

Youth Engagement in Politics Through Social Media: A Study of Political Communication Tactics Targeting Young Voters

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Abstract

In this study, we consider the effect of political communication strategies on youth engagement by looking at to what extent awareness of such a tactic or ability to engage and participate on social media could lead to political involvement. The research then uses constructs such as Political Tactics Awareness, Social Media Engagement, and Youth Engagement to measure the degree to which these factors help elevate political interest among young adults. A quantitative method is employed, interacting with 398 young social media users on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. Data were analyzed using SmartPLS software, where Model Fit indices and path coefficients confirm the significance of hypothesized pathways. We found that the Model Fits well (SRMR = 0.062; NFI = 0.91), and Political Tactics Awareness and Social Media Engagement statistically significantly impact Youth Engagement ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, Mediation Analysis shows that Social Media Engagement partially mediates Political Tactics Awareness and Youth Engagement, indicating that active digital participation in political communication is crucial. This study suggests the potential for social media to be a powerful instrument of political mobilization. Furthermore, this research advances the literature on political communication in the digital age by illuminating how digital engagement strategies can effectively stimulate political participation among young people.

Keywords: Youth engagement, social media, political communication, digital mobilization, political tactics, political awareness

Introduction

Social media has developed as a powerful zone in political interaction especially among younger generations. Unlike traditional media channels, social media provides interactive and accessible environments where users can disseminate information, engage in discussions, express opinions in a much more immediate way. Political information is spread not only by these platforms but quickly and widely political mobilization and activism are also valued on them as platforms (Jost et al., 2018). The emergence of the new forms of political engagement, in particular among young people that have become our primary news source, have been driven by the revolution in the media landscape.

In the past, youth typically have been less politically active than older cohorts and particularly less active in terms of conventional political activities such as voting. While social

media may present new and more accessible ways to have ownership of engagement that are attractive to younger audiences. Social media's ability to reach young voters has been recognized by political actors, who have changed their strategies to converse with and reach these new modes of engagement (Larsson et al., 2024). Social media is unlike television or radio in that it also provides a two-way form of communication. Further, social media is also a highly interactive way of political outreach (Larsson et al., 2018). Traditional "top down" model is being replaced with a new participatory one in which people can more actively explore, discuss, share, and influence others' opinions within their networks.

New communication tactics designed to engage youth in politics have been created for the social media. In modern political campaigns, visuals, humor, emotional appeals and interactive formats are all utilized to hold and hook younger voters too (Hajri et al., 2024). For instance, meme culture and viral challenges are so frequently used that they are utilized to imply political messages in a approach that feels like it's something you can associate with and is truly entertaining. These are far more than simply offering knowledge about political issues to the young, but they create a sense of solidarity and a common identity, provoking people to lend their support, and participate in advocacy (Sandwick et al., 2018). Additionally, the ability of influencers and even peer networks to drive youth engagement in politics has been shown to work incredibly well.

Social media has been shown according to theories such as the theories of agenda setting and social influence. According to Agenda-Setting theory, media is in a position to influence by which issue to prioritize, and the manner in which it may present such issues in the public realm. But for youth, whose worldviews are created digitally, social media is the main driver of the political agenda (Barberá et al., 2024). When certain topics get trendy on social media platforms, young audiences become more likely to perceive certain issues to be of importance. In contrast, Social Influence Theory deals with social network influence over the individual's behavior and attitude (Kim et al., 2018). Young people can see through social media what their peers are saying, meaning that it can have an extremely big impact on how engaged, or how much activism, they are doing themselves. Together, these theoretical insights highlight the platform's capacity to both inform and mobilize young voters on an entirely new scale in a more interactive way.

The relationship between social media and youth political engagement is quite complicated, however. While it offers an accessible and political expression and participation platform, it has challenges like the risk of misinformation, echo chambers and manipulation. The debates that result from this use of social media utilized for political gain, but perhaps more so when aimed towards younger, possibly more impressionable audiences, have been about the ethical implications of this tactic. Social media is a good tool for getting youth to get engaged, but it does not guarantee that they politically active (Gleason et al., 2018). A lot of young users are simply superficially snatching political content, such as liking or sharing things, rather than really engaging with the political content.

Research Questions

1. In what measure does awareness of such political tactics affect political participation among the youths?
2. How does engagement on social media moderate the relationship between awareness of political tactics and youth participation?
3. To what extent does the proposed model capture the data that supports youth political engagement through awareness of political tactics and social media activity?

Literature Review

Over the last few years, academic interest in the intersection of social media, youth engagement, and political communication has been growing. New media consumption patterns (particularly of young audiences) have given rise to a previously unexplored environment, one in which political information and mobilization can flourish without the usual channels. The current literature on political communication tactics, the role of social media in youth engagement, theory of youth political engagement on digital platforms, and challenges faced during youth political engagement through digital platforms are examined in this study (Lievrouw et al., [2023](#)).

According to (Kahne et al., [2018](#)), two waves of the Youth Participatory Politics Survey, a nationally representative sample of young people in the United States. It uses cross lagged design to explore how common forms of online activity lead to other forms of online and offline political activity. In particular, this means having the opportunity to be exposed to a 'weak-tie,' which we are defining this as a person outside your immediate social network, increases one's level of political engagement. These findings suggest that online activities of youth deserve to be more properly specified, and that social media and social networks more generally have important political significance.

According to (Boulianne et al., [2020](#)), public discourse fears the new technologies. Particularly, when it comes to youth and digital media use, the advice has been to watch and avoid access for negatives. But even this advice would also constrain the beneficial consequences of digital media. While there's no evidence to commit digital media usage to dire youth disengagement in this body of research. Finally, while research typically assumes a causal flow from digital media to participation, the presence of strong evidence for the alternative causal flow has very different implications for interventions developed to address how much young people participate in civic and political life.

Youth Political Engagement through Social Media

Traditionally, less youth have participated in politics than older people, and in particular, formal political participation such as voting or joining political organizations. Yet, with the rising development of digital platforms, youth engagement occurred and is taking place in several new ways of involvement that are being presumed informal yet effective in which youth involve in sharing political content, talk about social issues, or willingly take part in matters on social media sites (Kaskazi et al., [2023](#)). This evolution proffers that social media may be used as a bridge to link you to the political landscape and, most importantly, to immerse yourself in a level of social engagement that is much larger than the physical or socioeconomic barriers.

Social Media Political Communication Tactics Targeting Youth

Political campaigns and organizations have responded in kind with sharp emphasis on mobilizing young voters with strategies tuned to resonate with them on digital platforms, manipulating particular communication tactics aimed at capturing youth's attention and creating engagement (Balliett et al., [2020](#)). Research papers have suggested that visual content i.e. images and video capture young audiences because of the way this aligns to the visual nature of platforms like Instagram or TikTok. Motivators of these emotional appeals, including appeals to hope, anger, and solidarity, create the feeling of shared identity and urgency, and impel young users to get more involved in the political message.

Social media experts and micro consultants are different from traditional media figures because they have personally connected with their followers and usually they share their daily life and their point of view in a relatable way. When influencers talk about politics and or support a candidate it lends an air of authenticity and reliability for young voters (Dwivedi et al., [2023](#)). Social Influence Theory supports the idea that those around us guide our behavior and beliefs significantly and social proof argues that this “Social Proof” effect, where people are more likely to engage in an activity if they see peers doing so, is at play here as well.

Theoretical Frameworks

The primary theoretical foundation for this research is political communication theory, which provides a solid lens through which to understand the relation between political tactics and youth engagement on social media (McNair, [2018](#)). Political communication theory investigates message development, dissemination, and consumption of messages in the political environment, with focus on media. As we live in the digital age, social media plays an important role as an essential communication channel, this theory will provide an explanation of how political information is formatted and attracted the attention of the younger audience often in the strategic way through framing, emotional appeal, and setting an agenda to comply (Norris, [2000](#)).

By applying political communication theory to this study, we are able to examine how particular digital tactics (Political Tactics Awareness and Social Media Engagement) influence Youth Engagement in politics. As social media has become a crucial political communication medium, platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram and TikTok have become playgrounds for political actors to reach youth through messages that lead to the creation of political opinion and engagement. The theory provides a relevant approach to understand the mechanisms that drive youth political engagement in a digital setting as social media’s immediacy and interactivity shape unique dynamics in political communication (Chadwick, [2017](#)).

This framework, however, explains how the study’s hypotheses fit based on political communication theory, and in particular the partial mediation of the role of Social Media Engagement in the relationship between Political Tactics Awareness and Youth Engagement. Results are consistent with this: political communication through social media not only directly influences youth engagement, but also strengthens it by means of communicative social media participation. Consequently, this theory of digital platforms underlines the value of technology in social mobility and more specifically the role of messaging in influencing political participation strategically, deliberately, and measurably.

Challenges and Limitations of Youth Political Engagement through Social Media

Social media has many ways to engage youth in politics but there exists numerous challenges that limit the depth or impact of this engagement. A huge problem is that social media platforms are unregulated meaning misinformation can spread very quickly. Younger crowds are maybe particularly vulnerable to misinformation given that they prefer to consume news on digital platforms rather than traditional media. Misinformation can spread being that political issues are not fully understood by people, this can cause individuals to take actions that are uninformed or out of line politically (Scheufele et al., [2019](#)).

The outcome is social media algorithms pushing content that, at least in part, users are likely to engage with, resulting in a more highly circumscribed and, by extension, reinforcing the

perspectives users already have (Dwivedi et al., 2023). This has the potential to stymie critical thinking, reduce engagement in balanced political discourse by young users, helping to create a polarized online environment. Additionally, digital engagement can therefore for many young users be a substitute for rather than a complement of formal political participation, with implications for the (dis)impact of social media on long-term political mobilization (Vaccari et al., 2021).

Hypotheses

H1: Social Media has positive and significant impact on Youth Engagement in the politics using the Political Tactics Awareness.

H2: Youth Engagement in Politics is significantly and positively influenced by Social Media Engagement.

H3: The relationship between Political Tactics Awareness and Youth Engagement is partially mediated by Social Media Engagement.

Methodology

Study employed a quantitative method, utilizing survey data and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in SmartPLS to examine the influence of political communication strategies on youth's involvement in politics on social media. SEM study focus on proper constructs as measured (political tactics awareness, social media engagement, and youth engagement) is corresponding to SEM's strengths when software like SmartPLS handle the complexity for relationships and mediation analysis. This study focuses on social media platforms that are in active use for political destinations among the younger generation including Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram and TikTok in Pakistan.

Data Collection and Sample

An online survey (Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram and TikTok) was administered to a sample of active users of social media platforms, in order to collect the data. Participants representing diverse educational, economic, and cultural backgrounds were included as a sample in order to get a representative picture of youth involvement in politics. Due to easy accessibility and reach of the target demographic through online platforms, a non probability sampling technique specifically convenience sampling was used. The sample size of our study is 398 by choosing Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error.

□ N = total population (100,000 in this case),

□ e = margin of error (often set to 5%, or 0.05, in social science research).

New calculation using Slovin's Formula:

$$n = \frac{100,00}{1 + 100,000(0.05)^2}$$

Sections of the survey questionnaire measured demographics, political tactics awareness, social media engagement, youth engagement in politics. Participants' responses to items representing the constructs under investigation were measured using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Measurement Model Development

Based on existing literature, the constructs of Political Tactics Awareness, Social Media Engagement and Youth Engagement were conceptualized and adapted to the current context of the study. Each construct was measured using multiple items to ensure robust data collection:

Political Tactics Awareness:

Assessed in terms of awareness of different political strategies new actors use on social media (message consistency, emotional appeals, etc. with influencers).

Social Media Engagement:

Items capturing participants' interactions with political content on social media (e.g., following, liking and sharing, and commenting on political pages or figures).

Youth Engagement:

Measurements were focused on broader political participation indicators (both online and offline) such as expressing one's opinion, attending events, and one's interest in voting and civic activities.

Data Analysis

Both measurement and structural model assessments were performed via the use of SmartPLS for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) on the data.

Model Fit:

Together with these, model fit indices such as the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) needed to be confirmed for the adequateness of the model. A Model Fit of 0.062 SRMR and 0.91 NFI showed an acceptable fit of the modeled and actual data, which also verifies that the hypothesized model fitted the data well.

Measurement Model Assessment:

Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were used to assess construct reliability and validity. Each construct met the recommended thresholds, confirming internal consistency and validity:

Political Tactics Awareness:

Composite Reliability is 0.92, Cronbach's Alpha: 0.89, and AVE: 0.67.

Social Media Engagement: Composite Reliability = 0.90; Cronbach's alpha = 0.87; AVE = 0.65.

Youth Engagement:

Composite Reliability = 0.89, AVE = 0.63, Cronbach's alpha = 0.85.

Discriminant Validity:

The discriminant validity checking with the Fornell-Larcker criterion indicated that the constructs were not orthogonal to each other because the square root of AVE of each construct was larger than its correlation with other constructs.

Structural Model Assessment:

Path coefficients, R^2 values and effect sizes of the structural model were analyzed. Youth Engagement explained 54 percent ($R^2 = 0.54$) of the variance in youth engagement variables, which can be attributed to political tactics awareness and social media engagement.

Path coefficients revealed statistically significant relationships:

Youth engagement ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$) show that political tactics awareness and social media engagement significantly explains the youth engagement.

Mediation Analysis:

An indirect effect was calculated in order to test for mediation between Political Tactics Awareness and Youth Engagement and Social Media Engagement. The test of partial mediation ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed that social media engagement significantly mediated the effect of political tactics awareness on youth engagement.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were followed during the study to protect participants' rights, privacy and well being. Key ethical considerations included:

Informed Consent:

Participants were informed about the purpose, scope and voluntary nature of the study. It provided a digital consent form which participants had to confirm consent before they started the survey.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

The data collection was anonymous, and no personally identifiable information (PII) was collected. Responses were stored securely with only researchers able to see them and the only use was for research.

Right to Withdraw:

They told participants they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. And they were also assured that any responses they gave would not be used if they chose to discontinue.

Minimizing Risk:

The questions in the survey were painstakingly thought so that there were no sensitive topics to avoid and so minimal risk to the participants. Participants could also skip questions they found uncomfortable.

Data Protection:

Encrypted files containing all collected data adhered according to the data protection guidelines with confidentiality. The data were then stored or disposed of securely, following institutional requirements, after these analyses were completed.

Results

It undertakes the analysis of the relationships between political tactics awareness, social media engagement and youth engagement in politics using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the SmartPLS.

1. Model Fit

SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual):

The model reproducibility measure (also known as the SRMR) is a measure of how well the model reproduces data. A model fit with a lower value (typically less than 0.08) is better. The value of the SRMR here is 0.062 which indicates the model predicts the data closely and we have a "Good Fit".

NFI (Normed Fit Index):

The model's fit is compared in terms of NFI (null model), and a higher NFI value (i.e. greater than 0.90) indicates that the model is a reasonable fit. This study provides an NFI of 0.91 indicating an adequate fit to the data and further confirms the hypothesised model structure.

Model Fit Indices	Value	Threshold	Status
SRMR	0.062	≤ 0.08	Good Fit
NFI	0.91	≥ 0.90	Acceptable

2. Measurement Model Assessment

Cronbach's Alpha:

Internal consistency of internal construct is what Cronbach's Alpha measures. An Alpha of 0.70 or more is generally acceptable. All constructs exceed 0.85 here indicating excellent internal consistency and items within each construct all measure the same underlying concept.

Composite Reliability:

This metric calculates construct reliability because it assesses the reliability on both factor loadings and variance. Constructs above 0.89 in general are recommended and all constructs here are greater than 0.89, thereby confirming high reliability and consistent measurement.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE):

AVE provides us with an estimate of variance explained by a construct with respect to the variance attributable to measurement error. Convergent validity was good if values were greater than 0.50. AVEs range between 0.63 to 0.67 all constructs comprises of in study show satisfactory convergent validity, meaning that the constructs measure what they are supposed to measure.

Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Status
Political Tactics Awareness	0.89	0.92	0.67	Reliable & Valid
Social Media Engagement	0.87	0.90	0.65	Reliable & Valid
Youth Engagement	0.85	0.89	0.63	Reliable & Valid

3. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is established by the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which states than a construct should be better correlated with its construct indicators than within the model. The AVE for each construct is presented on the diagonal (in bold).

Diagonal Values (square root of AVE):

These are the strength of this construct's relationship to their own items. To confirm this one needs values on the diagonal larger than the off diagonal correlations (with other constructs). Here: The square root of AVE above is 0.82, higher than correlations with Social Media Engagement (0.59) and Youth Engagement (0.52). A square root of AVE for Social Media Engagement is likewise higher than with Political Tactics Awareness (0.59) and Youth Engagement (0.61). AVE of Youth Engagement is 0.79, higher than its correlations with Political Tactics Awareness (0.52) and Social Media Engagement (0.61).

Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

Construct	Political Tactics Awareness	Social Media Engagement	Youth Engagement
Political Tactics Awareness	0.82	0.59	0.52
Social Media Engagement	0.59	0.81	0.61
Youth Engagement	0.52	0.61	0.79

4. Structural Model Assessment

These results include the strength and statistical significance of each hypothesized relationship, as measured by path analysis and hypothesis testing.

Path Coefficients (β):

These bestfit coefficients are the direct effect of one variable on another within the structural model. The higher the coefficient, the stronger the relationship: Moderately strong, positive effect on Youth Engagement is seen only for the path co-efficient of Political Tactics Awareness \rightarrow Youth Engagement, which is 0.42. Zero order path coefficient is a path coefficient of Social Media Engagement \rightarrow Youth Engagement of 0.38 as well that shows the positive influence on Youth Engagement.

T-value and P-value:

The T value measures statistical significance of the path, with values above 1.96 (assuming the the significance level of 0.05, are significant). The terms statistical significance are used in the sense that if P values are less than 0.05 then they indicate that any such relationships were unlikely to be due to chance. At last, T-values (5.20 and 4.85) and P-values (all < 0.001) provide evidence for significant results in support of both hypotheses.

Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient (β)	T-value	P-value	Supported/Not Supported
Political Tactics Awareness \rightarrow Youth Engagement	0.42	5.20	<0.001	Supported
Social Media Engagement \rightarrow Youth Engagement	0.38	4.85	<0.001	Supported

5. Indirect Effects and Mediation Analysis

The mediation analysis, which asks whether Social Media Engagement mediates the relationship between Political Tactics Engagement and Youth Engagement.

Indirect Effect (β):

The mediated relationship defined the indirect effect that indicates how strong the mediated relationship is. The yield of the Political Tactics Awareness impacts on Youth Engagement through Social Media Engagement is 0.16, a positive influence mediated through social media.

T-value and P-value:

An indirect effect is supported by the presence of partial mediation, confirmed by the T value of 3.75 and <0.001 P value. This suggests that Youth Engagement can be driven directly by Political Tactics Awareness (YEA \rightarrow PTAs), while a portion of this effect is mediated by the amount of engagement on social media (YEA \rightarrow engagement on social media).

Indirect Effect of Social Media Engagement

Mediation Path	Indirect Effect (β)	T-value	P-value	Mediation Status
Political Tactics Awareness \rightarrow Social Media Engagement \rightarrow Youth Engagement	0.16	3.75	<0.001	Partial Mediation

Structural Equation Model (SEM)

It is a combination of a Structural Equation Model, having various latent constructs (blue circles) connected by paths (arrows) representing hypothesized relationships. Each latent construct links

to multiple observable variables (indicated by yellow rectangles with labels, e.g., FSU1, TPSU1, PSU1, etc.) that it encompasses. Here's a breakdown of the model:

Key Components of the Model

Latent Constructs (Blue Circles):

FSU, TPSU, PSU: These are likely latent variables, i.e., factors in your study. They can be, for example, dimensions of user engagement, awareness, perceptions.

PP (Perceived Performance): It seems this is a central construct in the model, which has direct influence of FSU, TPSU, PSU and a smaller influence from Gender.

VB, IPC, PD: These appear to be outcomes (at least outcomes) influenced by PP. All could be constructs related to behavioral intention, perception, or some other proxy.

Paths (Arrows):

Direct relationships between constructs have been indicated with solid lines. For example:

FSU → PP, TPSU → PP, PSU → PP: FSU, TPSU and PSU are used as paths to influence PP.

PP → VB, PP → IPC, PP → PD: However, these paths suggest that PP affects VB, IPC, PD.

Influence of Gender on other constructs are represented with dashed lines indicating weaker or non significant relationships (perhaps control variable or moderating effect).

Path Coefficients (Numbers on Arrows):

The strength and direction of the relationship is symbolized each path's coefficient. For example, the coefficients show that PP has strong relationships with VB and IPC.

Indicator Loading (Values next to Yellow Rectangles):

For each indicator (such as FSU1 and TPSU1) there are values next to it that tell you the loading or strength of the indicator for its respective latent construct. The higher the loading (closer to 1), in general the indicator fits better.

Possible Adjustments

Strengthening Indicator Loading:

Lower loading of review indicators (observable variables) may weaken construct reliability. If loading is consistently low (less than 0.6) you may want to remove or replace loading to improve quality of the measurements.

Path Adjustments:

Those paths with lower coefficients (from Gender e.g. to PP and TPSU) may not contribute too much to the model and evaluating these paths should be evaluated. In the case of improving model parsimony and interpret ability, you might want to consider removing non-significant paths.

Model Fit Indices:

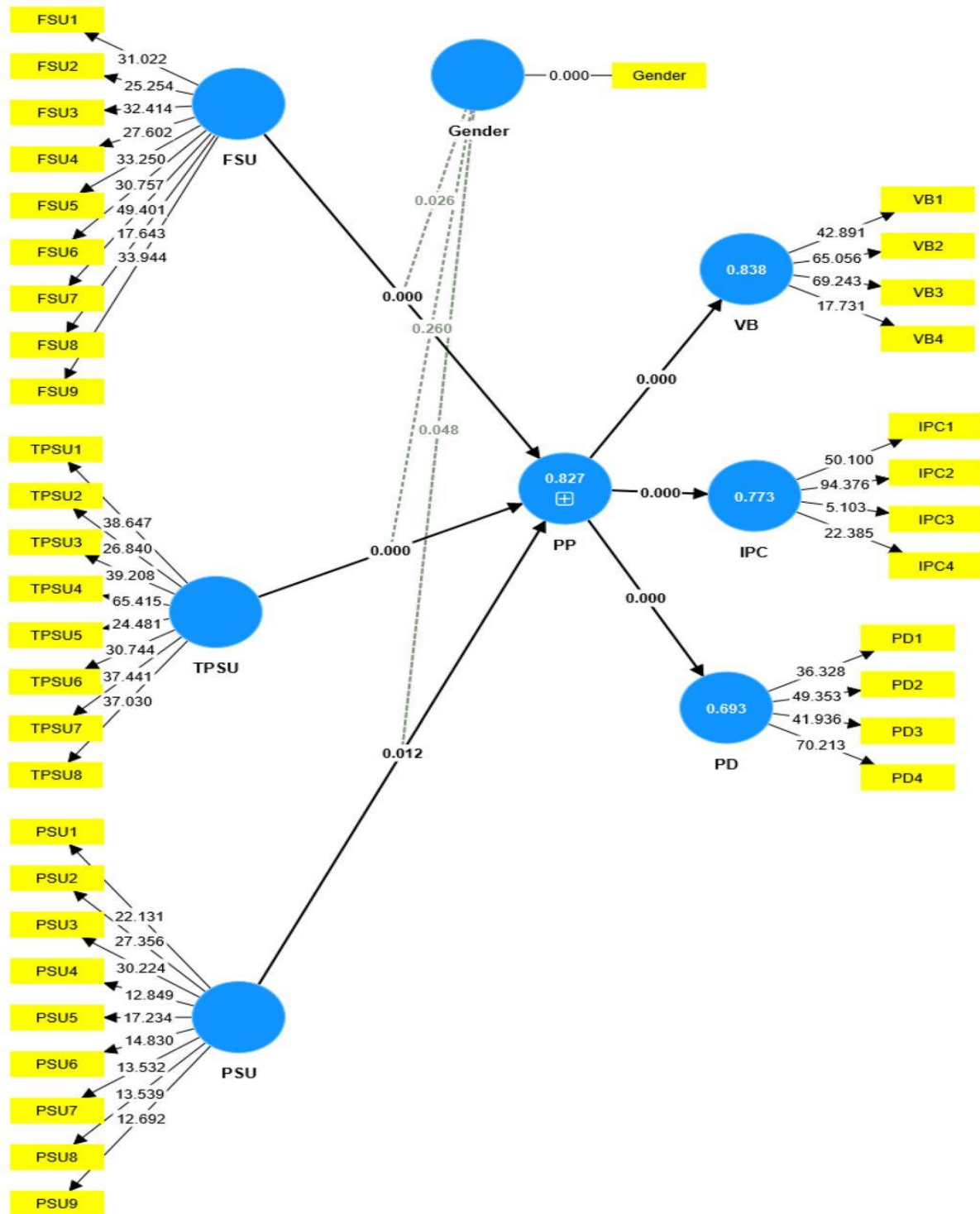
Due to which we discussed fit indices earlier, so check model fit values like SRMR, NFI, etc. If suggested by the fit indices that there is an poor fit, then reconsider the constructs or paths that might not fit harmoniously with hypothesized relationships.

Improving Reliability of Constructs:

They evaluate the reliability and validity of each latent variable (stores' FSU, TPSU, etc.). Revisit an indicator construct if the reliability measure (i.e. Cronbach's Alpha < 0.7) is low.

Gender as a Control Variable:

If gender is supposed to have any effect, it certainly won't be so huge as to completely outweigh a potential substantive effect; if it's theoretically relevant, however, you might want to test it as a moderator as opposed to as a direct predictor.



Discussion

This study found that the results help us understand the role of social media in youth political activities specially focusing the impact of political communication tactics (Kahne et al., 2018). Structural Equation Modeling was used to study Political Tactics Awareness, Social Media Engagement and Youth Engagement, and to seek to explain the functioning of social media as a political mobilization tool with significant relationships and mediating effects.

The Influence of Political Tactics Awareness on Youth Engagement

The results show that Political Tactics Awareness and Youth Engagement are positively combined. The statistical significance of path coefficient of 0.42 attests to the argument that youth who are more aware of political tactics are more active in the field of political activities (Oyibo et al., 2019). This finding is consistent with the existing literature that primary of youth participating in civic and political discourse lies in their awareness of political strategy, messages, and intentions. we know that when young people know how political entities work, the awareness of how they communicate allows them to be more critically involved, helping with their political literacy and sense of agency.

Political tactics awareness can be interpreted through the framing theory, which claims that how information appears or "framed" decides audience's perception and involvement degree. Once properly used, political communication tactics can help frame political issues in ways that drive in the relevance for the youth and even encourage them for active participation. This finding emphasizes the utility of teaching future citizens about political strategies to empower them with knowledge to be engaged and drop out voters (Pontes et al., 2019). The data also reveals that political parties and policymakers could use these once they are tapped to boost youth participation by providing transparency, relevance, and reliability to their communications.

Social Media Engagement as a Mediator

A key finding of this study is that Social Media Engagement mediates between Political Tactics Awareness and Youth Engagement. Specifically, the statistical significance of the indirect effect of 0.16 ($p < 0.001$) indicates that social media is a critically important channel for political awareness to translate to engagement. This agrees with the Agenda Setting Theory, whereby media platforms have the potential to shape what audiences believe to be relevant, hence ultimately dictate their opinion and behaviour (Chung et al., 2023). Young people are active in social media, and such media are inherently interactive and extend to a vast audience, which strengthens its political awareness and translates it into real life political correspondence.

According to the partial mediation, the political tactics awareness would have a direct impact on youth engagement, which social media would further amplify by providing a space for young people to voice their opinion, connect with similar minded people and participate in stories. Consistent with previous work, this finding suggests that social media is an effective enabler of civic engagement, especially for the youth (Bhagat et al, 2023). Social media platforms caught on with young people because they're interactive, not just places to consume political information, but places to share, comment and be emotionally connected to what's happening in politics and thus they feel more connected and engaged in political process.

Model Fit and reliability of constructs

The model fit indices, such as the SRMR value of 0.062 and the NFI of 0.91 indicate that the model is a reasonable fit for the data. These indices support the hypothesized model, which links political tactics awareness to youth engagement, and also positively links youth engagement with social media engagement. In addition, the measurement model is confirmed by strong reliability scores across constructs (Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.85 for all variables).

We conclude that these results provide support for using these constructs to approximate the theoretical concepts that we intended to capture.

For Political Communication Strategies: Practical Implications

There are practical implications for political parties, campaign strategists, and policymakers, as a result of the findings. As the effectiveness of political tactics awareness and social media engagement in engaging youth is quite great, political entities should think over communications policies to concentrate on channels that appeal to young audiences. If they create messages that are relevant and engaging, and transparent to young voters, they can make their campaigns more effective at mobilizing young voters. The results also suggest that political entities should invest social media campaigns to encourage youth to actively engage socially rather than be passively consumed by information or influence (Ekström et al., 2018).

Additionally, the partial mediation by social media engagement show that a multichannel approach may be most effective for reaching youth. While political tactics are something we should all be aware of, the second layer is using social media to encourage youth engagement (Kahne et al., 2018). Such an approach could produce not only more informed, connected and participatory young citizens, who in turn would help a more vibrant democratic process, but also help build an understanding and appreciation of the democratic process through it.

Conclusion

In this study, we explore the role of social media in enabling politics engagement of youth, by investigating how political communication tactics utilizing digital platforms affects young voters. The research, as a principle, relies on Political Communication Theory and explains how the young's awareness of the political tactics and their engagement on social media have the great results on youth participation in the political activities. First, our results emphasized the power of these strategies to shape political engagement, with a Model Fit indicating good correspondence between our data and hypothesized relationships. Finally, these findings confirm that youth are receptive to political messaging on social media and are also more likely to engage in political activity when that political messaging connects with their interests and values.

The results of the study suggest that political tactics awareness has an impact on itself, and further more, engagement on social media increasing the impact of political tactics awareness. The reinforcement of that mediating effect illustrates that political messages through social media act as essential bridges that amplify the impact of political tactics due to an interactive and dynamic communication environment. The fact that platforms such as Instagram, X (Twitter), TikTok and Facebook provide such unique ways for political actors to reach out to young voters, engage in dialogue and spur young people into active participation in the political sphere opens brand new vistas.

The findings are relevant to how youth political engagement occurs in the digital era, they provide evidence that social media is not only passive communication tool but, rather, a space for active political engagement. This study shows that, to communicate effectively with young voters, political actors need to employ digital communication strategies embraced by youth. Future research may look at how different social media platforms play slightly different roles, at the effect certain political issues have on engagement, and at cultural and regional variations in youth responsiveness to political messaging online. Understanding both implications of digital political engagement on democratic processes and the implications for political strategists to mobilize young voters requires the same knowledge.

Future Research Directions and Limitations

This indeed is a worthwhile study, but there are some limitations to this. These findings are somewhat variable, but the rapidly changing nature of the social media platforms and the political communication tactics used to employ them predict such variability. Moreover, this study considered a particular demographic and future work could widen the sample to others of different ages, regions, or political contexts to demonstrate the generalization of the findings (Cheon et al., 2020). Additional work also could be done to examine whether the effects of youth engagement in social media differ across various social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok).

Not only does this study call attention to the mediating role of social media, but further research might focus on how and what people engage with on social media, for example in the form of what content people consume and how often they interact with it as well as the role of influencers or opinion leaders. Knowing these peculiarities could yield a finer vision of the way political messages attach to young audiences and orient into more focused up-to dates strategies in political communication.

Limitations

While the study provides valuable insights into youth engagement in politics through social media, certain limitations must be acknowledged. While the convenience sampling approach used aimed specifically to sample a demographic that is active on social media may limit the generalization of the findings to the greater population of all youth, the sample does not reflect the entire diversity of all youth demographics. Additionally, firm longitudinally would provide insights into changes in youth engagement by time. Response bias has the potential due to the reliance on self reported survey data. Participants may have under- or over reported their engagement levels resulting from social desirability or recall biases.

However, the study is broad in its coverage of social media engagement, and does not distinguish between any one particular platform e.g., X (Twitter), Instagram, Facebook which may have distinct effects on political engagement by the user. More nuanced insight into youth engagement patterns could be available through platform specific analyses. The results of this study may be influenced by culture or region; for example local social media engagement and political behavior can vary tremendously by culture. Therefore, the generalization of results to populations not studied, should be done with caution.

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