

Chapter 7

Democracy, Habermasian Sphere, Social Media, and Youth Participation in Governance in Zimbabwe: Youth in Governance Processes in Africa

David Makwerere

Bindura University of Science Education, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

This chapter focused on the opportunities and challenges presented by social media in the democratization process in Zimbabwe. The chapter contends that youth participation on various social media podiums is very vibrant. The youth use social media to communicate issues affecting them and in most cases to express their displeasure with governing authorities. The types of the youth on social media can be categorized into three; the protestors, the defensive and the moderates. The protestors are those who simply use the platforms created by social media to vent their frustrations in a less constructive way. The defensive are those youths who believe in the status quo and are willing to defend the ruling elites at all costs. The moderates are those who believe that social media can be a platform for dialogue and constructive engagement.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-9388-1.ch007

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the World Wide Web has led to the birth of platforms of interaction that have drastically narrowed the gap between individuals in terms of communication (a concept that Marshall McLuhan has since termed “globalization”. This globalization has been largely aided by the birth of social media platforms such as the microblog known as Twitter, networking sites like Facebook, and Instagram, amongst others. Beyond shrinking social spaces, social media has created Habermasian spaces where important issues relating to governance and democratization can be discoursed upon. Participants in discourses over the World Wide Web have come to be known as netizens and their views have reached corridors of power to an extent where they are influential in government decision making. In the Zimbabwean context, the term “Twimbos” has since been invented to refer to Zimbabwean netizens active on Twitter. So great has been the adoption of such media that the sitting President of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa has created accounts on Facebook and Twitter where he has actively sought to engage with citizens and appraise them on developments in his government. This move can be seen to be in line with his pronouncements that he wants to be “a listening president” and that his government would be “an engaging government”. The youth demography of the population in Zimbabwe makes up 70% of the total citizenry and is the most active group when it comes to social media. Beyond the adoption of social media as a tool to police government by citizens, governments have themselves taken advantage of technology to create e-governance systems and Zimbabwe has been trying to adopt such (albeit with little success).

BACKGROUND

The advent of social media has presented ordinary citizens with an opportunity to effectively participate in governance processes. The youth have emerged as the greatest consumers of the many social media products that are on the market (Valenzuela 2013). There has always been a concern in many developing countries about the lack of youth participation (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; David, 2013; Yamamoto & Kushin, 2013) and social media has been viewed as a potential game changer. The 21st century has presented the world with many dynamic developments. The social media has arguably emerged as the most powerful social and technological force of the millennium. The social media presents the world with a vast array of cultural, social, technological and economic resources that are useful for the sustainable development of the global community. The internet is a powerful empowerment tool. However, social media also possess potential pitfalls that include the exclusion of minorities, cyberbullying, defamation of character and many other undesirable

19 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/democracy-habermasian-sphere-social-media-and-youth-participation-in-governance-in-zimbabwe/230218

Related Content

Political Violence and Internal Party Democracy in Kwara State

Olamide Temitayo Ojogbede (2023). *Insights and Explorations in Democracy, Political Unrest, and Propaganda in Elections* (pp. 213-226).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/political-violence-and-internal-party-democracy-in-kwara-state/326373

Advancing Muslim Modest Fashion Clothing: Impact on Consumer Behavior and Challenges for Young Female Muslim Influencers

Shamima Raihan Manzoor, Abdullah Al-Mahmud, Arnifa Asmawiand Shahida Raihan Manzoor (2024). *Journal of Comparative Asian Development* (pp. 1-26).

www.irma-international.org/article/advancing-muslim-modest-fashion-clothing/346369

China's Infrastructure Financing and the Role of Infrastructure in Awakening African Economies

Michael Mitchell Omoruyi Ehizuelen (2021). *Journal of Comparative Asian Development* (pp. 1-25).

www.irma-international.org/article/chinas-infrastructure-financing-and-the-role-of-infrastructure-in-awakening-african-economies/279131

Evaluating Gains of Friendly Policy Environment in India

Benjamin Chijioke Asogwa, Joseph Chinedu Umehand Simon Terhemba Penda (2014). *Globalization and Governance in the International Political Economy* (pp. 218-229).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/evaluating-gains-of-friendly-policy-environment-in-india/94331

China's Shifting Labour-Intensive Manufacturing Firms to Africa: A Particular Focus on Ethiopia and Rwanda

Ezihuelen Michael Mitchell Omoruyi (2021). *Journal of Comparative Asian Development* (pp. 1-36).

www.irma-international.org/article/chinas-shifting-labour-intensive-manufacturing-firms-to-africa/285550