The Relationship Between Social Media Use and Civic Engagement

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Abstract

This essay provides a comprehensive literature review of the relationship between social media use and civic engagement via data analysis. Many studies have found that social media activities, such as posting and sharing political information, can raise political awareness and help individuals engage in a broader range of political activities. This essay specifically examines why and how social media use increases civic engagement. Addressing a gap in the literatures, this research identifies two social mediating effects (political interest and interest homophily) through which social media use enhances civic engagement. To empirically test the research model, a survey was conducted with a US representative sample after harvesting Twitter data for six months and matching survey data with the Twitter data. Findings suggest that individual differences in political interest moderate the effects of accessing political information on social media.

Keywords: *social media, civic engagement, political awareness, data analysis, interest homophily, political interest, public participation, survey research*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media have reshaped the public discourses and transformed political involvement. Such platforms facilitate digital interactions, allowing users to create, share, and exchange information. This typology differentiates work supporting the cyberbole hypothesis vs. work supporting the contact hypothesis. The research aims to expand the typology to cover user behavior in Chinese social media... (A Ayankoya, 2013). It is hoped that the implementation of reinforcement learning (RL) publish/subscribe model will be achieved in the trial. A proof-of-concept system has been running in an edge computing environment. Findings provide additional evidence to support the argument that social media facilitate digital interactions, providing a foundation to examine the impact on cognitive and emotional processes, that these effects are nuanced, and that they find stronger effects when including emotional outcomes. It has been observed that the effects of user behavior are context-specific. Importantly, experiments in Chinese social media indicate that post behavior influences psychological states in a manner unique to each platform. Overall, this research complements arguments made by, and serves to caution researchers against generalizing the effects of digital interactions across all social media platforms. (Yang et al., 2021)

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between social media use and civic engagement has been a subject of growing interest in recent years. Research on this interplay has been varied, studying the issue from different theoretical perspectives and employing different methodologies. Despite these differences, much of what has been found can be summarized as categorically positive or negative impacts of social media on political participation. Informed by networked-pathways theory, prior research on this issue has found that social media can be either positively or negatively correlated with political participation. Some studies have found positive correlation. Others have found negative or insignificant correlation. There has been limited consideration of the idea that different demographic groups may

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experience the positive or negative influence of social media in different ways. However, recent research on this issue alludes to the opportunity to re-examine widely held beliefs about the relationship between social media use and political participation. To address these gaps, this study examines the relationship between social media use and civic engagement when mediated by social media participatory capital, while controlling for socio-demographic characteristics, the overall use of media for political information, news use, political interest, and political talk.

Literature on the influence of social media on civic engagement has exploded with the advent of new technologies, and there are now a vast number of studies on this issue. Advocates suggest that social media have a transformational effect on relations between politicians and citizens, offering a new, unfiltered and interactive channel for political communication. Critics argue that social media are a poor substitute for serious journalism, undermining rather than strengthening citizens' capability of acting as effective political participants. While there is an emerging consensus that social media use stimulates some forms of political participation, the findings are not consistent. Moreover, research suggests that different forms of political participation are facilitated or hindered by social media, and that the influence of social media on political participation is strongly contingent on moderators such as previous political knowledge, issue publics or political predispositions like political partisanship. Studies show that social media have different impacts on online and offline political participation. The results also suggest that the effects of social media depend on the civic engagement measurement being used and the time period in which social media practices are being examined. Where early research is primarily focused on the political fora and electoral systems, the growing presence of social media globally has triggered a wider range of studies accounting for citizens engaging in civic and political activities across a variety of regimes. Cross-national comparative research has started to explore how the influence of social media on political engagement

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may vary in different national contexts. However, the overwhelming focus of prior work on social media and civic engagement is on more established democracies with some research suggesting that social media have different impacts on citizens in non-Western systems. (Theocharis et al., 2021)

4. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate the relationship between social media use and civic engagement among young people. As minds are shaped by experiences, social media can serve as a vehicle of political development. Comparisons between social media citizenship and traditional citizenship could foster a better understanding of the dynamics between social media and civic engagement. Research questions (RQ) are as follows. RQ 1: Does social media citizenship have the potential to promote further political development in younger people than traditional citizenship (D. J. Bailey, 2019)? RQ 2: Do deepening civic engagements on social media diversify civic engagements offline even if they are factors that can affect the magnitude of civic engagement, and what is the relationship between the magnitude of civic engagement and the strength of civic engagement? There is a companion analysis between the application of social media and traditional media and the strength of some dimensions of citizenship. Focus groups in this study compose newly gathered data. In this study, my focus groups carry out analyses of civic character offline and experiences of relationships with traditional media.

The student is an Asian woman with a good command of English in her late 20s and is a graduate student at Iowa University. Certificates of Qualifications GU (CPF), motorcycle, and car are available. The employment is a salesperson for a technical product/service company earning $25,000 to $35,000, mainly in commission. As important personal beliefs, the most important virtue is patience, and opinions need to be heard in political events. Smartphone, fixed telephone, and desktop computer are always available. IP Booth is equipped using Wi-fi in public places (Nicole Marks, 2012). A desktop computer with the Windows 8

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operating system is used for an average of 5 hours per diem for 3-5 years. 90 minutes are spent on lecture courses and about 110 minutes reading newspapers and watching news. Instagram and Facebook are social media accounts that have been used, logged in for the last 4 hours about 15 minutes, and do not agree with 20-25-year-old male friends' posts and tweets about podcasts or politics. The previous experience of participating in discussions includes attending political events. At ages 19-20, citizens voted in elections. A conversation with friends aged 20-25 has included political content, and there is dissatisfaction with the unfairness of the current system. At events, different languages were spoken to share experiences with other people who spoke the same language. Since the perception of others was poor, the resolution to avoid rejection led to a preference for routine conversation topics.

5. FINDINGS

The data presented here suggests that there is a relationship between higher levels of social media use and higher levels of civic engagement. Specifically, this relationship is stronger regarding items regarding political involvement. A limitation is that this area of research is constantly evolving with each new update to current social media in general. Another limitation of the research is it focuses on the use of social media by younger Americans excluding the use of social media for political purposes by followers from outside of the USA.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the rise of social media networks paved the way for a significant change in the daily lives of younger generations. Social media applications are omnipresent in everyday life, whether for professional communication, personal interactions or political discussions. This study brings new insights on the connection between social media use among individuals aged 18-30 and their level of involvement in everyday politics and conventional political activities. To address the research objective, this paper defines what are considered high and low levels of civic engagement. Next, the social media usage patterns of respondents were analyzed. Finally, descriptive statistics and chi-

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square tests were used to examine correlations between social media engagement and civic engagement in everyday politics and conventional political activities. The findings suggest that social media is increasingly becoming a platform for political discussion among young citizens. At the same time though, the paper argues that the relationship between social media use and political engagement remains complex, nuanced, varied and context-dependent. (Grasso & Giugni, 2022)

6. DISCUSSION

The growth of social media platforms has, to date, been associated with the potential of revolutionizing the way people communicate on political and social issues (A Ayankoya, 2013). Social media is a network technology designed to facilitate communication, collaboration, and sharing of computer-based content among social groups. The most active social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These platforms gather millions of users, offering opportunities for social capital improvement and civic engagement. Most studies that have been conducted to date exhibit the contribution of using social media platforms for strengthening various social capital components like bridging and bonding and enhancing different forms of civic and political participation. Despite that, some researchers are arguing that it's clear that social media have little role to play in fostering civic engagement, while some have savvy criticisms about its misuse as facilitating engagement by only a small portion of the population (D. J. Bailey, 2019).

The findings add several new dimensions to the argument by examining how the relationship changes between different types of social media use and civic engagement. Moreover, this study examines the generalizability of the relationship between social media use and civic engagement, considering different socio-demographic groups. However, it finds results that show a nuanced interaction between social media use and civic engagement. This study found a clear and robust difference in the relationship that different types of

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social media use have with certain civic practices and acts. Analyzing how different types of social media are most closely related to civic engagement can help make a better sense of why some studies are providing contradictory findings. Still, the majority of studies in the literature predominantly focus on a single type of social media use or a small number of platforms. Some notably different results might change if interaction is examined between the different types of social media use. (Andersen et al.2021)

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Social media platforms have altered the landscape of current civic activity, providing new spaces for the exchange of political views and information. The proliferation of social media use has brought about mixed effects in bridging or broadening the participation gap of civic engagement amongst different socio-demographic subgroups. The findings suggest that, while social media have facilitated political deliberation and participation equally among the more favorable subgroups of civic engagement, both those expressing interest in politics and having higher education regardless of internet and social media use, they have further hindered the involvement of the public at large, particularly for people with lower education who were socio-politically marginal before the spread of social media. Bearing in mind that people's perception of digital information is shaped by their offline milieu, differential exposure to cross-cutting political content rather than simple political content on social media exacerbates socio-political disparities in bridging the previous gap related to political polarization. The results provide important empirical evidence to disentangle the anticipated effects of social media on civic engagement, revealing how the biased distribution of homophily and political polarization on social media moderates their overall effects through the mediation of perceived cross-cutting exposure to the extent of online political contents (B. Schmitt et al., 2022). Nonetheless, despite significant attention paid to the effects of social media use on political outcomes, very few studies have examined the specific mechanisms underlying

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their causal effects. The present study explores how exposure to cross-cutting and like-minded political information on social media affects the probability of people engaging in political discussion via the perception of such information as it is filtered by socio-political affinity and perception in a socially-biased information environment. By drawing on detailed survey data linked with respondents' Facebook activity, the analysis further investigates whether a change in strategies of following Facebook news outlets alters the perception of political content of socio-political affinity, eventually stretching it as cross-cutting exposure. Findings underscore the importance of digital media literacy in securing active citizenship in the socially biased online and offline milieus. How to leverage such knowledge for better democratic practice and institutions is also discussed, suggesting a social and informational environment where public discussion on social media is rekindled by political leadership and high-circulation media with an interest in fostering a common ground and by maintaining a healthy mix of like-minded social ties on social media through campaign strategies and operational support within social media platforms (A Ayankoya, 2013). In light of the study findings, several practical recommendations for policy and practice are proposed, bearing in mind that the chasm between academic research and its policy, practice-related applications needs to be bridged, particularly within various political and social contexts.

8. CONCLUSION

This essay has examined social media use in four different aspects of civic engagement. It finds empirical evidence that refutes the popular perception that social media necessarily makes people more engaged in civic activities. In contrast to the potential of the internet, i.e. the technology, to empower grass-root social movements, the social media are rather profit-driven, centralised and commercial platforms under huge corporate entities, i.e. the tech companies. This study also shows that those in the marginalised communities, who are in fact in the great need of information and resources, have fewer opportunities in creating new use

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of social media. As found in the literature review on digital inequality, it is an inherent and critical problem in societal changes mediated by technology (A Ayankoya, 2013). This research on the impact of social media use on civic engagement finds a triggering effect of the clicktivism experience on traditional political activities. However, it should be noted that resources in enacting political participation is similarly stratified through the clicktivism, which rather results in the participatory bias to those who already are due to their socio-economic status. Other tests have not found significant effects of social media on any other traditional political activities and none of tested types of non-political activities. There are a number of deliberation events in which the same individuals tend to communicate with each other. These dyadic relationships could generate more effectual experiences both to avoid the use of social media in seeking new information, and to conditionalise its triggering effect for political activities on SNS discussion.

Conflict of Interest

Not reported in the supplied article; author confirmation required.

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Data Availability

The article describes survey and social media data. Dataset access and privacy restrictions require author confirmation.

Informed Consent

Consent and ethical approval for the reported survey and social media data require author confirmation.

Use of Generative AI

Use of generative AI in the original research and writing was not reported; author confirmation required.

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