

Nigerians Usage Of Facebook During 2012 *Occupy Nigeria* Protests: Between Networked And Real Public Spheres

Bisallah Hashim Ibrahim

Department of Computer science, University of Abuja, Nigeria
hbisallah@gmail.com

Abstract: The 2012 *Occupy Nigeria* protests renewed Nigerians long agitation for good governance in all ramifications. On January 1st, 2012, the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan announced the total deregulation of oil downstream sector through the removal of fuel subsidy. The announcement generated a lot of controversy among the citizens, especially civil societies and workers' unions which eventually led to public protests in the real public sphere and networked public sphere. It is on this basis that, this study investigates the nexus that exists between real public sphere and networked public sphere. The study found that there is a strong affinity between real public sphere and networked public sphere. This was established at the critical value: $r = 0.576$ and significant at 0.05 level of significance. Primarily, the study revealed that the socio-economic and political issues discussed by the online protesters motivated offline protesters during the protests. The findings of this study have, therefore, proved Facebook to be a potent new medium in connecting citizens during public protests. The study, therefore recommends, among others, that policy formulators in the country should always analyse the pros and cons of any policy critically before recommending such to appropriate governments and should involve relevant stakeholders in the formulation processes.

[Bisallah Hashim Ibrahim. **Nigerians Usage Of Facebook During 2012 *Occupy Nigeria* Protests: Between Networked And Real Public Spheres.** *Researcher* 2013;5(7):55-64]. (ISSN: 1553-9865). <http://www.sciencepub.net/researcher>. 9

Keywords: real public sphere, networked public sphere, *occupy Nigeria*, Facebook, online protesters, offline protester.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The *Occupy Nigeria* Movement in Ojota and across the nation and the world debunked the myth of the passive, socially immobile Nigerians who can be trampled upon by an oppressive governmental apparatus. It showed that the real 'R' in the Nigerian spirit is not *resilience* but *resistance* to tyranny; that spirit has not been crushed, not even by the cowardly deployment of soldiers to harass and intimidate harmless protesters (Odumakin, 2012). The protest against the removal of petrol subsidy started as one of those common protests but ended in introducing a new generation phase to the struggle and campaigns against waste and corruption in government. The protests cut across ethnic, class and religious divides of the country. This probably suggests that, Nigerians can fight back against oppressive system, if the messaging and mobilizations are carefully couched to identify and resonate with livelihood challenges confronting the people (Cleen Foundation, 2012). Considering the low living standard in the country, Nigerians, especially the downtrodden, see the removal of the subsidy on petroleum as another means of inflicting on them untold hardship. Eighty-four per cent of Nigerians live on less than 2 dollars per day (United Nation Development Report, 2009).

Adibe (2012) observes that Nigerians, especially, protesters submerged their primordial identities to the larger contradiction of a collective struggle against perceived state callousness, if not wickedness. It was a telling sign that under the right

leadership and conditions, a Nigerian nation will be a viable project. Cleen Foundation (2012) posits further that, "the movement is not guided, it is clearly born as a reaction to injustice and corruption around the world and, therefore, it is destined to change the underlying values of the system, not only the rules of it. It is a global movement for true democracy and better human conditions. In actual sense, the protest reflected a collective idea, a movement without borders or leaders".

It should be noted that as Nigerians across the major cities and towns were protesting against the policy (subsidy removal) in the real public sphere, efforts were also being made by groups and private individuals on social media (networked public sphere) especially Facebook and Twitter; informing relevant stakeholders to rescind the decision. This led to a number of people being involved in the real public sphere defied multi-ethnic nature of the country. Commenting on the effects of social media as viable tool for public discourse and collaboration, Mejias (2006) observes that the effects of social media are probably most visible in emerging forms of public discourse and collaboration. Since notions of democracy are closely tied to the ability to voice one's opinion and to the ability to organize collective action; the more opportunities for discussion and collaboration (such as those allegedly generated by blogs and wikis), the healthier the public sphere and the healthier the democracy.

Referring to Habermas' (1989) normative notion of the public sphere, Thornton (n.d) notes that public sphere is an aspect of social life where citizens can exchange views on matters of importance to the common good, so that public opinion can be formed. This public sphere comes into being when people gather to discuss problems of political concern. The importance of this lies in the process of discussion, which must take the form of rational-critical debate. This debate has a set of rules which include avoiding use of emotion or emotive language, and focus on the rationality of the content alone. Participants should have a common interest in truth, which meant that they bracketed status differentials so that participants speak as if they were equals.

Networked public sphere, on the other hand, allows citizens to actively participate in debating national problems that are germane to the nation through Facebook, twitter, blogs and other social media. Commenting on the efficacy of political participation through internet, Roberts (2011) asserts that internet offers a better medium for the creation of a public sphere in which a truly democratic form of political debate can take place. Thus, Facebook as a form of social media has propensity of ensuring effective public participation in an ideal democracy, especially when problems of national importance are being discussed like the one under study (removal of fuel subsidy). For networked public sphere to actually give everyone a voice, Roberts (2011) outlining Benkler's set of criteria for the efficacy of the new networked public sphere points out that it must have 'Universal Intake', with this, it must be open to everyone. It must establish itself capable of filtering relevant information, that is, 'plausibly within the domain of organised political action'. It must have systems for accrediting information sources that are likely to be reliable. It must be capable of synthesizing public opinion into a coherent public opinion and independent from government control.

It is against this background that this study investigates the nexus that exists between public sphere and networked public sphere during 2012 *Occupy Nigeria* protests that occurred as a result of Federal Government's decision to discontinue subsidy regime on petroleum product in the country. Specifically, the study seeks to reveal categories of socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online and considered by the offline protesters and the correlation between socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online and considered by the offline protesters during the protests. The study also aims at revealing whether socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online protesters affect the level of participation of offline protesters during the protests.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is imperative to examine previous studies conducted on different aspects of social media in political communication. Etling, Kelly, Faris and Palfrey (2010) conduct their own study on blogosphere; emphasizing politics and dissent online. Arab region of the World was used as a study area. They identify active discussion of public problems from a variety of perspectives, participation of normally excluded viewpoints, clustering of discussants with similar interests, and evidence of 'bottom-up' agenda-setting, rather than additional channels of top-down flows of information as key features of political blogging, an aspect of social media in the context of 'social media cum political revolution'. The researchers adopted a combination of three methods to map and analyse the Arab blogosphere; social network analysis of the linking behaviour of Arabic bloggers, automated text analysis of blog content, and human coding of individual blogs. They found that bloggers discussing politics within the Egyptian, Kuwait, Syrian, and the Levantine/English bridge clusters are overwhelmingly concerned with domestic problems, while Levant/English Bridge region is more engaged than the large national clusters with both international politics and the problems of violence, extremism and cross-cultural value conflict so deeply troubling to the West.

Khamis and El-Nawawy (2012) concentrated their study on "succeed Facebook revolution" in Egypt and "Failed Twitter revolution" in Iran. Specifically, their study addressed the Egyptians clamouring for political change that started in the virtual world and eventually led to actual change in the real world, but failed in Iran. Critical analysis of the relevant available literature and interviews with online activists in Egypt and Iran were employed as methods of investigating the parameters that favoured Egyptian and against Iran revolutions. SPIN (Segmentation, polycentrism, integration and networking) model was used to underpin the study. The assumption of the model is collective action, group coordination and organized division of labour among members of various groups for the attainment of a common goal. They concluded that the model helped social media succeed in Egypt, but not in Iran.

Despite this, the researchers observed that there cannot be a relationship of causality between social media and political revolutions; it can potentially contribute to political revolution, but only under certain circumstances. It should be noted that none of these studies focused on the nexus between networked public sphere and real public sphere, which is the gap in knowledge that the current study intends to fill. In a nutshell, the present study aims at finding out the extent to which Facebook usage during 2012 *Occupy Nigeria* protests motivate Nigerians to engage in the nationwide protests that greeted the

government's decision to remove subsidy on petroleum product.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What categories of socio-economic and political problems were discussed by the online and considered by the offline protesters during the protests?
2. Is there any correlation between socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online and considered by the offline protesters during the protests?
3. Do socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online protesters affect the level of participation of the offline protesters during the protests?

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online and considered by the offline protesters during the protests.

H₁: There is significant relationship between socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online and considered by the offline protesters.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CONCEPT OF PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

The concept of democracy is often traceable to Greece, when the system of administration or ruling people changed from everyone (citizen) being at the place where decision that would bind everyone would be made to representative governance, that is, in a form of electing some people (honourables) and representing others (citizens). Since democracy becomes government of the people by the people and for the people. Public participation have always being strengthened as means of ensuring effective democratic practice, because there is propensity that, the electorates will have opportunity of correcting their leaders through referendum when they are making social, economic and political decisions that will have severe impact on them. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision. It promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers. Also, public participation facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision and seeks input from participants in designing how they participate. It is a strategy that provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way. Public participation communicates to participants how their

input affected the decision (International Association for Public Participation, 2007).

It is noteworthy that participatory governance takes different approaches. In advanced democracies such as United States, Britain, and others, there is always effective usage of referendum, which allows citizens to vote in order to decide whether to adopt a policy being proposed by government or not. Another approach is the use of public debate, in this situation, members of parliament organised public forums where citizens are expected to participate in the decision making collectively (as a group such as civil society) or individually (individual citizens) through submission of memorandum. Sanni (2001) reasons that all those to be directly affected by a particular decision should in one way or the other be involved in the process of making the decision. This implies participatory democratic or consultative decision making; participation enhances the spirit of belongingness and collective morale. Suffice to say here that, in African democracies, the practicability of the two approaches remain debatable among the citizens and activists, because democracy is not really practiced the way it is supposed to be. The disrespect for rule of law, lack of political accountability, sit-tight syndrome among African leaders and other political problems facing Africa remain obstacles to effective public participation. However, the emergence of social media has changed the concept of public involvement in decision making or scolding governments' policies in Africa. The trend has led to mass revolt in public spheres, the 2011 Arab Spring success is, at least partly, traced to the usage of Social Media among the citizens in the region.

Explaining the role of social media in Arab World, Khamis and Vaughn (2011) observe that much of the user-generated content is transmitted using social media such as Facebook, the video-sharing portal You Tube, Twitter, and short message service (SMS) or text messaging. These media enable peer-to-peer communication between users and can be linked to each other, allowing users to transmit their ideas and images to large numbers of people. It is safe to say that one of the most important avenues through which public opinion trends and public spheres are both shaped, as well as reflected, in modern Arab societies is the internet. The significance of the Internet stems from the fact that it defies boundaries, challenges governmental media censorship, and provides an alternative voice to traditional media outlets, which echo official, governmental policies and views. In order words, it enables the in-flow and out-flow of information simultaneously through a "virtually defined... emerging cyber world that knows no physical boundaries" (Salmon, Fernandez and Post, 2010:159). Therefore, it provides invaluable opportunities to public mobilization across borders.

Khamis and Vaughn (2011) making reference to Howard (2011:182) point out that, through social

media, citizen journalists who are dissatisfied with traditional media's version of events are telling their own stories, and that "these patterns of political expression and learning are key to developing democratic discourses". They observe that social media not only help start democracies, but also help entrenching existing ones, and that the "networked design" of social media is the key factor threatening authoritarian regimes, since "These are the communication tools for the wealthy, urban, educated elites whose loyalties or defection will make or break authoritarian rules". Satellite television and social networking have made it easier to let each individual know that his or her views are shared by enough people to make protesting worthwhile and safe (Freeland, 2011) cited in Khamis and Vaughn (2011). The exposure, feedback, engagement (connecting) and exchange (sharing) that Social Media platforms provide create a major change for the traditional communication understanding. Essentially, information flow is no longer considered "one-way street" in which audience received messages through the "I communicate-you receive" mantra. Rather, Social Media integration is seen as an interactive process that enables same-level information exchange among the audience... (Gracia, 2011)

The interactive features of digital ICT open up unprecedented opportunities for more inclusive public engagement in the deliberation of policy problems. In a nutshell, the degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium, and on the messages, and the degree to which such influences are synchronised (Liu and Shrum, 2002) quoted in Tambouris, Macintosh, Wimmer, Vedel, Westholm, Lippa, Dalakioundou, Parisopoulos, Rose, Aicholzer, and Winkler (2007). The social media network best suited for the task of organizing the protesters was Facebook, "where information could be spread to thousands of people in an instant and then shared between friends" and this "dissemination was faster than leaflets, with the added benefit that those receiving the messages were already interested and trusted the source" (Idle and Nunns, 2011:20) as cited in Khamis and Vaughn (2011). Thus, Facebook is built on linkages between "friends". Shirky (2011) quoted in Khamis and El-Nawawy (2012) argues that the use of social media, such as logs, SMS, Facebook and Twitter "does not have a single preordained outcome." It depends on the political and social circumstances in each individual country. The potential of social media to initiate political change is dependent upon the activists' motivation to utilize the conditions in their societies in a way that makes change viable (Bennett, 2003).

2.2 GOOD GOVERNANCE: BETWEEN ONLINE INTERACTION AND PARTICIPATION

Almost from the moment the Internet became a mass medium, observers predicted that the Internet would change the relationship between citizens and the political information they consume. Hindman (2008) notes that numerous accounts have established that the Internet would function as a digital printing press enabling any motivated citizen to publish her views for a potential audience of millions. The architecture of the web would also instantly link citizens with diverse opinions to one another. This citizen-created hyperlinked content would not need to follow the biases, whims, and market demands which constrain traditional media. Without barriers to entry, the public sphere would become vastly broader and more representative (Hindman, 2008). From the outset, social media is primarily invented for social interaction purposes but it later becomes tool for political change, especially among the developing democracies of the world. 2011 Arab spring is a typical example of how social media can "overthrow" a leader, who refused to step aside through public sphere demands.

The Arabs usage of Facebook and Twitter to unseat President Mubarak has shown that, they think local and act global by confronting the power where the power holders are, in the global networks of power and in the communication sphere. Castells (2007) observes that the emergence of mass self-communication offers an extraordinary medium for social movements and rebellious individuals to build their autonomy and confront the institutions of society in their own terms and around their own projects. Naturally, social movements are not originated by technology, they use technology. Castells succinctly points out that technology is not simply a tool, it is a medium, and it is a social construction, with its own implications. It is imperative to emphasize that, Nigerians despite their different ethnic backgrounds used Facebook as form of self-mass communication during 2012 fuel subsidy removal protests across the country as Arabs did in their 2011 uprisings. Nigerians went to the extent of creating different groups in order to share their views and comments on the government's fuel subsidy removal decision; creating both interactive and participative mechanisms for Nigerians during the protests.

3.0 THEORY/CALCULATION

3.1 SOCIAL CATEGORIES PERSPECTIVE

This theory is derived from general sociology. The basic assumption of the theory is that members of a given social category (determined by age, sex, socio-economic status, etc) will seek out similar messages, which they will also respond to more or less similarly, other things being equal (Folarin, 2002). The clear implication of this theory within the context of the current study is that, Nigerians during 2012 Occupy Nigeria protests sought for information and happenings on the problems that

surround the fuel subsidy removal policy of the Federal government and that they responded to such messages based on their age, sex and socio-economic status through social media (especially Facebook).

3.2 SOCIAL INTERACTIVE THEORY

Social interaction is the process whereby the overt movements, covert deliberations, and basic physiology of one individual influence those of another, and vice versa. Less intense social interaction would, of course, have lower values for one or all of these basic dimensions of behaviour. Social interaction is the most elementary unit of sociological analysis... In the process of social interaction, people symbolically communicate meanings to the others involved. The others interpret those symbols and orient their responding action on the basis of their interpretation. In other words, actors engage in a process of mutual influence (Ritzer, 2008:368).

The effect of social interaction on participation is contingent on the amount of political discussion that occurs in social networks. Social interaction creates opportunities for individuals to gather information about politics that allow them to live beyond personal resource constraints, thereby supporting the political activity of many people (McClurg, 2003).

4. METHODS AND MATERIALS

Content analysis and survey research designs were employed for this study. Content analysis is a systematic method of research which allows a researcher to objectively and quantitatively extract relevant data from any form of communication contents. Fico, Lacy and Riffe (1998) quoted Holsti (1969) emphasize that content analysis is any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages. It is against this background that the method was chosen to analyse Facebook's contents of Nigerians during the protests. Suffice to say here that, the posts of the protest groups that had highest members were purposively content analysed. These groups include Occupy Nigeria Protest, Occupy Abuja/Nigeria, Nigerian Global Awakening Day Protest, Occupy Abuja/Nigeria GEJ and No Fuel Subsidy Removal. Specifically, the messages (posts) of selected protest groups during the protests were content analysed with a view to augment them with the findings of the survey method, while content categories and unit of analysis were the main research instruments used to generate relevant data. The contents of the selected posts constituted unit of analysis. Survey design was also used with the questionnaire as the main instrument of data collection to find out the view of Nigerians on the protests, especially those that participated in the protests (Occupy Nigeria). The population of this study is constituted by the people that participated in the

protests through online (networked public sphere) and offline (real public sphere) means.

A sample size of 300 respondents has been selected by the researcher. To carry out this study, the researcher purposively selected Kano, a Northern city in Nigeria because it is one of the cities where people actively involved in the protests. A simple random sampling technique was then used to select Kano Municipal Local Government and within this local government, copies of questionnaire were randomly administered to respondents who based on the researcher's assessment (determined by asking them), participated in the protests through real public sphere.

Content Categorization

For research question one of the study, the under listed and operationalized categories were used to extract relevant data from the Facebook's comments of Nigerians, especially those that joined one group or the other:

Socio-Economic Problems:

These cover problems that affect socio-economic well-being of Nigerians, especially masses, and discussed by online protesters as what government should address instead of removing subsidy on petroleum product. These challenges include corruption, favouritism in governance, cabals in oil industry, insecurity, high rate of poverty, lack of basic infrastructure and unemployment.

Political Problems:

These comprise poor policy implementation, lack of political accountability, lack of financial transparency, bad governance, international conspiracy (international financial institution and other countries such as United States and Britain involvement).

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 166 posts of the selected protest groups were sampled purposively. These issues gave rise to 333 political and socio-economic problems confronting the country discussed by the online protesters during the protests. For the survey aspect of the study, a total of 300 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents who participated in the protests. Question asked were designed to reflect categories of political and socio-economic problems considered by the respondents and the extent to which they were motivated by the political and socio-economic problems discussed by the online protesters. Specifically, the study set out to answer three research questions: What categories of socio-economic and political problems were considered and discussed by the online and offline protesters during the protests? Is there any correlation between socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online and considered by the offline protesters during the

protests? Do socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online protesters affect the level of participation of the offline protesters during the protests? The generated findings are discussed along these research questions.

Research Question 1: What categories of socio-economic and political problems were discussed by the online and considered by the offline protesters during the protests?

This research question was drafted purposely to reveal categories of socio-economic and political

problems confronting the country considered by the offline protesters before they posted on the walls of the protest groups (Occupy Nigeria Protest, Occupy Abuja/Nigeria, Nigerian Global Awakening Day Protest, Occupy Abuja/Nigeria GEJ and No Fuel Subsidy Removal) on *Facebook* and discussed by the online protesters. To reveal the categories, questionnaires were administered to the respondents while the *Facebook* contents of the protest groups were analysed.

Table 1: Respondents' Consideration of Political problems confronting the country while posting on the wall posts of the groups they belonged during the protests

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	198	66.0%
No	87	29.0%
Indifferent	15	5.0%
Total	300	100%

According to the data presented in Table 1, 198 (66.0%) of the respondents of the study indicate that they consider political problems confronting the country while posting on the wall posts of the group they belonged during the protests, while 15 (5.0%) of the respondents are indifferent. It can be inferred from this finding that majority of the respondents of this study consider political issues of the country during the protests. The respondents were further asked to indicate whether they consider socio-economic challenges of the country while posting on their groups' walls. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents' Consideration of socio-economic problems confronting the country while posting on the wall posts of the groups they belonged during the protests

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	212	70.7%
No	82	27.3%
Indifferent	6	2.0%
Total	300	100%

The data presented in Table 2 show that majority 212 (70.7%) of the respondents of the study considered socio-economic problems confronting the country during the protests before they posted on the walls of the protest groups on the *Facebook* they belonged, while 6(2.0%) were indifferent. It could be deduced from the findings that this would motivate the respondents to a certain extent in participating in the real world protests.

Table 3: Categories of political problems considered by the Respondents during the protests

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Poor policy implementation	12	4.0%
Lack of political accountability	4	1.3%
Bad governance	74	24.7%
Electoral malpractice	14	4.7%
Lack of political accountability, financial transparency and bad governance	4	1.3%
Poor policy implementation, bad governance and electoral malpractices	71	23.7%
Poor policy implementation, lack of political accountability and financial transparency	109	36.3%
Poor policy implementation, lack of political accountability, lack of financial transparency and bad governance	12	4%
Total	300	100%

According to the data presented in table 3, it could be inferred that majority of the respondents of the study chose poor policy implementation, lack of political accountability and financial transparency as categories of socio-economic issues or problems they posted mostly on the walls of the protests groups they belonged on *Facebook*

during the protests. It is also obvious from the table that the majority 74 (24.7%) and 71 (23.7%) of the respondents of the study considered bad governance and poor policy implementation, bad governance and electoral malpractices respectively during the protests. Suffice to say here that, the combination of problems chose by the respondents was arrived at through multiple response method adopted by the researcher.

Table 4: Categories of socio-economic problems considered by the Respondents during the protests

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Corruption in the country	27	9.0%
Favouritism in governance	2	0.7%
High rate of poverty	9	3.0%
Insecurity	50	16.7%
Corruption in the country, favouritism in governance and unemployment	5	1.7%
Corruption in the country, favouritism in governance, unemployment and insecurity	16	5.3%
Corruption in the country, favouritism in governance, cabals in oil industry and unemployment	53	17.7%
Favouritism in governance, cabals in oil industry and unemployment	19	6.3%
Corruption in the country and insecurity	62	20.7%
Corruption in the country, unemployment and insecurity	57	19.0%
Total	300	100%

Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents of the study considered corruption in the country, insecurity, unemployment and favouritism in governance during the protests. In their multiple responses, 62 respondents representing 20.7% indicated that they considered high rate of corruption in the country, while 57 (19.0%) and 53 (17.7%) chose combination of corruption in the country and insecurity, and corruption in the country, favouritism in governance, unemployment and insecurity as socio-economic issues or challenges facing the country (Nigeria).

Table 5: Categories of socio-economic and political problems discussed by online protesters

	Socio-economic issues							Political issues						
	Corruption in the country	Favouritism in governance	Cabals in oil industry	Unemployment	Insecurity	Lack of basic infrastructure	Total	Poor policy implementation	Lack of political accountability	Lack of financial transparency	Bad governance	Electoral malpractice	International financial institutions' interference (IMF)	Total
All the selected groups	72 (42.3)	16 (9.4)	25 (14.7)	12 (7.0)	19 (11.1)	26 (15.2)	170 (100)	8 (4.9)	23 (14.1)	34 (20.8)	83 (50.9)	7 (4.2)	8 (4.9)	163 (100)

Table 5 indicates categories of socio-economic and political issues or problems confronting the country and discussed by the online protesters during the protests as the main challenges that should be addressed by the Federal Government instead of removing subsidy on petroleum. It should be noted that the above data were generated through content analysis research design of the study. From the table, it is obvious that majority of the online protesters discussed corruption in the country, lack of basic infrastructure and cabals in the oil industry as predominant socio-economic problems that should be solved by the government. It is also clearly shown from the table that the protesters discussed bad governance, lack of financial transparency and political accountability as political problems facing the country that government at the federal level should address.

From the above analysis, it could be inferred that offline protesters consider both political and socio-economic problems facing the country while posting on the walls of the protest groups they belonged on *Facebook* during the protests. The data established that messages or information that focused on corruption in the country, favouritism in governance, unemployment and insecurity are mostly posted by offline protesters as main socio-economic problems confronting the country, while online protesters predominantly discussed corruption in the country and lack of basic infrastructure and cabals in the oil industry. Under the political problems category, offline protesters posted political issues such as bad governance, poor policy implementation and electoral malpractice while online protesters discussed bad governance, lack of financial transparency and political accountability. It should be noted that there is affinity between socio-economic and political problems posted and discussed by offline protesters during the protests. The researcher keenly noted that both offline and online protesters posted and discussed issues surrounding the fuel subsidy removal in the country based on their social and political perspectives.

The findings agree with Folarin's (2002) basic assumption of social categories perspective theory. The scholar notes that members of a given social category (determined by age, sex, socio-economic status, etc) will seek out similar messages, which they will also respond to more or less similarly, other things being equal. The findings also support McClurg's (2003) postulation on social interactive theory. McClurg points out that the effect of social

interaction on participation is contingent on the amount of political discussion that occurs in social networks. Social interaction creates opportunities for individuals to gather information about politics that allow them to live beyond personal resource constraints, thereby supporting the political activity of many people.

Research Question 2: Is there any correlation between socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online and considered by the offline protesters during the protests?

The research question was drafted to find out whether there is significant relationship between socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online protesters and considered by the offline protesters as the main problems that should be addressed by the government instead of removing fuel subsidy.

Table 6: Relationship between socio-economic and political problems Discussed by the online and Considered by the offline protesters

Protesters	Socio-economic Issues						Total	Political Issues						Total
	Corruption	Favouritism	Cabal	Unemployment	Insecurity	Lack of basic infrastructure		Poor policy implementation	Lack of political accountability	Lack of financial transparency	Bad governance	Electoral Malpractice	International financial institution's interference	
	C1*	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6		C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	
Online	72	16	25	12	19	26	170	8	23	34	83	7	8	163
Offline	62	2	53	57	50	0	224	109	11	4	74	14	0	212
Total	134	18	78	69	69	26	394	117	34	38	157	21	8	375

*case

Using Correlation to calculate the data presented in table 6, we derive

$$R = \frac{\sum(X-X)(Y-Y)}{\sqrt{\sum(X-X)^2} \sqrt{\sum(Y-Y)^2}}$$

$$R = \frac{7125.18}{\sqrt{6756.26} \sqrt{14256.68}}$$

$$R = \frac{7125.18}{9812.6641}$$

$$R = 0.73$$

Calculated value = 0.73

The calculated r value of 0.73 indicates that there is a positive and very strong relationship between the two variables. It means that the socio-economic and political problems considered by the offline protesters are in strong relationship with those discussed by the online protesters.

Hypothesis Testing:

In order to find whether 0.73 is significant or due to chance, the null hypothesis of no significant correlation has to be tested.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online and considered by the offline protesters during the protests.

H₁: There is significant relationship between socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online and considered by the offline protesters.

α is the criterion of significance

$$df = n-2 = 12- 10 = 10$$

The critical value: r = 0.576 (one-tail test)

This is significant at 0.05 level of significance. It is also lower than the calculated value

Therefore, we accept alternate hypothesis. We therefore conclude that there is a significant relationship between socio-economic and political problems considered by the offline protesters and discussed by the online protesters.

Research Question 3: Do socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online protesters affect the level of participation of the offline protesters during the protests?

This question is interested in establishing the extent to which socio-economic and political issues or problems discussed by the online protesters affect the level of participation of the offline protesters. The researcher formulated five indicators; very great extent, great extent, little extent, very little extent and no extent to find out the respondents opinion on how socio-economic and political issues or problems discussed on *Facebook* during *Occupy Nigeria* protests motivate them (offline protesters) to participate in the protests.

Table 7: The Extent to which socio-economic and political problems discussed by online protesters affect the participation level of the offline protesters during the protests

Response	Very Great Extent		Great Extent		Little Extent		Very Little Extent		No Extent		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Corruption in the country	228	76	71	23.7	-	-	-	-	1	0.3	300	100
Favouritism in governance	52	17.3	163	54.3	84	28.0	-	-	1	0.3	300	100
Cabals in oil industry	2	0.7	157	52.3	81	27.0	59	19.7	1	0.3	300	100
High rate of poverty	25	8.3	184	61.3	59	19.7	31	10.3	1	0.3	300	100
Lack of basic infrastructure	41	13.7	129	43.0	128	42.7	-	-	2	0.7	300	100
Unemployment	84	28.0	201	67.0	8	2.7	5	1.7	2	0.7	300	100
Poor policy implementation	16	5.3	138	46.0	132	44.0	14	4.7	-	-	300	100
Lack of political accountability	137	45.7	148	49.3	15	5.0	-	-	-	-	300	100
Lack of financial transparency	1	0.3	93	31.0	165	55.0	11	3.7	30	10	300	100
Bad governance	177	59.0	117	39.0	5	1.7	1	0.3	-	-	300	100
Electoral malpractice	19	6.3	79	26.3	171	57.0	17	5.7	14	4.7	300	100
International Monetary Fund (IMF) interference in the nation's economy	6	2.0	111	37.0	167	55.7	7	2.3	9	3	300	100

The data presented in Table 7 shows the extent to which socio-economic and political problems discussed by the online protesters during 2012 Occupy Nigeria protests influence offline protesters to actively involve in the real world protests (real public sphere). It clearly shows that the majority 228 (76%) of the respondents are motivated mostly by messages and information on corruption in the country discussed and posted by online protesters during the protests, while 177 (59.0%) of the respondents indicated that messages on bad governance encouraged them in participating in the protests. It is obvious from the table that the majority 184 (61.3%) of the respondents are motivated through messages and information on the high rate of poverty, while 148 (49.3%) and 138 (46.0%) of the respondents were motivated through messages and information on lack of political accountability and poor policy implementation discussed by online protesters. The majority 201 (67.0%) and 129 (43.0%) of the respondents are of the view that unemployment and lack of basic infrastructure discussed by online protesters motivated them. It should also be noted that, 157 (52.3%) of the respondents are also of the opinion that cabals in the oil industry mentioned and discussed on *Facebook* during the protests encouraged them to participate in the real world protests.

It could be inferred from the analysis that offline protesters are mostly motivated to participate in the real world protests as a result of socio-economic and political issues or problems discussed by online protesters. Thus, there is linkage between offline and online protests. Specifically, the findings revealed that to certain extent activities or discussions on networked public sphere affected real public sphere. The findings above agree with Ritzer's delineation (2008) in relation to social interactive theory. The scholar notes that social interaction is the process whereby the overt movements, covert deliberations, and basic physiology of one individual influence those of another, and vice versa. Less intense social interaction

would, of course, have lower values for one or all of these basic dimensions of behaviour. Social interaction is the most elementary unit of sociological analysis...in the process of social interaction; people symbolically communicate meanings to the others involved. The others interpret those symbols and orient their responding action on the basis of their interpretation. The findings are also in consonance with Hindman (2008) and Idle and Nunns' (2011) assertions. Hindman (2008) submits that the architecture of the web would instantly link citizens with diverse opinions to one another. This citizen-created hyperlinked content would not need to follow the biases, whims, and market demands which constrain traditional media. Without barriers to entry, the public sphere would become vastly broader and more representative. Idle and Nunns (2011) note that the social media network best suited for the task of organizing the protesters was Facebook, "where information could be spread to thousands of people in an instant and then shared between friends" and this "dissemination was faster than leaflets, with the added benefit that those receiving the messages were already interested and trusted the source".

6. Conclusion And Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the researcher can conclude that there is affinity between socio-economic problems considered by the offline protesters before posting on the protest groups they belonged and discussed by the online protesters during 2012 Occupy Nigeria protests. It is significant to note that *Facebook* is an important social media tool in mobilizing citizens against governments' policies, especially obnoxious ones. It is also a potent tool for effective public participation in governance. Based on the findings of this study, discussions and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made towards the effective participatory governance in Nigeria, particularly through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT):

1. Government at all levels should always allow their citizens to have input in any policy that will have direct or indirect impact on them.
2. Relevant government agencies, especially Ministry of Information and Communication need to organise sensitisation programmes for the users of social media tools. This will go in a long way of correcting negative impressions about the country being created by most of the posts and comments of the online protesters during the protests.
3. Policy formulators in the country should always analyse the pros and cons of any policy critically before recommending such to appropriate governments and should involve relevant stakeholders in the formulation processes.
4. Civil society groups in the country need to sensitize their followers on the usage of social media for effective participatory governance. Most importantly on their choice of words while interacting with others on the social network.
5. Citizens should also maximize the potentials of the medium by engaging it more to discuss socio-economic issues, not only when there is a national civil disturbance or nation-wide protest, but also regularly to ensure that leaders are put on their toes to perform up to citizens expectations.

References

1. Thornton, Public Sphere: Does Internet create Democracy? Accessed on www.zipworld.com.au, October 10th, 2012.
2. B. Etling, J. Kelly, R. Faris, J. Palfrey, Mapping the Arabic Blogosphere: Politics and Dissent Online, Sage Publication, 2010 Accessed on www.nms.sagepub.com, November 8th, 2012.
3. B. Folarin, *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text*, Revised Edition, Link Publications, Abeokuta, 2003.
4. Roberts, Beyond the 'Networked Public Sphere: Politics, Participation and Technics in Web 2.0, Accessed on www.fibrejournal.org/fc, October 12th, 2012.
5. Cleen Foundation, *Fuel Subsidy Crisis in Nigeria*, 2012 Accessed on www.cleenfoundation.blogspot.com, August 12th, 2012.
6. C.T. Salmon, L. Fernandez, L.A. Post, Mobilizing Public will across borders: Roles and Functions of communication processes and technologies, *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 25 (3&4) 159-170.
7. E. Tambouris, A. Macintosh, M. Wimmer, T. Vedel, H. Westholm, B. Lippa, E. Dalakioundou, K. Parisopoulos, J. Rose, G. Aicholzer, R. Winkler, Introducing eParticipation DEMO_net Booklet Series, No 1, Macedonia, University of Macedonia, 2007. F. G. Fico, S. Lacy, D. Riffe, *Analysing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey, 1998.
8. G. Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, 7th ed. McGraw-Hill Higher Education, New York, 2008.
9. Adibe, *Lessons from Nigeria's 'Pawpaw Revolution'*, 2012 *The Daily Trust* Accessed on www.dailytrust.com.ng, October 2nd, 2012.
10. Gracia, Social Media-Integration: Theory-Model, 2011, Accessed on www.socialmediatoday.com/isra-gracia, October 7th, 2012
11. International Association for Public Participation, <http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/CoreValues>, 2007, October 4th, 2012.
12. Odumakin, Fuel Subsidy Removal: Myths, Realities and the Way Forward, A Paper Presented at the Symposium Organised by Socialist Workers Union on Tuesday 21st, February, 2012 at Lecture Theatre, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
13. M. Castells, Communication, Power and Counterpower of the Networked Society, *International Journal of Communication* 1 (2007) Pp. 238-266.
14. M. El-Nawawy, S. Khamis, Political Activism 2.0: Comparing the Role of Social Media in Egypt's "Facebook Revolution" and Iran's "Twitter Uprising", *Online Journal of the Virtual Middle East Cybernet*, Vol 6 Issue 1, 2012 Accessed on www.
15. M. Hindman, What is the Online Public Sphere Good for? in: J. Turow, L. Tsui (Eds.), *The Hyperlinked Society*, University of Michigan Press, Michigan, 2008, Pp. 1-29.
16. R.A. Sanni, *Politics and Governance in Nigeria*, Laditi Sanni (Nig) Enterprises, Osogbo, 2001.
 - i. S. D. McClurg, Social Networks and Political Participation: The role of social interaction in Explaining Political Participation, *Political Research Quarterly*, 2003 Vol. 56(4) pp 448-465.
17. S. Khamis, K. Vaughn, Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: How Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance, Cairo, The American University, 2011.
18. United Nation, Human Development Report, 2009 Accessed on www.hrd.undp.org/hrd2009, October 6th, 2012.
19. U. Mejias, Social and the Networked Public Sphere, 2006 Accessed on www.blog.ulisesmejias.com, October 5th, 2012.
20. W.L. Bennett, New Media Power: The Internet and Global Activism, in: N. Couldry and J. Curran (Eds.), *Contesting Media Power: Alternative Media in a Networked World*, Rowman & Littlefield, Oxford, 2003, Pp 103-127.