



Research Article

Communication and Social Media Feedback Patterns: Towards Global Digital Information Standards in Ghana and Nigeria

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Abstract: This study concerns the examination of communication and social media feedback patterns among students in Ghana and Nigeria. The objectives were to: find out the most common pattern of social media feedback mechanism applied; the outstanding reason of using social media feedback mechanism; the level of effectiveness and the main challenge in using social media feedback mechanism by residents of universities in Ghana and Nigeria. This study adopted two theories of the Social Information Processing and the Uses and Gratification with the method of online survey. The population was selected among individuals from Ghana and Nigeria. The sample size was picked conveniently at 800. In the proportionate distribution Ghana was allocated 103 copies and Nigeria had 697 copies. A structured questionnaire of 15 closed ended questions with four options was drawn from research questions. Analysis of data showed a major finding that “Share” was the dominant pattern of reaction, making up responses at 50% of all reactions – a clear sign that users are highly inclined to spread the content to others through social media feedback mechanisms. Among recommendations is to encourage speedy open interactions and discussions, experiences through online with constructive feedbacks.

Keywords: communication; digital engagement; social media; feedback; information

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the role of social media in shaping communication patterns among youth, especially students, has become increasingly significant. Social media has come to remain one of the influential tools of communication in the 21st century World. There are uncountable aspects of impacts in the capacity to promote social interactions, creation of meanings, prompt sharing of ideas, feels, knowledge and general information. It has tremendously affected the process and trends of communication (Akpam, 2022).

Hence, the proliferation of digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and Telegram has revolutionized not only how students communicate but also how they give and receive feedback (Boyd, 2014). Social media now functions as both a communication tool and a feedback mechanism, enabling real-time interaction and community-building in both academic and non-academic contexts (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

In Ghana and Nigeria – two of West Africa’s most populous and educationally active nations – social media usage especially among university students and others has seen rapid growth, driven by increased smartphone penetration, internet availability, and digital literacy (Nkansah & Oldac, 2024; Olowu & Seri, 2012). Individuals increasingly rely on these platforms not only to socialize but also to engage in academic collaboration, share information, and express opinions. The feedback functions embedded within these platforms – likes, shares, comments, reactions, and direct messages – play a central role in how students interpret engagement and validation in their digital interactions (Ndaku, 2013).

Generally, communication has evolved from traditional face-to-face interaction to more nuanced digital exchanges that are shaped by platform affordances and user behavior. According to McQuail (2010), communication in the digital age is less about linear transmission of information and more about participatory dialogue where feedback loops define the quality and effectiveness of the exchange. In this context, social media becomes

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not just a medium, but a space for co-creating meaning, establishing social presence, and negotiating identity and especially among university students who are often at the forefront of technological adoption.

Feedback on social media serves diverse purposes: it affirms identity, supports learning, builds social capital, and enhances self-expression (Ellison et al., 2007). Feedback mechanisms are also used to assess social acceptance, monitor peer engagement, and refine communication strategies. In Ghana and Nigeria, cultural and educational dynamics also influence these patterns. For instance, hierarchical classroom structures may make people more comfortable expressing their thoughts on social media than in person, while communal cultural values may drive higher rates of online peer support and feedback.

Despite their similarities, Ghana and Nigeria offer different digital ecosystems shaped by governmental policy, infrastructural development, and sociocultural norms. Exploring the similarities and differences in how residents of both countries use social media feedback mechanisms offers insights into broader themes of communication behavior, digital engagement, and cultural adaptation. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate and compare the communication patterns and use of social media feedback among residents in Ghana and Nigeria, considering the educational, cultural, and technological contexts that shape their behaviors.

Despite the popularity of social media as a tool for communication, the patterns of its usage differ across regions and institutions, influenced by cultural, economic, and infrastructural factors. In Ghana and Nigeria, variations in internet access, digital literacy, and institutional policies contribute to different communication behaviours among residents. Consequently, the ways people give and receive feedback – especially in group settings, discussions, and peer learning – are not always aligned with best practices for effective communication. This can lead to misunderstandings, delays in responses, or the complete absence of feedback, ultimately affecting economic and social performance and collaboration. Furthermore, while some residents actively use social media feedback mechanisms to participate in online and study groups, others prefer using it on many issues of engagements such as raising reports of gender abuses, discontentment, harassments, intimidations from colleagues and personnel. Often, there is the issue of distraction and misinformation that sometimes accompanies social media use and feedbacks, which can blur lines of communication. According to Plan International, an independent development and humanitarian organization, between 2018 and 2019, 83% of those involved in cyberbullying incidents were tertiary students, with a nearly even split between genders – 221 males and 225 females. In a survey conducted in 2018, the World Bank Group's Women revealed that 70% of female graduates report being sexually harassed by classmates and lecturers through social media feedbacks. In 2021, no fewer than 39 lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institutions were indicted and dismissed due to such misconducts of using social media. Consequently, in Nigeria many attempts have been done to regulate social media use and feedbacks to address potential negative impacts as well as to protect the reputation of institution. For instance, the Senate has passed a bill stipulating 21 years imprisonment for lecturers' caught by primarily involved in giving female students "offensive text messages" or other forms of harassments through social media.

The rise of cyberbullying and other communication negatives are tied to the increasing desire for digital literacy and the widespread use of social media platforms among people. While information technology has opened doors to greater knowledge and connectivity, it has also created spaces where people can become vulnerable to harassments. The anonymity of the online world often emboldens perpetrators, making it harder for victims to seek help or confront their abusers.

Currently, there is limited research that compares the communication and feedback patterns among residents in Ghana and Nigeria within the context of social media. Without empirical data to understand these dynamics, it is challenging for educators, administrators, and policymakers to develop interventions that can enhance communication as cyberbullying continues to rise. In such a landscape, understanding why, how, when and what prompt people to use social media platforms of feedback mechanisms become crucial in identifying gaps and proposing more structured communication strategies. This study therefore seeks to investigate the patterns, reasons, effectiveness and challenges of social media-based feedback mechanisms among residents in two countries, with the goal of improving digital communication practices. The objectives of the study are the following:

- (1) To find out the most common pattern of social media feedback mechanism applied



by residents in of Ghana and Nigeria;

(2) To find out the outstanding reason of using social media feedback mechanism by residents in universities of Ghana and Nigeria;

(3) To find out the level of effectiveness of using social media feedback mechanism by residents in universities of Ghana and Nigeria;

(4) To find out the main challenges in using social media feedback mechanism by residents of universities in Ghana and Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

The first category is the quantitative feedback mechanism made up of “Likes, Shares, Views”. The quantitative feedback mechanism is also identified by the indicators of communication engagement such as reactions, retweets, and up votes. These forms of feedback are immediate, easily interpretable, and widely used across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube. Kim and Yang (2017) describe these metrics as symbolic cues that contribute to social media validation and influence perceptions with popularity. Burke, Kraut, and Marlow (2010) assert that likes and reactions serve as low-effort signals of attention and approval. It helps in boosting self-esteem and self-efficacy. These numeric feedback mechanisms can enhance a sense of self-worth and competence. They encourage repeated and sustained interaction and reinforces positive emotional states and may inspire content creation.

Next is the qualitative feedback made up of “Comments and Replies”. Qualitative feedback refers to written responses or replies to content, including comments on posts, messages in direct chats, and discussion threads. These forms of feedback are richer in emotional and contextual cues. Sundar (2008) emphasized that comment-based interactions offer richer interpersonal cues than likes or shares. Walther and Boyd (2002) argued that textual feedback compensates for the absence of non-verbal cues in online communication. It promotes dialogue as it encourages two-way communication and active engagement in peer discussions.

In addition, there are visual feedback mechanisms. This category makes up of emojis, GIFs, stickers, reactions. Visual feedback mechanisms also include click buttons of heart, laugh, sad, angry often used to express emotions quickly and vividly. Derks, Fischer, and Bos (2008) assert that emojis act as emotional cues that help users convey feelings in the absence of voice or facial expression. Riordan (2017) notes that emojis enrich emotional tone and reduce ambiguity in digital text.

It simplifies emotional expression by offering quick ways to convey feelings that might not be verbalized. It also offers cross-cultural communication through visual symbols that are often interpreted similarly across regions. It enhances clarity and emotional tone by reducing misunderstanding in peer-to-peer communication.

Moreover, there are the implicit feedback mechanisms. It manifests in silence, seen/read receipts, and delayed response. Implicit feedback mechanisms refer to non-responses, such as seen-but-no-reply messages or long delays before engagement. Though passive communication, these actions still convey meaning. Non-responsiveness or read-receipts carry social and emotional weight. Baym (2010) notes that silence or absence in online spaces can be interpreted as rejection, indifference, or disapproval.

The advantages encourage reflection and emotional resilience. It helps to develop coping mechanisms for social rejection or low feedback. It promotes self-awareness by interpreting silence required in critical emotional thinking and enhancing intrapersonal intelligence. Also, it signals boundaries and norms and teaches digital etiquette and the emotional consequences of online disengagement.

Benewaa and Emilio (2021) examined the influence of social media usage on the behaviour of Ghana students. Cross sectional descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 378 students was selected using proportional stratified sampling technique from a population of second- and third-year college of education students. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for the collection of data. Data were analysed descriptively using frequencies and percentages, and means and standard deviations. The study revealed that all the respondents were using social media with the most common social network sites used by the respondents being WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. The study revealed also that most of the respondents spent an average of six to 10 hours on social media in a day for above an average of five days in a week and considered their social media usage to be more than necessary and interfering with their lives.



In the context of our research, it is important to analyse Social Information Processing Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory in details. The Social Information Processing Theory focuses on how individuals develop interpersonal relationships through computer-mediated communication, such as social media platforms. It argues that even in the absence of nonverbal cues like body language or tone of voice, people can still develop meaningful relationships online – although it might take longer than in face-to-face interactions (Walther, 1992).

The Uses and Gratifications Theory originated in the 1940s and shifts the focus from what media does to people to what people do with media. It posits that individuals actively select media sources that best meet their needs – whether those needs are informational, personal identity, integration, social interaction, or entertainment. This theory is ideal for examining why and how individuals use social media platforms, and how the feedback they receive fulfills certain emotional or cognitive needs. People may seek social approval, validation, or empathy from peers through likes, comments, and shares. This active seeking of feedback helps them regulate their self-concept and develop higher emotional awareness (Katz et al., 1973). Positive feedback can boost emotional self-esteem, while negative or absent feedback may lead to emotional deregulation or social withdrawal.

3. Materials and Methods

This study adopted the online survey which are questionnaires created for the purpose of gathering feedback from target audience by filling forms facilitated by internet technology. Online surveys can vary in length and format and incorporate different types of questions, including multiple-choice, ordinal scale, short answer, and more (Akpan, 2022, Akpan & Udo, 2024) The population included individuals from Ghana and Nigeria. The sample size was picked conveniently at 800. In the proportionate distribution Ghana was allocated 103 copies and Nigeria had 697 copies.

This was a structured questionnaire of 15 closed ended questions with four options drawn from the variables of the respective research questions. The respondents were given chances of ticking their preferred answers. The questionnaires generated from Google Forms were sent out to email accounts of residents of the countries under study which were obtained from The Email Finder or Hunter.

The Percent Agreement reliability validation was applied using two research assistants to cross check the 15 questions and the options. The two trained research assistants agreed on 13 questions, leaving 2 for a revise. Through the formula of $13/15 \times 100$, the reliability and validity position were arrived at 87%. The high inter-rater reliability in this context means that the instruments used to gather responses were accurate and reliable, for superior outcomes and effective performance.

Data gathered for the study was analysed using simple frequency tables to calculate the totals and the percentages. This was supported by the use of pie charts. The two instruments of analysis provided the highest scores and the least scores to determine the results and implications.

4. Results

From table 1 and figure 1 the key observations are that “Share” is the dominant reaction, making up responses at 400 or 50% of all 800 reactions – a clear sign that users (especially Nigerians) are highly inclined to spread the content to others through social media feedback mechanisms. Nigeria contributes over 87% (697/800) of all reactions, showing significantly higher engagement than Ghana. In every reaction type (Like, Comment, Send, Share), Nigeria outperforms Ghana by a wide margin. “Like” and “Send” reactions together make up 155 or 19,4% and 141 or 17,6%, respectively indicating moderate engagement through appreciation and forwarding. “Comment” is the least common reaction at 104 responses or (13%), suggesting lower interactive discussion or feedback on the content.

The implications are that since “Share” is dominant, content should be designed to be highly shareable emotionally resonant, informative, or entertaining. With Nigeria contributing the lion’s share of reactions, tailoring content to Nigerian culture, language, and interests can significantly boost engagement. The low percentage of comments suggests a need to prompt dialogue or ask questions to build community and generate feedback.

Table 1. Analysis of reaction types.

| Reaction type | Nigeria | Ghana | Total | % |
|---------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| Like | 135 | 20 | 155 | 19,4 |
| Comment | 92 | 12 | 104 | 13,0 |
| Send | 115 | 26 | 141 | 17,6 |
| Share | 355 | 45 | 400 | 50,0 |
| Total | 697 | 103 | 800 | 100,0 |

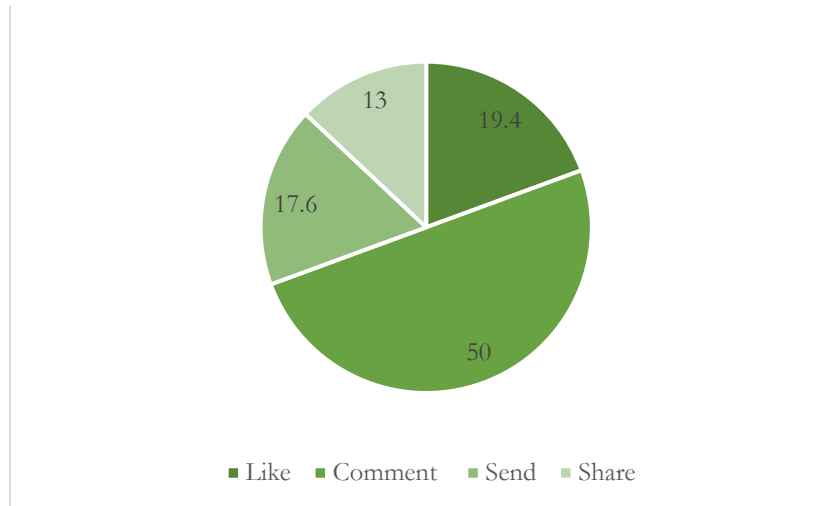


Figure 1. Distribution of reaction patterns (total = 800).

Table 2 and figure 2 reveal important insights into how and why people in Nigeria and Ghana use social media feedback mechanisms. A breakdown shows that simplicity concerns 429 responses or 53,6% out of 800 persons. This was against reasons to hide emotions which had a score of 160 or 20%, speed at 154 or 19,3%, covering identity at 54 or 7,1%. The implication is that over half the respondents prioritize ease of use. Social media platforms are favoured for their straightforwardness, suggesting that user-friendly design is crucial for engagement.

Table 2. Reasons for use of social media feedback patterns.

| Reasons | Nigeria | Ghana | Total | % |
|----------------|---------|-------|-------|------|
| Speed | 134 | 20 | 154 | 19,3 |
| Simplicity | 375 | 54 | 429 | 53,6 |
| Cover identity | 42 | 15 | 57 | 7,1 |
| Hide emotions | 146 | 14 | 160 | 20,0 |
| Total | 697 | 103 | 800 | 100 |

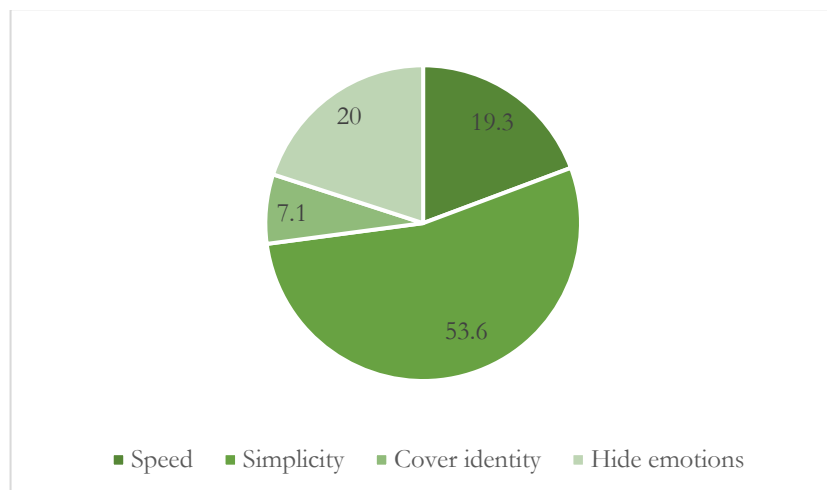


Figure 2. Reasons for use of social media feedback patterns (total = 800).

In table 3 and figure 3, strong perception of effectiveness recorded: Very high, 444 or 55,5%, High scored 83 or 10,4%, Low 161 or 20,1%, Very Low 112 or 14%. The implication is that a majority of residents (especially from Ghana) believe social media feedback is very effective. This suggests these platforms have a legitimate and trusted role in communication between residents and institutions. On Moderate Support (High – 10%), it implies that a smaller group views it as only “highly effective” but not very high. It means that there are limitations of technical, administrative, or cultural that prevent full endorsement. With Low at 20%, Very Low at 14%, it means that a large chunk of persons finds social media feedback ineffective. It reflects poor digital literacy among residents or weak infrastructure.

Table 3. Levels of effectiveness of social media feedback mechanisms.

| Effectiveness | Nigeria | Ghana | Total | % |
|---------------|---------|-------|-------|------|
| Very High | 362 | 82 | 444 | 55,5 |
| High | 62 | 21 | 83 | 10,4 |
| Low | 161 | 0 | 161 | 20,1 |
| Very Low | 112 | 0 | 112 | 14,0 |
| Total | 697 | 103 | 800 | 100 |

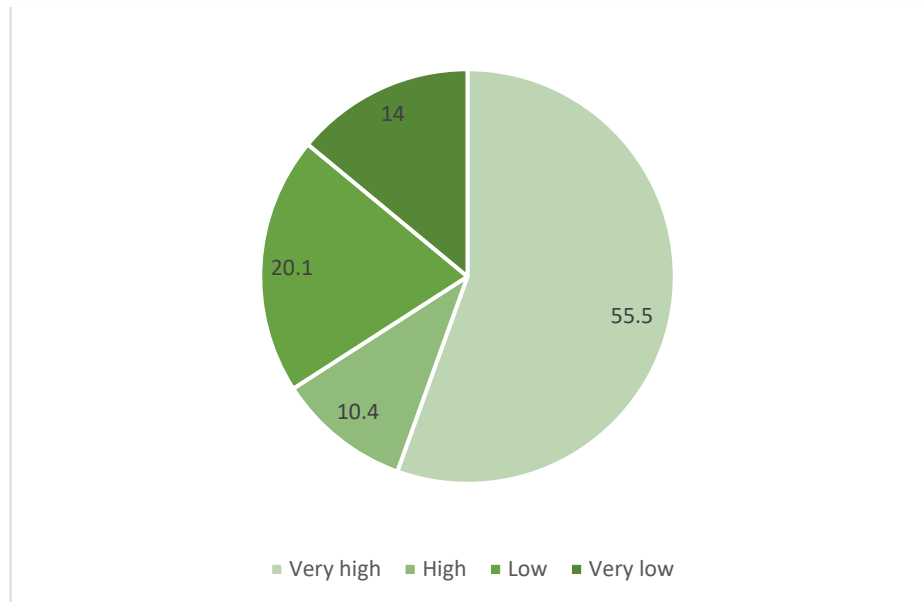


Figure 3. Levels of effectiveness of social media feedback mechanisms among students (total = 800).

Table 4 and figure 4 focus on challenges. Poor technology had a score of 374 or 47%, ambiguities – 173 or (21,6%), distortions – 141 or (17,6%) and inaccuracies 102 or 12,8%. A principal implication of these challenges showed that reliance on social media is growing but infrastructure and digital literacy diminishes. With poor technology (48%) at the peak is that there is limited access to reliable internet, up-to-date devices, or power supply in as much as people often struggling to access or use social media platforms effectively.

Table 4. Challenges of social media feedback mechanism among students.

| Challenges | Nigeria | Ghana | Totals | % |
|-----------------|---------|-------|--------|------|
| Distortions | 131 | 10 | 141 | 17,6 |
| Ambiguities | 165 | 8 | 173 | 21,6 |
| Inaccuracies | 90 | 12 | 102 | 12,8 |
| Poor Technology | 311 | 73 | 384 | 48,0 |
| Totals | 697 | 103 | 800 | 100 |

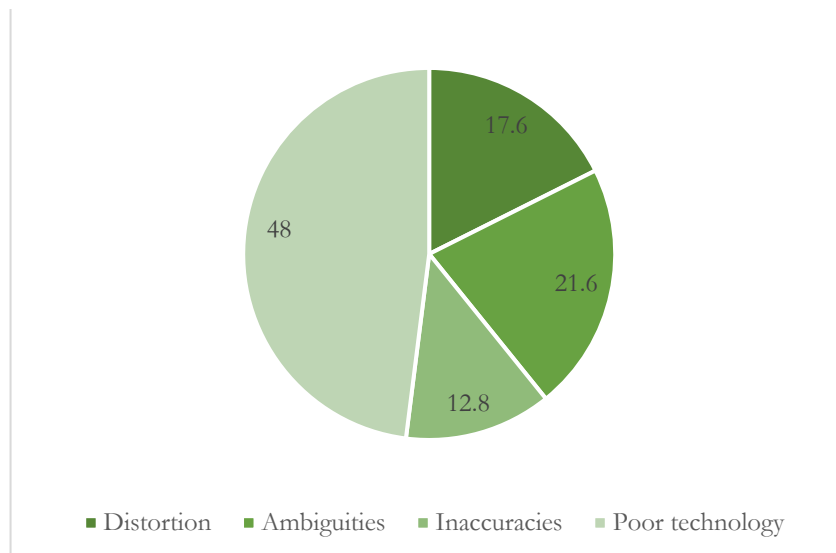


Figure 4. Challenges of using social media feedback mechanism among students.

It widens the digital divide, leaving many persons without a voice in feedback systems. It hinders timely communication, reducing the effectiveness of engagements and responses. On ambiguities (21,6%), it shows that messages or feedback can be misunderstood due to lack of clarity, vague language, or poor expression. This can lead to misinterpretation by authorities or peers, creating confusion or tension. Distortions (17,6%) showed that information passed through social media can be twisted or exaggerated, leading to misinformation. This undermines trust in feedback mechanisms and can spark unnecessary panic or conflicts. Inaccuracies (12,8%) showed that unverified or false information can circulate easily, leading to poor decision-making by persons and institutions. Weakens the credibility of advocacy or reporting via social media. The effectiveness of feedback systems is reduced.

5. Discussion

The findings show that “Share” is the dominant reaction, making up responses at 400 or 50% of all 800 reactions – a clear sign that users (especially Nigerians) are highly inclined to spread the content to others through social media feedback mechanisms. Nigeria contributes over 87% (697/800) of all reactions, showing significantly higher engagement than Ghana. In every reaction type (“Like, Comment, Send, Share”), Nigeria outperforms Ghana by a wide margin. “Like” and “Send” reactions together make up 155 or 19,4% and 141 or 17,6%, respectively indicating moderate engagement through appreciation and forwarding. “Comment” is the least common reaction at 104 responses or (13%), suggesting lower interactive discussion or feedback on the content. A recent study by Apuke and Omar (2020) support these observations regarding the dominance of the “Share” reaction and higher engagement levels among Nigerian social media users. They research indicated that Nigerians are highly inclined to share content on platforms like WhatsApp, driven by factors such as social capital and relational communication. This behavior underscores the significant role of sharing in user engagement within Nigeria. Additionally, a study by Antwi Agyei, Ampedu, Mang’ati, Boardi, Boakye-Boateng, Nunoo, and Mensah (2024) examined social media usage patterns in Ghana and finds that while platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook are widely used, the engagement levels, particularly in terms of sharing content, are comparatively lower than in Nigeria. The study highlights that Ghanaian users are more inclined towards information seeking and post-purchase reviews rather than active content sharing.

The research revealed important insights into how and why people in Nigeria and Ghana use social media feedback mechanisms. A breakdown shows that Simplicity with 429 responses or 55,6% out of 800 persons. This was against reasons to hide emotions which had a score of 160 or 20%, speed at 154 or 19,3%, covering identity at 54 or 7,1%. This aligns with findings by Asempah (2024) that platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube are popular due to their user-friendly interfaces and ease of use, which influence users’ behavior. The convenience and simplicity of these platforms enhance user engagement and favorability.



Another work that explored the impact of simplicity in social media feedback mechanisms is by Adebayo (2023) who examined how user interface simplicity influences social media engagement in Nigeria, highlighting that straightforward and intuitive interfaces significantly enhance social media user interaction and feedback.

The finding showed that a majority of residents perceive social media feedback mechanism as very effective in Nigeria and Ghana. This finding aligned with research of Aladesusi, Issa, Abodunrin, Boris, Babalola, and Nuhu, (2021) that there is positive perception of using social media to enhance learning. The study found that social media platforms are frequently utilized to facilitate learning, indicating their effectiveness in engagements and communication between persons.

It was found that poor technology had a score of 48%, ambiguities – 21,6%, distortions – 17,6%, and inaccuracies – 12,8%. A principal implication on these challenges showed that though there was reliance on social media feedback mechanisms the supporting infrastructure for digital literacy diminishes. The implication of poor technology relates directly to the digital divide in African countries. This divide manifests through limited access to reliable internet, lack of up-to-date devices, and inconsistent power supply, hindering ability to effectively engage with digital platforms for communication and feedback. This observation aligns with findings by Onwe and Ezekwe (2014), who highlighted that inadequate information and communication technologies resources and infrastructure lead to significant inequalities in technology access and usage, thereby affecting participation in activities that rely on digital tools.

6. Conclusions

The interplay between social media feedback mechanisms and students' emotional intelligence has garnered significant attention in recent research, particularly within the contexts of Ghana and Nigeria. Recent studies have explored how various forms of social media feedback – quantitative (likes, shares), qualitative (comments), visual (emojis, GIFs), and implicit (seen receipts, silence) – impact the development and expression of emotional intelligence among students. The analysis of social media feedback mechanisms among users in Nigeria and Ghana reveals critical behavioral trends that underscore the broader dynamics of digital engagement in West Africa. The findings indicate a clear preference for content dissemination, with the “Share” reaction being the dominant form of engagement. This overwhelming inclination to share content, particularly among Nigerian users who represent the majority of total responses, suggests a culturally embedded value in spreading information, ideas, and social commentary across networks.

It was found that since “Share” is the dominant reaction, organizations, marketers, and social change advocates should create highly shareable content – such as short videos, relatable memes, and concise infographics – to maximize organic reach. Besides, social media content creators should design posts that invite opinions, debates, or storytelling, especially using culturally resonant issues. That given the high tendency to share content rapidly, there is a need for educational programs promoting digital literacy. The social media users should continually monitor trends in feedback mechanism usage. Regular updates and user-centered innovations will ensure that social media platforms remain engaging and relevant to the needs and gratification patterns of their audiences.

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