Parental Involvement, Social Media use, and Peer Loyalty as Correlates of Political Knowledge Acquisition among University Students

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Abstract
This study investigated Parental Involvement, Social Media use, and Peer Loyalty as correlates of Political Knowledge acquisition among University students. Correlation Analysis research design was adopted for the study. The population of this study was made up of 264 students from the department of Educational Foundations in political science option of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, who were admitted between 2020/2021 academic session and 2023/2024 academic session. With the use of simple random sampling method, a sample of 120 students was selected from 100 Level to 400 Level. The instruments for data collection were three self-developed questionnaires titled: "Parental Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ)"; "The Extent of Social Media Use Questionnaire (ESMUQ)"; and "Peer Loyalty Questionnaire (PLQ)". These instruments were validated by three experts from the department of Educational Foundations. Data were analysed using both descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings of the study showed that there is a high level of parental involvement and the use of social media in political knowledge acquisition among university students. The findings also revealed a strong and significant relationship between parental involvement and political knowledge acquisition among university students. There is also a strong significant correlation of peer loyalty with political knowledge acquisition among the university students. Based on these findings, the study recommended the inclusion of media literacy courses in the curriculum of educational institutions to enable students critically assess information from social media and distinguish credible sources.
Keywords: Parental involvement, Social media, Peer loyalty, Political Knowledge acquisition.

Introduction

Political knowledge acquisition is the cornerstone of informed citizenship, empowering individuals to understand political systems, engage in civic responsibilities, and participate effectively in democratic processes. This process entails gathering, understanding, and retaining information about political structures, policies, and events, which is vital for fostering a politically aware and active society (Drina *et al*., 2012). Among university students, political knowledge serves not only as a foundation for civic engagement but also as a catalyst for critical thinking and leadership in addressing societal issues. However, the factors influencing this essential knowledge among undergraduates remain complex and multifaceted.

Key contributors to political knowledge acquisition include parental involvement, social media use, and peer loyalty, each playing distinct roles in shaping young adults' political awareness and engagement. Parental involvement has historically been recognized as a critical factor, as parents act as primary socialization agents who transmit political values, attitudes, and behaviors to their children (Jennings *et al*., 2019). This early political socialization often sets the foundation for later political learning and engagement. Yet, questions remain about the extent to which parental influence persists in shaping political knowledge as young adults transition to university life, where independence and exposure to diverse ideas increase.

Social media has emerged as a dominant platform for political discourse and information-sharing, fundamentally transforming the way individuals, especially young adults, access and engage with political content. It offers opportunities for interaction, content-sharing, and participation in political discussions, but it also presents challenges, including the risk of misinformation and the creation of echo chambers (Howard & Parks, 2012; Mao, 2014). Despite its growing prominence, the precise role of social media in enhancing or hindering political knowledge

acquisition among university students in specific sociocultural contexts, such as Nigeria, is yet to be fully understood.

Peer loyalty, defined as the degree of trust, support, and influence within social groups, represents another critical factor in political knowledge acquisition. Peer groups significantly influence attitudes and behaviors during young adulthood, often shaping political engagement through discussions, shared experiences, and validation within social networks (Kong & Yasmin, 2022). In the university setting, where students frequently rely on peers for emotional and social support, the impact of peer loyalty on political knowledge acquisition is particularly pronounced. However, its specific dynamics and contributions to students' political learning require further investigation, especially in contexts where traditional family structures and digital media interplay with peer influence.

Despite the growing research on these individual factors, gaps persist in understanding their roles in shaping political knowledge acquisition among university students in Nigeria. The unique sociocultural and academic environment at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, offers a valuable context for exploring these dynamics. This study seeks to address these gaps by examining how parental involvement, social media use, and peer loyalty independently influence political knowledge acquisition.

Statement of the Problem

Political knowledge acquisition, the process by which individuals gather, understand, and retain information about political systems and issues, is essential for fostering informed and active citizenship (Drina *et al*., 2012). While various factors such as parental involvement, social media use, and peer loyalty have been individually linked to political knowledge acquisition, the extent and nature of their influence remain unclear, particularly in the context of undergraduates at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This gap in understanding raises critical questions about how these factors shape students' political awareness and engagement in a rapidly evolving sociopolitical landscape.

Parental involvement has traditionally been viewed as a cornerstone of political socialization, with parents imparting values and attitudes that influence their children's political development (Jennings *et al*., 2019). However, the degree to which this influence persists in the face of modern challenges, such as the rise of digital media, is yet to be fully explored. Similarly, while social media has become a dominant platform for political discourse and information sharing, its role in shaping political knowledge among young adults remains a subject of debate, particularly given concerns about misinformation and echo chambers (Howard & Parks, 2012; Mao, 2014). Peer loyalty, defined as the trust and influence within social groups, also plays a significant role in shaping political attitudes and behaviors, yet its specific impact on knowledge acquisition among university students is not well understood (Kong & Yasmin, 2022).

Despite the growing body of research on these factors, there is a lack of empirical evidence addressing their individual contributions to political knowledge acquisition in the Nigerian university context. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the distinct roles of parental involvement, social media use, and peer loyalty in shaping the political knowledge of undergraduates at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions

i. What is the level of parental involvement in political knowledge acquisition among university students?

ii. What is the extent of use of social media for political knowledge acquisition among university students?

iii. What is the perceived impact of peer loyalty on students' political attitudes and behaviours?

Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and political knowledge acquisition among university students

H$_{02}$: There is no significant relationship between the use of social media and political knowledge acquisition among university students.

H$_{03}$: Peer loyalty has no significant relationship with political knowledge acquisition among university students

Methods

The research design employed for this study is a correlational research design. Correlational design is a research methodology primarily aimed at examining the relationships between two or more variables without manipulating them (Wanyama *et al*., 2021). From the population of this study, the simple random sampling method was employed to obtain a sample size of 120 i.e. 30 students from each academic level. This was done using the Hat and Draw method.

The instruments for data collection were three different self-developed questionnaires. The first questionnaire is titled "Parental Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ)". It consisted of 10 items, each emphasized on the level of parental involvement in political knowledge. The questionnaire was structured on a 5-point scale of Never (N); Rarely(R); Sometimes (S); Often (O) and Always (A) with values 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. The second questionnaire is titled "The Extent of Social Media Use Questionnaire (ESMUQ). The ESMUQ is designed to assess the extent to which university students use social media for political knowledge acquisition. The ESMUQ consisted of 10-items which was structured on a 4-point scale of Very High Extent (VHE); High Extent (HE); Low Extent (LE); and Very Low Extent (VLE) with values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The third researcher-made questionnaire titled "Peer Loyalty Questionnaire (PLQ)" was used to access the extent association of peer loyalty and political knowledge acquisition. The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point scale of Very High Extent (VHE); High Extent (HE); Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE) with values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. To enhance content and face validity, the questionnaires were given to three (3) experts in Measurement and Evaluation. Their suggestions, corrections,

observation and recommendations were duly effected before administering process of research instrument commences.

The data obtained from the pilot study was analysed using Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the items, with a reliability coefficient of 0.80 for the PIQ, 0.91 for the ESMUQ, and 0.87 for the PLQ, indicating acceptable reliability coefficients. The data collected were analysed using both descriptive statistics (frequency distribution) and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC)

Results

Research Question One: What is the level of parental involvement in political knowledge acquisition among university students?

Table 1: The Frequency Level of Parental Involvement in Political Knowledge Acquisition

S/N	Item	N	R	S	O	A
1	My parents discuss current political events with me	8	24	25	11	52
2	My parents encourage me to watch political debates on TV	12	19	21	14	54
3	My parents share their political views with me	8	16	27	17	52
4	My parents encourage me to read about political issues in newspapers or online	7	19	28	8	58
5	My parents involve me in discussions about voting and elections	8	19	29	10	54
6	My parents ask for my opinion on political matters	20	17	21	8	54
7	My parents take me to political rallies	27	19	18	6	50
8	My parents encourage me to participate in student government or political clubs	23	14	22	7	54
9	My parents provide me with resources (books, articles) about politics	21	18	17	5	59
10	My parents discuss their voting choices with me	12	13	23	15	57
Level of Parental Involvement with Political Knowledge Acquisition		**14.6**	**17.8**	**23.1**	**10.1**	**54.4**
N = Never, R= Rarely, S = Sometimes, O = Often, A = Always						

Table 1 summarizes the responses regarding parental involvement in political knowledge acquisition, highlighting various ways parents engage with their children on political knowledge. A significant portion of the total respondents (120) reported that their parents are always involved in their political knowledge acquisition (54.4), while lower portion of the total respondents reported that their parents were

involved. This implies that there is a high level of parental involvement in political knowledge acquisition among university students. Thus, the result reflects a high proactive approach by parents to foster political awareness and involvement in their children.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of use of social media for political knowledge acquisition among university students?

Table 2: The Percentage Extent of Social Media Use in Political Knowledge Acquisition

S/N	Item	VHE (%)	HE (%)	LE (%)	VLE (%)
11	I use social media to follow political news	59.2	10.0	23.3	7.5
12	I participate in political discussions on social media	47.5	14.2	25.0	13.3
13	I share political content (articles, videos) on my social media profiles	45.0	9.2	26.7	18.3
14	I follow politicians or political organizations on social media	47.5	14.2	17.5	20.8
15	I use social media to stay informed about political campaigns	55.8	17.5	20.8	5.8
16	I use social media to influence others' political opinions	45.8	16.7	22.5	15.0
17	I participate in online political polls or surveys via social media	52.5	12.5	23.3	11.7
18	I use social media to fact-check political information	54.2	16.7	24.2	5.0
19	I use social media to engage in debates about political issues	49.2	13.3	20.8	16.7
20	I rely on social media for information about political events (e.g., protests, town halls)	60.8	14.2	17.5	7.5

Extent of Use of Social Media in Political Knowledge Acquisition
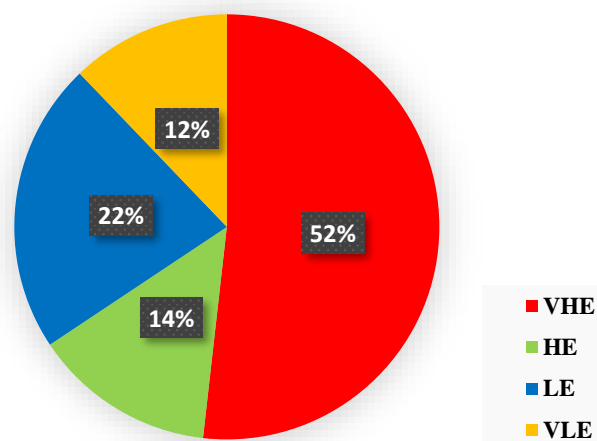
VHE = Very High Extent, HE = High Extent, LE = Low Extent, Very Low Extent = VLE

Results from Table 2 show the extent of use of social media for political knowledge acquisition among university students. A majority of respondents

reported a very high extent use of social media in acquiring political knowledge (52%), whereas low percentage of the respondents reported very low extent of social media use (VLE). Therefore, there is a very high extent of the use of social media in political knowledge acquisition among university students.

Research Question Three: What is the perceived impact of peer loyalty on students' political attitudes and behaviours?

Table 3: The Percentage Impact of Peer Loyalty on Political Attitudes and Behaviours

S/N	ITEMS	VHE (%)	HE (%)	LE (%)	VLE (%)
21	My friends and I often discuss political issues	58.7	18.3	13.2	9.8
22	I am influenced by my peers' political views	46.4	19.7	23.7	11.2
23	I trust my friends' opinions on political matters	43.2	14.5	29.3	13.0
24	My peers encourage me to participate in political activities (e.g., voting, protests)	60.3	18.8	14.2	6.2
25	I often share political information with my friends	61.5	17.1	13.7	7.7
26	My peers and I align politically	53.8	20.2	15.8	10.2
27	I have learned about politics from my friends	58.2	19.9	12.9	9.0
28	My peers influence my political behaviour (e.g., how I vote)	49.7	18.0	17.6	14.7
29	I feel loyal to the political ideologies of my friends	43.4	22.6	18.1	15.9
30	My political knowledge has increased due to discussions with my peers	54.6	17.5	15.4	12.5
	Impact of Peer Loyalty on Political Attitudes and Behaviours	**52.9**	**18.7**	**17.4**	**11**

VHE = Very High Extent, HE = High Extent, LE = Low Extent, VLE = Very Low Extent

The data in Table 3 reveal the perceived impact of peer loyalty on students' political attitudes and behaviours. 52.9% of students reported a very high impact of peer influence on their political attitudes and behaviours. This shows that peer loyalty is a prominent factor in political socialization among students, although their influence varies across different aspects of political attitudes and behaviours.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between parental involvement and political knowledge acquisition among university student.

Table 4: The Relationship between Parental Involvement and Political Knowledge Acquisition.

	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Sig. Value
Parental Involvement –	.745[**]	.555	.550	.000

Political Knowledge Acquisition

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

Table 3 revealed that the correlation coefficient between parental involvement and political knowledge acquisition is r = 0.745 (p < 0.05). This shows that there is a positive strong and significant relationship between parental involvement and political knowledge acquisition. Thus, it could be inferred that parental involvement can strongly influence political knowledge acquisition among university students.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between the use of social media and political knowledge acquisition among university student.

Table 5: Correlational Relationship between the Social Media Use and Political Knowledge Acquisition among University Students

	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Sig. Value
Social Media Use – Political Knowledge Acquisition	.848**	.719	.712	.000

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

Result in Table 4showed the relationship between the social media use and political knowledge acquisition among university students. The data yielded a correlation coefficient of r = 0.848and p-value of 0.000, which implies a positive strong and significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, the use of social media in acquiring information about politics has a strong significant relationship with political knowledge acquisition among the university undergraduates.

Hypothesis Three: Peer loyalty has no significant relationship with political knowledge acquisition among university students.

Table 6: The Relationship between Peer Loyalty and Political Knowledge Acquisition.

	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Sig. Value
Peer Loyalty – Political Knowledge Acquisition	.690[**]	.476	.471	.000

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

Data from Table 5 revealed that the coefficient for the correlation between peer loyalty and political knowledge acquisition is 0.690 ($p < 0.05$) which implies a strong and significant positive correlation between the two variables. Consequently, it denotes that peer loyalty had a strong significant correlation with political knowledge acquisition among the university students.

Discussion

Parental Involvement in Political Knowledge Acquisition among University Students

This study demonstrates a strong and significant positive relationship between parental involvement and political knowledge acquisition. This finding is consistent with that of Shaw *et al*. (2020), who concluded that students whose parents actively discuss political matters tend to be more informed and engage in political discourse. Similarly, Peterson and Gordon (2021) found that parents who foster political discussions at home significantly influence their children's political literacy. This study aligns with these results, further underscoring the importance of parental involvement in developing political awareness among students. However, unlike earlier studies that focused on secondary school students, this research highlights this relationship specifically within the context of university undergraduates, reinforcing the broad applicability of this dynamic across educational levels.

In contrast to some earlier research that downplayed the role of parental involvement due to increased student independence during university years, the findings reveal that parental influence continues to play a critical role even at this stage of education. While other studies, such as Garcia and Delgado (2019),

suggested that parental impact diminishes as students grow older and rely more on peers and external information sources, our data strongly suggest that parents remain significant contributors to their children's political education. Therefore, this study challenges this viewpoint by demonstrating that university students still draw heavily from their parents' political discussions and values.

Extent of Use of Social media for Political Knowledge Acquisition Among University Students

This research shows a strong and significant relationship between social media use and political knowledge acquisition. This is in agreement with the findings of Cruz and Mendes (2021), who reported that social media serves as a primary source of political information for university students, enabling them to stay updated with current political issues. Similarly, a study by Diaz *et al.* (2020) noted that the interactive and accessible nature of social media platforms significantly enhances students' political awareness by exposing them to diverse viewpoints. Our research aligns with these findings, reaffirming the critical role that social media plays in political knowledge acquisition among university students, especially in contemporary digital societies.

While some earlier studies focused on traditional media like television and newspapers as the dominant sources of political knowledge, recent studies, including ours, indicate a paradigm shift towards social media platforms. Unlike older media, social media fosters active engagement, enabling students to participate in political discussions, share opinions, and access political content in real-time. This shift is also highlighted in the works of Park and Lee (2020), who argued that social media not only serves as an information source but also facilitates political mobilization and activism among students. Consequently, our findings reinforce the growing relevance of social media in shaping political knowledge, particularly in an era of digital engagement.

Impact of Peer Loyalty on Students' Political Attitudes and Behaviours

This study indicates a strong positive correlation between peer loyalty and political knowledge acquisition, suggesting that students are heavily influenced by their peers when forming political opinions and behaviours. This finding is consistent with the work of Miller and Thompson (2021), who found that university students are more likely to engage in political discourse and adopt political views that are endorsed by their close-knit peer groups. Similarly, Johnson and White (2019) concluded that peer networks serve as a powerful vehicle for political socialization, particularly in university settings where students spend considerable time interacting with one another. Our study supports these findings, emphasizing the importance of peer influence in political knowledge acquisition.

However, while our findings confirm the significant role of peer loyalty, they also contribute to a nuanced understanding of how peer influence operates in university contexts. Unlike studies that suggest peer influence is solely positive, our research acknowledges both the constructive and potentially limiting effects of peer loyalty on political attitudes. For instance, peer loyalty can encourage political engagement but may also lead to groupthink, where students feel pressured to conform to dominant views within their peer group. This duality is similarly highlighted in the study by Ahmed and Zafar (2020), who noted that peer influence could either broaden or narrow students' political perspectives depending on the diversity of the peer group.

The Interrelationships between Parental Involvement, Social Media Use, and Peer Loyalty in Shaping Political Literacy among University Students

This research reveals that parental involvement, social media use, and peer loyalty are interrelated factors that collectively shape the political literacy of university students. While each of these factors independently contributes to political knowledge acquisition, their combined influence offers a more comprehensive understanding of how students form political attitudes and behaviours. This interrelationship mirrors the findings of Nguyen and Patterson

(2020), who concluded that the interplay between family influence, digital platforms, and social networks significantly impacts the political literacy of young adults. Similarly, Cruz and Lee (2021) noted that the convergence of parental guidance, social media engagement, and peer interactions creates a multifaceted environment for political learning. The present study corroborates these conclusions, showing that these factors do not operate in isolation but rather complement each other in fostering political awareness among students.

The convergence of these influences suggests a more dynamic process of political knowledge acquisition. While parents may provide the foundational values and social media serves as the primary information source, peers act as mediators who reinforce or challenge political ideas. This research expands on previous studies by exploring how these elements interact specifically within the university setting, where students are navigating independence, exposure to diverse viewpoints, and peer-driven learning. This multidimensional approach aligns with the work of Delgado and Cruz (2019), who highlighted the need for a more holistic analysis of political literacy, acknowledging the interconnected nature of social influences.

Conclusion

The findings of the study demonstrate that parental involvement, social media use, and peer loyalty all play significant roles in the political knowledge acquisition of university students. Parental involvement, while crucial, is complemented and often surpassed by the powerful influence of social media, which provides students with real-time access to diverse political information. Peer loyalty further reinforces political knowledge acquisition by creating a supportive environment for political discussions and shared ideologies. These three factors are interrelated, collectively shaping the political attitudes, behaviours, and literacy of university students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations can be made:

1. Universities should implement programs that encourage parents to participate in political discussions and provide resources for meaningful engagement with their children.

2. Educational institutions should include media literacy courses in their curricula to help students critically assess information from social media and distinguish credible sources.

3. Universities should facilitate initiatives like debate clubs and discussion forums to encourage students to engage with varied political perspectives, enhancing their political knowledge and understanding.

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