Social Media Knowledge Regarding Local Election Affects Undergraduates' Participation

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate how familiarity with social media about local elections influences the engagement of students. The sample for this study consisted of 350 undergraduate students. The questionnaire was used as an instrument in the data collection process. The findings demonstrated that the first place to check for daily political news was Facebook, followed closely by TikTok, and then Twitter. Monitoring is done mostly daily about the regularity with which undergraduate students follow political information. Undergraduate students use electronic devices such as smartphones, iPad, other tablets, notebooks, and desktop computers to keep up with the news. A mean score of 4.30 indicates that the conduct of undergraduate students who obtain political information about local elections from social media is always favorable. The findings suggest that further study should be conducted on specific platforms to validate the impacts of social media usage in light of the distinctive characteristics of each platform.

Keywords: Behavior, Participation, Political information, Political science

1. Introduction

At this point, academics are not allowed to conduct any experiments using social media as a medium for learning or instructing. Reading the news on websites based on the Internet is the first step in incorporating social media into one's routine. The last step is participating virtually in the activities of community organizations. Additionally, it facilitates the development of novel educational practices and provides access to a wide range of resources (Votinova & Votinov, 2019). The use of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram can facilitate more engaged and active learning among students (Jamari et al., 2017; Manca, 2020). In addition to this, Twitter motivates students to achieve better academic results (Junco et al., 2011). Integration of social media into teaching and learning settings can lead to new forms of communication, cooperation, and identity function, as well as beneficial cognitive and social consequences, according to research on the use of social media in education (Gao et al., 2012; Nti et al., 2020).

In higher education, the use of social networks that are enabled by technology carries with it a great deal of educational potential (Gikas & Grant, 2013). The best learning environment for users may be built through social media platforms that encourage involvement and interaction for users to acquire a better understanding and information gained through first-hand experience (Graham, 2014; Skoric et al., 2016). The dissemination of information may be done in a manner that is both participative and collaborative through the use of social media (Vuori, 2012). Users can quickly develop and share their works, make connections with a community of individuals that share similar interests, and offer feedback on the work produced by other users (Strandberg et al., 2019; Juhji & Nuangchalerm, 2020). Using social

media, students are better able to communicate with one another about their assignments, share their knowledge, and remain motivated to learn. According to the findings of Wang and Cai (2018), a significant number of college students in China are informed about politics both domestically and internationally due to social media.

Learning about politics through social media in the digital age depends on political communications that connect to politics and social situations. These types of political communications include things like governments, political parties, and pressure organizations. The political activism of the people, in which a collection of individuals is participating, is a question of convincing individuals. When it comes to power, ideology, interests, and communication, actions can be taken in the form of news, virtual events, etc., propaganda, deviations from the truth, advertising, and public relations. Political communication is a kind of political marketing, notably the election process (polling), which is a crucial instrument in representative democracies. Political communication, is a transmission between society and the political system, is an element that is in a dynamic state, national and local politicians are tasked with communicating a message regarding politics from one part of the political system to another part of the political system.

Furthermore, they serve as a link between the political system and society, as political processes such as political lulling and selection of individuals into the political system, as well as political engagement, are entirely dependent on political communication. Public relations are especially important for students who study political science and rely on political communications (Prachagool & Nuangchalerm, 2019). The key argument is that democratic principles should be adhered to when selecting local leaders through the electoral process. This is an advantage of local democracy. In addition, local government works to cultivate a sense of belonging, togetherness, and collective thought among its constituents, and it continues to do so in this manner. Membership in the same community is another benefit of this type of community building (Hassanli et al., 2022). As a direct consequence of this, municipal elections are now widely recognized as influencing the democratic process on both the regional and national levels.

Using social media sites as well as OCC (outside-of-class communication) technologies, both students and teachers can post and reply to messages in a virtual group that pertains to the subject matter of the course (Brooks & Young, 2016; DiVerniero & Hosek, 2011). An effective learning environment and a mechanism for teachers to communicate with their charges who are less engaged in an active learning classroom may be created via the use of these groups. Tess (2013) discovered that students were less likely to use social media as an organized learning tool.

The use of social media platforms has led to the dissemination of educational content on a variety of topics, including politics. Now more than ever, the goal of social media is to disseminate political information (Dimitrova et al., 2014). The social and political education of today's youth is profoundly impacted by the widespread use of social networking platforms (Doan, 2005; Persson, 2015). Students routinely communicate political information via social media, engage in online debates with their neighbors, and share their thoughts

(Kaskazi & Kitzie, 2021). Research conducted by Limaye et al. (2021) found that there are differences between Facebook and Twitter, which extends the knowledge gap hypothesis to the arena of online communication.

According to related research conducted by Intyaswati (2022), the results from the Netherlands differ from those from other countries (Turkey and Portugal) because residents of the Netherlands make less frequent use of Facebook for news tracking. In addition, Twitter is a type of social media that symbolizes a potential political communication scene and encourages a public dialogue that is more informed (Beers, 2014). During the municipal elections in Thailand in 2022, the function that social media will play as a political education tool for the millennial generation is going to be imposed. This is because all actions concerning democratic problems are regarded as significant. This was essential to cultivate in them the ability to think critically.

Higher education has an essential function in the production of bundles. Middle- and upper-class cadets build and develop knowledge, research, academic services to society, and the maintenance of arts and culture. Higher education is, therefore, home to a wide range of science disciplines and a hub for knowledgeable scholars. Economic and social policies and drivers define a lot of talent in higher education. Higher education is also a factor in transforming agents into desirable societies, so political learning in higher education institutions greatly influences young people's political behavior (Žalėnienė & Pereira, 2021). Elareshi et al. (2021) studied students' political interests and exposure to the press and found that students were politically interested and open to political news from the press. Politics from the press by acknowledging political communication through social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and television.

According to the findings of research conducted by van Erkel and Van Aelst (2021), keeping one's actions, attitudes, and knowledge accessible to the media for political news is an effective approach to keeping up with recent happenings. In the gathering of political news via observation of occurrences, the following are examples of interesting political news stories: election outcomes; news tracking; etc. Regarding how people see democracy, elections, political demonstrations, the coverage given by the media, election campaigns, and other related topics, perception, television news, and social media are to blame in many cases, according to Yan et al. (2021).

For instance, the call for democracy tends to depoliticize people's points of view. Furthermore, for democracy to be maintained, it needs to create opportunities for both its citizens and its younger generations. Get information that is both accurate and complete as much as possible, particularly about the implementation of democratic policies by the government. The government must bring the people and the children together before the implementation or declaration of such measures for everyone to be able to benefit from them. For the government to provide support for politics, legislation needs to be rushed. The public and youth sectors' overall performance may be strengthened and improved through editing, revising, and enforcing existing legislation. The political aspects of democracy and public policy should be advanced by the combined efforts of older and younger people alike.

Local elections are thus viewed as another kind of democratic government that establishes and upholds individuals' rights and liberties with the support of a larger society (Leromain & Vannoorenberghe, 2022). Representatives of the people use it because it is a government system built on the idea that "sovereignty belongs to the people" (Isaac, 2022). The person tasked with carrying it out is the representative of the people's responsibilities for the public's interests. The electorate is directly involved in politics to exercise sovereignty through representatives, namely local council members or local administrators, who wield dominance and concurrently create policies derived from direct elections of the populace through the electoral process and administer them in local government entities or governments that conform with the features of representative democracy. Each province is designated a local government area depending on the subdivision, such as the provincial administrative organization (OECD), the sub-district administrative organization, and the municipality. Therefore, by choosing their representatives to exercise their political decision-making authority, local elections serve as a conduit for citizen political participation at the local level (Masuku & Macheka, 2021).

Social media has therefore been used for democratic and political purposes. It is applied in a variety of ways for political engagement or communication initiatives. Politics play a role in how government services are administered and provided. This is so because the majority of political actions in a democracy entail the sharing of information among all the different parties. So, the goal of this study is to find out how learning about political information about local elections through social media influences the behavior of undergraduates.

2. Method

This research uses a survey questionnaire consisting of personal qualities; learning about political information about local elections through social media influences the behavior of undergraduates; content validity tests; and reliability tests.

2.1 Population and Samples

Undergraduate students from a university in Thailand are among the participants in the study. A straightforward random sampling technique was used to select 350 undergraduate students from a total of 2,149 individuals using Taro's formula (Yamane, 1973).

2.2 Instrument

2.2.1 The Questionnaire

The research questionnaire had two sections. In the first section, respondents are questioned about their preferred social media platforms as well as the gender and year class of the undergraduate students. Quantitative data collection is the goal of the second section. A five-point Likert scale, a measurement method frequently utilized in social science research, is used to rate 10 statements in the second section.

The research questionnaire provides a measurement method that is objective and reliable. Using a pre-test with 30 undergraduate students, the questionnaire was validated at 0.87. In addition, from the final version distributed to responders, parts that were deemed ambiguous or

unclear were removed. The survey participants were informed of the study's goals and requested to sign a consent form before participating in the poll to certify that they were willing to answer the questions. They were also given the assurance that their data would be kept private.

2.2.2 Measurement

Survey questions on social media activity assessed the frequency of the respondent's behaviors as follows: 1) inviting people in social media groups to vote; 2) keeping up with local elections via social media; 3) getting acquainted with political news and clearing up any doubts about the work of local politicians or political parties via online media; 4) forwarding messages, images, and videos about local elections via social media; 5) commenting on elections via social media; 6) using sites for political news coverage, such as YouTube, Facebook, LINE, Instagram, and Twitter; 7) posting messages, images, or videos commenting on election news via social media; 8) sharing messages, images, and videos about the candidate's policies and projects via social media; 9) expressing a sense of disagreement (liking) with text, images, or videos related to local elections; and 10) there is exposure to political news that can be used as information for discussing or expressing political opinions. These responses were ranked from "never" (1 point) to "always" (5 points), and the interval score is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Criteria for interpreting scores from social media influence behavior when learning political information about local elections

Range of average score	Interpretation
4.21-5.00	Always: refers to social media influence behavior when learning political information about local elections is highest.
3.41-4.20	Very Often: refers to social media influence behavior when learning political information about local elections is high.
2.61-3.40	Sometimes: refers to social media influence behavior when learning political information about local elections is moderate.
1.81-2.60	Rarely: refers to social media influence behavior when learning political information about local elections is low.
1.00-1.80	Never: refers to social media influence behavior when learning political information about local elections is very low.

2.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

Process the data obtained from the questionnaire with a ready-made program that uses statistics to analyze the following data: 1) analyze general data, including gender and year level, by

frequency and percentage; 2) analyze data on social media behavior regarding receiving information about local elections, by mean value (M) and standard deviation (SD); and 3) create a questionnaire about the problem. We took all of the data and organized it into categories to identify barriers and suggestions for using social media for local election information. By grouping texts or sentences with similar characteristics or meanings and presenting them as essays, they will have the same or similar features or implications.

3. Result

Based on research on how learning about political information about local elections through social media influences behavior, the results of the study can be summarized as follows:

3.1 General Analysis of Respondents

The results of the general analysis of respondents in terms of gender are as follows: At the year level, the majority of respondents were female, representing 196 persons (56.0 percent) and 157, 71, 45, 56, and 21 students in years 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively, representing 20.58%, 18.61%, 17.69%, 29.36%, and 13.76%.

Students rank Facebook as the first source of daily political news, followed by TikTok and Twitter, respectively. The frequency with which students follow political information has been discovered to be primarily monitored daily. Students use mobile phones, iPads or tablets, and notebook or desktop computers to stay up to date on current events.

3.2 Behavior Analysis

The behavior of undergraduate students learning about political information about local elections through social media is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Undergraduate students and political information about local elections through social media

Item	Mean	SD	Interpret
(1) Inviting people in social media groups to vote.	4.37	0.73	Always
(2) Keeping up to date with local elections via social media.	4.38	0.71	Always
(3) Exposure to political news Doubts about the work of local politicians or political parties to clear doubts through online media.	4.36	0.73	Always
(4) Forwarding messages, images, and videos about local elections via social media.	4.25	0.75	Always
(5) Commenting on elections via social media.	4.25	0.79	Always
(6) Use political news coverage sites such as YouTube, Facebook, LINE, Instagram, and Twitter.	4.25	0.77	Always
(7) Posting messages, images, or videos commenting on election news via social media.	4.27	0.80	Always
(8) Sharing messages, images, and videos about the candidate's policies and projects via social media.	4.21	0.83	Always
(9) Expressing a sense of disagreement (like) with text, images, or videos related to local elections.	4.26	0.77	Always
(10) There is exposure to political news that can be used as information for discussing or expressing political opinions.	4.37	0.69	Always
Overall	4.30	0.76	Always

From Table 2, it appears that the behavior of undergraduate students learning about political information about local elections through social media is always level. It can be ranked by the fact that following up with local elections via social media exposes one to political news that can be used as information for discussing or expressing political opinions and inviting people in social media groups to vote.

4. Discussion

Students today make frequent use of many forms of social media. This study follows the online behaviors of undergraduate students, which are not generally included in the course materials at that level of education, to explore how students learn about politics through the use of social media. According to the findings of the study, the most reliable places to obtain daily political news are Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter. It has come to light that the frequency with which students consume political media is the primary factor that is considered in ongoing monitoring. Student contacts may provide them with opportunities to increase their knowledge. This can be inferred from the fact that students use a variety of technologies to keep themselves informed

of current events, with mobile phones coming in first, then iPads and tablets, and finally notebooks and desktop computers.

The interactions that students have through discussions on social media suggest that they are more involved in their coursework and informed about the material than their peers, who use social media less often (Kligler-Vilenchik, 2022). When students discourse about a subject, they are processing the information, recalling it, repeat it verbally, and paying attention to one another. Sharing knowledge in the context of a conversation can make it easier for relevant information to be retained in long-term memory, facilitating learning through this approach. People who participate in interpersonal interaction are more open to the most complicated concepts, are better able to make strong logical links between them, and are more likely to initiate sensible disputes (Dostál et al., 2017). The capacity of sophisticated thought to generate a solid political orientation contributes to the expansion of political knowledge.

Furthermore, the students who were studied used social networking sites to study together regardless of their location or the passage of time. According to Brooks and Young (2016), unstructured connections may have a marginal impact on the intellectual growth of pupils, but real learning can only take place when there is an interaction between the students and the teachers. Students are better able to select the most useful resources thanks to Facebook, which visualizes their social relationships with others who have the same interests (Intyaswati, 2022). The students think that being a part of a Facebook group dedicated to chemistry expands their knowledge and inspires them to continue their education online. Facebook has developed into a social media platform that influences how college students handle their election campaigns for leadership positions (Skoric et al., 2016).

According to Dimitrova et al. (2014), the use of social media in online education can affect students' political understanding through the use of online political dialogues on numerous different platforms. Depending on the number of people participating in the online discussion, more student learning can result from online discourse in higher education. Students were able to expand their professional networks by interacting directly and indirectly with industry professionals on social media, which also helped them get a deeper comprehension of the work produced by their peers. Social media can change their perception through a multi-dimensional array of sources that are reliable for political engagement (Siribunnam et al., 2014).

Nevertheless , the researchers questioned undergraduates majoring in political science for this study. Political communications understand the specifics of the material associated with studying politics through social media that correspond to what the researcher wishes to study and are the best-suited person to deliver information because they are subject matter experts in this area. Because the research was conducted from the standpoint of political science, politics, and governance, those who will be using the findings must consider the constraints that relate to such data. The aggregate social media activity of the different platforms is included in the list of the study's limitations. The purpose of a future study will be to investigate different types of social media platforms to identify the distinctive characteristics of conversations and activities on each platform. There are differences across social media platforms in terms of the accessibility of political information, networking opportunities, and group communication.

5. Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, political networks can be uncovered by listening to talks on social media platforms. The findings are in line with those of previous research. Students' brains are molded via the process of political conversation. Even when social media is not used in the learning design, political knowledge is still about the complexities of previous knowledge acquisition.

The results of the study indicate that utilizing social media does not have an impact on an individual's political literacy. In this pathbreaking study, researchers looked at the relationship between participation in social media and political discourse and its effect on the political education received by students. Interactions on social media, such as debating the viewpoints of other students, following the accounts of politicians, gaining political knowledge, publishing political experiences, and commenting on current events, have very little influence on how well students learn politics.

The political discussions that take place on social media have very little influence on these activities. Education about social media platforms ought to include a discussion of politics. This conclusion guarantees that democracy will function properly. Young people can be inspired to get involved in politics as a result. The findings of the larger-scale investigations will be supported by more data through subsequent studies with broad demographic boundaries.

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