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Influence of TikTok and Nigerian TikTokers on Social Discourse among Selected University Students: A Study of UNN, ESUT and Caritas University, Enugu

Ferdinand Obasi[1*] & Maureen Ugochi Otukwu[1]

[1]*Department of Mass Communication, Caritas University, Enugu, Nigeria*

*Corresponding author: amokovia@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of TikTok and Nigerian TikTokers on social discourse among selected university students in Enugu State, Nigeria. It set out to determine the students' level of exposure to TikTok content on social issues, how far Nigerian TikTokers shape their perceptions and opinions, how TikTok use affects their engagement in conversations on cultural, political and societal issues, and the ways in which the platform supports their participation in social discourse. The study was anchored on Technological Determinism and Uses and Gratifications theories. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and a sample of 381 undergraduates was drawn from an estimated population of 34,600 students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) and Caritas University, Enugu. The findings showed that the students were highly exposed to TikTok content on social issues, that Nigerian TikTokers significantly influenced their perceptions and opinions, that TikTok use was significantly related to their engagement in conversations on cultural, political and societal issues, and that the platform served as an effective space for participation in social discourse. The study concludes that TikTok influences the social discourse of university students in Enugu State. It recommends that educational institutions, content creators, regulators, youth organisations and development partners use the platform to promote credible, responsible and constructive discussion of social issues.

Keywords: TikTok; Nigerian TikTokers; Social Discourse; University Students; Enugu State

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Introduction

Social media has changed the way young people obtain information, express opinions and take part in public life. Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok are among the most widely used platforms (Ajayi-Ayodele, 2025). Social media trends often fade quickly, but TikTok has kept its popularity (Ekwugha & Okorie, 2025). The app started in China in 2016 as Douyin, and its international version, TikTok, followed in 2017 (Montag et al., 2021; Nwafor & Nnaemeka, 2023). It is built around short videos that users record, edit and share with an online community, usually with music, filters and other effects (Montag et al., 2021).

TikTok is now a mainstream platform in Nigeria. Influencers, including Nollywood celebrities and musicians, have helped to raise its visibility, and its short, music-backed videos are popular among young Nigerians, including university students (Nwafor & Nnaemeka, 2023). In late 2025, the platform's potential advertising reach among Nigerian adults was 47.8 million, compared with 38.0 million for Facebook and 30.5 million for YouTube (Kemp, 2025). Advertising reach figures are estimates and are not counts of unique users, so they should be treated with care, but they show how far TikTok has grown in the country.

Entertainment is only part of what the platform offers. Many users watch and post dance, lip-sync and comedy videos, but experts and creators also use TikTok to share short pieces of knowledge with a wide

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audience (Regasa & Ettisa, 2023), and social media more generally can support students' learning (Abbas et al., 2019). Politicians, activists and ordinary young people also use it to speak about public affairs. In Zimbabwe's 2023 general elections, for example, political actors used TikTok to urge young people to register and vote (Ureke, 2024), and in South Africa young people used meme-based videos to challenge racism (Schoon & Bosch, 2024). TikTok may also change how young people use older media. Oyeleke et al. (2023), for instance, examined the implications of exposure to TikTok short videos for broadcast news reception among journalism students in Nigeria.

The same features bring risks. Heavy use may reduce students' attention to academic work and lead to dependence on the platform (Ekwugha & Okorie, 2025), and cyberbullying has been reported to be common on social media among university students in the United Arab Emirates (Abaido, 2020). Personalised algorithmic feeds can encourage compulsive use, and short, unverified videos spread quickly, which makes it easy for misinformation, stereotypes and harmful trends to circulate. TikTok therefore offers both opportunities and risks for young people, and responsible use depends on an understanding of both.

Nigerian TikTokers, the creators who use the platform to engage audiences, play a major part in shaping opinion on politics, culture, lifestyle, gender and other social issues. University students form a large share of the platform's active users, and for many of them TikTok has moved beyond entertainment to become a space for civic engagement, identity construction and social commentary. In this study, social discourse means the conversations, opinions and exchanges through which people discuss cultural, political and societal issues.

At the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) and Caritas University, Enugu, TikTok content and creators increasingly shape students' views on politics, gender relations, cultural identity and lifestyle. Although the influence of the platform is visible, little empirical research has examined how TikTok and Nigerian TikTokers affect students' awareness, attitudes and participation in social conversations. Existing Nigerian studies have mostly dealt with gratifications, addiction, self-esteem and cultural values (Ajayi-Ayodele, 2025; Falope et al., 2025; Nasidi et al., 2024; Nwafor & Nnaemeka, 2023), while work on political participation has focused on social media in general (Uwalaka, 2021). This study addresses that gap by examining the influence of TikTok and Nigerian TikTokers on social discourse among university students in Enugu State.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to assess the influence of TikTok and Nigerian TikTokers on social discourse among selected university students. The specific objectives were as follows:

1. To examine the level of exposure of students of UNN, ESUT and Caritas University, Enugu to TikTok content related to social issues.
2. To determine the extent to which Nigerian TikTokers influence students' perceptions and opinions on social discourse.
3. To assess how TikTok usage shapes students' engagement in conversations on cultural, political and societal issues.
4. To identify the specific ways through which TikTok serves as a platform for students' participation in social discourse.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent are students of UNN, ESUT and Caritas University, Enugu exposed to TikTok content related to social issues?
2. How do Nigerian TikTokers influence students' perceptions and opinions on social discourse?
3. In what ways does TikTok usage shape students' engagement in conversations on cultural, political and societal issues?
4. How does TikTok serve as a platform for students' participation in social discourse?

Literature Review

Concept of Social Media

Social media is a broad term for internet-based applications that allow users to create and exchange content. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define it as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. The term covers social network sites, blogs, microblogs and video- and image-sharing platforms. boyd and Ellison (2007) describe social network sites as web-based services that let people build a profile within a bounded system, list the other users with whom they share a connection, and view and move through those connections.

What sets social media apart from older media is that ordinary users become producers of content and not only consumers of it. Jenkins (2006) describes this as a participatory culture, in which people produce, share and respond to media content and so help to shape public conversation. Young people are the heaviest users. Surveys have long shown that teenagers and young adults make the most use of social networking sites (Lenhart et al., 2010), and they use these sites mainly to strengthen relationships with people they already know (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). As mobile internet access spreads, social media increasingly compete with newspapers, radio and television as places to find information, interact with others and build communities.

TikTok Usage among Undergraduates in Nigeria

TikTok's popularity in Nigeria grew quickly in 2020. The government's directive that citizens should stay at home during the COVID-19 pandemic led many Nigerians to turn to social media for entertainment and social interaction (Nwafor & Nnaemeka, 2023). Worldwide, Sensor Tower estimates reported by Music Business Worldwide show that TikTok downloads rose by 12% to 28.5 million in the week of 16–22 March 2020 (Stassen, 2020a), and that the app had passed 2 billion downloads by the end of April 2020 (Stassen, 2020b).

TikTok allows users to create and share short videos, and it gives young Nigerians a creative outlet for singing, dancing, lip-syncing and stand-up comedy. Much of the content is light and entertaining, and challenges and trends spread quickly among users (Nwafor & Nnaemeka, 2023). Among undergraduates in Anambra State, for example, the Joeboy Alcohol Challenge was the most popular trend (Ekwugha & Okorie, 2025).

Influence of TikTok and Nigerian TikTokers on Social Discourse among University Students

Unlike older social media platforms, TikTok uses a short-form video format that lets users watch, create and share content in highly interactive ways (Montag et al., 2021). Its recommendation algorithm, together with features such as duets, stitches and live streaming, creates an environment in which students can follow trends, express themselves creatively and take part in peer discussion.

Research on TikTok use in Nigeria is still limited, but it offers useful insight into why students use the platform. Nwafor and Nnaemeka (2023) surveyed undergraduates at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University and, using the Uses and Gratifications approach, reported that students were heavy users of TikTok. The main motives were entertainment, self-expression, social interaction and learning new information. TikTok met both social and cognitive needs, including making friends, relieving boredom and exploring trending ideas. Students often watched humorous or dance content to relieve stress, for example, while others followed TikTokers who offered socio-political commentary and so met their need for information.

Similarly, Falope et al. (2025) examined TikTok addiction among undergraduates in Kwara State. Their focus was academic performance, but they found that TikTok use was widespread without being necessarily harmful. Most respondents did not meet the threshold for addiction, and their academic performance was largely unaffected. This suggests that TikTok use is generally part of students' daily routines in a balanced way, serving social and informational purposes without much disruption to academic commitments.

Beyond individual gratifications, TikTok works as a digital social space. Students often meet viral challenges, trending hashtags or educational content that can shape campus conversations and the activities of student groups, and the design of the platform encourages fast sharing and peer-to-peer discussion. Understanding how students use TikTok is therefore important for understanding its role in social discourse. High levels of engagement suggest that Nigerian TikTokers, meaning content creators with large followings, can shape discussions, set trends, and influence social norms within student communities (Montag et al., 2021; Nwafor & Nnaemeka, 2023).

Studies of TikTok and political or social engagement are still few in Nigeria, but research on social media in general offers useful pointers. A review of 21 studies by Ajaegbu and Ajaegbu (2024) shows that social media are reshaping political processes and protest in sub-Saharan Africa. Evidence from TikTok itself is now appearing elsewhere on the continent. In Zimbabwe, political actors combined politics with entertainment on TikTok to urge young people to register and vote in the 2023 general elections (Ureke, 2024). In South Africa, young people used meme-based TikTok videos to frame and challenge a racist incident at Stellenbosch University, which is a personalised form of political participation (Schoon & Bosch, 2024).

Studies from outside Africa show similar patterns, with some limits. Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik (2023) describe TikTok as a key space in which young people try out their political voice in creative ways, and Medina Serrano et al. (2020) found that partisan communities form on the platform and that duets allow exchanges across party lines. At the same time, parties and candidates in Spain and Peru used TikTok mostly to broadcast messages from the top down and to mix politics with entertainment, with little use of its participatory features (Cervi & Marín-Lladó, 2021; Cervi et al., 2023). The ability of the platform to support real discussion therefore depends on how it is used.

Uwalaka (2021) examined the link between social media and political participation among students in Nigeria. The study found that protest experience and political efficacy, which is the belief that one can influence political outcomes, predicted students' intention to take part in politics more strongly than social media use did. This implies that while TikTok gives students access to political information and discussion, its effect depends on whether they feel able to act on what they learn. Students who view TikTok content on social justice or civic issues, for instance, may take part in offline discussion or advocacy only if they believe they can contribute in a meaningful way.

Specific TikTok studies support this view. Nwafor et al. (2024) investigated the effectiveness of TikTok in promoting public awareness of climate change in Nigeria. They found that the short visual content, interactive features and algorithm-driven recommendations of the platform make it effective for mobilising engagement and shaping awareness of complex issues. However, inconsistent internet access, low digital literacy among some students and limited content creation skills were barriers to full participation. These findings show that TikTok can support informed social discourse among Nigerian students, but that structural and technological limits remain.

The influence of Nigerian TikTokers extends beyond entertainment to students' social perspectives, attitudes and behaviour. Creators with large followings can act as opinion leaders who guide discussion on social issues. Some students engage critically with such content, while others adopt the stances or copy the behaviours that their favourite creators model. When prominent TikTokers post about political corruption, gender equality or health campaigns, for example, students may repeat these positions in peer discussions or campus initiatives. Ekwugha and Okorie (2025) found that the wish to gain followers was the main reason Anambra State undergraduates joined TikTok trends, which shows how strongly audience approval can shape what students do on the platform.

Through these mechanisms, Nigerian TikTokers act as go-betweens for information, entertainment and social influence. By framing issues, modelling behaviour and generating peer engagement, they can shape how students understand and take part in social discourse. This influence is increased by the recommendation algorithm of TikTok, which gives more visibility to popular or viral content and may therefore steer campus conversations and peer norms.

Empirical Review

Several studies have examined TikTok use among students in Nigeria and elsewhere. The main ones are summarised below.

Ekwugha and Okorie (2025) studied the prevalence of TikTok social trends among undergraduates in Anambra State. Guided by Social Learning Theory, they used a survey design and collected data from 352 respondents with a questionnaire. The data were analysed with simple percentages using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The Joeboy Alcohol Challenge was the most common trend, and the wish to gain followers was the main factor that drew undergraduates into TikTok trends. The study also found that TikTok trends contributed to the promotion of nudity among the undergraduates. The authors recommended that universities and educational institutions encourage educational and awareness-driven content in these popular formats, introduce digital literacy programmes, and help students balance participation in social trends with their mental and social well-being.

Nasidi et al. (2024) used a cross-sectional survey of 314 TikTok users among university students in Nigeria to examine the links between TikTok use, social comparison and self-esteem, and the moderating role of gender. Using structural equation modelling in AMOS, they found that TikTok use and social comparison each had a positive and statistically significant effect on self-esteem, and that the effect was stronger among female than male respondents.

Ajayi-Ayodele (2025) examined the influence of TikTok video content on the promotion of Nigerian cultural values among students. Drawing on the Uses and Gratifications and Cultural Imperialism theories, the study surveyed 376 students of Adekunle Ajasin University, Ondo, selected with the Taro Yamane formula and a multi-stage sampling technique that combined stratified, simple random and purposive sampling. Exposure to TikTok content had led to cultural imperialism, as many young adults imitated Western dressing, ate foreign food and adopted religious practices. TikTok had also helped to promote some Nigerian languages and music, and so to preserve part of the country's cultural heritage. The author recommended that Nigerians use the open nature of social media to showcase and preserve core cultural values and so reduce the effect of cultural imperialism.

Muhammad et al. (2024) surveyed 80 undergraduates of Zamfara State University, Talata Mafara, on how they use TikTok for self-presentation. The students used features such as lip-syncing, live videos, green screen, voiceovers and TikTok sounds to present themselves. Audience reach, likes, comments, varied forms of self-expression, information, education, entertainment and relationships were the factors that encouraged self-presentation. The study recommended that students build their real selves offline and not rely only on TikTok impressions.

Obasi (2024) used interviews and focus group discussions with 30 students to examine the effect of TikTok on the academic performance and social life of students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study reported both positive and negative effects. TikTok was a source of entertainment and stress relief and a way of meeting like-minded people, but excessive use was linked to anxiety, procrastination, poor academic performance, social isolation, loneliness and depression. The author concluded that students should use the platform sparingly and balance their social life with their academic responsibilities, and that educators and parents should monitor young people's use of social media.

Two studies from other settings are also relevant. Anamta et al. (2025) surveyed 400 undergraduate, MPhil and PhD students in Faisalabad, Pakistan, and found that a higher level of TikTok use was associated with higher academic performance but lower moral development. Aluh et al. (2019) surveyed students of the University of Nigeria, one of the institutions in the present study, and found that more than half of them (55.7%) had social media anxiety. WhatsApp was the most used platform, and social media use was not significantly associated with anxiety.

These studies show that students use TikTok widely, that it meets social, informational and self-presentation needs, and that its effects on students can be both positive and negative. Most of them dealt with academic performance, self-esteem, culture or self-presentation, and few examined how TikTok and its creators affect students' participation in social discourse. This study was designed to help fill that gap.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Technological Determinism and Uses and Gratifications theories. The first helps to explain how the platform itself shapes what students see and discuss, and the second helps to explain why students choose to use it.

Technological Determinism Theory

Technological determinism is an approach that treats technology, or technological advance, as the central cause of social change (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). It is a reductionist theory because it assumes that the technology of a society determines the development of its social structure and cultural values. The term is generally credited to the American economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929), and the debate on the idea is collected in Smith and Marx (1994). Bimber (1990) distinguishes three forms of technological determinism and argues that Karl Marx, who is often described as a determinist, was not one in the strict sense.

Technological determinists see technology in general, and media and communication technologies in particular, as the prime cause of change in society and as the basic condition behind the pattern of social organisation. In its strongest form, the theory treats technology as the foundation of society in the past, the present and the future, so that new technologies change society at every level, including institutions, social interactions and individuals (Okoye & Oparaugo, 2019).

McLuhan (1964) gave the theory its best-known form in the phrase "the medium is the message". His argument was that the form of a medium shapes society more than the content it carries, so that over the centuries the form of the media people use has mattered more than the particular messages passed through them.

The theory applies to this study because students of UNN, ESUT and Caritas University use TikTok and other social media platforms to take part in social discourse. The design of TikTok, with its short videos, trending sounds and algorithmic recommendations, shapes what students see and how they respond to it.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) asks why people use the mass media and what functions mass communication performs for them (Katz et al., 1973). It is an audience-centred approach that focuses on what people do with media, and not on what media do to people. Folarin (1998) explains that the theory treats the audience member as an active party in the effects process, who selects, attends to, perceives and retains media messages according to his or her needs and beliefs. Users therefore choose media deliberately to meet specific needs, such as knowledge, relaxation, social interaction, companionship, diversion or escape (Okoye & Oparaugo, 2019).

The theory builds on earlier communication research. Blumler and McQuail (1969) laid the main groundwork in their study of the motives of audiences who watched political programmes during the 1964 general election in the United Kingdom, and the approach was developed further in the 1970s (Katz et al., 1973). UGT differs from media effects theories because it assumes that individuals have power over their media use and are not passive consumers. It explores how people deliberately seek out media to meet needs or goals such as entertainment, relaxation or socialising.

UGT has been used widely to study TikTok. Omar and Dequan (2020) found that users' motives, namely archiving, self-expression, social interaction and peeking at other people's lives, and not their personality traits, predicted TikTok use. Bossen and Kottasz (2020) reported that entertainment was the main gratification sought by adolescent TikTok users, and that passive viewing was more common than creating content. Scherr and Wang (2021) showed that different gratifications explain daytime, night-time and active use of TikTok among users in China. In Nigeria, Nwafor and Nnaemeka (2023) applied the theory to undergraduates' use of the platform.

The theory is relevant here because it explains why students of UNN, ESUT and Caritas University follow Nigerian TikTokers and why they use the platform to take part in social discourse. Taken together, the two theories explain both the pull of the technology and the choices of the user.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A descriptive design describes and interprets existing social phenomena without manipulating variables. It was chosen because the aim was to give an accurate account of how university students engage with TikTok and TikTokers as a platform for social discourse, and to examine students' existing opinions, attitudes and behaviour concerning the influence of TikTok on their social interactions and communication. The survey method suited the study because it allows quantitative data to be collected from a large number of respondents using structured instruments such as questionnaires.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Enugu State, Nigeria, and covered three tertiary institutions: the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) and Caritas University. They were chosen because they are a federal, a state and a private institution respectively, which gives a balanced view of students' experiences and media habits. Students in these universities are active users of digital platforms, including TikTok, and so are well placed to show how social discourse develops through online interaction and content creation.

Population of the Study

The population comprised all registered undergraduate students of UNN, ESUT and Caritas University, Enugu. According to available institutional records and recent estimates, UNN has about 18,000 students, ESUT about 15,000 and Caritas University about 1,600, which gives an estimated total population of 34,600 students. University students are among the most active social media users, particularly on TikTok, and are therefore well placed to provide relevant information on the platform's influence on social discourse.

Sample Size

The sample size was determined with the Australian Sample Size Calculator, which gave a sample of 381 respondents at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This is close to the 379 to 380 respondents suggested by the table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for populations of 30,000 to 40,000.

Findings and Discussion

This study examined the influence of TikTok and Nigerian TikTokers on social discourse among selected university students in Enugu State. It was anchored on Technological Determinism and Uses and Gratifications theories, and data were collected from 381 undergraduates of UNN, ESUT and Caritas University, Enugu, through a descriptive survey. The major findings were as follows:

1. Students of UNN, ESUT and Caritas University, Enugu have a high level of exposure to TikTok content related to social issues.
2. Nigerian TikTokers significantly influence students' perceptions and opinions on social discourse.
3. There is a significant relationship between students' TikTok usage and their engagement in conversations on cultural, political and societal issues.
4. TikTok serves as an effective platform for students' participation in social discourse.

Exposure to TikTok Content on Social Issues

The first finding is that students at the three universities were well exposed to TikTok, and that they frequently engaged with content on everyday social issues. These included how to speak, how to dance, how to sell their pictures and videos, and how to market chosen products through online advertising. The study also found that students spent between four and five hours daily on the platform. This agrees with Nwafor and Nnaemeka (2023), who found that undergraduates at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu

University were heavy TikTok users. Falope et al. (2025), however, found that heavy use did not necessarily amount to addiction, so high exposure should not be taken to mean dependence.

Influence of Nigerian TikTokers

The second finding is that Nigerian TikTokers, as influencers, strongly shape the perceptions and opinions that students at the three universities hold on social issues. This supports the view that creators with large followings act as opinion leaders, and it is consistent with evidence from other African countries that creators and political actors use TikTok to shape young people's views (Schoon & Bosch, 2024; Ureke, 2024). The influence is not always positive. Ekwugha and Okorie (2025) found that TikTok trends promoted nudity among undergraduates in Anambra State, and Ajayi-Ayodele (2025) found that exposure to TikTok content led students to imitate Western dressing and eating habits. This study covered only three universities, but similar patterns may exist in other Nigerian universities and polytechnics.

TikTok Use and Engagement in Social Conversations

The third finding is that students' TikTok use is significantly related to their engagement in conversations on cultural, political and societal issues, and that students take part in such conversations frequently. From the viewpoint of technological determinism, this suggests that the design of the platform, with its short videos, trends and algorithmic recommendation, puts social issues in front of students and invites them to respond. A significant relationship does not by itself show that TikTok causes this engagement, however. Students who are already interested in public affairs may also seek out such content, and Uwalaka (2021) found that political efficacy and protest experience predicted students' political participation more strongly than social media use did. The result should therefore be taken as showing a link between TikTok use and engagement, and not as proof that the platform alone produces it.

TikTok as a Platform for Participation in Social Discourse

The fourth finding is that TikTok serves as an effective platform for students' participation in social discourse. This is in line with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which holds that users choose media to meet their needs, and with earlier work showing that students use TikTok for self-expression, social interaction and information (Nwafor & Nnaemeka, 2023; Omar & Dequan, 2020). Other studies show that TikTok can support informed discussion of public issues in Nigeria (Nwafor et al., 2024) and that it gives young people room for political expression (Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2023). The long hours that students spend on the platform give them many chances to join such discussions, although time spent does not by itself show the quality of the discourse. As the studies of Spanish and Peruvian politicians show, a platform built around entertainment can also turn serious issues into "politainment" and limit two-way exchange (Cervi & Marín-Lladó, 2021; Cervi et al., 2023).

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, the study concludes that students of UNN, ESUT and Caritas University, Enugu have a high level of exposure to TikTok content related to social issues. Nigerian TikTokers significantly influence students' perceptions and opinions on social discourse, students' TikTok use is significantly related to their engagement in conversations on cultural, political and societal issues, and TikTok serves as an effective platform for their participation in social discourse. TikTok therefore influences the social discourse of university students in Enugu State, and this influence can help or harm constructive public conversation, depending on how the platform is used.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. Educational institutions and relevant stakeholders should take advantage of the platform by creating and promoting credible social, civic and educational content that can improve students' understanding of contemporary societal issues.

2. Content creators should be encouraged to uphold ethical standards, verify information before sharing it and promote responsible discussion of social issues. Regulatory bodies and media literacy advocates should also step up efforts to reduce the spread of misleading or harmful content on the platform.
3. Youth organisations and civil society groups should use TikTok as a channel for constructive dialogue, civic education and informed participation in issues that affect society.
4. Government agencies, non-governmental organisations, educational institutions and development partners should include the platform in their communication and public engagement strategies, so as to reach young people more effectively and encourage meaningful participation in social and national development discussions.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study adds to knowledge in two ways. First, it provides local empirical evidence on the influence of TikTok and Nigerian TikTokers on social discourse among university students in Enugu State, and so helps to address the limited Nigerian literature on the subject. Second, it shows that students of UNN, ESUT and Caritas University are highly exposed to TikTok content on social issues, which supports the growing role of social media platforms as sources of information and public discourse among young people.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The study has some limitations. It covered three universities in one state and relied on self-reported survey data collected at one point in time, so its findings cannot be generalised to all Nigerian students or taken as proof of cause and effect. Future studies could include universities in other regions, combine surveys with interviews or content analysis of creators' videos to examine the quality of the discourse itself, and follow students over time to show how their engagement changes.

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