

Fossil Fuel Crisis And Opinion On Twitter In Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examines the influence of Twitter (X) discourse on public opinion regarding Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis, focusing on platforms like Twitter (X). Guided by two objectives, it analyse the extent to which Twitter (X) platforms influence public perception of Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis, assess whether digital discourse on Twitter(X) fosters a unified mass opinion. Drawing on *Framing Theory* and *Public Sphere Theory*, the study positions social media as both a narrative-shaping tool and a space for civic engagement. Using a survey research design, data was collected from 340 respondents. Findings show that social media significantly informs public understanding, with users favouring digital platforms over traditional media. However, its impact on changing attitudes or emotional responses is limited. While hashtags and cross-platform discussions help build shared narratives, campaigns and Twitter groups show weaker influence in promoting unified action. Polarization is driven by sensational posts and conflicting views, which reduce trust and hinder balanced discourse. Key challenges include misinformation, biased reporting, and algorithm-driven echo chambers, though digital literacy is not widely seen as a barrier. In conclusion, social media plays a dual role informing and connecting the public while also contributing to fragmentation. Strategic communication, inclusive engagement, and multi-stakeholder collaboration are essential to enhance its positive impact on Nigeria's energy discourse.

Keywords: Fossil Fuel, Crisis, Opinion, Twitter.

INTRODUCTION

“Social media refers to computer-mediated technologies that enable individuals to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and opinions in virtual communities and networks” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011) explain that social media platforms include social networking sites, micro-blogging sites, and video-sharing sites, and have become integral to daily life. According to the Pew Research Center (2021), “over 70% of adults in the United States use social media, with younger adults being the most frequent users”. “Social media is often used for personal communication, entertainment, news consumption, and political engagement” (Gillespie, 2018). Social media has also become a powerful tool for social and political activism, as illustrated by movements such as #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, and #BringBackOurGirls (Jenkins et al., 2016). Nevertheless, social media has also been associated with negative outcomes, including the spread of misinformation and disinformation, online harassment and hate speech, and the erosion of personal privacy and digital security (Pariser, 2011).

“Mass opinion is shaped by a range of factors, including personal experiences, social networks, cultural values, and the media” (Dahlgren, 2005). For example, individuals who are exposed to different forms of media, such as newspapers, television, and social media, are likely to be influenced by the messages and opinions that they encounter (McChesney, 1999). Mass opinion can also be shaped by social movements and civil society organizations, which often use public opinion research and media campaigns to advocate for policy change (Burstein, 1998). Mass opinion can have a significant impact on public policy and decision-making processes. In a democratic society, mass opinion is often seen as a form of “popular sovereignty,” in which the will of the people is expressed through elections, referendums, and other forms of political participation (Schattschneider, 1960). In other political systems, mass opinion can be a force for social change, as in the case of nonviolent revolutions and mass movements for social justice (Kubik & Morell, 2006).

In contemporary society, social media serves as a vital channel for sharing information, exchanging ideas, and shaping public opinion on a wide range of issues, including the fossil fuel crisis. According to Kim and Kim (2020), “social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram provide opportunities for individuals to engage in public discourse and shape the narrative around important societal issues, such as climate change, energy policy, and environmental justice”. As the fossil fuel crisis continues to unfold, social media platforms have become a key battleground for competing narratives and perspectives. On the one hand, environmental activists, scientists, and concerned citizens are using social media to raise awareness about the impacts of fossil fuel use on climate change, air pollution, and public health (Zarecor et al., 2019). On the other hand, fossil fuel companies and their supporters are using social media to promote their interests and shape public opinion (Martínez-Botas et al., 2018). The role of social

media in shaping mass opinion on the fossil fuel crisis is significant because of the platform's capacity to reach large audiences, amplify messages, and create echo chambers of opinion.

According to Edelson et al. (2017), social media algorithms can reinforce existing beliefs and worldviews by promoting content that user are likely to agree with, which can lead to the polarization of opinions and the formation of "filter bubbles" that reinforce ideological echo chambers. This polarization can make it difficult for individuals to engage in constructive dialogue and consensus-building on complex issues, such as the fossil fuel crisis. Despite the challenges posed by social media polarization, there are chances to use social media to promote constructive dialogue and consensus-building on the fossil fuel crisis. One approach is to use social media platforms to amplify diverse voices and perspectives, rather than simply reinforcing existing beliefs and worldviews (Lee & Wilson, 2019). "For example, social media platforms can be used to promote the perspectives of marginalized communities who are disproportionately impacted by fossil fuel pollution, such as low-income communities, communities of colour, and indigenous communities" (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Another approach to promoting constructive dialogue on the fossil fuel crisis is to focus on fact-based discourse and evidence-based policymaking. According to Vosoughi et al. (2018), "the spread of misinformation and disinformation on social media can be a significant barrier to effective policymaking and public engagement on complex issues like the fossil fuel crisis". To address this challenge, social media platforms can implement fact-checking tools and algorithms that prioritize accurate information and promote evidence-based decision-making (Fugelsang et al., 2020). A third approach to promoting constructive dialogue on the fossil fuel crisis is to engage in deliberative democracy, which involves bringing together diverse stakeholders to engage in structured, facilitated dialogue on complex issues (Cohen & Chavez, 2016).

Fossil fuel refers to a "broad class of energy sources that are formed from the remains of plants and animals that lived millions of years ago" (Meyer & Ruzicka, 2009; Pearson & Sass, 2004). These fossilized remains, composed primarily of carbon, hydrogen, and other elements, underwent geological processes that transformed them into fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas (Schurr & Netschert, 1960; Romero, 2016). "The use of fossil fuels dates back to ancient civilizations, where coal was used for heating and cooking" (Smil, 2007). The modern era of fossil fuel use began with the Industrial Revolution, which relied on coal to power steam engines and other early machinery (Landes, 1983; Wrigley, 1988). The discovery and exploitation of oil in the late 19th century directed to the rise of the petroleum industry and the widespread use of gasoline, diesel, and other petroleum products for transportation and power generation (Yergin, 1991; Dilworth, 1993).

"The widespread use of fossil fuels has led to significant economic development and improved standards of living in many parts of the world" (World Bank, 2015). However, the dependence on fossil fuels has come with significant costs. "The burning of fossil fuels releases large amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere, which traps heat and contributes to climate change" (Svante Arrhenius, 1896; IPCC, 2007). Other emissions, such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, and sulfur dioxide, can cause health problems, acid rain, and other negative impacts (Health Effects Institute, 2010; IPCC, 2014). In recent years, there has been growing awareness of the negative impacts of fossil fuels and a push towards cleaner and more sustainable energy sources (Kemp, 2006; Bloomberg, 2018). "Governments and businesses are increasingly committing to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and transition to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower" (IEA, 2020; IRENA, 2021).

Nonetheless, shifting toward a low-carbon economy presents considerable hurdles. Fossil fuels continue to be the primary energy source in many regions, and adopting cleaner alternatives demands substantial financial commitments. The transition away from fossil fuels is not only a technical challenge but also a social and political one. Many communities and regions that have historically relied on fossil fuel extraction and use face significant economic and social disruptions as they shift towards cleaner energy sources (Gorelick et al., 2014; Hausmann et al., 2019). Moreover, the fossil fuel industry is politically powerful and has resisted efforts to reduce dependence on its products (Hoffman, 2011; McKibben, 2012). Although these challenges persist, social media offers valuable opportunities to drive positive change in addressing Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis. One opportunity is to use social media to create new channels for civic engagement and advocacy, such as online petitions, crowd funding campaigns, and digital storytelling platforms (Akinnola et al., 2017). "Another opportunity is to use social media to bridge the gap between citizens and decision-makers, by providing a platform for citizens to share their concerns and recommendations with policymakers and government officials" (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Despite being Africa's top oil producer with abundant fossil fuel reserves, Nigeria has long faced a persistent paradox. The country faces recurring fuel crises marked by scarcity, subsidy controversies, and soaring pump prices. These crises have not only disrupted economic activities but have also triggered widespread public discontent. In recent years, social media platforms like *Twitter* (X), *Facebook*, and *Instagram* have emerged as powerful arenas for shaping and amplifying mass opinion on these issues, often influencing public discourse and even policy responses. The lack of consensus in online discourse ranging from support for subsidy removal to strong opposition suggests a complex interplay between digital expression and public perception. This ambiguity presents

a gap in understanding how social media influences collective opinion formation and whether it contributes to a unified stance or deepens on fossil fuel issues in Nigeria. To understand if the untailored opinions of the masses has in anyway shaped the perception of the masses on fossil fuel crisis in Nigeria.

Nigeria's fossil fuel sector remains deeply entrenched in the country's economic framework, yet its operation is riddled with ecological damage, corruption, and social disparity. According to a report by Vanguard Nigeria, successive Nigerian governments have spent over \$21 billion on rehabilitating state-owned refineries. Despite these massive investments, the refineries remain largely non-functional, prompting continued reliance on imported fuel at high costs. While most conventional media outfits may seek to continue with a sensational journalist style on the fossil fuel crisis, the researcher observed that these reports rarely provide platforms for mass opinion or interactive engagement. Most coverage remains top-down focusing on elite narratives, political statements, or sanitized economic summaries without capturing the voices and realities of the people most impacted. Social media, by contrast, has emerged as a grassroots outlet for storytelling, protest, and digital activism.

The removal of fuel subsidies in May 2023 by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu sparked a nationwide uproar, with millions of Nigerians taking to social media to express frustration over rising living costs and perceived government insensitivity. A study by Ezegwu et al. (2023) found that over 60% of social media posts on the subsidy removal carried negative sentiments, with users criticizing the policy as "anti-poor" and "economically destabilizing". This digital backlash illustrates how social media has become a barometer of public sentiment, capable of mobilizing opinion and shaping national narratives. Viral posts may prioritize sensationalism over substance, and trending hashtags may overshadow nuanced realities. This duality may make it difficult to gauge authentic mass opinion and formulate policies that reflect lived truths. Without a clear understanding of how *Twitter* can shape public perception and how that perception aligns with the lived experiences of affected Nigerians, efforts to reform the fossil fuel sector may continue to miss the mark.

Objectives of the Study

This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of social media messages and digital discourse on the fossil fuel crisis in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on how they shape public perception and influence civic engagement. The research will be anchored on these four key objectives to:

1. analyse the extent to which *Twitter* (X) platforms influence public perception of Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis.
2. assess whether digital discourse on *Twitter*(X) fosters a unified mass opinion.

Research Questions

1. To what extent which *Twitter* (X) platforms influence public perception of Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis?
2. How digital discourses on *Twitter*(X) foster a unified mass opinion?

Scope of the Study

This research was defined by specific geographical, demographic, periodic, and ideological boundaries to ensure a focused and coherent investigation into the issue of fossil fuel crisis in Nigeria. Geographically, the study will concentrate on social media users within Rivers State, Nigeria; with particular emphasis on Port Harcourt an oil-producing hub significantly impacted by fuel policy decisions and energy infrastructure challenges. Demographically, the research will focus on active social media users aged 18 to 45 years, comprising youths, civil society advocates, and working-class Nigerians who frequently engage in digital conversations related to national policy and economic issues.

periodically, the study will cover a ten-year period from 2014 to 2024, capturing a timeline that includes major events such as recurring fuel scarcity, infrastructural breakdowns, environmental protests, and the 2023 removal of fuel subsidies. This timeframe ensures recency and relevance, reflecting evolving public sentiment and technological shifts in communication. Ideologically, the study is positioned to evaluate how *Twitter*(X) serve as instruments for public discourse, grassroots mobilization, and opinion shaping. It will investigate the extent to which online narratives either align with or diverge from conventional media portrayals of the fossil fuel crisis, and how these digital expressions influence civic engagement, policy critique, and perceptions of accountability.

Operational Definition of Terms

Twitter(X): *Twitter*(X) refers to interactive platforms that allow users to interact, share information, and involve in discussion on societal issues.

Opinion: Opinion denotes the collective perspectives formed by individuals with substantial knowledge and critical understanding of societal issues.

Fossil Fuels: Fossil fuels in Nigeria refer to carbon-based energy sources like petrol and diesel, whose extraction, pricing, and distribution by government and private actors influence economic conditions and spark public discourse, especially on social media platforms.

Crisis: A crisis in this context refers to a prolonged and disruptive condition in Nigeria's fossil fuel sector marked by fuel scarcity, price instability and public dissatisfaction that significantly affects economic activities, social welfare, and digital civic engagement.

Theoretical Framework

Framing Theory

Framing theory, as first articulated by Erving Goffman (1974), views social reality as the product of interpretive schemata that organize experience and guide understanding. A frame selects certain aspects of reality and makes them more salient, shaping how audiences perceive, interpret, and respond to issues. Robert Entman (1993) later refined this by describing framing as "the strategic process of defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies all through carefully chosen language and images". Richard Harvey Brown (2006) applied framing theory to political discourse, showing how competing frames of democracy, nationalism, and market liberalism are constructed and reinforced through speeches, news coverage, and policy debates. For instance, the democracy frame often emphasizes participation, rights, and legitimacy, leading citizens to view certain institutions as more authentically democratic even when underlying processes may be flawed. Similarly, neoliberalism is frequently framed as an uncontested pathway to growth and efficiency, marginalizing alternative views or critiques of market-driven policies. John (2000) extended framing analysis to the experience of mobility in contemporary societies. He argues that both physical travel and virtual connectivity are embedded in "mobility frames" that influence how people understand place, belonging, and movement. The "nowhere" frame, for example, highlights feelings of dislocation in an era of constant online and real-world flux, while the freedom through travel frame valorizes mobility as a form of self-discovery and escape.

Zygmunt Bauman (2005) used framing theory to interpret liquid modernity, a condition marked by rapid change and uncertainty. In such a world, people cling to frames of identity, community, or security that promise order but can shift fluidly under globalization and technological upheaval. These frames provide temporary anchor points, even as they must be continually renegotiated. On climate change and fossil fuels, framing theory helps explain how denialist narratives gain traction on social media. Algorithms amplify certain frames casting environmental regulation as economically disastrous or portraying certain groups as environmental extremists thus reinforcing echo chambers where misinformation thrives. Political actors and traditional media also deploy frames that pit short-term economic interests against long-term planetary health, stalling collective action.

Hence, framing theory is highly relevant to this study of the fossil fuel crisis in Nigeria. It illuminates how online communities coalesce around specific environmental frames curating, remixing, and amplifying messages that support their preferred narratives on energy policy and government accountability. By revealing which frames dominate, and how they're constructed through language and imagery, this approach can shed light on the dynamics of public opinion, inform more effective messaging strategies, and ultimately contribute to policy shifts that better balance economic and environmental goals.

Public Sphere Theory

Public sphere theory originated in the 1960s through the work of German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who sought to explain how public discourse and collective opinion influence political and societal dynamics. He conceptualized the public sphere as a space where individuals participate in reasoned, critical discussions on social and political matters an activity he deemed vital to the health of democratic systems. Over time, the theory has evolved and been adapted to diverse settings, including the realm of social media, where it helps illuminate the platforms' role in shaping public sentiment and political dialogue.

The interplay between public sphere theory and social media is intricate and layered, presenting both opportunities and challenges for shaping and expressing public opinion. Social media platforms have the potential to broaden the scope of the public sphere by amplifying a wide range of voices and viewpoints. However, they can also foster division and intensify polarization, as algorithm-driven content and echo chambers tend to reinforce existing beliefs and biases.

Fraser (1992) argued that Habermas's conception of the public sphere failed to account for the ways in which power and domination shape public discourse, particularly for women and marginalized groups. Fraser proposed an alternative conception of the public sphere, which she termed the subaltern counter public, which refers to groups that are excluded from the dominant public sphere but nonetheless engage in critical discourse and cultural production in their own communities. She argued that these subaltern counter publics could serve as sites of resistance to dominant norms and practices, and could provide a basis for broader political and social change.

Fraser's work has had a significant impact on debates about public discourse and political participation, particularly with regard to issues of gender, race, and class. One of the key implications of Fraser's critique of Habermas's public sphere theory is the importance of recognizing the role of power and exclusion in shaping public discourse. Fraser argued that the idealized Habermasian public sphere ignored the fact that power and domination were often exercised through the denial of voice or visibility to marginalized groups, creating a situation in which the dominant discourse could present itself as universal and objective, while excluding and silencing alternative viewpoints. Warner (2002) proposed a pluralistic approach to the public sphere, arguing that different publics or counterpublics could coexist, each with its own set of norms, values, and forms of communication. Warner's work on the public sphere has also been influential in shaping debates about identity politics and cultural studies, particularly with regard to the concept of "subcultures" and their relationship to mainstream culture.

Warner argues that subcultures are not simply oppositional or resistant to mainstream culture, but rather offer alternative forms of public discourse and community that can enrich and complicate our understanding of public life. In addition, Warner's work on the public sphere has been influential in shaping debates about the role of new media technologies, such as the internet and social media, in shaping political discourse and social movements. Michael Schudson's 2007 contribution to public sphere theory offers a critical reexamination of traditional views by emphasizing the evolving interplay between media and democracy in modern society. Schudson contends that Habermas's concept of the public sphere as a realm for rational and democratic dialogue is overly idealized and does not adequately reflect the intricate and diverse character of public discourse in contemporary society. In contrast, Schudson advocates for a more practical and inclusive perspective, recognizing the influential roles of media and popular culture in shaping both public conversation and political engagement.

In the perspective of social media and the fossil fuel crisis, public sphere theory highlights the importance of creating spaces for rational, informed, and constructive discussion, where multiple perspectives can be considered and debated. This includes efforts to promote fact-based information, critical thinking skills, and civil discourse on social media platforms, as well as attempts to counter misinformation and disinformation. Public sphere theory simultaneously acknowledges the critical need to confront the deeper power structures and social disparities that shape and impact the nature of public discourse.

The influence of social media on public opinion and political dialogue has sparked vigorous debate and sustained scholarly inquiry. While some researchers contend that social media has significantly transformed the structure and purpose of the public sphere, others maintain that conventional media and established modes of political communication still hold sway. Regardless of where the balance lies, grasping how discourse unfolds on social media platforms is essential for tackling multifaceted challenges like the fossil fuel crisis. Hence, the Public Sphere Theory is appropriate to this study as it emphasizes the role of open, participatory discourse in shaping public understanding and collective action. In the context of the fossil fuel crisis in Nigeria, social media platforms serve as dynamic arenas where citizens engage in dialogue, share experiences, and critically evaluate policy decisions. This study anticipates that participants will recognize the value of such discourse not merely as a form of expression, but as a catalyst for informed opinion and civic engagement. Through active participation in these digital public spheres, individuals contribute to shaping narratives that can influence policy outcomes and promote social accountability.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research design to collect data from respondents. A survey research design is the most suitable methodology for this study, as it enables the researcher to gather a representative overview of individuals, events, or circumstances related to the connection between social media and public opinion in Nigeria. The population for this study comprises Nigerian adults aged 18 years and above who actively use social media platforms and have engaged with content related to the fossil fuel crisis. According to DataReportal (2025), Nigeria had approximately 38,700,000 active *Twitter(X)* users as of January 2025, representing a significant segment of the population involved in digital discourse. The sample size for this study was determined using Taro Yamane formula for estimating a population proportion. Therefore, the sample size is 400 out of the population of 38,700,000 persons respectively will be adopted for the study.

This study adopted a purposive sampling technique to select the 400 respondents who are most relevant to the research objectives. Given the focus on public opinion shaped through social media discourse, the sample will consist of Nigerian adults (aged 18 and above) who are active users of *Twitter(X)* and who have engaged with content related to the fossil fuel crisis, fuel subsidy debates, or energy policy discussions. Respondents were identified based on their visible interaction with relevant hashtags, posts, or comment threads. This non-probability sampling method ensures that only individuals with informed perspectives and digital engagement on the topic are included, thereby enhancing the depth and relevance of the data collected. The technique is particularly suitable for studies exploring nuanced social phenomena within specific online communities. The data analysis was undertaken in two phases beginning with the analysis of demographic data using tables, frequencies and simple percentages. Secondly, weighted means score

will be used to answer the research questions, the mean will be calculated by using nominal value to the response categories: strongly agree (SA) 4, agree (A) 3, disagree (D) 2 and strongly disagree (SD) 1. The criterion mean will be achieved thus;

$$\text{Criterion mean} = \frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4}$$

$$\text{Criterion mean} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$$

Decision rule for the research questions was based on criterion mean of 2.50. Any mean response of 2.50 and above is regarded as agreed and will be accepted while mean response rating less than 2.50 is regarded as disagree and will be rejected.

Data Presentation

As highlighted in the previous chapter, a total of 400 copies of questionnaire were administered to X users (formerly twitter) using Google survey form, although 340 copies of the questionnaire were successfully retrieved.

Section A of the item on the questionnaire focus on the demographic data to respondents.

Table 4.1:1 Sex Respondents

Options	Response	Percentage %
Male	210	61.76%
Female	130	38.24%
Total	340	100%

The data shows that 61.76% of respondents were male, indicating men are more engaged in discussions about Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis on social media (*Twitter X*). This suggests a gender gap in public opinion shaping, highlighting the need for more inclusive dialogue across platforms.

Table 4.1.2: Age Range of Respondents

Options	Response	Percentage %
18-25	162	47.65%
25-35	102	30%
35 and above	76	22.35%
Total	340	100%

The data shows that 47.65% of respondents were aged 18–25, making young adults the most active group in shaping mass opinion on Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis via social media (*Twitter X*). Their dominance suggests that online discourse is largely driven by youth, with older age groups participating less actively.

Table 4.1.3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Options	Response	Percentage %

Undergraduate	140	41.2%
Graduate	125	36.8%
Post Graduate	75	22%
Total	340	100%

The data shows that 41.2% of respondents were undergraduates, indicating that those with lower academic qualifications are the most active in expressing opinions on Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis via social media (*Twitter X*). This suggests that younger, possibly student populations are driving much of the online discourse.

Research Question 1: To what extent which Twitter (X) platforms influence public perception of Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis?

Table 4.1.4: Highlighting how social media shapes public views on Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis.

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Total	Mean	Decision
		(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		(\bar{X})	
1	<i>Twitter(X)</i> content exerts significant influence on understanding of Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis.	171	112	30	27	1107	3.25	Agreed
2	Posts and discussions on twitter (X) are relied upon more than traditional media for information about the fossil fuel crisis.	130	142	40	28	1054	3.1	Agreed
3	Information circulated on <i>Twitter(X)</i> prompts changes in attitudes toward government energy policies.	65	95	110	70	835	2.45	Disagree
4	Visuals (e.g., infographics, videos) about fuel subsidy issues on social media heighten perceived seriousness of the crisis.	55	61	175	49	802	2.35	Disagree
5	Online influencer endorsements regarding fossil fuel reforms influence individual viewpoints on the crisis.	60	102	140	38	864	2.54	Agreed

The data shows that social media significantly shapes public understanding of Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis, with strong agreement on its influence and preference over traditional media. However, its impact on changing attitudes and emotional responses such as through visuals or influencer content is less convincing, with respondents largely disagreeing on those fronts. Overall, social media informs perception more than it transforms it.

Research Question 2: How digital discourses on Twitter(X) foster a unified mass opinion?

Table 4.1.5: Showing how digital discourse on Twitter (X) platform fosters a unified mass opinion on the fossil fuel crisis.

S/N	Items	SA (4)	A (3)	SD (2)	D (1)	Total	Mean (\bar{X})	Decision
1	Hashtags and trending topics on <i>Twitter (X)</i> contribute to the formation of a collective narrative about Nigeria's fossil fuel challenges.	172	130	22	16	1138	3.34	Agreed
2	Engagement with <i>Twitter (X)</i> campaigns on fuel subsidy removal fosters a sense of collective purpose.	55	58	176	51	797	2.34	Disagree
3	<i>Twitter (X)</i> groups focused on energy policy facilitate consensus on solutions to the fossil fuel crisis.	45	53	210	32	791	2.32	Disagree
4	Online petitions and coordinated digital posts promote a unified public stance on environmental justice.	95	102	75	68	904	2.65	Agreed
5	Cross-platform discussions (e.g., <i>Facebook</i> reflections of <i>Twitter (X)</i> debates) strengthen common opinions about the fossil fuel crisis.	101	112	90	37	957	2.81	Agreed

The data suggests that digital discourse especially through hashtags, trending topics, and cross-platform discussions helps shape a unified public view on Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis. While online petitions also support collective stances, campaigns and Twitter groups show weaker influence in building consensus or shared purpose. Overall, social media fosters shared narratives more than unified action.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: To what extent which Twitter (X) platforms influence public perception of Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis?

In today's Nigeria, social media has become a powerful force in shaping how citizens perceive the on-going fossil fuel crisis. From bustling cities to rural communities, *Twitter (X)* platform have replaced traditional media as the go-to sources for information, debate, and public sentiment. The data reflects this shift clearly: most respondents agree that social media content strongly influences their understanding of the crisis, and many rely more on digital discussions than on newspapers or television broadcasts.

Yet, while social media informs, it doesn't always transform. The same data shows that emotional engagement through visuals, influencer posts, or campaign endorsements doesn't carry the same weight. Nigerians may scroll past infographics or watch videos, but these rarely change their core beliefs or attitudes toward government energy policies. Instead, people seem to use social media more for awareness than persuasion. The study by Ezegwu, Chukwuemeka, Ezeji, and Chibueze (2023) aligns with the findings of this research, as it demonstrates that social media platforms particularly Twitter (X) and Facebook play a significant role in shaping public discourse around Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis. While the platforms effectively raise awareness and amplify public sentiment, both studies agree that they have limited influence in changing individual beliefs or attitudes toward government energy policies.

This tells a compelling story: social media in Nigeria is a mirror, reflecting the public's concerns, frustrations, and hopes about the fossil fuel crisis. It spreads information quickly, sparks conversation, and builds collective awareness. But when it comes to shifting hearts and minds, its influence is more subtle. The platforms inform the people but the people still decide what to believe.

Research Question 2: How digital discourses on Twitter(X) foster a unified mass opinion?

In the digital landscape of Nigeria, social media platforms have become powerful arenas for shaping collective thought. The data reveals that hashtags, trending topics, and cross-platform conversations especially those bouncing on *Twitter (X)* play a central role

in building a shared narrative around the fossil fuel crisis. These tools allow Nigerians from different regions and backgrounds to rally around common themes, voice frustrations, and amplify concerns about fuel subsidy removal and energy reforms. The study by Ojumu (2025) aligns with the findings of this research, as it explores how Nigerians used social media particularly *Twitter (X)* to engage in public discourse during the Borno flood crisis. Similar to the fossil fuel crisis, Ojumu found that hashtags and trending narratives helped build a shared sense of concern and urgency across diverse user groups. However, the study also revealed that while digital platforms fostered widespread awareness and emotional solidarity, they did not lead to coordinated mass action or unified policy demands. This supports the conclusion that social media in Nigeria connects voices and amplifies sentiment, but translating that into unified public action remains a challenge.

However, not all forms of digital engagement carry equal weight. While online petitions show some success in promoting unified stances, campaigns and Twitter groups appear less effective in forging consensus or a shared sense of purpose. This suggests that while Nigerians are willing to engage and express solidarity, deeper coordination and unified action remain elusive. Ultimately, social media in Nigeria fosters shared understanding more than collective mobilization. It connects voices, spreads awareness, and builds momentum but translating that into unified public action is still a work in progress. The digital discourse is loud, widespread, and influential but unity, it seems, is still forming in fragments.

Conclusion

This study underscores the pivotal role of social media in shaping public discourse on Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis. Through the lens of Framing Theory and Public Sphere Theory, it becomes evident that Twitter (X) platform is not just channel of communication they are arenas where narratives are constructed, contested, and amplified.

The findings reveal that while social media effectively informs public perception and facilitates shared narratives, it struggles to foster unified action or shift deeply held beliefs. Instead, it often contributes to polarization, driven by sensational content and algorithmic echo chambers. Misinformation, biased reporting, and fragmented discourse remain significant challenges, even as digital literacy proves less of a barrier than expected.

Recommendations

To enhance the impact of social media discourse on public opinion regarding Nigeria's fossil fuel crisis, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Strengthen Strategic Communication on Social Media Platform: To improve public understanding of the fossil fuel crisis, government agencies, media organizations, and advocacy groups should adopt targeted digital strategies that prioritize clarity, consistency, and accessibility. This includes using local languages, relatable formats, and mobile-friendly content on Twitter (X) platform. Such efforts will ensure that energy policy messages resonate with diverse audiences and foster informed engagement nationwide.

2. Foster Unified Narratives through Coordinated Digital Campaigns: To build a more cohesive mass opinion, stakeholders should design cross-platform campaigns anchored on shared hashtags, synchronized messaging, and interactive features such as polls and live discussions. By encouraging collaboration among influencers, civil society groups, and media outlets, these campaigns can amplify common narratives and reduce fragmentation in public discourse.

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