PERCEPTION OF THE BAN ON TWITTER AS A PREDICTOR OF SOCIAL ANXIETY AND POLITICAL APATHY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Bolajoko Ibiyemi Malomo[1]*, Babatunde Yusuf Oyidi[2] & James Akanmu[3]

[1,2]Department of Psychology, University of Lagos, Nigeria

[3]Department of Engineering, University of Lagos, Nigeria

*bmalomo@unilag.edu.ng

ABSTRACT: This study investigated the perception of the ban on Twitter as a predictor of social anxiety and political apathy among the University of Lagos undergraduate students. Students express social anxiety. The authors adopted a survey research design, and the stratified sampling method was utilized to select participants from the University of Lagos. A total of 383 undergraduate students were randomly sampled to participate in the study. The results of the study indicated that the ban on Twitter had a significant influence on both social anxiety and political apathy. The influence is particularly stronger in social anxiety, as revealed by the One-way ANOVA analysis (F = 18.967, P = 0.000 < 0.05, 30.261, P = 0.000 > 0.05). Additionally, this study identifies a connection between social media use and social anxiety disorder (SAD), emphasizing the importance of mental health and emotional control when using social media. Healthcare professionals, educators, and policymakers are advised to be abreast and discuss the of social media usage on mental health, especially concerning social anxiety disorders. The results of these studies are expected to be useful to the government in understanding the various opportunities associated with Twitter use and reconsidering the adoption and utilization of Twitter by different ministries to engage with the public.

Keywords: Ban on Twitter, Social Anxiety, Political Apathy, Students, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Social anxiety disorders among undergraduate students remain distressing and impairing for the students and their families. Children with anxiety disorders have lower educational and social functioning than children without anxiety problems (Bollinger & Halupa, 2012). In addition, the social interaction, peer relationships, education, and family life of young people may be affected by anxiety disorders (Weiss, 2013). Often, students express fear of being humiliated at the risk of saying something that their peers may perceive as stupid. If social anxiety among students is left untreated, many students suffer from distress and panic attacks (Burke & Ruppel, 2015).

Twitter is one of the social media channels that provides a medium where information on various issues is disseminated, including ideas on political activities being expressed and interests articulated and aggregated (Litzler, Samuelson & Lorah, 2014). However, any ban on Twitter would be devastating, as it could negatively affect social interaction among users. Twitter turned

into a space where the youth could air their opinions about problems they face in their daily lives, family, as well as community. It felt like a safe space to express their problems and get thousands of people to contribute or offer solutions.

In 2020, COVID struck, and the world was under total lockdown; social media was the only friend and fun place to visit throughout that period. It felt like a coping mechanism and also became a part of us in general. During this period, the youth felt like they could not express their opinions as there was no channel between the Nigerian government and her people regarding how the government was being run, and they took to Twitter to start voicing their concerns. This came as a shock to the government, as the world was able to see and hear all that was going on in the country. At the point of escalation, the government decided to ban the use of Twitter to curb and stop the youth from insulting the government, questioning their office, as well as sharing with the world the current unrest in the country. The multiplier effect of this ranges from increased anxiety among the users, slowing down the political discourse and overshadowing the Twitter space.

The Nigerian government implemented a ban on the popular social media platform Twitter (now X) in 2021 as a response to the violence that erupted from EndSars protests in different parts of Nigeria. The Twitter ban, as it was popularly called, focused on reducing the spread of information that sparked outrage among Nigerians and created a sense of calm among Nigerians. However, several individuals accessed the social media platform using several means such as virtual private network (VPN). While this approach by the government aimed at reducing the spread of hate speech and false information, psychosocial issues, including social anxiety and political apathy, raised concerns among the academic audience. Nonetheless, the association between the perception of Nigeria due to the Twitter ban and psychosocial issues have not been adequately addressed.

Anxiety, as a human emotion, encompasses various behavioural, affective, and cognitive reactions to perceived threats (Bollinger & Halupa, 2012). However, social anxiety, a form of anxiety, may be characterised by distress and discomfort when interacting and communicating with people. The symptoms of social anxiety often arise in social evaluation situations, leading to social apprehension or phobia (Weiss, 2013). Hence, as the severity of social anxiety increases, individuals may resort to social avoidance, preferring to stay indoors rather than engage in social activities. Social anxiety disorder is relatively common, with lifetime rates ranging from 7% to 13% among adolescents and adults (MacKenzie & Fowler, 2013). It is a persistent and often hidden disability that affects learning and well-being (Russell & Topham, 2012). Several students may experience heightened symptoms of social anxiety, which negatively impact their lives and educational experiences (Topham et al., 2014). For instance, female university students tend to experience higher levels of social anxiety compared to males (MacKenzie & Fowler, 2013). According to Leigh et al. (2023), social anxiety may be associated with a reduction in suicidal thoughts and behaviours, which may lead to deaths among persons between the age of 15 years and 29 years (Ajibola & Agunbiade, 2022)'

Individuals with social anxiety are often concerned about sounding inarticulate, boring, unintelligent, or being ignored. In the academic environment, these fears can be exacerbated due to the participatory and social nature of classrooms. Students not only strive to make a good

impression on others but also face the pressure of achieving good grades, making it a high-stakes situation. They may be required to interact with unfamiliar individuals, participate in class discussions, deliver presentations, and receive feedback from peers and instructors (Cohen et al., 2019). When students exhibit social anxiety in the academic setting, they may experience anticipatory anxiety, fears of negative evaluation within the classroom, physiological symptoms of anxiety (such as a shaky voice or a blank mind), self-consciousness, and embarrassment during learning activities or brainstorming sessions (Topham et al., 2014). These events can exacerbate existing feelings of self-consciousness, leading to reduced social and cognitive functioning in the classroom or learning environment (Topham et al., 2014). Hence, social anxiety has been reported to have a negative impact on students in learning situations, resulting in decreased engagement, academic achievement, and lower retention rates (Brook & Willoughby, 2015).

Apathy refers to a lack of interest in various aspects of life and can manifest as a lack of concern or interest in the environment, people, or things (Baber et al., 2021). Apathy can also be a non-pathological trait where individuals lack interest in unimportant activities or things they do not find significant (Bollinger & Halupa, 2012). Political apathy affects people of all ages and can be traced to low voter turnout during elections or disengagement from political activities (Turner & Griffin, 2019). Apathy can also be described as another name for inactivity, submission, and even numbness that has pandemic proportions when it relates to social, economic, environmental, and political issues. Hence, lack of understanding, concern, social duty, and action, such as voting, are also symptoms of political apathy, and this is primarily true for people between the ages of 18 and 24 (Hattam & Stokes, 2019). Political apathy is an inevitable byproduct of the transformation of politics from a field dominated by those who participate in politics out of a real passion for the game and a desire to change the world, as opposed to the colder, more calculated "career" politicians, who view it as a position where the objective is to maintain the existing party or firm in power, similar to any other employment in a company without taking into account what occurs in the nation as a whole. Consequently, the public, particularly younger people, is no longer captivated by politics (Hess & Gatti, 2010).

Political disengagement or apathy among university students or undergraduates is not a novel concept anymore, as other geopolitical surveys show similar trends among young people. Most recent surveys believe that this aversion of young people from the entire electoral process results from a wide range of drifting away from traditional politics and is not just temporary (Hattam & Stokes, 2019). The rise of digital culture through the Internet and social media, more specifically Twitter, is a significant development in contemporary societies. Indeed, these recent developments represent a new political landscape with potential implications for social change and the emergence of new social arrangements. This, of course, hardly guarantees a fresh start for historically disenfranchised and marginalised social groups (Yamamoto, Kushin & Dalisay, 2014).

Understanding the links between Twitter as a component of social media and politics is essential, given that social media consumption is an increasingly important dimension of socialisation and the awareness of political development identities and affiliations among undergraduate students (Saddat, Ahmed & Moihiuddin, 2014). However, Twitter's "many sins" in the Nigerian space can be seen in its covert support for the #ENDSARS protests against police brutality in Nigeria, which ultimately forced the Nigerian government to review her Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), as

well as the unrestricted use of Twitter handles and other social media apps by secessionist campaigners (Mungadi et al., 2021). It is believed that the behaviours of Nigerians on Twitter space were "capable of compromising Nigeria's existence" The choice had nothing to do with Twitter's decision to remove a tweet from the President of Nigeria, who, in a warning to secessionists, had written, in part, "Many of the people misbehaving today are too young to be aware of the carnage and loss of life that occurred during the Nigerian Civil War. There was a stir on the platform when the President tweeted, 'We will treat them in the language they understand. Those of us in the fields for 30 months, who lived through the war, will do so," accusing him of making a "genocidal remark" and calling for a complaint about the tweet for abuse (Akinyoade, 2021). Twitter provides a platform for an art form for a more direct link to politics, real-time news that can be consumed if not mobilized rapidly, and an online space where alignment with others of similar political tastes can occur (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media has assisted the political security of individuals by encouraging citizen participation in civic life, governance, and news reporting. According to Buschman (2023), credible and sustainable governance depends on effective citizen participation and what it produces, and the quality of governance declines when this participation is restricted through censorship or outright bans. Social media is still a tool for social accountability, conveying policy changes and promoting policy change.

Twitter is a widely used, and it's a free social networking platform for microblogging that allows users to publish ideas, experiences, and summaries known as "tweets," which are restricted to 140 characters and can include links to blogs, web pages, photos, videos, and other online content. Notwithstanding the time constraints placed on this communication tool, Twitter is widely utilised on an endless range of topics (Burgess & Baym, 2022). Academics and researchers from various fields and expertise levels often utilise Twitter. After a Twitter account is created, it may be accessed from any computer or mobile networked device to send and receive tweets. The recklessness with which pro-secessionist Twitter users have heated Nigerian politics has also put an already fragile entity's corporate survival in danger (Ekpu, 2021). The afterthought deleting by Twitter of previous tweets of separatist leader Nnamdi Kanu following the reactionary posture of the Nigerian president might be a validation of the complacency of Twitter's internal system on fair and balanced reporting of events (Olufemi, 2021).

Moreover, during public health and safety catastrophes like the COVID-19 epidemic, new media like Twitter are crucial for information sharing, customer service marketing, and remote employment. The halt may hinder trade, reduce output, and eventually result in job losses (Anyim, 2021). On June 2, 2021, Twitter was shut off in Nigeria. This had a significant impact on society and the economy. The suspension of Twitter, a popular microblogging site, has started to hurt Nigeria's faltering economy, causing a loss of N7.5 billion between June 2 and June 4. Nigeria's move to temporarily lift its initial indefinite suspension on Twitter usage might have a negative economic impact on the nation by deterring fresh investment in the country's technology sector. Nigeria's ranking as one of the best-performing African nations in luring investment for technological start-up enterprises may be jeopardized by the ban. In addition to the financial loss,

BalaZaka, a financial expert, claimed that the government should be more concerned about the signal that Twitter's ban has given to foreign investment. He suggested that the government could have diplomatically engaged Twitter.

Most impact ones do their business mostly on Twitter. Since the introduction of Twitter, the impact on the marketing industry in Nigeria has expanded to the point that nearly anyone with a loyal following may land deals with companies trying to broaden their reach. While organisations may readily use other platforms for their marketing initiatives, it may be more difficult for them to obtain the same results as Twitter. The number of individuals who rely on the Internet, particularly social media, for a living has significantly increased as a result of the Internet revolution. Many Nigerians have built livelihoods off these sites, working as social media administrators, content creators, and product photographers. Nigerians are increasingly using Twitter to find employment, investors, and open positions. The startup ecosystem in Nigeria has grown rapidly in a short period, with $3,77.4 million funded in 2019, yet this amount fell to $120.6 million in 2020 owing to the coronavirus. However, the Ban on Twitter jeopardises startups' efforts to use social media to launch marketing campaigns and create relationships with their consumers. Apps created using Twitter APIs are also impacted, and investors are less likely to invest in Nigerian businesses, depriving the country of much-needed funds.

Moving on, political security, as a subset of human security, is concerned with whether people live in societies that preserve their basic human rights, even while political repression, systematic torture, ill-treatment, and disappearances persist across continents (Amnesty International, 2018). Political uneasiness arises when there is political repression, systematic violation of human rights, and military threats. Political security is an agenda that seeks to safeguard individuals against states that continue to engage in political repression, systematic torture, and ill-treatment of citizens.

After the suspension of President Trump's account on Twitter and Facebook, Ghosh (2021) empirically investigated the prospect that the world might soon experience social media regulation. The study's findings showed that there are structural differences between social media and traditional media that are so fundamental that self-regulation and legislative reform will be required to bring social media companies under control, even as the US government decides what will happen to Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, the federal law that shields internet companies from liability for user-generated content distributed on their platforms.

Musa (2021) experimentally examined the impact of the Ban on Twitter on African digital democracy, with Nigeria joining Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Chad, Egypt, Cameroon, Congo, and Morocco in the social media gagging culture. The sponsors of the "Protection from Internet Falsehood and Manipulation Bill 2019, the Digital Rights Bill (2019), which was supposed to protect Nigerians' fundamental rights on the Internet, declined because it "covers too many technical subjects and fails to address any of them extensively," according to the study.

A study conducted by Primack et al. (2018) found that there is a significant relationship between the use of social media and the development of anxiety and depression in young adults. The study found that young adults who use social media for more than two hours per day are more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression than those who use social media for less than one

hour per day. The study also found that the use of social media can lead to social isolation, which can further contribute to the development of anxiety and depression.

Zhuravskaya et al. (2021) empirically investigated how social media and the internet impact political results in both democratic and dictatorial states. The research was exploratory, with an emphasis on work that explores characteristics that separate the Internet and social media from conventional offline media, such as low barriers to entry and dependence on user-generated material. According to the study, internet users are more politically conscious, as seen by voting, street protests, government attitudes, political division, and political conduct. Findings highlighted authoritarian countries' techniques for Internet censorship and the use of social media for surveillance and propaganda. Bamman et al. (2012) researched deletion and censoring practices in Chinese social media. The study used a mixed-method research approach to compare censoring patterns on Sina Weibo, Twitter, and other applications. The study's findings indicated that the famed China Great Fire Wall (GFW) restricts Chinese people's access to international websites (Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, and Google) to the point that politically sensitive words such as demanding someone to resign are blocked.

Theoretical Review

According to Ohaja (2003), knowledge does not exist in a vacuum. There is a body of theories in every area that explain observed facts in that field. This is why this discussion is based on the uses and gratifications hypothesis. The uses and gratifications hypothesis, according to Katz, Blumer, and Gurevitch (1974), introduces a phase in mass media research that challenges the conventional focus on what the audience does with the media rather than what the media does to the public. It also focuses on the motivations behind audience media consumption and the functions that media provide (Xu et al., 2023). According to Paimre (2015), who elaborates on the notion, the fundamental query is: Why do individuals utilise the media, and for what purposes? The theory has been defined as a communication research paradigm that aims to explain difficulties based on the audience's subjective account of media experiences and the roles a certain type of information fulfils in specific situations (Sun et al., 2022).

The audience uses the mass media to meet their own needs, and the theory argues that there are specific advantages that a consumer expects to get from each media, and failing to meet these expectations will result in the audience abandoning the medium. Tweets from subscribing websites, blogs, personalities, celebrities, and so on provide information, entertainment, and education to audiences. Twitter's mobile notification activation allows users to get all tweets on their account as text messages for free. The theory may be used in research where participants have a choice of what to use based on the potential benefits of a certain medium's content. Furthermore, Zafar (2010) argues that the Uses and Gratifications theory supports the idea that media consumers actively participate in the selection and use of the media. Folarin (2002) makes the case that the question should be changed to: What sorts of effects occur under what conditions? To further clarify what the theory involves. Who utilises which medium in what situations and for what objectives became the question. The theory is pertinent to this research since it examines the perception of the ban on Twitter as a predictor of social anxiety and political apathy among Unilag undergraduates.

Objectives of the study

The main aim of this research is to examine the perception of the ban on Twitter as a predictor of social anxiety and political apathy among University of Lagos students based on the following.

1. To examine the perception of the ban on Twitter as a predictor of social anxiety among undergraduates.
2. To examine the perception of the ban on Twitter as a predictor of political apathy among undergraduates.
3. To investigate the perception of students on the ban of Twitter and to understand its propensity to have a significant influence on social anxiety more than political apathy among undergraduates.

Research Hypotheses

1. The perception of undergraduate students on the ban on Twitter will significantly predict social anxiety.
2. The perception of undergraduate students on the ban on Twitter will significantly predict political apathy.
3. Undergraduate students will express more social anxiety due to the ban on Twitter compared to political apathy.

METHOD

This study utilised a cross-sectional research design aimed at gathering survey data from undergraduate students at the University of Lagos. Three faculties, namely Social Sciences, the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Arts, were randomly selected from twelve faculties in the University of Lagos. The participants were undergraduate students, and the sample size was determined through a power analysis of the total number of undergraduates at the University of Lagos to ensure statistical significance. Thus, 383 undergraduate students were sampled for this study. A total number of 383 participants were used for this study. This research study used a stratified random sampling technique by dividing the required study participants into subgroups or strata according to factors like age, gender, field of study, and level of study. Afterwards, volunteers from each stratum in proportion to their population representation can be chosen at random. This sampling technique helped to make the sample more representative and cut down on sampling error.

The Social Media Intensity Scale (SMI), an 8-item measure by Ellison et al. (2007) was utilised to assess the intensity of participant's social media use by measuring the strength of their emotional attachment to it. The second instrument we utilised is the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS), which consists of a 20-item measure that examines social anxiety, specifically in situations involving conversations or meetings that may involve scrutiny. The questionnaire was originally developed by Mattick & Clark in 1998. The SAIS is accompanied by the Social Phobia Scale (SPS), which was created to assess commonly feared social situations. We also utilised a 5-point Likert scale to gauge the extent of the participants' truthfulness in each statement. Thirdly, political

apathy was measured using the Political Participation Integrity Scale (PPIS) developed by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady in their book "Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics" (1995). The scale aims to assess the quality of political participation by measuring sincerity and integrity in various political activities. Additionally, the application of the 5-point Likert scale enabled the authors of this study to measure the strength of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

To assess the Ban's influence on Twitter on social anxiety and political apathy, data was obtained from a representative sample of Twitter-using undergraduate students at the University of Lagos. First, consent was obtained from participants before a power analysis was conducted to determine the target population and determine the appropriate sample size. The population was subsequently stratified and divided based on important factors such as age, gender, field of study, and academic level. Next, participants were randomly selected from each stratum in proportion to their representation in the population using a stratified random sampling technique. A survey questionnaire was developed to collect data on demographic information, Twitter usage, social anxiety, political apathy, and the perceived impact of the Ban on Twitter on anxiety and political apathy at all levels. The questionnaire was distributed to three out of the twelve faculties at the University of Lagos: the Faculty of Social Science, the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Arts.

Before administration, the questionnaire underwent a pre-test with a small group of five students to ensure question clarity and validity. The selected participants provided their consent, and the questionnaire was then administered physically to the participants using our sampling technique. Data was collected and recorded from the completed questionnaires. However, this study had limitations, including self-selection bias, social desirability bias, and the generalizability of the results due to the specific sample population. These limitations were addressed through the use of the stratified sampling technique. Finally, the collected data was analysed, and conclusions were drawn based on our findings. A survey form was used to gather the data, and it was made available by distributing it to undergraduates with the assistance of our sampling method. The questionnaire also included questions about demographics, social media usage measuring Twitter use, social anxiety, political apathy, and how participants perceive the impact of the Ban on Twitter on their levels of anxiety and political indifference.

The obtained data from the survey was analysed using descriptive statistics such as histograms, scatterplots, and P-P plots. Inferential statistics, such as the one-way ANOVA test and regression analysis, were utilized to test the hypotheses. The regression analysis involved multiple linear regression, which helped us understand the extent of the effect of the Ban on Twitter on anxiety and political apathy.

RESULTS

Table 1: Summary of Demographic Data Presentation

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	202	52.7
	Female	181	47.3
Age	20-25 years	234	61.1
	26-30 years	121	31.6
	31+	28	7.3
Religion	Christianity	192	50.1
	Muslim	138	36.0
	Others	53	13.8
Ethnicity	Yoruba	289	75.5
	Igbo	47	12.3
	Hausa	47	12.3

The table presents the frequency and percentage distribution of participants by sex, age, religion, ethnicity and level of study. Most of the participants were male (52.7%), aged between 20-25 years (61.1%), identified as Christian (50.1%), and were of Yoruba ethnicity (75.5%).

The first hypothesis stated that the perception of undergraduate students on the ban on Twitter will significantly predict social anxiety. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: A summary table showing a simple linear regression on the impact of the predictor variable on anxiety.

Predictor	R	R^2	F	Sig.	B	t	Sig.
Ban on Twitter	.457[a]	.209	100.5	.000[b]	.661	10.025	.000

Dependent variable: Anxiety

The predictor variable (Ban on Twitter) explains 20.9% of the variation in anxiety following the multiple regression analysis as shown in Table 2, with a statistically significant relationship (F(1, 100) = 100.5, p <.005). According to the unstandardised regression coefficient (B), anxiety increases by .661 for every unit higher in the predictor variable (Ban on Twitter). Therefore, these findings appear that Ban on Twitter strongly predicted anxiety among undergraduate students (R2 = .209, F (1, 100) = 100.5, p < .005).

Hypothesis two states the perception of undergraduates on the ban on Twitter will significantly predict political apathy. To test the hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: A summary table showing the simple regression analysis on the influence of the ban on Twitter on political apathy

Predictor	R	R^2	F	Sig.	B	t	Sig.
Ban on Twitter	.205[a]	.042	16.697	.000[b]	.277	4.086	.000

Dependent Variable: Political apathy

The Ban on Twitter accounted for 4.2% of the variation in Political apathy following the multiple regression analysis as shown in Table 3, with a statistically significant relationship (F(1, 100) = 16.697, p <.005). According to the unstandardised regression coefficient (B), apathy increases by .277 for every unit higher in the predictor variable (Ban on Twitter). Therefore, these findings appear that Ban on Twitter strongly predicted political apathy among undergraduate students (R2 = .042, F (1, 100) = 16.697, p< .005).

The third hypothesis stated that undergraduate students will express more social anxiety due to the ban on Twitter compared to political apathy.

Table 4: One-way ANOVA Test Showing Social Anxiety and Political Apathy amongst Undergraduate Students due to the ban on Twitter

		Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Political apathy	Between Groups	24	548.361	18.967	.00	
	Within Groups	358	28.911			
	Total	382				
Social anxiety	Between Groups	24	752.824	30.261	.00	
	Within Groups	358	24.878			
	Total	382				

One-way ANOVA was conducted to test if the ban on Twitter will have more influence on social anxiety than political apathy amongst undergraduates. The table above highlights that the ban on Twitter was significant in political apathy (F = 18.967, P =0.000 < 0.05). Also, the ban on Twitter was significant in social anxiety (F = 30.261, P = 0.000 > 0.05). Hence, the results show that a ban on Twitter is significant in political apathy and social anxiety amongst undergraduates, but it is higher in social anxiety, given that the F is higher than political apathy. (F = 18.967) and social anxiety (F = 30.261).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of our study revealed that the perceptions of the ban on Twitter predicted social anxiety and political apathy among undergraduate students. These are consistent with previous studies conducted on the influence of social media on political security and citizen participation in civic life (Ohaja, 2003). For instance, Musa (2021) found that the ban on Twitter has an impact on

African digital democracy. According to Zafar (2010), the Uses and Gratifications theory supports the idea that media consumers actively participate in the selection and use of media based on their own needs and expectations. In this case, it could be argued that the suspension of Twitter in Nigeria may have hindered participants in our study from using this platform to satisfy their needs for information sharing, customer service marketing, remote employment, and civic participation (Anyim, 2021).

Furthermore, findings from the present study demonstrated that social anxiety had a higher influence due to the ban on Twitter than political apathy. A study by Ghosh (2021) gives us an explanation for this finding by addressing the feeling of apprehension developed by American citizens on the prospect of social media regulation following the suspension of President Trump's account on Twitter and Facebook. Conversely, Bamman et al. (2012) found that China's Great Firewall (GFW) blocks politically sensitive words on social media. Such findings suggest that social media regulation and censorship can have a significant influence on political outcomes and citizen participation in civic life. However, this past study does not fully support social anxiety as it only focused on political apathy, which is in contrast to our findings. Furthermore, Primack et al. (2018) found that social media use is significantly linked to anxiety and depression in young adults which is a supportive claim and a good explanation for our findings. In this case, it could be argued that the suspension of Twitter in Nigeria may have hindered undergraduate students' ability to use the platform to meet their needs for information sharing, customer service marketing, remote employment, and civic participation.

Conclusion

This study sought to determine how Undergraduate students perceive the ban on Twitter and how it has influenced levels of social anxiety and political apathy. The findings offer an important new understanding of the bans on numerous facets of society. The study emphasises the value of social media sites, particularly Twitter, in promoting political security, citizen involvement, accountability, and information sharing in times of crisis. It underlines that social media prohibitions may have a detrimental impact on the efficiency of government, social accountability, and economic progress. The study also reveals a link between social media use and social anxiety disorder (SAD), emphasising the significance of mental health and emotional control when using social media. The study also uncovers the existence of political apathy, particularly among young people, and contends that social media restrictions may be a factor in political indifference and poor political engagement. Policymakers need to consider the potential negative consequences of restricting social media and address the mental health implications by encouraging political engagement through social media and ensuring access to these platforms can combat political apathy and enhance citizen participation. The outcome of our study is needed to understand the long-term impact, especially on young people.

Implications of Findings

1. This study has some pretty important takeaways for both young adults and their parents. For young adults, it's a good idea to be aware of how much time you're spending on social

media and try to limit it. For parents, it is important to have conversations with their kids about the potential risks of social media and encourage them to use it healthily.

2. This study looks at the social impact of the Ban on Twitter, including how it affects businesses, and the sharing of information during crises. The findings show that it is important to keep the online environment free and open so that people can interact, do business, and thrive. Policymakers and society as a whole need to carefully consider how restrictions on social media platforms might change the way we interact with each other and participate in society.

3. This study suggests that there is a link between emotional differentiation, experiential avoidance, self-control, and social anxiety disorder (SAD). This highlights how important it is to address mental health issues and promote emotional well-being when we talk about social media use. If access is restricted, people who rely on social media for social connection and interaction might suffer negative effects on their mental health. Healthcare professionals, educators, and governments need to take the psychological impact of social media restrictions into account when addressing mental health issues.

4. This study shows how important social media sites like Twitter are for political engagement and participation. The findings suggest that restrictions on social media access, especially for young people, might lead to political apathy. Policymakers need to recognise the potential of social media platforms as tools for political engagement and make sure that access is not unnecessarily restricted to promote political participation and democratic processes.

Limitation of Study

Potential bias in self-reporting may occur due to reliance on self-reported measures of social anxiety and political apathy. The impact on confounding variables such as personal experiences, socio-economic status, or ongoing events locally or globally may influence social anxiety and political apathy among University of Lagos students. Also, limited generalizability to other populations or contexts is advised.

REFERENCES

Ajibola, A. O., & Agunbiade, O. M. (2022). Suicide ideation and its correlates among university undergraduates in South Western Nigeria. *Community Health Equity Research & Policy, 43*(1), 45–58.

Akinyoade, A. (2021, June 27). Ban on Twitter: The ripple effect. *The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News.* https://guardian.ng/life/twitter-ban-the-ripple-effect/

Anyim, W. O. (2021). Ban on Twitter in Nigeria: Implications on economy, freedom of speech and information sharing. *DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.* https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/5975/

Baber, W., Chang, C. Y. M., Yates, J., & Dening, T. (2021). The experience of apathy in dementia: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(6), 3325. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18063325

Bollinger, D. U., & Halupa, C. (2012). Student perceptions of satisfaction and anxiety in an online doctoral program. *Distance Education, 33*(1), 81–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2012.667961

Burgess, J., & Baym, N. K. (2022). *Twitter: A biography.* NYU Press.

Burke, T., & Ruppel, E. (2015). Facebook self-presentational motives: Daily effects on social anxiety. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 43*(2), 191–210. https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2015.1019540

Buschman, J. (2023). Libraries, democracy, and citizenship: Twenty years after 9/11. *The Library Quarterly, 93*(2), 181–201. https://doi.org/10.1086/723615

Cohen, M., Buzinski, S. G., Armstrong-Carter, E., Clark, J., Buck, B., & Reuman, L. (2019). Think, pair, freeze: The association between social anxiety and student discomfort in the active learning environment. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology, 5*(4), 265–277. https://doi.org/10.1037/stl0000147

Ghosh, D. (2021, January 14). Are we entering a new era of social media regulation? *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2021/01/are-we-entering-a-new-era-of-social-mediaregulation

Musa, A. I. (2021). Ban on Twitter and the challenges of digital democracy in Africa. *Legislative Digest, 6*(16), 4–9.

Ohaja, E. U. (2003). *Mass communication research and project report writing.* John Letterman Limited.

Bamman, D., O'Connor, B., & Smith, N. (2012). Censorship and deletion practices in Chinese social media. *First Monday, 17*(3). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v17i3.3943

Brook, C. A., & Willoughby, T. (2015). The social ties that bind: Social anxiety and academic achievement across the university years. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 44*(5), 1139–1152. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-015-0262-8

Ekpu, R. (2021, June 8). Taming Twitter. *The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News.* https://guardian.ng/opinion/taming-twitter/

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends:" Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-*

Mediated Communication, 12(4), 1143–1168. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00367.x

Eltantawy, N., & Wiest, J. B. (2011). The Arab Spring: Social media in the Egyptian revolution: Reconsidering resource mobilization theory. *International Journal of Communication, 5*, 1207–1224.

Folarin, B. (2002). *Theories of mass communication: An introductory text.*

Hattam, S., & Stokes, J. (2019). Liberation and connection. In *Transitioning students into higher education* (pp. 45–53). https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429279355-6

Hess, D., & Gatti, L. (2010). Putting politics where it belongs: In the classroom. *New Directions for Higher Education, (152)*, 19–26. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.421

Iyatse, G., & Adepetun, A. (2021, June 7). $12b e-commerce suffers as ban on Twitter costs N7.5 billion in three days. *The Guardian Newspaper.* https://skillsafrica.org/news/sifa-advertorial-in-print-media-nigeria

Katz, E., Blumler, J., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Uses and gratifications research. *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 37*(4), 509–523. https://doi.org/10.1086/268109

Leigh, E., Chiu, K., & Ballard, E. D. (2023). Social anxiety and suicidality in youth: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Research on Child and Adolescent Psychopathology, 51*(4), 441–454. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-022-00978-7

Litzler, E., Samuelson, C. C., & Lorah, J. A. (2014). Breaking it down: Engineering student STEM confidence at the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender. *Research in Higher Education, 55*(8), 810–832. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-014-9333-z

MacKenzie, M. B., & Fowler, K. F. (2013). Social anxiety disorder in the Canadian population: Exploring gender differences in sociodemographic profile. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 27*(4), 427–434. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2013.05.006

Mattick, R. P., & Clarke, J. C. (1998). Development and validation of measures of social phobia scrutiny fear and social interaction anxiety. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 36*(4), 455–470. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967(97)10031-6

Mungadi, D. D., Kana, A. A., Yusuf, A. U., Owa, F. T., Abubakar, I. A., & Onibiyo, E. R. (2021). EndSARS cyber warfare protest and critical national asset and infrastructures in Nigeria. *Infokara Research Journal, 10*(3), 194–208.

Olufemi, A. (2021, June 5). #TwitterBan: Twitter deletes Nnamdi Kanu's tweets. *Premium Times.* https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/465867-twitterban-twitter-deletes-nnamdi-kanus-tweets.html

Paimre, M. (2015). Mapping trajectories of attention to drug related issues in Estonian main dailies. *Advances in Journalism and Communication, 3*(2), 39–48. https://doi.org/10.4236/ajc.2015.32005

Primack, B. A., Greenfield, P. M., Michikyan, M., & Yan, Y. (2018). Association of different types of social media use with depression and anxiety in young adults. *Depression and Anxiety, 35*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1002/da.22779

Russell, G., & Topham, P. (2012). The impact of social anxiety on student learning and well-being in higher education. *Journal of Mental Health, 21*(4), 375–385. https://doi.org/10.3109/09638237.2012.682265

Sun, Y., Liu, Y., & Zhang, J. (2020). Excessive enterprise social media use behavior at work: Role of communication visibility and perspective of uses and gratifications theory. *IEEE Access, 8*, 190989–191004. https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2020.3032153

Topham, P., Moller, N., & Davies, H. (2014). Social anxiety in learning: Stages of change in a sample of UK undergraduates. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 40*(1), 125–145. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2014.895305

Turner, J., & Griffin, A. (2019). Power, language and social change: A dialogue with Hilary Janks about Critical Literacy in a "post-truth" world. *Language Arts, 96*(5), 318–324.

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics.* Harvard University Press.

Weiss, D. E. (2013). *The relationship between Internet social networking, social anxiety, self-esteem, narcissism, and gender among college students* (Publication No. 3570710) [Doctoral dissertation, Pace University]. UMI Dissertation Publishing.

Xu, X. Y., Tayyab, S. M. U., Jia, Q., & Huang, A. H. (2023). A multi-model approach for the extension of the use and gratification theory in video game streaming. *Information Technology & People.* https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-05-2022-0393

Yamamoto, M., Kushin, M. J., & Dalisay, F. (2017). Social media and political disengagement among emergent adults: A moderated mediation model of cynicism, efficacy, and social media use on apathy. *Mass Communication and Society, 20*(2), 149–168. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2016.1224352

Zafar, S. S. (2010). EU-Libya relations. *SSRN Electronic Journal.* https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1601165

Zhuravskaya, E., Petrova, M., & Enikolopov, R. (2021). Political effects of the internet and social media. *Annual Review of Economics, 13*, 415–438. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-082019-110727