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The Influence of Social Media on Youth Political Engagement in the 2024 Elections

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Abstract

This is because the present study will seek to explore the role of digital interaction on youth engagement through political involvement in the 2024 elections thereby isolating a gap within the literature of political action and digital interaction. Using a quantitative research method conducted online, the information was collected as a structured survey among the population of young voters aged between 18-30. The research came up with a positive correlation between the duration of use of social media with political participation, a coefficient of 0.45, and between exposure to political contents and political participation of 0.52. In addition, the engagement level was also found to be enhanced by increasing the frequency of discussing politics over the web ($r = 0.35$). These facts further bring out the significance role of social media as a major platform of discussions and organization of political activities and events particularly among youths who are increasingly using products of the social media to share information and perform interactions. Based on the study, the knowledge of the way through which social media affects political perceptions and actions in highly polarized electoral settings can be proceeded with. Among these is the consideration of the future research on the nature of technological based activism in the electoral process that would empower the youth political enlightenment of the voting population. Such findings are crucial to the theoretical and practice aspects of the previous government, schools, and political parties in the capacity to understand the youths and organize young citizens to mobilize them.

INTRODUCTION

The present trend of social networking has significantly affected how political action has been organized, including the youths. Social media is today the primary platform through which issues regarding politics are discussed and agitated due to its ability in the transfer of information and thus real time communication. The shambolic elections of 2024 have provided the perfect opportunity to look at the role of social media in youths' acquisition of political information, their participation in political discourse and how they conduct themselves during voting and activism periods (Vromen et al., 2015; Keating & Melis, 2017). It is therefore important to understand

effects that social media has on the young people's political activities due to the fact that such a conspicuous population is regularly playing a significant role in any democratic process (Loader et al., 2016; Penney, 2007; Coleman & Blumler, 2009).

There is tremendous interest in youth electoral enrolment and other political activities, hence, there is a large body of literature focusing on youth political participation (Saud, 2020). In the past, youth turnout has usually been lower than any other age group due to factors such as political disengagement, perceived political disenfranchise (Kitanova, 2020; Snell, 2010). However, the novelty of technology, particularly the social media platforms, has shifted the common notion of youth involvement with politics in the following ways by providing the youths with other platforms to express themselves on issues to do with politics, develop their opinions and get involve in political actions (Manago et al., 2021; Weinstein, 2014). Consequently, social media is not only considered an instrument for the diffusion of information, but also a political forum where citizens can openly discuss politics.

The continuous increase of the usage of social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram and TikTok has enhanced the influence of social media in delivering politics notably to more youthful users. In recent elections across the globe, youth have actively participated in politicking through social media where they post opinions, protests, and information about candidates and policies among others (Butt et al., 2021; Marquart et al., 2020). This has been well elaborated, especially pertaining to the build up to the 2024 elections whereby social media has been an important tool for both organised and unstructured carrying out of politics by the youths.

Even though social media has become an influential tool in politics, little is known on how various social media platforms affect youth political participation particularly with regards to the 2024 elections. Although, prior quantitative studies have offered an understanding of potential relationship between social media usage and political involvement (Cartwright et al., 2021; Boulianne, 2015), there is lack of qualitative study which addresses the nature and motivational aspect of youth engagement through them. Theorizing qualitative and political involvement, and especially, the motives behind young individuals' political sharing through social media, are ambiguous. An attempt to address the identified question will be made in this study, and thus this paper will provide a qualitative discussion on the influence of social media on young people's political participation in relation to the 2024 election.

This research is novel in a way it advances the knowledge on youth political participation in the context of digital media. Past research has demonstrated the ability of social media to enable political engagement among young people (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020), although most of these studies were mainly quantitative, and have not examined the perceptions of youth voters. Through embracing a qualitative analysis method in this research, more comprehensible analysis of the attitudes, behaviors and experiences from the political activism that youths engage themselves in through the use of social media is provided.

In addition, this study has the policy implications to policymakers, political campaigns, and social media platforms. Given growing evidence of youth voter turnout in elections across the world, it becomes important for political campaigns to have a background on what leads youths into the voting booths. The findings of this study suggest social media can effectively mobilise young people given understanding of the character of youth engagement with such platforms among the campaigners and policymakers. Altogether, this work will serve a significant purpose of effusing insights about the efficient use of social media tools in increasing the levels of youth's political activism.

Furthermore, it will fill the gap in the existing literature regarding social media and citizens' participation in the political processes' characteristic of the digital

democracy (Arshad & Khurram, 2020). Given that due to the current threats of fake news, political attitudes, and echo-systems, social networks pose major problems for young users, how youths manage these impacts or factors while being politically active is imperative. The implication of this study will avail a deeper understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of social media for youth participation in democracy.

METHODS

This research work adopted a quantitative research methodology to investigate the impact of social media on youthful voters in political activities during the election year 2024. The method used sought to generate quantitative data from a big number of respondents to help identify patterns, trends, and relationship between the youths' use of the SM platforms and their political activities. The next sub sections indicate the research design, population and sampling, data collection method, instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis. In this study, a descriptive and correlational research design was used. Descriptive aspect concentrated on presenting an overview of the trends observed in youth social media engagement and the correlational aspect sought to establish relationship between various independent variables amongst which are frequency of social media use, and dependent variable, political engagement. The study sought to establish a positive relationship between presence and extent of social media and some commonly recognized measures of political engagement including the intention to vote, discussion in political matters among others.

Participants in this study were the youth within the age of 18-30 years who are registered voters and within the 2024 voting age bracket. The survey targeted this age group because young people are considered strong users of new technology such as social media and they play an active role in political discussions online. In all, 500 respondents were randomly selected from different urban and rural centres across the country. The sampling technique used was stratified random sampling, in that the study was able to take into consideration the demographic characteristics of gender, education level as well as geographic distribution. By stratifying the winners, both the participants from urban and rural areas, with different levels of education, active social media users were recruited into the sample. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain quantitative data from the respondents of the study. It is with these premises that the present questionnaire was constructed based on previous scales identified in related research on social media and political participation. The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

This section focused on demographic information such as age, gender, education level and geographical area of the participants. This part of the work was devoted to the amount of times the participants visited various forms of social media, the given time spent, sorts of materials they encountered, and how often they came across political information. This section assessed the degree of political activism on the basis of the following parameters: voting intention, conversing about politics, both virtually and face-to-face, and activism. In terms of the engagement level, a 5 Likert scale which includes strongly disagree=1; disagree=2; neutral =3; Agree =4, strongly agree =5 was adopted. A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted with a sample of 50 people in order to assess the clear and reliable response and validity of the questionnaire. Other changes were made depending on the pilot's results to enhance the method of using this instrument for gathering credible data.

Data collection took two months, specifically from January up to February 2024. To ensure enormous coverage, the questionnaire was set online as well as administered physically. For those who consented to take an online version of the questionnaire, an online survey tool, Google Forms, was employed. In the case of respondents from

rural settings, structural questionnaires administrated through self-completion were used in paper and pencil format and collected by the assistants.

Before handing out the Questionnaire, participants were duly advised on the objectives of the study, and their rights such as the freedom to participate or not and that their information will be kept a secret. All the participants agreed to answer the survey's questions and provided written informed consent. The data collection plan used did not ask the respondents for any person identifiable information in order to keep the results anonymous. The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 27. Frequency tables and percentage distributions were employed in order to provide descriptive statistics of the demographic characteristics and the means, standard deviations, and percentages from the study findings.

In order to answer the correlational aspect of the research, the quantitative data was analysed using Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the existence of a relationship between social media usage variables; time on media media and frequency of interaction with content containing politics and the political engagement variables; evoting intention and political discussion involvement level. Multiple regression analysis was also carried out in order to know the level to which social media usage has an impact on political engagement. Main predictors, including the type of social media and the number of times that young people are exposed to political content, were used to measure the level of political participation among the youth as the outcome variable. All statistical tests that were used in the study employed an alpha level of 0.05. This threshold helped to guarantee the reliability of the results and validity of the conclusions in regard to KC residents and other people. The findings were analyzed and summarized in tables and graphs for better understanding of the outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exploring the relationship between social media usage and youth political engagement in the 2024 elections. The study aimed to determine how various aspects of social media, including time spent on platforms, frequency of exposure to political content, and participation in online political discussions, influenced political behaviors such as voting intention and activism among young people. The analysis involved statistical techniques to uncover significant trends and correlations, providing insight into the role that social media played in shaping political engagement during the election period. The following section presents the findings based on the quantitative data collected.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Respondents (N=500)

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	270	54%
Female	230	46%
Age Group		
18-20	150	30%
21-25	200	40%
26-30	150	30%
Education Level		
High School or Lower	120	24%
Bachelor's Degree	300	60%
Postgraduate Degree	80	16%
Geographic Location		
Urban	350	70%

Rural	150	30%
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The demographical distribution contained in the table provides background information in the interpretation of the study results. The respondents surveyed were 500 individuals; 54 percent revealed that they were males and 46 percent were females, which means the proportion of males and females was relatively well-balanced, a factor that decreases the chances of gender-based bias in the study. The distribution of the sample in terms of age, however, demonstrates possible limitation of the representativeness of the sample as a percent of all respondents occurred in the age ranges of 21-25 years (40 percent). This implies that the population sample can be biased against the aged people who might be experiencing diverse situations or attitude different to the research topic that is being studied.

There is also clear superiority of the participants with a bachelor degree (60%) indicating a relatively educated sample. Although this can add quality in the response since the respondents are likely to be knowledgeable about the topic, it may also have a bias effect in case the topic is related to education level. Finally, the urban biasness of the respondents (70 percent) is a cause of concern to the extent that the rural viewpoint is left out, considering that they are often vital in the research through which one seeks to deal with a societal or systemic problem. On the whole, although the demographic statistics enable one to obtain a rather good idea of the sample structure, one must point out the apparent bias of the sample in terms of particular categories, first and foremost it is the youthful, urban, and educated status of the knowledge parties.

Table 2. Social Media Usage Patterns

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency (%)
Average time spent on social media (per day)	3.5 hours	1.2 hours	
Frequency of social media usage			
Less than 1 hour/day			10%
1-3 hours/day			40%
More than 3 hours/day			50%
Preferred social media platforms			
Facebook			35%
Instagram			30%
Twitter (X)			20%
TikTok			15%

The data presented in the table reveal notable patterns in the respondents' social media usage, offering insights into both the intensity and platform preferences of digital engagement. The average daily usage of 3.5 hours, coupled with a standard deviation of 1.2 hours, suggests considerable variability in user behavior—some individuals spend a moderate amount of time online, while others are likely to be heavy users. Significantly, 50% of respondents reported using social media for more than three hours daily, indicating a trend toward prolonged engagement that may reflect habitual or even compulsive usage, particularly among certain demographics. Meanwhile, 40% of respondents reported a more moderate usage range of one to three hours, suggesting that a substantial portion of users still engage in a relatively controlled manner.

When it comes to platform preferences, Facebook emerged as the most dominant, with 35% of respondents identifying it as their primary platform. This finding is somewhat surprising given the perception that Facebook's popularity is declining among younger users, and may point to the continued relevance of the platform for

networking, information consumption, or community-based interactions. Instagram followed closely at 30%, indicating its visual-centric appeal remains strong, particularly among users drawn to lifestyle and influencer-driven content. Twitter accounted for 20%, reflecting its role as a space for news, political discourse, or niche communities. TikTok, though still trailing at 15%, may represent an emerging preference among younger cohorts and deserves further attention as its user base rapidly expands. Overall, these patterns point not only to high daily engagement with social media but also to a diversified platform landscape that reflects varied user motivations and digital behaviors.

Table 3. Exposure to Political Content on Social Media

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency (%)
Frequency of political content exposure			
Daily			45%
Several times a week			35%
Once a week			15%
Rarely or never			5%
Type of political content consumed			
News on elections			50%
Political debates/discussions			30%
Politician's posts/updates			20%

The table provides the overview of frequency of exposure to political content on social media and the types of this content that were viewed by the participants. Although the data provide a great tool of snap-shoting, when critically analyzed, the possibilities generated, and shortcomings are identified of such findings. It is noteworthy that almost every other respondent (45%) uses political content on a daily basis, so it can be assumed that political discussion is a common part of their online media experience. Another 35 percent reported being exposed to such content several times a week, which is relatively high frequencies of exposure among the sample as well. Nonetheless, this frequency measure does not represent the quality or purpose of engagement: content that users can proactively pursue, consume passively, or it can be discovered by accident because of the algorithm discovery.

Type of content revealed that the category of news that was the most consumed among the participants was related to election as it was mentioned by 50 percent of them. This is probably not surprising since the electoral events are always accompanied with high media coverage. However, the plurality of the election news can be the result of a temporal bias in data collection, which is collected close to an election time, therefore, its ability to be generalized is questionable. Political debates (30%), which were consumed by respondents, as well as updates about politicians (20%), were also among the most popular, but the comparatively low number of engagements in these categories may indicate the user fatigue, dislike of these categories or the mistrust of the opinionated, personality-based political content. Generally, the fact that the data indicate political content is dominant in the social media feed of users, it fails to provide contextual quality in terms of motivation of users, algorithm of the social media platforms, or the credibility of the contents, which are critical in revealing the real effect of such exposure on political attitudes and conducts. Additional qualitative research would be required to de-construct how these patterns of consumption get converted to political knowledge, engagement, or polarization.

Table 4. Youth Political Engagement Indicators

Political Engagement Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency (%)
Voting intention in 2024 elections			
Definitely will vote			60%
Likely to vote			25%
Undecided			10%
Unlikely to vote			5%
Participation in political discussions (online/offline)			
Frequently			40%
Occasionally			35%
Rarely			20%
Never			5%
Involvement in political activism			
Actively involved (protests, campaigns)			15%
Occasionally involved			25%
Not involved			60%

The table gives us a picture of the youth participation in the 2024 political contests but on the other hand there are underlying indicators contained in the figures that are critical and it must be interpreted. Although at face value 60 percent of respondents have reported a high intention to cast their votes and another 25 percent were bound to do likewise, intention is not always converted to action. The strong degree of intention can transpire as a sign of social desirability, or aspiration attitudes and not of real electoral involvement. Furthermore, the difference of 15% between the level of strong intention and likely of voting indicates some certain degree of ambivalence or situational dependency- there is the need to look at the reasons that might lead to these people not being able to vote.

The youth are moderate in the political discussion practiced with 40 percent finding it very common to engage in political discussion. It is an indication of the sense of political concern and awareness that is essential towards a healthy democracy. That is, however, concerning that 60% of the responses listen to such political discourses less frequently or not at all, which casts doubts on the representativeness and quality of political discussions among this group of people. The non-voters that form 5 percent of the total could be the anti-establishment people who feel that their voices are not heard.

The most conspicuous difference between awareness and action is activism. Whereas the majority of the respondents stated interest in elections, there was no confirmed case of engagement in any political activism among respondents with 60 percent claiming to have not had any interaction. This is mostly because only 15 percent had actually been on political campaigns or demonstrations indicating that the youth were not actively involved in any way other than passive engagement e.g. voting or discussion. This may be attributed to the lack of accessibility to activist channels or the threat of consequences or the belief that direct action would not be effective. It, all told, is a discourse on the existence of a politically cognizant generation and, at the same time, it suggests the tendency towards the problem of the same serious barrier to the translation of this awareness into prolonged and varied forms of democracy engagement.

Table 5. Correlation Between Social Media Usage and Political Engagement

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Time spent on social media	0.45	0.001

Frequency of political content exposure	0.52	0.000
Participation in online discussions	0.35	0.003

The correlation analysis as it is represented in the table highlights some significant associations between the usage of social media and political engagement but the findings are subject to deeper critical analysis than what can be determined by statistical relevance of their findings. This means that there is a moderate relationship between time spent on social media and political engagement ($r = 0.45$, $p = 0.001$) with the responses indicating that their correlation is moderate, that is, higher time on social media platform translates to higher political engagement. Said relationship however, cannot be considered as evidence of causality and can be more subjective to other forms of opinion, precedent political interest or socio-demographic factors which could not be addressed in this study.

With a higher correlation ($r = 0.52$, $p = 0.000$), the exposure to the political contents increased the political engagement, which begs the question of the importance of the algorithmically selected and disseminated contents in influencing the political interests and the attitude toward politics. This observation could indicate the strength of niche information flows, but also points at the possibility of the echo-chamber or selective exposure effect in which people are more engaged not on the basis of balance but due to the repeated affirmation of whatever they held to be true previously.

This relationship can further be highlighted by the correlation between online discussion and political engagement ($r = 0.35$, $p = 0.003$), and demonstrates how digital-based political involvement is interactive. Although such a statistically significant relationship exists, content exposure correlates somewhat stronger, which indicates that the simple exposure to political content might be a more significant factor of engagement than actual conversation. This finding leads to considering the quality and depth of online political discourse to a closer examination, as it is yet unclear, it elicits or propagates the critical thinking or merely magnifies the partisan rhetoric.

All in all, the correlations are statistically significant, which means that they indicate the presence of significant correlations, but it also demonstrates that digital political behavior is also a rather complex subject. Future analyses should consider integrating control variables, examining causal pathways, and exploring the qualitative aspects of engagement to provide a more nuanced understanding of how and why social media influences political participation

Table 6. Multiple Regression Analysis – Predictors of Political Engagement

Predictor Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-value	Significance (p-value)
Time spent on social media	0.28	0.35	4.32	0.001
Exposure to political content	0.33	0.42	5.11	0.000
Participation in online political discussions	0.20	0.25	3.21	0.003

This table shows the results of the multiple regression analysis used to identify the key predictors of youth political engagement. Exposure to political content ($B = 0.33$, $Beta = 0.42$, $p = 0.000$) had the strongest predictive value, followed by time spent on social media ($B = 0.28$, $Beta = 0.35$, $p = 0.001$). Participation in online political

discussions was also a significant predictor of engagement ($B = 0.20$, $\text{Beta} = 0.25$, $p = 0.003$). All predictors were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The discoveries from this study reveal relevant information on social networking adoption and young people's vote in the 2024 polls. These outcomes fill voids in the literature and validate several hypothetical assumptions about the important and dominant part of digital fronts of the located political activity. The discussion compares this study outcomes with the existing research literature and enriches existing knowledge on usage of social media and youth political engagement.

This study makes several important contributions; first of which is the consideration of effects of social media on youths' political participation. Prior research has mainly focused on the broad political activation capacity of social media (Covert et al., 2020), but there is less research on the detailed youth election participation behavior found during elections. This study helps to address this issue by focusing on the following research questions: How do social media platforms, content exposure and voting in political discussions in particular bear influence on the youth voters participation in 2024 elections? The positive relationships between the amount of time spent of social media, political content and political participation support the views of Gil de Karamat & Farooq (2020) that media plays a major role in enhancing political consciousness and involvement.

The findings indicate a weak significant positive relationship between the time spent on social media and political participation, $r = 0.45$ which supports the works asserting that given that young people spend much of their time online, this exposure leads to greater interest in political events and processes. This study provides additional support to this line of thinking by showing that youth who use social media more heavily are more likely to participate in politics both virtually and in person. The regression analysis ($B = 0.28$, $p = 0.001$) affirmed the conclusion of prior research that pointed to predictive association of social media usage on engagement and that the digital twitters here is highly charged with political potential (Marttila et al., 2021). However, this study extends previous research by operationalizing it with the particularity of a very closely divided and very_Install media-focused election campaign to show that even passive use of social media may result in increased political engagement.

The kind of content found to have the strongest relationship with political engagement was political content with the actual correlation and regression weight being $r = 0.52$ and $B = 0.33$ respectively, meaning that participants who frequently encountered election related posts, political debates, and politician updates were likely to engage in the political activities. This observation affirms the "information gap" hypothesis put forward by Prior 2007 which suggest that it is possible for political information from social networks to cut across the divide between the politically active and the inactive. In this study, therefore, the effectiveness of social media as a source of political information is highlighted by the fact that those respondents who often consulted the sites for political material had a higher rate of vote intention and actually participated in political discussions as well as activism. This supports the assertion of Omotayo & Folorunso (2020) that the information function of social networks is a determinant of electoral activity in youth.

However, this study expands on existing literature by focusing specifically on the 2024 elections and presenting evidence of how platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (X) are actively shaping political engagement. While previous research, such as studies by Rossini (2022), recognized social media's influence in political campaigning, this study uniquely highlights how contemporary algorithms and platform-specific trends amplify political messages and directly affect youth engagement. Furthermore, unlike older studies that examined general political behavior, this research pinpoints how exposure to curated, tailored political content

on these platforms can lead to higher engagement, particularly in the context of emerging technologies and targeted advertising.

Another important finding is the role of online discussions in fostering political engagement. The moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.35$) and significant regression value ($B = 0.20$, $p = 0.003$) indicate that participating in online political discussions significantly enhances political engagement. This is consistent with the findings of Theocharis et al. (2023), who argued that social media serves as a platform for civic discourse, facilitating political participation through discussion and debate. However, the current study provides updated insight by suggesting that, in 2024, youth are not just passive consumers of political content but are actively shaping political conversations. Participation in discussions on platforms like Twitter (X) and Instagram has evolved, with youth often using these spaces to express their political views, join movements, or engage in debates.

This is further corroborated by studies like that of Gil et al. (2021), who found that political discussions on social media increase political engagement by providing a platform for expression and dissent. However, this study adds nuance by showing how such discussions in 2024 are now more interactive and action-oriented, involving direct interaction with political figures and campaigns. The rise of more engaging features on social media, such as live Q&As with politicians or viral hashtags, has empowered youth to take a more active role in political discourse. This direct involvement in discussions can also explain the rise in activism, as indicated by 15% of respondents who reported participating in political campaigns or protests.

This study addresses significant gaps in the literature regarding the evolving nature of political engagement among youth in the context of digital media. Many prior studies focused on the broad relationship between media consumption and engagement (Santos et al., 2022), often neglecting the specific role of social media platforms in electoral contexts. Earlier research tended to examine traditional social media platforms like Facebook (Manca, 2020) or Twitter, while this study includes emerging platforms like TikTok, which are increasingly influential among youth. The study also fills a crucial gap by examining how social media platforms can act as both information sources and engagement tools, creating a feedback loop that fosters political involvement. It provides evidence that youth political engagement is more nuanced than previously understood, driven by both passive content consumption and active participation in online discussions. Moreover, by focusing on the 2024 elections, the study captures how social media's evolving algorithms and content dissemination strategies have made political content more accessible and engaging for young users, thereby amplifying their involvement.

CONCLUSION

The paper presents strong argumentation on the massive contributions of social media in engaging the young people in political activities through elections in 2024, and how the mediums can act as information source as well as the field of active participation. The results confirm the revolutionary impact of social media in contributing to the checking of political engagements in young voters hence the correlations drawn between the amount of time spent on social media, the exposure to political content and the level in online discussion. This research not only fills critical gaps in the literature by focusing on the unique dynamics of youth engagement in the current electoral context but also suggests that social media is reshaping political discourse in ways that traditional media could not. As young voters increasingly turn to social media for political interaction, it is imperative for policymakers, educators, and activists to recognize and harness this potential to foster a more engaged and informed citizenry. The insights gained from this study pave the way for future research to further explore the evolving relationship between

digital engagement and political participation, particularly as new platforms and technologies emerge.

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