a "Who to follow" section featuring Walt Mossberg (@waltmossb) with a "Follow" button.

Martha Karua



Cover Photo



**Martha Karua**  
301,771 likes · 3,577 talking about this

Like Message

Posters:  
Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do. — Goethe

About · Suggest an Edit

Photos · Likes · Notes · Jibokee!

My Appeal As We Await The Verdict  
Good day Kenya. A country awaits the

301k

Click to enter the draw to win a Huawei W1 phone worth 600k from Airtel Uganda

Recent

85 Friends

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1015331557855492&set=a.1015139440380492.839805.163341245491&type=1>

Martha Karua

Martha Karua Timeline 2013

Martha Karua  
March 1 · 48

Moving forward for a better Kenya Get 4 to Vote 4 Martha on Merch 4. Si Mama Na Mama! — with Peter Oboro.



Martha Karua changed her cover photo  
March 1 · 48

Like Comment Share

31 11

Martha Karua shared a link.  
March 1 · 48

**KENYA UNITED! Get4ToVote4MarthaMarch4!**

No tribe puts food on your table...Kenya UNITED!

There is no difference between poor Wapudu, Kariakwu. We must work together to make a better Kenya 100% of us. Get 4 To Vote 4 Martha on March 4

Like Comment Share

79 29 14

Like Art? Talk to us

Click LIKE if You Love Art. Discover and Showcase Your Artwork!  
100k (100 - 100,000 people like Talk to us)

[https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10152635968125482&set=a.247917420491.311380.163341245491&type=1&relevant\\_count=1](https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10152635968125482&set=a.247917420491.311380.163341245491&type=1&relevant_count=1)

## Appendix 5: Peter Kenneth's Facebook and Twitter Pages

**Peter Kenneth**

278,189 likes · 5,337 talking about this

Welcome to the official Peter Kenneth Facebook page. Engage more at [www.peterkenneth.com](http://www.peterkenneth.com) | On Twitter @Peter\_Kenneth ([http://twitter.com/@Peter\\_Kenneth](http://twitter.com/@Peter_Kenneth))

About · Suggest an Edit

Photos · Likes · Events · Peter Kenneth

99 Friends

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151452601463113&set=a.101506246729113.400894.109586678112&type=1>

Home · Connect · Discover · Me

View conversation · Reply · Retweet · Favorite · More

**Peter Kenneth** (@Peter\_Kenneth) · 11m  
@chrispusmatea @chrisgrieg karibuni sana  
New conversation

**Peter Kenneth** (@Peter\_Kenneth) · 11m  
@Uingabo Asante ps am at your friends to vote for me  
New conversation

**Peter Kenneth** (@Peter\_Kenneth) · 11m  
@meary Tunawesmate  
New conversation

**PK47Movement** (@PK47Movement) · 11m  
March 4th get out the vote #Tunawesmake #PK47Revolution Make it an @Peter\_Kenneth moment! cc @PK47ma @Tunawesmake pic.twitter.com/80D87EK0G  
@Tunawesmake @Peter\_Kenneth  
New photo

**Peter Kenneth** (@Peter\_Kenneth) · 11m  
@kenwks Sawa sawa, asante  
New conversation

**Peter Kenneth** (@Peter\_Kenneth) · 11m  
@wemika I appreciate  
New conversation

**Peter Kenneth** (@Peter\_Kenneth) · 11m  
@mbogala\_gau me @peterkenneth.com  
New conversation

[https://twitter.com/Peter\\_Kenneth](https://twitter.com/Peter_Kenneth)

Appendix 6: Creative Campaign Material on social media



**Busy in prison?  
Worry no more..  
YOU CAN STILL BE PRESIDENT**

**skype™**

**Introduces  
GOVERNMENT  
PACKAGE**

**NOW LAUNCHING  
IN KENYA**

**we believe kusema na kutenda tukiwa mbali**  
this advertisement has been sponsored by The National Alliance

The advertisement features a black and white photograph of a man wearing a headset, looking thoughtful with his hand to his forehead. The text is overlaid on the image, with the Skype logo prominently displayed. A starburst graphic on the left contains the text 'NOW LAUNCHING IN KENYA'. At the bottom, there is a Swahili slogan and a small disclaimer.





# ***THE DIGITAL TEAM***

LET'S GET TO WORK



# UHURUTO

2013

**UMOJA**  
EDUCATION



**ONE SOLAR-POWERED LAPTOP FOR EVERY CLASS ONE CHILD**



**TNAY**  
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

**NARC**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION



Appendix 8: Kidero's Facebook Campaign Photo

**DKT. EVANS KIDERO**  
**GAVANA KAUNTI  
YA NAIROBI**

*Ahadi yangu kwa  
wakazi wa Nairobi...*

...ni kuimarisha elimu, ili kuinua  
maisha... kwa sababu ninajali  
"Watoto Wetu Tegemeo Letu"

JONATHAN MUEKE  
NAIBU WA GAVANA

ODM TUKO TAYARI

✓

CORD

Appendix 9: Raila Odinga's Campaign Photo on Facebook

