

The Possibilities of Internet Voting in Jamaica: Moving from Convenience to Fixing the Problem of Voter Apathy among the Youth

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DOI: 10.34190/EJEG.18.1.002

Abstract: Recent scholarship recognizes the importance of information and communication technologies (ICT), particularly the Internet, in helping to overcome challenges to political participation. The advent of Internet voting or I-voting in encouraging youth political participation has been framed within the context of convenience voting which can help to strengthen democracy by encouraging voting, especially among the more technologically-savvy youth population. This paper explores the relationship between Internet voting and youth political participation in the Jamaican society through a survey of 600 youth. The findings suggest that while it may not substantially reduce apathy, which is more generally linked to perceptions of political efficacy, Internet voting holds the potential to improve voter turnout among Jamaican youth. While convenience was not a major factor driving political apathy, it was an important factor in encouraging participation at the polls.

Keywords: Youth Participation, ICT, I-voting, Political Apathy, Democracy, Elections

1. Introduction

While political participation through voting is not the sole determinant of a functioning democracy, it remains a vital component of the democratic process and is considered “the gold standard form of political participation in liberal democracies” (Cammaerts, et al., 2016, p. 46). In fact, no true democracy can exist without a fair and effective electoral system as this is considered a prerequisite for the establishment of a legitimately constituted authority guided by the law (Schraufnagel and Sgouraki, 2005; Orum and Dale, 2009). Indeed, the right to vote ensures that governments are justifiably appointed and reflects the collective will of the people.

The act of voting also allows citizens the opportunity to elect and re-elect the officials of the state, which has intervallic (term in political office) and futuristic (particular policy direction) implications. Through this democratic exercise citizens are able to hold their elected leaders accountable, by insisting that they deliver on campaign promises (Johnson and Ryu, 2010). Voting is summararily a just and equitable way for all citizens to contribute to policies at the local and national levels of government. Thus, due to the universal recognition of the importance of voting to a well-functioning democracy, the growing phenomenon of voter apathy is of obvious concern to pundits and political scientists. Of particular concern, has been the phenomenon of low voter turnout among youth globally.

2. The Youth Vote and Democracy

In developing and industrialized countries around the world, youth represent between 40 percent and 60 percent of the total voting age population (International IDEA, 2016). Thus, this group constitutes a strong collective voice with the capacity to legitimize or delegitimize democracy. For example, the strong performance of the British Labour Party in the 2017 elections was partly due to an unexpected surge in youth votes, which has been termed a “youthquake” (Sturgis and Jennings, 2019; Harrison, 2018). In spite of this recognition, however, low voter turnout among youth, as a specific focus of studies on voter apathy, is well documented and is considered to be symptomatic of more underlying deficits within democratic systems (Jowell and Park, 2003; Bessant, 2004; Schraufnagel and Sgouraki, 2005; Farthing, 2010; Moeller, Kuhne and De Vreese, 2018). The emerging consensus is that low voter turnout among youth poses an acute long-term threat to the renewal and sustainability of democratic governance if the trend is not urgently reversed. In the absence of effective remedial strategies, these patterns of political apathy are likely to become entrenched as youth proceed through their life course (Dermody, Hammer-Lloyd and Scullion, 2010). For the purposes of this research, youth is operationally defined as persons between the ages 18 and 24.

Based on the literature, a number of social, economic, and political factors have been identified in an attempt to explain voter apathy among youth. These include: lack of knowledge about the electoral systems, policies, and political candidates; the inability of youth to connect with 'old' political candidates and/or the ideologies of parties; disillusionment and distrust in politics; the trans-temporal nature of young people (shifting from one location to another, thereby failing to develop and form any registration/voting pattern); other life distractions and inconveniences of traditional electoral procedures (Kimberlee, 2002; Wattenberg, 2016). Over the years, various suggestions have been made to address this particular democratic deficit.

One of the fastest-growing strategies to increase voting participation among youth, especially in larger democracies such as the United States, has been to link public education with both popular and digital culture. In many parts of the world, public education campaigns incorporating elements of popular and digital culture have been designed to encourage young people to vote. Examples of these include: The 'Framework of Citizenship Education' in Scotland; 'Rock the Vote' in the United States; 'Bite the Ballot', 'Swing the Vote', 'Generation Vote' and 'MyVote2014' in the United Kingdom; 'Elections Canada Online' in Canada as well as the 'Rock Enrol' campaign in Australia. These projects and programmes combine more traditional strategies such as door-to-door canvassing, use of flyers and leaflets, and radio and print ads with newer strategies such as phone banks and robocalls, dance parties at the polls as well as the use of social media.

Barrack Obama's 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns are considered seminal cases of the effective use of digital and popular culture to "make politics cool" to appeal to young voters. His campaigns incorporated the endorsements and active participation of influential North American pop icons including Beyoncé and Jay-Z, Oprah Winfrey, as well as actors Matt Damon and George Clooney. Similarly, in the UK, Tony Blair's connection to the Britpop movement as well as photo-ops with Oasis and Blur also constituted a similar approach. In Italy, Berlusconi also used international pop band U2's lead singer Bono in a political marketing brochure. In addition to using popular and digital culture, I-Voting/E-voting has also emerged as a strategy for encouraging increased voter participation among youth (Howland and Bethell, 2002; Christian Schaupp and Carter, 2005; Bochsler, 2010; Muneer and Shamail, 2013; Merz, 2015; Pickard, 2015; Cammaerts, et al., 2016). I-Voting is linked to the phenomenon known as convenience voting.

3. I-Voting: Exploring convenience and apathy

Convenience voting has become a popular approach linked to reducing voter apathy among youth. Convenience, both in terms of the registration process and in accessing polling stations, is widely considered an important factor for increasing voter turnout especially in the digital age (Stein and Vonnahme, 2008; Pammatt and Goodman, 2013). Studies have shown that online voting is particularly promising among the youth population because it encourages convenience in political participation (Alvarez, Hall and Trechsel, 2009; Goodman, 2014). In fact, the broad concept of electronic democracy covers a range of conceptual frameworks such as e-parliament, e-legislature, e-government, e-procurement, and e-voting or I-voting. It is well established that ICTs, and particularly the Internet, can contribute to the democratic process by facilitating political participation generally and among young people specifically (Krueger, 2002; Norris, 2004; Mossberger, Tolbert and McNeal, 2008; Mossberger and Tolbert, 2010; Vissers, Stolle and Mahéo, 2010).

The experience of Estonia (with remote voting) has often been cited in the literature as a pioneering case study on the effectiveness of I-voting (Alvarez and Hall, 2004; Maaten, 2004; Alvarez, Hall and Trechsel, 2009; Bochsler, 2010). Kitsing (2011) notes that, "Estonia is the only country in the world where citizens have voted online in the municipal, national, and European elections" (p. 58). One of the primary lessons learnt from the Estonian experience has been that online voting is perceived to remove the bureaucracy from voting (Alvarez and Hall, 2004; Kitsing, 2011). It has also been observed that Internet voting improved access to voters who lived far from the polling stations thus allowing them to participate in elections (Bochsler, 2010; Cammaerts, et al., 2016). Similar impacts of I-voting were also observed based on the experiences of developing countries such as Pakistan (Muneer and Shamail, 2013).

Beyond the Estonian experience, there has been significant published works on the use of ICTs to improve political participation, especially among youth. These include: the use of online election campaign to encourage youth participation in the electoral process (Ward, 2005); the mobilization of youth participation (Hirzalla, van Zoonen and de Ridder, 2010); the re-engagement of young people that are disenchanting with politics and civic life (Banaji and Buckingham, 2010); the exploration of how online political activities influence off-line political

participation (Hirzalla and van Zoonen, 2011; Rice, Moffett and Madupalli, 2012); an understanding of how online news consumption influences political participation among young people (Xiaoming, Nainan and George, 2014); the use of internet to empower young ethnic groups (Spaiser, 2011); the interplay between technical and social aspects of the voting process (Prandini, Sartori and Oostveen, 2014); and the use of the internet to provide citizens with the opportunity to conveniently cast ballots quickly via electronic mail or over an internet server – Internet or Electronic Voting (e-voting) I-voting has also been noted as an accurate way to record election results, a tool that allows for the efficient tallying of absentee ballots and an innovation that has the potential to reduce the cost of elections in the long-run (Solop, 2001; Done, 2002; Hall and Alvarez, 2004). I- voting can also increase citizen participation in the democratic process because this approach facilitates flexible, versatile and easy participation (Mohen and Glidden, 2001; Krueger, 2002; Norris, 2004; Trechsel, 2007; Mossberger, Tolbert and McNeal, 2008; Vissers, Stolle and Mahéo, 2010; Andel and Yasinsac, 2012; Carter and Bélanger, 2012).

As it relates to the youth vote, there is strong agreement among I-voting proponents that this process can play an important role in motivating and mobilizing the young people. Convenience was a strong factor that enhanced the attractiveness of this approach to target youth voters (Howland and Bethell, 2002; Christian Schaupp and Carter, 2005; Merz, 2015; Cammaerts, et al., 2016) . In this regard, I-voting does not only offer the promise of greater convenience but it also proposes to fix the problem of voter apathy among the youth by using an innovation that is aligned with their preference since most are already active in cyberspace and are “technologically-savvy” (Christian Schaupp and Carter, 2005, p. 587; Bochsler 2010; Hirzalla and van Zoonen, 2011).

The aforementioned observations are also valid in Jamaica for three main reasons: First, the government’s commitment to facilitating the expansion of ICT has engendered a strong culture of Internet usage within the country, especially among the younger population. Second, there is the growing practice of I-Voting for non-political activities such as participation in online entertainment polls and the virtually universal presence of young people in cyberspace via various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others. Finally, the utilization of electronic transactions, such as online shopping and banking may encourage the technological acceptance of convenience voting among the “computer savvy” younger generation (Christian Schaupp and Carter, 2005, p. 587; Bochsler 2010; Hirzalla and van Zoonen, 2011).

Outside of the scholarship highlighted earlier, there is also a growing body of non-scholarly work which also suggests that I-voting can reduce voter apathy among young people (Dougherty, 2011; Posadzki, 2011). Such ideas appear to be significantly influenced by the observation that millennials are naturally pulled to ICTs and the observation of their widespread participation in I-voting for non-political activities such as participating in online entertainment polls.

The overall scholarship on the effectiveness of I-voting in reducing voter apathy, while growing, has not been very convincing. This has made generalization problematic and has contributed to the slow rate of implementation of I-voting initiatives in democratic spaces around the world. Although the benefits seem to far outweigh the concerns, some of the common issues raised as challenges to the use of I-voting systems include trust, confidence, reliability, privacy, and access (Van de Donk and Tops, 1992; Fairweather, 2002; Haythornthwaite and Wellman, 2002; Henry, 2003; Benoist, Anrig and Jaquet-Chiffelle, 2007; Beaucamps, et al., 2009; Volkamer, Spycher and Dubuis, 2011; King and Hancock, 2012; Olsen and Nordhaug, 2012).

This work therefore is intended to address the need for further empirical research in this area by exploring the possibilities of I-voting to address voter apathy among the youth in Jamaica.

4. Jamaica

Historically, the black population, who are the racial majority of the post-colonial Jamaican society, were disenfranchised until Universal Adult Suffrage was declared in 1944. This was a watershed moment in Jamaica’s political history as it represented the strengthening of this young democracy and a significant change in the system of governance (Buddan, 2004). The country gained political independence from Britain in 1962; in that year the voter turnout was 72%. Five years later, the parliamentary election that followed in 1967 saw one of the highest turnouts in the nation’s history at 82%.

In 1976, when the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 years there was strong youth participation in the elections held that year; so much so that the youth vote was thought to have significantly influenced its outcome (Stone, 1986; Buddan, 2004). The voter turnout in that 1976 election was 85.21%. Four years later, the general election of 1980 became the most historically significant election in Jamaica's history. Although this election recorded the highest voter turnout in the country's history (86%), the election was marred by widespread political violence and is documented as being the country's bloodiest and most compromised election (Figueroa and Sives 2002; Gray 2004). The system of political clientelism that emerged in the Jamaican society created a bipartisan political culture in which militarized political enclaves known as garrisons emerged with tacit support of politicians (Figueroa and Sives 2002; Gray 2004; Figueroa, Harriott and Satchell, 2008; Sives, 2010). This garrison phenomenon fostered a political culture that was both violent and intolerant of dissent. Therefore, especially among the urban poor, there was little effort to develop individual efficacy and political consciousness as the act of voting became linked to a homogenized community identity forged through authoritarian, and clientelistic relationships between communities and politicians.

Voter turnout in Jamaica today is in a state of crisis. Jamaica, like many places around the world has seen a steady decline in electoral participation since the general election of the 1980 although the number of electors has increased. In 2011, 53% of the enumerated population and 46% of the adult population participated in the elections held that year (International IDEA, 2016; Electoral Commission of Jamaica, 2015, 2016). The lowest voter turnout in the nation's history was recorded in the 2016 general election when 48% of the electors voted (Electoral Commission of Jamaica, 2016). The lack of participation among the youth has been highlighted by local political scientists, politicians and researchers as contributing to this trend (Waller and Satchell 2016). Voter apathy among the youth is a noticeable trend in the Jamaican scenario, and represents a distinct shift from past active youthful involvement in the political process in the 1970s.

5. Research Design

In this study we explore the contributive value of online voting in encouraging voter turnout specifically among the youth. This is done through the use of a national survey of 600 youth living in Jamaica. The study is guided by the following overarching research question – Can online voting encourage apathetic young Jamaican youth to vote?

The research is a part of a larger study that probes political development in Jamaica. It is an exploratory study, which uses a cross-sectional case study approach to determine whether online voting could encourage young people in Jamaica who are apathetic, to actually vote. Apathy in this research refers to a lack of political interest and non-participation in the political process (DeLuca, 1995). The concept is viewed as having both behavioural (enumeration¹ status) and attitudinal (intentions of participating in future elections) dimensions. Several specific sub-research questions guided the analysis:

1. What is the level of apathy among the Jamaican youth?
2. Can I-voting encourage youths who have no intentions of voting to do so?
3. What are the possibilities of I-voting encouraging apathetic youths to vote?
4. Is convenience a major factor driving the prospects of I-voting?

A quantitative approach was used to gather the data. A total of twenty-seven (27) open and closed-ended questions were administered to achieve the intended objectives of the study. Data collection lasted for approximately two weeks between March 25, 2019 and April 10, 2019. Data were collected across all fourteen (14) parishes.

The Jamaican youth (i.e., 18 – 24 years old) formed the unit of observation for the study. A sample size of 600 youth was used for the study with a margin of error of approximately 3.5% and a confidence level of 95%. A probability sampling procedure was used to identify respondents. More specifically, the stratified random sampling technique was used. Youth were categorized by parish and gender. A total of two hundred and fifty-six (n = 256) males and three hundred and forty-four (n = 344) females participated in the study. Expressly, males accounted for 42.7% of the sample and females 57.3%. Majority of the sample (53.6%) has secondary- level education. Since the research question probed the issue of convenience, a distinction was made between convenience voting and the broader phenomenon of internet voting, which includes methods that require the use of a personal computer with landline, internet connectivity or Internet kiosks, and mobile voting done via a smartphones or other handheld devises through a mobile application.

¹ The enumerated population are those who are eligible to vote and appear on the national voters list

The survey results were analyzed using the Statistical Package of the Social Science (SPSS) in accordance with the stated aims and objectives of the project. Descriptive analyses were generated to provide basic fundamental information about the respective populations being studied. Bivariate analyses were done to make inferences about the populations being studied.

6. Results

Several themes were explored in an attempt to systematically examine the research question. These included: voting behaviour, political apathy, political victimization, and finally the possibilities of ICT to solve political apathy.

7. Youth and Political Apathy

Two main indicators were used to determine political apathy. The first was behavioural, measured by enumeration status, and the second was attitudinal, captured by the participants' intention to vote in the next general election. On the first measure, the findings show that the majority (71.8%), of the youth interviewed were enumerated. Those who were not registered were asked to provide reasons. The results indicated that among the 28.2% who were unregistered, 47% were disinterested in politics while 47.7% reported experiencing systemic and personal problems in navigating the process involved in getting registered, including challenges with the new National Identification System recently introduced by the Government of Jamaica.

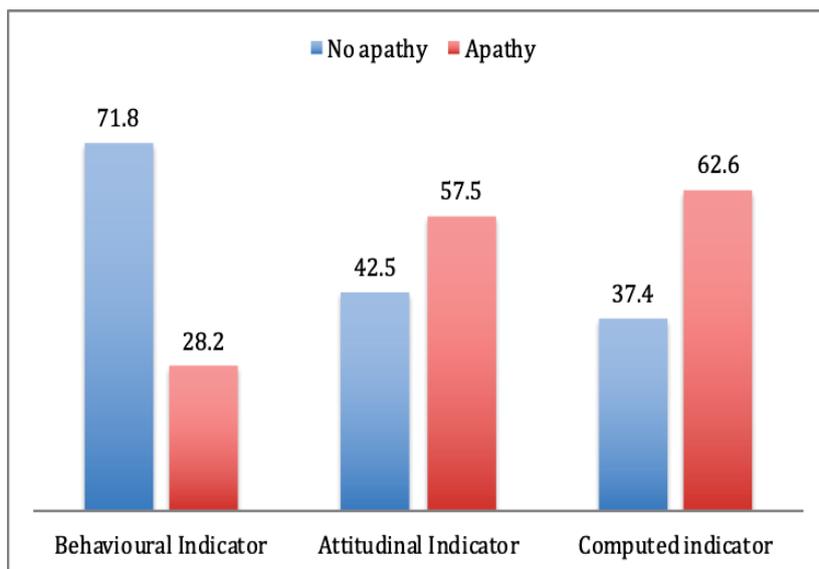
On the attitudinal measure, respondents were asked if they would be voting in the next election when the date is announced. A large proportion of participants, (57.5%, n=335), indicated that they do not intend to vote in the next election. The study further probed the reasons for non-intent to vote and received reactions from 287 participants. The findings show that most of those who reacted, (53.7%), were disinterested in politics and 35.5% reported having a feeling of disillusionment and a general discontentment with the current state of politics (see Table 1). The responses that informed this thematic area included feelings that their vote will not make a difference. Additionally, these participants reported that the ideological stances of the two major parties as well as the behaviours of their political candidates were indistinguishable leaving them with no real choice. Although not statistically significant, it should be noted that 55.82% of those who do not intend to vote in the next elections are females and 44.18% are males, $p > .05$.

Table 1: Reasons youths were not registered or did not intend to vote

	Why participants are not enumerated %	Why participants have no intentions of voting %
Disinterestedness	47.0	53.7
Disillusionment/no perceived political choice	1.3	35.5
Lack of political efficacy	4.0	1.7
Not enumerated/problems with the NIDS	47.7	6.6
Lack of convenience		0.3
Concern about corruption		1.0
About to migrate		1.0

A composite variable of apathy was developed using a two-tiered measure. The first isolated youth who were not enumerated while the other isolated those with no intention to vote in the next election. All measures indicating "apathy" were given a score of 1 and those with "no apathy" a score of 0. The computed variable therefore ranged between 0 and 2, with 0 reflecting "no apathy" and 1 and 2 representing that there is some level of apathy on either the attitudinal or the behavioural measure or on both indicators. The findings revealed that 62.6% of the youth interviewed are apathetic. This level of apathy is embedded in the affective, that is, thoughts of not participating in the elections rather than in the behavioural, which is measured by preparation for participation vis-a-vis the process of enumeration (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Measures of apathy utilised



8. The Possibilities of I-Voting

The main purpose of the paper is to determine the extent to which voter apathy among Jamaican youth can be reduced through the introduction of I-voting. Respondents were asked, “Would you vote in the next election if you were allowed to use the Internet to vote for your political representative?” Over a half, 51.3% or 308, of the respondents indicated they would (see Figure 2). An open-ended question, which asked participants to provide reasons explaining why they would or would not use this method, found that convenience was the main pull factor for the overwhelming majority, 87.5%, of the participants.

Participants were generally less enthused about the prospects offered by the use of mobile phones. More than forty-seven percent (47.2% or 283) stated that they were opposed to using this method to vote (see Figure 2).

For those who were favourably disposed towards the idea of mobile voting, 93.1% also cited convenience as the main pull factor (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: Participants who would use I-Voting

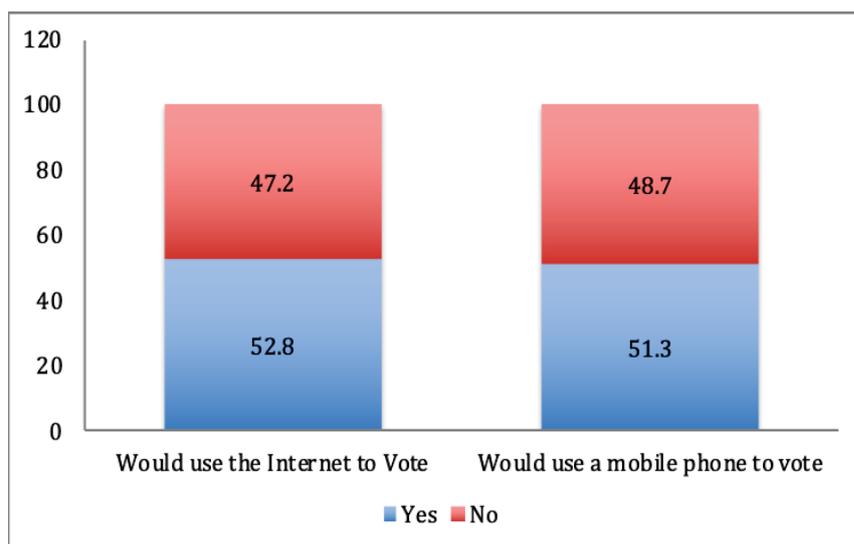
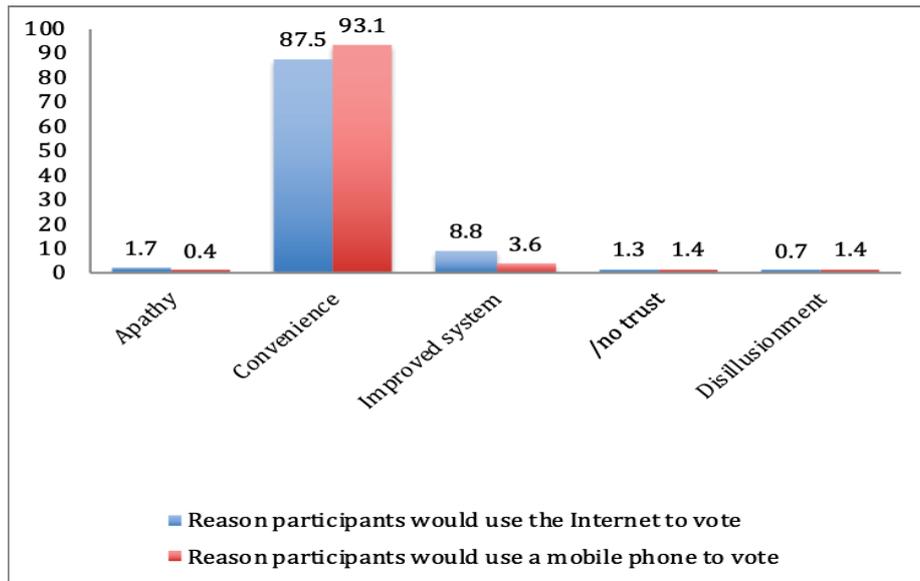


Figure 3: Reason youths would use ICT methods to vote

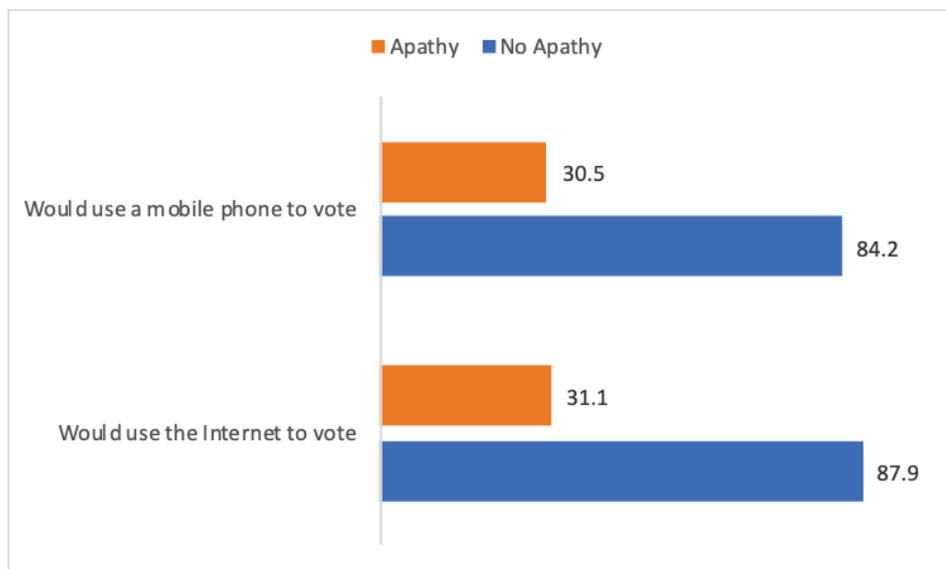


The attitudinal dimension was used to explore the possibility of I-voting to stimulate youth participation in the electoral process. It was found that 25.4% or 85 of those who originally stated that they would not vote in the next elections indicated that they would change their minds if they were allowed to use the Internet. Among the youth who had intention of voting 85.9% or 213 said they would vote using the Internet ($\chi^2(1, n=568) = 208.007, p=.000$). Slightly fewer were, however, persuaded by the prospect offered by using a mobile phone. Only 24.2% or 81 of the youth who reported that they had no intention of voting in the next election indicated that they would change their minds if allowed to use a mobile phone to vote ($\chi^2(1, n=566) = 195.217, p=.000$).

9. Political Apathy and I-voting

To further interrogate the main research question, the study conducted a more focused examination of 365 apathetic youth and the potential of convenience voting in solving the issue; using the computed apathy score. Just over one in every 3 youth (31.1%) would be persuaded to vote if they were allowed to use the Internet ($\chi^2(1, n=568) = 172.397, p=.000$) and an almost equal number, (30.5%), would vote if they were allowed to use their mobile phones, $\chi^2(1, n=566) = 153.851, p=.000$ (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Apathetic youths who would use I-voting

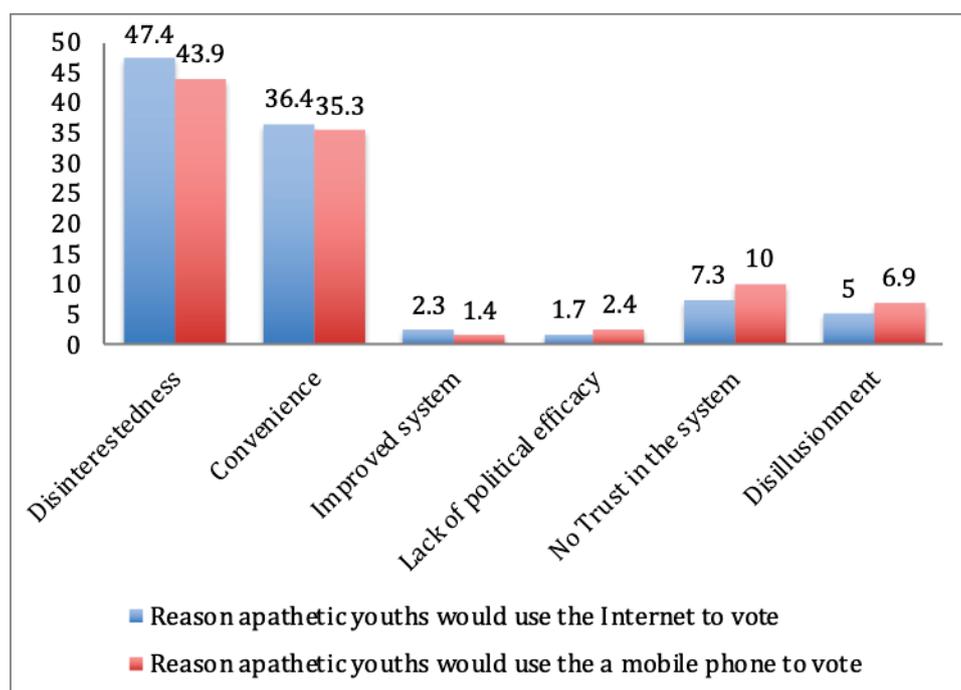


The study also explored the possibilities of the Internet to solve the problem of apathy along the attitudinal and behavioural measures. On the attitudinal measure, 26.2% of youth who were apathetic would vote if they were allowed to use the Internet while 87.9% of youth ($\chi^2(1, n=568) = 208.077, p=.000$) who were not apathetic to voting said that they would vote if they were allowed to use the internet. On the behavioural dimension, 41.6% of those who were apathetic would use the Internet to vote if they were allowed to. This is compared to 57.1% of those who were not apathetic ($\chi^2(1, n=583) = 11.227, p=.001$).

Regarding the use of mobile phones to improve voter turnout, on the attitudinal dimension 25.2% of those who have no intention of voting would be opened to voting if they were allowed to use a mobile phone while 84.5% of those who were not apathetic would use the mobile phone to cast their ballots ($\chi^2(1, n=566) = 195.217, p=.000$). This medium of voting was, however, more promising for youth who are apathetic along the behavioural dimension. Almost 41.6% of those who were not registered to vote, indicated that they would use a mobile device to cast votes. The findings also revealed that 55% of those who are registered would vote using platform ($\chi^2(1, n=581) = 8.346, p=.004$).

The select case option was also used to explore more deeper feelings among the participants towards voting using the Internet and mobile phones. Although most view I-voting favourably, sentiments of disinterestedness were expressed by 47.4% of those who stated that they would prefer to use the Internet and 43.9% of those who would use a mobile phone. Convenience was the main reason why 36.4% of apathetic youth would use the Internet to vote and why 35.3% would use a mobile phone. The issue of trust was a cause for concern among 10% of those who stated that they would use a mobile phone (see Figure 5). A central theme in the open-ended responses was the question of who would manage the online system and whether or not the votes could be traced to a single user. Only 2.4% of those who would use the Internet to vote and 1.4% of those who would use their mobile phone saw I-voting as an improvement to the current system.

Figure 5: Reason apathetic youths would use the Internet to vote



10. Discussion

The main goal of this research is to explore the possibilities of ICT in reducing voter apathy among the Jamaican youth. The study found that majority (62.6%) of the Jamaica youth are in fact apathetic; indicating that they either have no intention to vote (the attitudinal measure) and/or they are not enumerated (the behavioural measure). Overall, most of the participants were, however, enumerated. While this signals interest in political participation, the act of enumeration has wider value since the process also provides Jamaican youth with an affordable form of national identification. Less than a half (42.5%) of the youth interviewed, however, intended to vote in the next national election. This is consistent with the low turnout among youth in the last general elections held in 2016 in which 44.8% of the entire voting age population participated.

10.1 Political Apathy and I-Voting

While the lack of convenience in the voting process was not a major factor driving apathy, the finding from this study support conclusions by previous theoretical and empirical research about the possibilities of using I-voting as a tool for encouraging voting among youth. More than a half (52.8%) of the youth were willing to use the Internet to vote; representing a potential 10.3% increase in voter turnout among youth if internet voting were introduced. Convenience was also explored in relation to the modality of voting. While I-voting is usually carried out from an internet- connected computer or kiosks, mobile phone would allow for even greater access. The study found that (51.3%) of youth would use their mobile phones to vote. This method of voting would therefore increase voter turnout among Jamaican youth by 8.8%. These results confirm the postulations from the literature reviewed that convenience voting would have a modest impact on voting behaviour (Magleby, 1987; Karp and Banducci, 2000; Southwell and Burchett, 2000; Southwell, 2000; Peters, 2003; Dyck and Gimpel, 2005; Luechinger, Rosinger and Stutzer, 2007; Gronke and Toffey 2007; Kousser and Mullin, 2007; Gronke and Miller, 2007; Gronke, et al., 2008).

Among youth who were apathetic, 31.1% would vote if they were allowed to use the Internet and 30.5% if they were permitted to use a mobile phone. While literature suggests that convenience voting would not be able to solve the underlying issues that drive apathy (Oostveen and Van den Besselaar, 2004; Berinsky, 2005; Christian Schaupp and Carter, 2005; Cammaerts, et al., 2016), convenience was, however, the main reason why apathetic Jamaican youth would be motivated to utilize I-voting services. This was true of 36.4% of those who would use the Internet and 35.3% who would use a mobile phone. However, while apathetic youth were willing to embrace the use of ICT, 47.4% expressed disinterestedness in politics and another 5% expressed feelings of disillusionment. They also did not see this potentially representing an improvement to the current electoral system.

The study therefore confirmed that I-voting may encourage apathetic youth to participate in elections, however the wider systemic challenges and general disinterestedness suggests the need for greater mobilization and engagement among this population. There was, in fact, large scale support for the technology among those who were not apathetic which supports Berinsky's (2005) findings that voting reforms of this nature serves those who are already politically engaged. The question of how to reach the youth population to create both attitudinal and behavioural change to reduce apathy are therefore beyond the scope of convenience.

Certainly, under-participation is often a symptom of deeper problems or conditions that cannot be resolved solely by the introduction of ICTs. The voting patterns among the youth are not distinct from the broader voting population. Among the general voting population still remains, more serious concerns about embedded dysfunctions in the country's political system related to political culture, representation, performance and effectiveness that serve as dissuading factors (Figueroa and Sives 2002; Gray 2004; Figueroa, Harriott and Satchell, 2008; Sives, 2010). Nearly, 60 years after its Independence, it is evidently time for Jamaicans to be empowered to express their individual preferences to repel the country's bipartisan political culture.

The findings suggest that our youth are not a-political but rather there is a general disconnect from representational politics. This disconnect may be related to the broader political climate and inadequacies of the institutions of political socialization that fail to equip youth with the skills necessary to navigate the political system and to build political efficacy. Fixing the problem of apathy therefore requires innovative thinking that may include the convenience offered by the prospect of using ICTs as a voting tool. ICTs also hold great intrinsic potential to assist in the institutionalization of comprehensive educational programmes, civic engagement activities and mobilization in both physical and cyberspaces.

11. Conclusion

This article contributes to the theoretical and pragmatic discourse on ICT and political participation in small developing states such as Jamaica. The issues surrounding ICT and political participation were explored among the most technologically savvy population- Jamaican youth- who have already been disproportionately exploiting the benefits of this technology for engagement with popular culture. They are also coincidentally the group that is most deeply apathetic. Further investigation among the general population will deepen the narrative around digital literacy and general accessibility.

Although convenience was not a major factor contributing to political apathy, the youth population's engagement with ICTs is promising from the standpoint of making I-voting a viable alternative to traditional

voting in order to attract more young voters. While convenience would modestly encourage higher voter turnout among youth, the potential that lies in its use to promote mobilization and engagement of youth should not be ignored (Howland and Bethell, 2002; Christian Schaupp and Carter, 2005; Bochsler, 2010; Muneer and Shamail, 2013; Merz, 2015; Pickard, 2015; Cammaerts, et al., 2016).

I-Voting is inevitable given the increasing use of the Internet and the new normal of digital culture in most countries and especially among youth. This study agrees with the general position that ICTs can help to facilitate greater political participation to overcome the widespread concerns about the defective and outdated political cultures and traditions that are held to be primarily responsible for fueling general apathy that is being transmitted to Jamaican youth. ICTs can facilitate improved mobilization and improved political discourse and interactions. ICTs can also aid in creating new platforms that give attention to problematic issues such as political victimization, trust, confidence in politics and political institutions, and the general challenges inherent in the processes of political socialization. These, however, will remain mediating variables to political participation if they are not systemically addressed. This research therefore supports I-voting and the use of ICTs as a part of the solution to fixing this burgeoning problem of political apathy among the youth.

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Appendix

Voter Turnout in Jamaica 1962-2011

Year	Voter Turn-out	Total Vote	Registration	Voting Age Population Turn out	Voting age population	Population
2016	48.37%	882,389	1,824,412	44.79%	1,970,264	2,970,340
2011	53.17%	876,310	1,648,036	46.18%	1,897,725	2,868,380
2007	60.40%	808,240	1,338,146	49.56%	1,630,960	2,780,132
2002	59.06%	768,758	1,182,292	50.89%	1,510,580	2,680,029
1997	65.42%	773,425	1,182,292	48.77%	1,585,760	2,170,000
1993	67.68%	678,572	1,002,571	44.67%	1,518,930	2,411,000
1989	78.38	845,485	1,078,760	58.96%	1,434,000	2,390,000
1983	2.73%	27,043	990,019	2.14%	1,264,480	2,258,000
1980	86.91%	860,746	990,417	74.74%	1,151,690	2,173,000
1976	85.21%	742,149	870,972	84.83%	874,860	2,083,000
1972	78.88%	477,771	605,662	57.27%	834,200	1,940,000
1967	82.24%	446,815	543,307	54.86%	814,500	1,810,000
1962	72.88%	580,517	796,540	73.65%	788,160	1,642,000

Adopted from: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)