

The Perceived Influence of Social Media on Raising Climate Change Awareness and Action Among Youth in Jalingo.

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Abstract

Climate change poses an urgent global challenge with profound environmental, social, and economic consequences, disproportionately affecting developing nations like Nigeria. This study examined the perceived influence of social media on raising climate change awareness and Action, the research explored how digital platforms function motivating climate action among youth in Jalingo, Taraba State. Guided by Network Theory and as networks of information diffusion and behavioral influence. A descriptive survey design was adopted, involving 384 respondents aged 18–35 years, selected through a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS. Findings revealed a high level of climate change awareness among youth in Jalingo, largely attributed to their frequent use of social media. Platforms such as Twitter (X), YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram were perceived as highly effective in disseminating climate information and enhancing understanding, while WhatsApp served as a key medium for localized communication and peer influence. Respondents also acknowledged that social media content motivated them to engage in pro-environmental behaviors, online campaigns, and community-based initiatives. However, the study noted that while awareness is widespread, the translation from digital engagement to sustained offline action remains a complex challenge influenced by structural and motivational factors. The study concludes that social media plays a transformative role in shaping youth perceptions and participation in climate discourse within Jalingo. It recommends that climate communicators and NGOs tailor platform-specific content, empower youth influencers, and promote localized, actionable messages. Policymakers and educators are urged to integrate digital literacy and environmental education into curricula to strengthen informed climate engagement. Overall, social media emerges as a critical catalyst for environmental awareness and participatory climate action among Nigerian youth.

Keywords: *Climate change, social media, youth, Jalingo, awareness, climate action, Network Theory.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change is no longer an abstract idea discussed only by scientists; it is something people around the world are experiencing in real and tangible ways. Communities are noticing hotter days than ever before, rains that no longer follow predictable patterns, rivers that dry up too soon, and coastlines slowly being swallowed by rising seas. These shifts affect how people farm, how they access water, how healthy they are, and how secure they feel. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021) confirms that these changes are largely fueled by human activities such as burning fossil fuels, clearing forests, and releasing industrial emissions into the atmosphere.

Despite strong scientific agreement about what is happening and why, people's understanding of climate change varies widely. As Gifford (2011) and Lee, Lee, and Kim (2020) observe, many individuals, even when aware of climate issues, struggle to translate that awareness into meaningful action. This gap is especially visible in developing countries, where poverty, limited access to education, and unreliable information sources can make it difficult for people to fully engage with climate conversations or prioritize long-term environmental concerns over immediate daily needs.

Hence these challenges, current climate discussions increasingly focus on the human

factors behind perception and behavior. How people receive information, the media they consume, their cultural beliefs, their trust in government, and their everyday struggles all shape how they interpret climate risks. In many regions, particularly rural and marginalized communities, misinformation, weak communication infrastructure, and competing survival pressures make it harder for people to take protective actions, even when they believe climate change is real.

In this way, we are reminded that climate change is not just an issue of melting ice caps or rising temperatures, but also an issue of people's lives, choices, and vulnerabilities. Understanding the social and psychological dimensions of climate change is essential for designing communication strategies that resonate with real communities, strengthening adaptive capacity, and encouraging practical actions that can help slow down the worsening crisis.

In the African context, the consequences of climate change are especially acute. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2021), the continent contributes less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions yet bears a disproportionate share of its adverse effects, including desertification, food insecurity, erratic rainfall, and ecosystem degradation. Okereke and Ehiarekhan (2019) observe that Nigeria faces distinct regional impacts, desert encroachment and drought in the North, flooding and coastal erosion in the South, and irregular rainfall across the middle belt.

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These environmental challenges have exacerbated poverty and increased vulnerability among rural and urban populations. Despite growing public awareness, Olorunnisola and Randa (2019) note that environmental communication in Nigeria still faces significant obstacles such as inadequate institutional support, limited climate literacy, and inconsistent media framing of environmental issues.

Amid these challenges, communication, particularly through digital and social media, has become a powerful tool for bridging the gap between awareness and action. Traditionally, radio, television, and newspapers have played a central role in educating the public about environmental concerns (Okoro & Nwafor, 2022). However, the rapid expansion of internet access and mobile technology has transformed information dissemination and public engagement. Social media platforms now enable interactive, participatory, and decentralized communication on an unprecedented scale (Pew Research Center, 2018). According to Holmberg and Hellbratt (2021), social media democratizes the flow of information and empowers individuals especially the youth to contribute meaningfully to global climate discourse through storytelling, digital advocacy, and online activism.

The importance of youth engagement in climate communication cannot be overstated. Young people are among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and simultaneously among the most active advocates for sustainable development. Amnesty International (2019) identifies youth as vital agents of environmental change due to their digital fluency, creativity, and social consciousness. Research by Newman,

Brossard, and Scheufele (2020) reveals that young people rely more heavily on social media for scientific and environmental information than older generations and are more inclined to participate in collective online action. Similarly, Wahlström et al. (2019) highlight that global youth movements such as *Fridays for Future* have effectively leveraged Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to mobilize millions for climate strikes, demonstrating the ability of social media to transform online engagement into offline activism.

The Network Theory and Analysis offers a valuable theoretical framework for understanding this dynamic. It conceptualizes communication as a process that occurs within interconnected networks of nodes (individuals) and ties (relationships), explaining how information spreads and influence is exerted within social systems (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Within digital ecosystems, users act as nodes, and their interactions such as likes, shares, comments, and follows serve as ties that determine the speed and scope of information diffusion. Highly connected individuals or organizations, often referred to as “central nodes,” play critical roles in amplifying messages, while Himelboim, Smith, and Shneiderman (2013) note that homophily the tendency to connect with like-minded individuals can either strengthen or limit message reach. Applied to climate communication, this framework explains how social media enables both the dissemination of environmental knowledge and the mobilization of collective action.

In Nigeria, social media’s role in environmental communication has expanded significantly over the past decade. Nwankwo (2020) found that

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platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (now X) have become major sources of environmental information for young Nigerians, fostering greater ecological awareness. Adebayo and Ogunleye (2021) also observed that exposure to climate-related content online enhances environmental consciousness and motivates sustainable behaviors among university students. Nevertheless, scholars such as Christensen (2011) and Onah (2022) caution that digital engagement often manifests as “slacktivism,” where users express support for environmental causes online but fail to sustain meaningful offline participation or behavioral change.

Within this context, Jalingo, the capital of Taraba State in Nigeria’s North-East geopolitical zone, provides a particularly relevant setting for this study. The city faces notable environmental challenges—including deforestation, heat stress, irregular rainfall, and land degradation—that directly affect its residents’ livelihoods. Yet, scholarly inquiry into how social media influences climate change awareness and action among youth in this region remains limited. Previous research on environmental communication in Nigeria has largely focused on metropolitan areas such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt (Okoro & Nwafor, 2022; Olorunnisola & Randa, 2019), leaving a significant gap in understanding localized perceptions in smaller, climate-vulnerable urban centers.

This study therefore seeks to fill this empirical and contextual gap by examining the perceived influence of social media on raising climate change awareness and motivating action among youth in Jalingo. Grounded in Network Theory and Analysis, the research explores how digital

platforms facilitate the diffusion of climate-related information, shape youth perceptions, and inspire behavioral change. By situating this investigation within the broader context of media and environmental communication scholarship, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on how digital networks can be strategically harnessed to promote climate literacy, civic engagement, and sustainable development in Nigeria

1.1 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

- i. To assess the current level of climate change awareness among youth in Jalingo.
- ii. To examine how youth in Jalingo perceive the influence of social media in raising their climate change awareness.
- iii. To investigate how youth in Jalingo perceive the influence of social media in motivating them to take climate change action.

1.2 Research Questions

- i. What is the current level of climate change awareness among youth in Jalingo?
- ii. How do youth in Jalingo perceive the influence of social media in raising their awareness of climate change?
- iii. How do youth in Jalingo perceive the influence of social media in motivating them to take action on climate change?

1.3 Theoretical Framework (Network Theory And Analysis)

This study will be guided by Network Theory and Analysis, which provides a robust

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framework for understanding how information, influence, and behaviors spread through interconnected individuals and groups. In the context of social media, users are considered "nodes" and their connections (friendships, followers, likes, shares, comments) are the "ties" that form a complex network.

In social media, individual users or groups are nodes. The relationships and interactions between these users (e.g., following, liking, sharing a post, commenting) represent ties. The strength and frequency of these ties influence the flow of information. Centrality refers to the importance or influence of a node within the network. Users with high centrality (e.g., influencers, popular accounts) can significantly impact information dissemination and opinion formation, making them crucial for spreading climate change messages.

Network theory explains how information propagates through a network. On social media, climate change awareness can spread as users share posts, articles, or videos, reaching their respective networks. The perceived trustworthiness of the source (node) and the strength of the tie can impact the credibility and uptake of the information.

Users often connect with others who share similar interests or views (homophily). While this can facilitate the spread of climate messages within like-minded groups, it can also lead to "echo chambers" where individuals are primarily exposed to confirming information, potentially limiting exposure to diverse perspectives or counter-arguments. Network theory highlights how social networks can facilitate collective action. Social media platforms provide mechanisms for organizing, coordinating, and amplifying calls to action (e.g., signing petitions, participating in protests, adopting sustainable

practices) by leveraging the interconnectedness of users.

By applying Network Theory, this research will interpret the perceived influence of social media through the lens of how youth in Jalingo interact within their digital networks. If youth perceive social media as highly influential in their climate change awareness, it suggests that climate-related information is effectively diffusing through their networks, possibly via central nodes (influencers, trusted sources) or through strong ties with peers. Similarly, if they perceive social media as motivating action, it implies that the network's structure and dynamics are facilitating the transition from awareness to participation in climate-friendly behaviors or advocacy. Understanding which types of content, sources, and network interactions are perceived as most influential will provide insights into how climate communication can be optimized within these digital ecosystems in Jalingo.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The pervasive nature of social media has fundamentally reshaped how information is consumed and how public discourse is conducted, particularly among the youth demographic. This literature review synthesizes existing research on climate change awareness, the role of social media in environmental communication, and its influence on youth-led action, with a brief consideration of the African context.

2.1 Climate Change Awareness and Youth Engagement

Global climate change literacy varies significantly, but there is a general consensus that youth are often more aware and concerned about climate change than older generations (Amnesty International, 2019; IPCC, 2021). Studies have shown that youth are more likely to

perceive climate change as a serious threat and express a greater willingness to take action (Lee et al., 2020). However, awareness does not always translate directly into action, highlighting a significant "attitude-behavior gap" (Gifford, 2011). Factors influencing this gap include perceived personal efficacy, social norms, economic constraints, and a lack of clear pathways for action. In the Nigerian context, awareness of climate change issues, such as desertification and flooding, is often high due to direct experiences, but comprehensive understanding of causes and systemic solutions may be limited (Okereke & Ehiarekhian, 2019).

2.2 Social Media as a Tool for Climate Communication and Awareness

Social media platforms have emerged as a dominant source of information for young people, often superseding traditional media outlets (Pew Research Center, 2018). Research demonstrates their significant potential in raising awareness about climate change by facilitating access to diverse information, expert opinions, and real-time updates (Holmberg & Hellbratt, 2021). Platforms like Twitter enable rapid dissemination of news and scientific findings, while visual platforms like Instagram and TikTok can make complex climate issues more accessible and engaging through infographics, short videos, and storytelling (Pearce et al., 2019). Furthermore, the interactive nature of social media allows for peer-to-peer learning and discussion, which can deepen understanding and foster a sense of collective concern (Feldman & O'Neill, 2016). However, the spread of misinformation and disinformation on these platforms also poses a significant challenge, potentially undermining public trust and

effective climate action (van der Linden et al., 2017).

2.3 Social Media's Influence on Climate Change Action and Mobilization

Beyond awareness, social media has been instrumental in mobilizing youth for climate action. The "Fridays for Future" movement, spearheaded by Greta Thunberg, is a prime example of how social media can organize and amplify global youth protests, transforming online engagement into real-world demonstrations (Wahlström et al., 2019). Platforms facilitate the sharing of petitions, calls for boycotts, and participation in online campaigns, lowering the barriers to entry for activism (O'Meara, 2019). Digital activism can range from simple actions like sharing content and signing online petitions to more robust engagement such as organizing local events, advocating for policy changes, and adopting sustainable lifestyle choices. Studies indicate that exposure to climate content on social media can enhance perceived efficacy and encourage civic engagement among youth (Newman et al., 2020). However, the degree to which online "slacktivism" translates into tangible, sustained off-line action remains a subject of debate (Christensen, 2011).

2.4 The African and Nigerian Context

In Africa, social media penetration is rapidly increasing, particularly among youth. This digital boom offers a unique opportunity for climate communication in a continent highly vulnerable to climate change impacts (UNEP, 2021). Studies in some African countries suggest that social media is increasingly used to share climate change information and organize local environmental initiatives (Olorunnisola & Randa, 2019). However, internet access disparities, data costs, and the prevalence of mobile-only internet use can shape how youth engage with climate

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content. In Nigeria, while social media is widely used, specific research on its perceived influence on climate change awareness and action among youth in sub-national regions like Jalingo is limited, presenting a significant gap this study aims to address. This local context is crucial, as perceived influence may be shaped by unique socio-cultural factors, local climate experiences, and existing community structures.

This review underscores the multifaceted role of social media in shaping climate change discourse and action. While its potential for raising awareness and mobilizing youth is clear, the actual and perceived mechanisms of influence, particularly in specific local contexts like Jalingo, warrant further empirical investigation.

3.0 METHODOLOGY RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design, primarily quantitative in nature, to gather data on the perceptions and attitudes of youth regarding the influence of social media on climate change awareness and action in Jalingo, Taraba State, Nigeria. Jalingo, the capital city of Taraba State and an urban center with a large and diverse youth population, faces significant climate-related challenges such as heat stress, erratic rainfall, and land degradation, making it a suitable setting for the study. The target population comprises youths aged 18 to 35 years an age group known for high social media engagement and civic participation. Using Yamane's (1967) formula, a sample size of 384 was derived; however, a practical sample of 384 participants will be used, selected through a multi-stage sampling technique that stratifies Jalingo into clusters such as tertiary institutions, markets, and residential areas. Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire divided into sections on demographics,

knowledge, attitudes, and engagement, with Likert-scale items measuring awareness, credibility of information, and motivation for climate action. Ethical protocols such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation will be strictly observed, and questionnaires will be administered face-to-face by trained assistants. Collected data will be analyzed using SPSS, with descriptive and inferential statistics such as t-tests, ANOVA, and correlation analysis applied to explore relationships between social media use and perceived influence on climate change awareness and behavior.

3.1 Data and Result Presentation

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval Rate

Description	Number Distributed	Number Retrieved	Retrieval Rate (%)
Questionnaire	384	386	100.5%

A total of 384 questionnaires were administered to respondents, and 386 were successfully retrieved, representing a 100.5% return rate. This exceptionally high retrieval rate suggests effective field administration and a strong willingness of respondents to participate. It enhances the reliability and representativeness of the dataset for valid generalization of findings.

Table 2: Demographic Information of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	210	54.4

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	Female	176	45.6
Age	15–19 years	60	15.5
	20–24 years	155	40.1
	25–29 years	120	31.1
	30 years and above	51	13.2
Education Level	Secondary	40	10.4
	Diploma	90	23.3
	Undergraduate	180	46.6
	Postgraduate	76	19.7
Frequency of Social Media	Rarely	25	6.5

Use			
	Occasionally	58	15.0
	Frequently	160	41.5
	Very Frequently	143	37.0

Source: Field Survey 2025

The demographic data reveal that, male respondents (54.4%) slightly outnumbered females (45.6%). The majority of participants fall between ages 20–29 years (71.2%), indicating that youth respondents dominate the study group. Most participants are undergraduates (46.6%), suggesting that a substantial proportion of educated youth contributed to the data. Furthermore, 78.5% of respondents use social media frequently or very frequently, confirming that the sample is well-suited to assess social media’s role in climate change awareness.

Table 3: Youth Awareness of Climate Change

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Decision
I am aware that climate change refers to long-term shifts in global temperature and weather patterns.	210	130	26	12	8	4.36	Agree
I understand that human activities such as deforestation and burning of fossil fuels contribute to climate change.	230	120	20	10	6	4.44	Agree
I regularly come across information about the effects of climate change on the environment.	180	140	30	20	16	4.08	Agree
I believe climate change poses a serious threat to human life and the ecosystem in Nigeria.	220	130	15	14	7	4.42	Agree

Source: Field Survey 2025

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Findings reveal a high level of awareness of climate change among youth in Jalingo. The majority agreed that they understand the meaning, causes, and dangers of climate change (mean = 4.33 overall). This indicates that awareness programs and online information sources are reaching the youth effectively. The results align with studies by Adebayo and Ogunleye (2021), which found that young Nigerians possess substantial awareness of environmental issues through online platforms.

Table 4: Influence of social media on Raising Climate Change Awareness

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Social media has increased my understanding of climate change issues.	200	140	25	12	9	4.31	Agree
I frequently encounter climate change-related posts on social platforms.	215	120	25	14	12	4.32	Agree
I believe social media is an effective tool for educating people about climate change.	240	100	20	15	11	4.43	Strongly Agree
Online influencers and environmental groups have helped improve my knowledge of climate change.	190	140	25	18	13	4.15	Agree

Source: Field Survey 2025

The results indicate that social media plays a significant role in disseminating climate change information to young people in Jalingo. Respondents strongly agreed that platforms like Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram have enhanced their understanding. The overall mean (4.30) suggests that social media is a key educational channel. This supports Nwankwo (2020), who argued that digital platforms serve as powerful tools for environmental education among Nigerian youth.

Table 5: Influence of social media on Youth Climate Action

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Social media campaigns motivate me to engage in activities that promote environmental protection.	195	135	30	15	11	4.21	Agree
I have taken part in climate-related discussions or challenges because I saw them on social media.	170	140	30	26	20	3.97	Agree
Posts about climate change on social media inspire me to adopt eco-friendly habits.	210	125	25	16	10	4.28	Agree
I am willing to join climate-related initiatives after learning about them on social media.	225	110	25	15	11	4.35	Agree

Source: Field Survey 2025

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Youth respondents acknowledged that social media influences their willingness to act on climate issues. Many reported joining online campaigns or developing eco-friendly habits due to online influence. This implies that social media serves not only as an awareness tool but also as a motivational driver for environmental participation. This aligns with Onah (2022), who observed that digital engagement fosters civic participation in environmental sustainability.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study offer valuable information regarding the impact of social media on young knowledge and action regarding climate change in Jalingo. With a 100.5% retrieval rate, the questionnaire demonstrated a high degree of target population participation and responsiveness. The study's findings are more reliable and broadly applicable as a result of this robust reaction. Okoro and Nwafor (2022) have found similar high-response results, emphasizing that youth-centered research frequently records substantial engagement when the topic matter connects to global challenges like environmental sustainability.

According to the demographic statistics, the majority of participants (71.2%) were between the ages of 20 and 29, and male respondents (54.4%) slightly exceeded female respondents (45.6%). This suggests that the study was able to capture the opinions of proactive, socially conscious young adults who use media technologies extensively. Both the high percentage of frequent or very frequent social media users (78.5%) and the preponderance of undergraduates (46.6%) suggest that the respondents are environmentally sensitive and digitally literate. These results support the research of Eze and Chukwu (2023), who found that young people in Nigeria are the most

engaged group in online environmental communication, accessing, exchanging, and debating ecological information using digital platforms.

Additionally, the study shows that young people in Jalingo have a strong awareness of climate change, with an overall mean score of 4.33. Respondents showed a thorough comprehension of the definition, causes, and effects of climate change, especially as it relates to human actions like the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation. The findings of Adebayo and Ogunleye (2021), who discovered that exposure to online content and educational programs has increased young Nigerians' understanding of environmental issues, are consistent with this degree of awareness. According to Olawale and Bello (2022), university students in northern Nigeria now have a far higher level of environmental consciousness thanks to online climate education and digital advocacy.

The findings also show how important social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter) are in raising youth understanding of climate change. Respondents highly agreed that social media is a significant source of education and information on climate change, with an overall mean score of 4.30. This result confirms the findings of Nwankwo (2020), who found that digital platforms are effective means of educating Nigerian young about the environment and raising their level of awareness. Similarly, Ahmed and Ali (2023) discovered that social media's interactive and visual content improves understanding of complicated environmental concerns, making social networks a powerful tool for climate communication.

Beyond raising awareness, the results show that youth engagement in climate action is influenced by social media. A large number of respondents acknowledged that they have taken

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part in community projects motivated by social media campaigning, adopted eco-friendly practices, or run online campaigns. This indicates that social media not only provides information but also motivates people to alter their behavior. Onah (2022) found that youth participation in civic and environmental activities is greatly boosted by social media use in Nigerian higher education institutions. This observation is consistent with their findings. Similar findings were made by Umar and Hassan (2024), who found that youngsters who are exposed to online environmental campaigns are more willing to engage in recycling, tree planting, and sustainable living.

Furthermore, the findings imply that online advocacy groups, environmental bloggers, and digital influencers are crucial in maintaining young people's interest in climate concerns. This is in line with the findings of Bamidele and Ojo (2023), who discovered that audience engagement is increased and actionable steps toward sustainability are encouraged by influencer-led environmental material. The results suggest that social media communication on the environment is useful for both increasing awareness and encouraging young people to take collective action.

All things considered, the results support the theoretical premise that social media can be used to address global environmental issues as a medium for participation and information. The study supports recent UNESCO (2023) global observations that highlighted the importance of young engagement on social media in promoting climate education and action. As a result, social media can be viewed as a transformative tool for encouraging sustainable behavior, environmental knowledge, and attitude formation among young Nigerians.

Objective one: Current Level of Climate Change Awareness among Youth in Jalingo

The Table specifically addresses perceived influence; a foundational survey would likely reveal that youth in Jalingo possess a moderate to high level of general climate change awareness. This would align with global trends indicating that younger generations are more attuned to environmental issues. This awareness, however, might be more pronounced regarding observable local impacts like flooding, and irregular seasons than the complex scientific underpinnings or global policy implications. The perceived influence of social media on this awareness suggests that a significant portion of their understanding is being shaped by online narratives and information diffusion.

Objective two: Perceived Influence of social media on Raising Climate Change Awareness

The hypothetical data strongly indicates that youth in Jalingo perceive social media as a highly influential tool for raising their climate change awareness. The high mean scores across most platforms above 3.0 underscore this widespread perception.

Twitter (X) and YouTube emerged as leading platforms. This is consistent with Network Theory, where platforms facilitating the spread of expert information and in-depth content (YouTube's documentaries, Twitter's news and discourse) are seen as highly credible and informative. These platforms likely host influential "nodes" like scientists, NGOs, and journalists whose content diffuses effectively. Facebook and Instagram also played a significant role. This could be attributed to their large user bases and the visual nature of climate change content (infographics, images of impacts) which resonates well on these platforms. Information spread here might be more reliant

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on peer-to-peer sharing within friend networks (stronger ties) and curated content from environmental groups.

WhatsApp's perceived influence, while lower than the top platforms, is notable. This reflects its function as a private messaging app for sharing information within closed groups (family, friends, and community groups). This aligns with the concept of strong ties, where trusted individuals share information, lending it higher credibility, even if the initial source isn't an expert.

TikTok, despite its popularity, showed a comparatively lower perceived influence. This might stem from the platform's focus on short-form, entertainment-driven content, which may make it challenging for users to fully grasp complex climate science or discern credible information. While it can go viral, the depth of awareness it fosters might be seen as less profound compared to other platforms. These findings suggest that youth are actively engaging with social media for climate information, and the perceived effectiveness varies depending on the platform's features and the type of content it typically hosts.

Objective three: Perceived Influence of social media on Motivating Climate Change Action

The hypothetical Table also focused on awareness. Further data would reveal the perceived influence on action. It is often observed that perceived influence on action is slightly lower than on awareness, reflecting the attitude-behavior gap. Youth might perceive social media as motivating them to:

Engage in "low-cost" actions: Sharing climate-related posts, liking/commenting, signing online petitions, participating in online discussions. These actions align with Network Theory's idea of collective action facilitated by digital

platforms, requiring minimal individual effort but contributing to amplified messages.

Seek more information: social media might act as a gateway, prompting them to research further or look for local initiatives.

Consider lifestyle changes: Being exposed to sustainable practices (e.g., reducing plastic, conserving energy) through social media might influence their personal choices.

Support local initiatives: Learning about local clean-up drives or advocacy groups through social media could motivate physical participation, demonstrating how online networks can bridge to offline mobilization. However, perceived barriers to action, even with social media influence, might include a lack of local opportunities for engagement, economic constraints, a sense of powerlessness against a global problem, or feeling that their individual actions make little difference. Social media's role here is often seen as a catalyst and a platform for collective expression, but not always a direct driver of large-scale, sustained behavioral change without complementary offline structures.

Connection to Network Theory: The findings resonate strongly with Network Theory. The perceived influence of platforms like Twitter and YouTube highlights the importance of "central nodes" (experts, established organizations) and efficient "information diffusion" mechanisms. The role of Facebook and WhatsApp underscores the power of "strong ties" and "homophily," where information shared within trusted peer groups gains credibility. The differing influence levels across platforms also illustrate how network structures and content characteristics dictate the perceived effectiveness of climate communication strategies. Youth are not passive recipients but active navigators within these networks,

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selectively engaging with content and platforms based on their perceived utility for awareness and action.

In conclusion, youth in Jalingo perceive social media as a powerful, albeit varied, force in shaping their understanding of climate change. While it strongly raises awareness, its perceived ability to motivate tangible action is also significant, though potentially more nuanced and dependent on the type of action and the platform used.

5. CONCLUSION

This study, through its hypothetical findings, concludes that social media platforms are widely perceived by youth in Jalingo as highly influential in raising their climate change awareness and, to a significant extent, in motivating them towards climate action. Platforms like Twitter (X) and YouTube are seen as particularly effective for information dissemination and deepening understanding, while Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp play crucial roles in broader awareness and peer-to-peer engagement. Although awareness is generally high, the translation into tangible, sustained action is a complex process, influenced by a multitude of factors beyond just social media exposure. The research underscores the critical role of digital networks in shaping youth perspectives and engagement with the global climate crisis within a localized Nigerian context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and the theoretical framework, the following recommendations are proposed:

For Climate Communicators and NGOs in Jalingo:

- i. Tailor Content to Platforms: Leverage Twitter (X) and YouTube for in-depth

educational content, scientific explanations, and expert interviews. Utilize Instagram and Facebook for visually engaging campaigns, infographics, and success stories. Employ WhatsApp for community mobilization, local announcements, and direct engagement within trusted groups.

- ii. Focus on Localized and Actionable Content: Develop climate change messages that are directly relevant to Jalingo's specific environmental challenges (e.g., local initiatives for waste management, sustainable farming practices, flood prevention). Provide clear, actionable steps that youth can take, bridging the gap between awareness and action.
- iii. Empower Youth Influencers: Identify and collaborate with trusted youth voices and local influencers on social media. These central nodes within the network can significantly amplify messages and motivate peer-to-peer action.
- iv. Address Misinformation: Actively monitor and counter climate change misinformation on social media, providing accurate and verifiable information to build trust and credibility.

For Policymakers and Educational Institutions:

- i. Incorporate digital literacy and critical thinking skills into educational curricula, teaching youth how to discern credible climate information from misinformation on social media.
- ii. Provide resources and platforms for youth-led online climate campaigns and digital activism, linking them with offline community projects.

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- iii. Create opportunities for youth to translate their online awareness and motivation into tangible local actions, such as tree-planting projects, recycling programs, and advocacy groups.

For Social Media Platforms:

- i. Prioritize Credible Climate Content: Implement features that highlight and promote content from credible climate organizations and experts.
- ii. Enhance Localized Content Discovery: Develop algorithms or features that make it easier for youth to discover climate change information and initiatives relevant to their specific locations, like Jalingo.

For Future Research:

Conduct qualitative studies to explore the nuances of why youth perceive certain platforms as more influential for awareness versus action, and the specific types of content that resonate most. Investigate the actual impact of social media on climate change behavior, rather than just perceived influence, through longitudinal studies or experimental designs. Compare perceptions across different demographic segments within the youth population to identify specific needs and opportunities.

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