Analysis of Social Networks as Forums for Political Debates in Tanzania: A Case of Chama Cha Mapinduzi and Chadema Tanzania Twitter Platforms

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author JG designed the study and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author FN managed the manuscript and confirmed the literature searches. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

The rise of social media platforms has transformed the way political debates are conducted in Tanzania. Among the social media platforms, Twitter is the most popular social network in Tanzania, and it has become an important tool for political communication and debates. Currently, political parties, including CCM and CHADEMA, have an active Twitter account, which they use to engage with their supporters and the general public. The paper presents part of the findings of the study on *Assessment of Social Networks as Forums for Political Debates in Tanzania, A Case of Chama Cha Mapinduzi and Chadema Tanzania Twitter Platforms.* This paper examines types of issues discussed on social media platforms, specifically focusing on Twitter accounts of Chadema

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Tanzania and Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). It analyses the content of their posts, engagement levels, and the extent to which various issues are addressed. By studying these two prominent Tanzanian political parties, the paper aims to provide insights into the key political issues that garner attention and attraction on social media in the Tanzanian context. The paper uses Habermas' theory of public sphere to analyse political discussions on the two Twitter accounts. The paper used the qualitative content analysis technique to explore the two Twitter accounts from January to March 2023. The study found that the two Twitter accounts have become a significant avenue for public discourse, enabling individuals to engage with political issues, express opinions, and connect with others. The discussions cover a wide range of topics, from local to global matters, and often include debates on policies, elections, governance, social justice, and more. The paper further found that there is freedom to obtain information that is not limited, and interaction in social media also encourages young voters to participate in political debates. The paper recommends that political parties invest more in social media to allow their members to engage in political discussions and debates to widen the horizon of democracy.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the International Centre for Research on Human Society (ICRHS, 2018), the emergence of political communications in their earliest and most rudimentary form may be traced back to the development of representative democracies in the 18th and 19th centuries. The connection between followers and politicians was established by several means, including electoral canvassing, town hall meetings, the distribution of printed materials such as flyers and posters, and local gatherings and candidate hustings. These activities were often complemented by the use of print media, such as newsletters, magazines, journals, and newspapers.

Since its presence in 1997, social media have become coordinating tools for nearly all of the world's political movements. According to the Global Data Report Portal [1], several countries have effectively used social media to promote politics and engage with citizens. Here are a few notable examples: United States: Social media played a pivotal role in Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns, helping him connect with younger voters and mobilize supporters. Additionally, former President Donald Trump's use of Twitter gained significant attention during his tenure. India: Indian politicians, including Prime Minister, have leveraged social media platforms to directly communicate with citizens, share updates, and mobilize support. Modi's use of platforms such as Twitter has helped him maintain a strong online presence. Brazil: Jair Bolsonaro, the President of Brazil, relied heavily on social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, during his 2018 election

campaign. He used these platforms to share his views, interact with supporters, and bypass traditional media [2-5]. Kenya: In Kenya, social media platforms such as Twitter played a central role in political discussions during elections. The #ElectionsKE hashtag trended during the 2017 general elections, with citizens using it to discuss election-related issues. Iran: Social media played a key role in the 2009 Iranian presidential election protests. Platforms such as Twitter were used to share real-time updates, photos, and videos of the protests and the government's response [2-4]. Egypt: During the Arab Spring in 2011, social media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter, played a significant role in mobilizing protests and disseminating information about political events. Ukraine: Social media was crucial in Ukraine's Euromaidan protests in 2013-2014, enabling protesters to organize, share information, and gain international support. South Korea: Social media platforms such as KakaoTalk played a role in the 2016 South Korean presidential scandal, with citizens using them to voice their opinions and demand accountability [6-9]. These examples highlight how social media has been used to engage citizens, promote political agendas, and shape public discourse in various countries around the world.

On Twitter, a wide range of political issues are discussed, reflecting the diversity of global concerns and interests. Some common types of political issues discussed on Twitter include elections and campaigns: Discussions about upcoming elections, candidates' platforms, debates, and campaign strategies are prevalent on Twitter. Policy Debates: Twitter is often used

for debating and sharing opinions on various policy topics, such as healthcare, education, taxation, immigration, and environmental regulations [10-13]. Social Justice and Human Rights: Conversations about issues related to social justice, equality, civil rights, LGBTQ+ rights, racial justice, and gender equality are frequent on the platform. International Relations: Twitter users discuss global affairs, diplomatic relations, international conflicts, and treaties, providing a platform for people from different countries to share their perspectives. Climate Change and Environmental Issues: Discussions about climate change, environmental conservation, sustainability, and related policies are common on Twitter [14-17]. Healthcare: Healthcare policies, access to healthcare services, vaccination debates, and discussions about public health crises often take place on the platform. Freedom of Speech and Censorship: Twitter itself is often a topic of discussion, with debates about freedom of speech, online censorship, and platform policies. Economic Issues: Conversations about economic policies, income inequality, job creation, trade agreements, and economic growth frequently appear on Twitter. Immigration and Refugees: Debates surrounding immigration policies, refugee crises, border security, and asylum-seeking are also common.

Discussions about counterterrorism measures, intelligence agencies, cybersecurity, and other national security topics are prevalent. Corruption and Accountability: Twitter users often discuss corruption within governments, corporate entities, and other institutions, demanding transparency and accountability. They debate cultural representation, cultural preservation, language policies, and identity politics, which are also discussed on the platform [18-21]. Discussions about technology's impact on politics, data privacy, surveillance, and the role of tech companies in society occur on Twitter. These are just a few examples of the wide array of political issues that people discuss on Twitter. The platform provides a space for individuals to voice their opinions, share information, and engage in meaningful conversations about matters that are important to them [1,22].

According to Chadwick [23]. This evolution then gives diverse effects, to which scholars quickly provide the latest analyses. The advent of social media has transformed the volume of digital podiums to link people, permitting their endless contact and cooperation and conveying their voices to a wider public. It is generally supposed that social media play an important role in spreading information and the claims of political groups.

Due to this rationale, Tanzania has witnessed the emergence of various digital political platforms, including UVCCM (Umoja wa Vijana wa Chama Cha Mapinduzi), CCM (Chama Cha Mapinduzi), Chadema in Blood (Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo), Chadema Tanzania, CHADEMA vs CCM, ACT Wazalendo Tanzania, and ACT Wazalendo UDSM (University of Dar es Salaam), among others. In contrast to organized political organizations, social networks include a variety of political personal profiles, which can be either identifiable or anonymous. One prominent account, Kigogo 2014, assumes the role of an opinion leader in holding politicians responsible for their actions. The purpose of their actions is to bring to light any discrepancies or irregularities, ensuring that the public is informed about the true state of affairs within correctional facilities. The advent of social media platforms has provided citizens with expanded opportunities to express their opinions freely and at their convenience. The advent of virtual private network (VPN) technology has significantly expanded the potential for counterpoliticians to target political parties, as it effectively conceals the origin of posted content.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF POLITICS IN TANZANIA

Tanzania, a diverse East African nation known for its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, has experienced a dynamic political landscape since gaining independence in 1961. The country has navigated a path from one-party rule to a multiparty democracy, undergoing significant political shifts and facing various challenges along the way. Tanzania's political journey was shaped by its founding president, Julius Nyerere, who embraced a philosophy of African socialism and advocated for a unified nation. During his rule, the country followed a one-party system, where the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party held a dominant position. However, in the early 1990s, as the winds of political change swept across Africa, Nyerere's successor, President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, initiated the transition to a multiparty democracy. The establishment of a multiparty political system in 1992 marked a turning point in Tanzania's political landscape. The first multiparty elections in 1995 saw CCM's victory, and Benjamin Mkapa became the first

democratically elected president. This shift paved the way for political pluralism, allowing opposition parties such as Chadema (Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo) to gain prominence and challenge the CCM's dominance. To date, the CCM has remained the ruling party in Tanzania, and the party's presidential candidate, Samia Suluhu Hassan, assumed office as president in March 2021 following the passing of President John Magufuli. Her presidency has marked a new chapter, and her leadership style and policy directions have been closely watched. Tanzania's political arena continues to be vibrant, with ongoing debates and discussions on various issues. Social media and digital platforms have played an increasingly important role in shaping public discourse, enabling citizens to engage in political conversations and express their opinions.

Despite progress towards democracy, Tanzania faces certain challenges in its political landscape: Civil Liberties: Concerns have been raised about the state of civil liberties and freedom of expression, with reports of media restrictions and limited political space for dissenting voices. Electoral Processes: Questions about the fairness and transparency of electoral processes have emerged, prompting discussions about the need for robust electoral reforms. Corruption: Corruption remains a significant concern, affecting governance and public services. Addressing this issue remains a priority for the government. Human Rights: Human rights organizations have raised concerns about human rights abuses and the protection of marginalized groups. Regional Disparities: Disparities in development and infrastructure between urban and rural areas persist, posing challenges to equitable governance [24]. In conclusion, Tanzania's political journey is a tale of transformation from one-party rule to a multiparty democracy. While challenges persist, the country's commitment to democratic values, social progress, and political inclusivity remains a foundation for a more vibrant and resilient nation.

Checking the kinds of political issues discussed on social media can offer valuable insights and benefits for both individuals and society as a whole. According to various scholars [25,24, 22,26,27]. There are a few reasons why it is important to monitor and understand political discussions on social media: Public Opinion Gauge: Social media provides a platform for individuals to express their opinions and thoughts openly. By analysing these discussions,

researchers, policymakers, and politicians can gain a better understanding of public sentiment on various political issues. Democratic Engagement: Social media allows for direct engagement between citizens and political leaders. Monitoring these interactions can help leaders better grasp the concerns of their constituents, leading to more responsive policies and governance. Discussions on social media often reflect emerging concerns, trends, and issues that might not have received attention through traditional channels. Policymakers can use this information to identify areas that need policy adjustments or reforms. Early warning signs: Social media discussions can act as early indicators of societal tensions or public dissatisfaction. Identifying these warning signs early on can help prevent potential conflicts or crises. Accountability and Transparency: Monitoring political discussions on social media encourages transparency and accountability among public figures. It holds politicians and officials responsible for their actions and statements. Youth Engagement: Social media is a platform where younger generations are particularly active. By observing their discussions, it is possible to understand the issues that matter most to them, thus informing policies and outreach strategies. Misinformation and Disinformation: Understanding the types of political issues being discussed can also help identify instances of misinformation and disinformation. This is important for maintaining a well-informed citizenry and countering false narratives. Campaign Strategies: During election seasons, political discussions on social media can provide insights into the strategies and messaging employed by different political parties and candidates. Cross-Cultural Understanding: Social media discussions often involve participants from diverse backgrounds. By analysing these discussions, it is possible to gain insights into cross-cultural perceptions and viewpoints. Research and Academia: Social media data provide a rich source for research and analysis in fields such as political science, sociology, communication studies, and more. Social media has democratized public discourse. Monitoring political discussions helps ensure that a wide range of voices are heard and considered. In essence, checking the kind of political issues discussed on social media can contribute to a more informed, engaged, and accountable society. It allows for better communication between citizens and leaders, helps identify emerging concerns, and supports evidence-based decision-making. This paper

therefore sought to explore the kinds of political issues discussed in *Chadema Tanzania* and *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* Twitter accounts to understand how the discussions and debates are conducted, the freedom of expression accommodated and the way Habermas' theory is reflected in their debates and discussions.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative content analysis as it was studying the assessment of social media as forums for political debates in Tanzania, a case of Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) and Chama Cha Demokrasia Na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) Twitter platforms. Data were collected from two political parties' social platforms from Twitter over a period of three months for each political party between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2023 (CCM) and 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2023 (CHADEMA) by using qualitative content analysis data collection methods.

The decision was made to conduct a qualitative content analysis, as this would provide the opportunity to study the communications of the two political parties' social platforms from Twitter. Since the data that were being studied were written data, this was considered the most suitable method for analysing these data [28]. A form of qualitative content analysis is directed content analysis, which is based on existing theories and is often used to develop or extend theories [29]. Like most content analyses, it uses coding as a method, and the codes are often developed from key concepts in the theory [29]. This is a suitable strategy for this study since the main advantage of a directed content analysis is that it can support and extend existing theories [29], which was the purpose of this study. It can also be considered necessary to use a directed approach when doing a content analysis in fields with previous research, since it is unlikely that the researchers manage to have a naive perspective when previous theories in the area exist [29]. The targeted population of this study is the active users of the Twitter social network, specifically the followers of Chama Cha Mapinduzi and Chadema Tanzania Twitter accounts.

4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The findings are based on the data collected from two political parties' Twitter account platforms over a period of three months for each

political party between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2023 (Chama Cha Mapinduzi) and 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2023 (Chadema Tanzania). A total of 123 tweet updates were collected, 64 from Chama Cha Mapinduzi and 59 from Chadema Tanzania, at which each tweet was coded during the data collection. The following are the kinds of issues debated and discussed in the two Twitter accounts:

4.1 Accountability

Accountability refers to the responsibility of individuals, organizations, or institutions to answer for their actions, decisions, and performance in relation to specific goals or standards. It involves being answerable for one's behavior and the consequences that result from it. In various tweets post from both sides (Chama Cha Mapinduzi and Chadema Tanzania) contexts, accountability can have different meanings and applications. Here are a few examples:

a) Personal Accountability: This refers to taking ownership of one's actions, acknowledging mistakes, and accepting the consequences. Personal accountability involves being responsible for one's behavior, decisions, and commitments. Tweets such as "#sautiyachongolo Katibu Mkuu wa CCM Ndg. Daniel Chongolo amewaeleza wakuu wa wilaya kuwa Chama Cha Mapinduzi kinategemea matokeo chanya kwenye huduma kwa wananchi. Hivyo, wakiona chochote kile kina malalamiko, maana yake kuna mtu hajakaa kwenye eneo lake #vitendovinasauti" (translates to Secretary General of CCM Daniel Chongolo) and explained to the district heads that Chama Cha Mapinduzi depends on positive results in service to the people. Therefore, if they see anything that has a complaint, it means someone is not staying in their area).

b) Organizational Accountability: Organizations, such as businesses, government agencies, or nonprofit entities, are accountable for their actions and performance. This includes being transparent about financial matters, adhering to legal and ethical standards, and being accountable to stakeholders such as employees, customers, shareholders, or the public. Such tweet is

"KATIBU Mkuu wa (CCM) @chongolo_daniel ameagiza TANROADS kuhakikisha ndani ya mwaka mmoja michakato yote ya ujenzi wa barabara kutoka Wilayani Malinyi, Morogoro hadi Wilaya ya Namtumbo Mkoani Ruvuma unakamilika ili kufungua mawasiliano ya wananchi kutoka sehemu moja na nyingine." (In translation The Secretary General of (CCM) @chongolo_daniel has instructed TANROADS to ensure that within one year all road construction processes from Malinyi District, Morogoro to Namtumbo District in Ruvuma Region are completed to open communication between citizens from one place to another. ").

c) Public Accountability: Government institutions and officials are accountable to the public they serve. This includes being transparent in decision-making processes, providing access to information, and being answerable for the use of public resources. Such tweets include "Mwigulu na wote waliohusiska na malipo nje ya bajeti wapishe uchunguzi huru wa kilichofanyika kwenye matumizi nje ya bajeti bila ruhusa ya bunge na kuvunja sheria mbili za wizara ya fedha." Mhe. Ahobokile Mwaitenda" (in translation, "Mwigulu and all those involved in out-of-budget payments should conduct an independent investigation into what happened to out-of-budget spending without the permission of parliament and breaking two laws of the Ministry of Finance." Hon. Ahobokile Mwaitenda").

Accountability mechanisms can be formal or informal. They can include policies, regulations, monitoring systems, audits, performance evaluations, reporting structures, or oversight bodies. The purpose of accountability is to ensure transparency, trust, and the fulfillment of obligations, ultimately promoting integrity, fairness, and responsible behavior.

4.2 Constitution

A constitution is a fundamental document or set of rules that outlines the basic principles, structure, powers, and limitations of a government or organization. It serves as the supreme law of the land, establishing the framework for governance, defining the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and ensuring the separation and balance of powers. Constitutions can take different forms depending on the type of government and the country's legal traditions. Here are a few key aspects commonly found in constitutions:

(a) Fundamental Rights: Constitutions often include a section that guarantees certain fundamental rights and freedoms to individuals, such as the right to life, liberty, equality, and due process of law. Such tweets as "Nilipita gerezani natambua wapo watu wa Tunduma zaidi ya 70 nao walipitia gerezani, angalau sisi tupo hai wapo wengine ambao walikuwa wasiidizi wetu hatujui wapo wapi." Mhe. Freeman Mbowe – Tunduma" (in translation "I went through the prison and I realize that there are more than 70 people from Tunduma who also went through the prison, at least we are alive and there are others who were our helpers, we do not know where they are." Hon. Freeman Mbowe – Tunduma").

(b) Structure of Government: Constitutions outline the structure of the government, including the separation of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. They define the roles, responsibilities, and powers of each branch and may establish mechanisms for checks and balances to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful. Such tweets include "Ndugu zangu katiba yetu ya sasa imempa Rais wa nchi hii mamlaka ya kututoza kodi na kutuletea tozo na ushuru, na namna nyingine nyingi za kutunyanganya HeLa zetu. Imempa mamlaka Rais ya kuamua pesa gani itengwe kwaajili ya kitu gani." Mhe. Tundu Lissu" (in translation "Brothers, our current constitution has given the President of this country the authority to tax us and bring us charges and taxes, and many other ways to rob us of our money. It has given the President the authority to decide what money should be allocated for what purpose." Hon. Tundu Lissu").

(c) Constitutional Amendments: Procedures for amending or revising the constitution are usually outlined. This ensures that the constitution can adapt to changing circumstances and societal needs while still maintaining a rigorous process for modification. Such tweet is "Tunataka Katiba Mpya itakayohakikisha kwamba

hatutawaliwi tena na watu ambao hatujawachagua, kusiwe na mtu anaitwa DC tena." Mhe. Tundu Lissu", (in translation "We want a new constitution that will ensure that we are no longer governed by people we have not elected, there should be no one called DC again." Hon. Tundu Lissu").

Constitutions provide a framework for governance, protect individual rights, and establish the rule of law. They often reflect the values, history, and aspirations of a nation or organization. Constitutional interpretation and application are typically overseen by a judiciary to ensure that laws and government actions align with the constitutional principles and provisions.

4.3 Economic Prosperity and Trade

Economic prosperity and trade unions can have a complex relationship. Trade unions are organizations formed by workers to represent their interests, negotiate with employers on labor conditions and wages, and protect their rights in the workplace. The goals of trade unions often include improving working conditions, job security, and wages for their members. The impact of trade unions on economic prosperity can vary depending on the context and how they interact with other economic factors. Here are some key points to consider:

(a) Employment and Job Security: Some argue that rigid labor regulations and strong unions may discourage hiring and investment by making it more challenging for businesses to adapt to changing economic conditions. Conversely, others contend that trade unions can help protect workers from unfair treatment and provide stability in the labor market, which can contribute to overall economic well-being and reduce income inequality. Such tweets as "Katibu wa NEC, Itikadi na Uenezi wa CCM Ndg. @sophiamjema1 leo tarehe 20 Machi 2023 ameshiriki na kutoa salaam za Chama cha Mapinduzi katika hafla ya uzinduzi wa mradi wa Ujenzi wa Kesho bora kwa Vijana kupitia Kilimo (Building a BetterTomorrow)#kaziiendelee #kilimoBiashara" (in translation Secretary of NEC, Ideology and Propagation of CCM Ndg. @sophiamjema1 today, March 20, 2023, participated and gave the greetings of the Revolutionary Party at the launch of the project of Building a Better Tomorrow

for Youth through Agriculture (Building a Better Tomorrow). It is important to recognize that the impact of trade unions on economic prosperity is a subject of debate and can vary depending on the specific context, economic policies, and the nature of the labor market. Balancing the interests of workers, businesses, and overall economic growth is a complex task, and different countries have different models and approaches to achieve this balance.

4.4 Freedom of Religion

Freedom of religion is a fundamental human right that protects individuals' rights to practice their religion or belief system freely and without interference. It is a fundamental aspect of freedom of thought, conscience, and expression. Here are some key points related to freedom of religion:

(a) Protection of Beliefs: Freedom of religion protects individuals' right to hold any religious or nonreligious beliefs of their choice. It encompasses a wide range of religious, spiritual, or philosophical beliefs and extends to both organized religions and individual beliefs. Tweets such as "Ndg. Abdulrahman Kinana, Makamu Mwenyekiti wa CCM Bara Akihutubia viongozi wa Dini ya Kiislam, Waumini, Washiriki katika Mashindano ya Nane ya Kuhifadhi Quran Tukufu Mkoa wa Dar es Salaam yaliyoandaliwa na Taasisi ya Asw-haabul Kahfi Islamic Centre, ukumbi wa kimataifa wa JNIC." (translation "Mr.

Abdulrahman Kinana, Vice Chairperson of CCM Bara Addressing the leaders of the Islamic Religion, Believers, Participants in the Eighth Competition to Preservation of the Holy Quran Dar es Salaam Region organized by the Aswa-haabul Kahfi Islamic Center Institute, JNIC international venue).

(b) Worship and Practice: Freedom of religion ensures the right to manifest one's religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and rituals. This includes attending religious services, conducting religious ceremonies, wearing religious attire, and following religious dietary practices. Such tweets include "Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) kinawatakia wanachama, mashabiki, wakereketwa na watanzania

wote waumini wa dini ya kiislamu, Mfungo Mwema wa Mwezi Mtukufu wa Ramadhani. Katika kipindi hiki cha toba, tuendelee kuiombea nchi yetu Amani, Upendo, Mshikamano na Utulivu. #RamadanKareem", (in translation is, "Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) wishes members, fans, enthusiasts and all Tanzanians believers of the Islamic religion, a good fasting of the holy month of Ramadan. In this period of repentance, let us continue to pray for our country for peace, love, unity and stability. #RamadanKareem").

Freedom of religion is enshrined in international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is protected by many national constitutions and laws. It is an essential component of a democratic and pluralistic society, allowing individuals to express their beliefs, engage in religious practices, and live according to their conscience.

5. DISCUSSION

The study assessed social media as forums for political debates in Tanzania, a case of Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) and Chama Cha Demokrasia Na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) Twitter platforms. The study findings revealed and concluded that social media is used as a platform for political activities for political parties that again provides opportunities for audiences to express their political views without any fear.

One important thing to consider taken from the study is that with the emergence of social media, great hopes have been expressed across the globe that young adults may reengage in traditional politics, directly due to the various activities happening on social media and indirectly by shaping low-effort forms of online engagement, which is then assumed to shape offline participation in a second step. In fact, the available evidence clearly suggests that social media use, particularly political use, has an impact on offline forms of participation [30]. However, aggregate-level data from Germany, the U.S., Switzerland, and Japan indicate that generational gaps between younger and older adults have not or only marginally decreased. Although there was an unprecedented increase in social media use over the past decades (including an increase in political use), voter turnout did not change significantly and was substantially lower than that of the older

generation [1]. At the same time, the entire body of research on social media and political participation would suggest an increase in participatory activities of young adults. In explaining this paradox, this paper pointed to the potentially distracting functions of social media, mainly due to nonpolitical, entertainment-oriented content. Such content can make nonpolitical information more accessible, ultimately impeding the processing and salience of political considerations and dampening the activation and execution of participatory goals [1].

To test these conjectures, future research needs to carefully distinguish several types of content on social media, on several platforms and channels, and access motivations, gratifications of usage and content. This may lead to a more nuanced picture of the social media-based political engagement of young adults, particularly in regard to the democratically most relevant outcome: voting in an election.

6. CONCLUSION

The rise of social media platforms has transformed the way political debates are conducted in Tanzania. Among the social media platforms, Twitter is the most popular social in Tanzania, and it has become an important tool for political communication and debates. Currently, political parties, including CCM and CHADEMA, have an active Twitter account, which they use to engage with their supporters and the general public. While the Chadema Tanzania Twitter account has become a platform for open political discourse, the CCM approach has been more limited and one-sided. As Tanzania continues to develop and mature politically, it is likely that social media platforms will play an increasingly important role in shaping political debates and discussions.

This study assessed how CCM and Chadema Tanzania Twitter accounts are forums for political debates in Tanzania. Four central conclusions can be drawn from the paper. First, the two Twitter accounts have become a significant avenue for public discourse, enabling individuals to engage with political issues, express opinions, and connect with others. Second, the discussions cover a wide range of topics, from local to global matters, and often include debates on policies, elections, governance, social justice, and more. Third, there is freedom to obtain information that is not limited, and interaction in social media also encourages young voters to

participate in political debates. Fourth, Habermas' theory of public sphere in terms of freedom and engagement of participants is featured in the debates and discussions of participants in the two Twitter accounts, namely, Chadema Tanzania and Chama Cha Mapinduzi Twitter accounts. The paper recommends that political parties invest more in social media to allow their members to engage in political discussions and debates to widen the horizon of democracy.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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