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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Role of Social Media in Influencing Youth Political Behavior: A Systematic Literature Review

Siti Juwairiah Zainurin[1], Wan Norhasniah Wan Husin[2], Noorazmi Mohd Zainol[3]*

[1, 2, 3]National Defense University of Malaysia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study systematically reviewed the works which investigated the relationship between social media and youth political behavior emphasizing on how it may influence their political participation. The systematic review included 30 out of 2,037 articles, and the majority of youth who became followers of politicians on social media, had a positive effect on youth involvement in politics, such as participating in protests through online petitions. Ten of the studies showed a positive relationship between youth political behavior and political discussion. Most articles were removed since the age exceeded the youth age and unrelated to the study. The analysis revealed four effect of social media youth political behavior; the ability to follow politicians, the freedom to express opinions online, online political communications, and the abundance of information. This study suggests the government to mandate the politicians utilize social media for public discourse since it effectively gains youth perspective, concerns and aspirations.

INTRODUCTION

Social media is the most widely utilized communication instrument in the world, particularly among youth since they can access information on politics, economics, and entertainment via numerous sophisticated gadgets given, including smart phones, tablets, and even laptops (Vorderer et al., 2013). Most of them prefer to use digital platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, and WhatsApp, as these provide information more effectively. This circumstance has indirectly influenced youth to be less interested in traditional politics which then affected them to be less interested in engaging traditional political activities like voting during elections (Marquat et al., 2020; Binder et al., 2020).

There are more than 3.5 billion people under the age of 30 living in the world today, and 84% of them are youth at aged of 18 to 29 years, who are the main users of social media. Then followed by 81% of those aged 30 to 49 (Anderson, 2022). With the sophistication of social media applications, the relationship between political leaders and youth can be built through social interaction, which can encourage youth to vote, increase political opinion expression, and provide space for digital online petitions or commenting on politicians' posts (Boulianne, 2018; Pavan et al., 2019). Besides social media used also can affect youth participation in political protests, online political engagement, including institutionalized activities like online campaigns and non-institutionalized actions like participating in protests (Wunderlich et al., 2022; Valenzuela, 2014). They are also more competent at commenting on politicians' ideas on social media, and are willing to participate in demonstrations if it means shifting the country's development trajectory in a more efficient way. This digital platform also promotes democracy and honesty among youth, and encouraging them to join organizations (Alfaruqy et al., 2023).

According to Keating et al. (2017), political science studies have taken an interest in the issues of youth political engagement through social media, specifically looking at how youth utilize these platforms to to search for information and share political opinions. Studies have also shown that social media use for non-political reasons may dampen political engagement by distracting rather than mobilizing those (Matthes, 2022). Although there are signs that the political use of social media affects offline political involvement, data from Germany, the United States, Switzerland, and Japan shows that the difference in voter turnout between younger and older persons has not significantly decreased. Despite the significant rise in social media usage, particularly for political reasons, voter participation has remained low among the youth compared to the elder generation. While there are concerns that lower-effort political activities on social media may divert users from traditional forms of political engagement, there is evidence that social media can help promote political participation among youth (Tipane, 2023).

Definitions

Social media. It can be described as a group of internet-based applications rooted in the foundations of Web 2.0, allowing the creation and exchange of user-generated content, and are often divided into six categories: social networking, social bookmarking, social news, media sharing, micro blogging, and online forums (Kaplan et al., 2010). It also refers to current interactive channels that allow people to connect and exchange ideas, experiences, and information across a number of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube (Igbafe et al., 2018; Casteltrione et al., 2018). While the use of social media for a political objective is primarily centered on politicians seeking votes and political positions by influencing voters' political behavior (Fernandes et al., 2010). In this study, social media for political reasons is defined as using social media platforms solely to display images of political parties, leaders, campaigns, and their political opinions on one's profile page (Ganduri et al., 2020).

Political Behaviour. It is defined as any type of participation in the political process, whether individually or collectively, as well as any activity with political implications for interest groups, social movements, and behaviouralism. It also addresses political attitudes, and political participation in protests, social movements, and elections (Katz, D., 1961).

Youth. It can be defined as the phase between childhood and pre-adulthood, marked by emotional changes and social interactions. According to the United Nations youth are defined as those aged 15 to 24 years old, and in the United States of America and Japan, youth are defined as those aged between 15 to 24 years. Meanwhile, Malaysia's Youth Organizations and Youth Development Act was amended in 2019 to reduce the young age limit to 30 years beginning January 2026 (The Star; 2023). This is due to the age-related groups influence a country's the trajectory and prosperity (Wan Husin et al., 2021). Therefore, this study will analyse research that focused on youth between the ages of 18 and 30 years old.

Objectives

There are three objectives which seek to answer the following research questions:

Is there an association between the nature of social media and the youth political behavior?

To analyze the most used form of social media regarding politics.

To investigate the political behavior chosen by the youth either positive or negative after being influence by the social media.

To answer these questions a systematic search database was conducted using search terms designed to capture as much of the extent research as possible. Studies were screened against predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria and selected accordingly.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Social media was first centered on social sharing and entertainment, and it has evolved into a key platform for sharing global political news starting in 1977. Protests, online petitions, and comments on politicians' posts are a few examples of how young people are getting involved in politics through social media (Matthes, 2022). This positive relationship is also due to the youth's inclination towards active participation in civic life (Boulianne, 2018), which further enhances their comprehension of contemporary political issues. People also gain political knowledge from social media posts, which influence their political views and behaviour. Besides, the accessible engagement space enables political organisations engage social media users in politics (Anderson, 2022).

This situation has become a benchmark for the significant change that has altered the worldwide political landscape (Chen et al., 2020). If politicians' opinions are censored by news outlets during an election, political parties and individuals turn to social media sites such Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube as a substitute (Kreiss, 2012). Furthermore, this digital platform serves as a vital hub for political discourse by disseminating news and educating the public, whereby this channel will guide NGOs in raising public awareness about social and political issues (Anderson, 2022). Several studies indicate that social media has increased political participation among youth by providing a platform to exchange ideas and engage in political discussions, thereby impacting their political behaviour. Hence, they more likely to engage in politics by sharing their opinions and also increases their interaction with politicians and the public (Keating et al., 2017).

Existing research illuminates that social media can enhance youth's political knowledge in several ways, such as introduced unorthodox formats for political education. Besides the availability of personalized content and direct communication channels has the potential to increase youth comprehension of political issues (Tipane, 2023). A systematic literature analysis on social media found that Chinese university students' political participation is low, resulting in a lack of national politics awareness. This predicament is closely related to China's autocratic administration style. In contrast with democratic countries, students who discontent with democratic system are more inclined to express themselves politically on social media platforms (Chen et al., 2023). Meanwhile, other systematic review showed that on political activities, social media will increase political efficacy, political discussion, political expression, and online and offline political discourse. However, there are also criticism which emphasizes the intricate relationship between online expression, situational political participation, and the unpredictability of actual political engagement among social media user (Borhan-Eddine, 2020).

This systematic review will look at broader dimension of political behaviour such as political socialization, political culture, political communication, and elections. It aims to investigate the influence of social media on youth political behaviour, and how their political knowledge affects social media content evaluation. PICO (population, intervention, control, and outcomes) was used to develop research questions (Aslam et al., 2010) and to examine the impact of social media (population) influence (intervention) and political knowledge (control) on youth political behaviour. In the following sections, four central themes of how social media affects youth political behaviour and political stability of countries are examined, which are following politicians on social media, freely and openly online political expression, political communication, and wide range of political information. These four themes are crucial to examine since they are all significant in determining youth political behaviour.

RESEARCH METHODS

The review was guided by the PRISMA Statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), which is commonly used in social sciences (Chapman, 2021). It offers three unique advantages which are (1) defining clear research questions that permits systematic research, (2) identifying inclusion and exclusion criteria, and (3) examining large database of scientific literature in a defined time (Sohrabi et al., 2021). The PRISMA Statement enables a rigorous search

of terms related to advancing scientific understanding on the impact of social media approaches on youth political behavior. PEO (population, exposure, outcome), the amended PICO method (population, intervention, comparisons, outcome), were used to described eligibility criteria and develop research questions.

Population

The review focused on studies with youth population, specifically the transition from school to university to employment. The population was limited to citizens aged 15 to 30 years, and only studies with a mean age between 15 to 30 years were included. Besides, the aim of analyzing youth political behaviors as an outcome was included.

Exposure

Social media exposure studies encompass both, traditional and new media. Newspapers, television, radio, and physical books are examples of traditional media, while media includes internet forms of communication such as social media, blogs, and online videos. Facebook and Twitter use among youth has dropped dramatically in recent years due to the rapid growth of social media sites like Snapchat, Instagram, and YouTube. New media improves targeting and customer engagement, whereas conventional media has a vast reach and can cover events. Social media might affect youth behavior by depriving them of important social signals found in face-to-face interactions, which can enhance coldness, anxiety, and insecurity. The Royal Society for Public Health in the United Kingdom reported that Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram increase depression, anxiety, body image concerns, and loneliness in 14- to 24-year-olds (Anderson et al., 2018).

Outcome

This review should consider outcomes that meet the definition of political behaviour, which is the actions and activities of individuals and groups that seek to influence the political process and decision-making. They can be categorized as voting, lobbying, protesting, and running for office. Political behaviour's outcome depends on circumstances and intentions, and it can affect policies, rules, and regulations, as well as public opinion and attitudes towards politics. Besides it also can give negative impact such as polarization, societal dissatisfaction, and violence (Harrell-Cook et al., 1999). Thus, political behaviour's consequence is complex and multidimensional, depending on the political system, the social and economic backdrop, and the strategies and tactics utilized by political actors.

Inclusion criteria

Studies were included if the following criteria were met:

Must be written in the English language (due to time restrictions and access to papers).

Must be full papers (full text of the published, peer reviewed papers must be available to the authors).

Must be within the predefined population age group (mean age of 18-30 years).

Must have exposure of either (a) at least one traditional media or (b) at least one new media.

Must have an outcome of political behaviour

Must investigate the relationship/association between social media used on youth political behaviour.

Identification

The Pearl Harvesting method using a broad range of search to include as many relevant studies as possible (Sandieson, 2006). This method starts by finding a few studies relevant to at least one search term. Subsequently, all the keywords within these identified "pearls" are retrieved. These keywords are paired with known alternative terms to resulting in an extensive list of search terms. This comprehensive list is then applied across various database such as Science Direct, Emerald, Taylor Francis, Springer Link, and Sage Journal to find related studies. The Pearl Harvesting method aims to cast a wide range of relevant literature related to the subject of interest (see Table 1). The selected database yielded 2,307 possible articles after the search.

Table 1. Alternative Search Terms Used in Databases Searchers

Alternative Search Terms	
Population	"youth*" OR "young adult*" OR "youngster*" OR "youthfulness" OR "young generation" OR "young people" OR "youngster*" OR "youthful individual" OR "young one"
Exposure	"social media influence*" OR "social media impact*" OR "social media effect*" OR "social media persua*" OR "digital influence*" OR "online influence*" OR "social media engagement effect*" OR "online social influence*" OR "digital social influence*" OR "social media reach" OR "influence* of social network*" OR "social media impact* on behavior*" OR "influence* of online network*" OR "impact of social media interaction" OR "social media impression" OR "effect* of electronic word of mouth"
Outcome	"political behavior*" OR "political socialization" OR "political participation" OR "political communication" OR "political culture" OR "election*" OR "voting behavior*" OR "political attitude*" OR "voter turnout" OR "political engagement" OR "political interest" OR "political attitude*"

Screening

Articles were first screened by title and abstract against the predetermined eligibility criteria. In cases of uncertainty, the full text was read for clarification. Exclusion criteria were then applied as follows:

Any systematic reviews or meta-analysis.

Conference abstracts or posters.

All included articles were then read in full to check that they were eligible.

Data extraction and data synthesis

The following details were retrieved for each study: country in which the research was conducted; the study exposure, that is, the nature of social media; and the study testing for youth political behaviour. Details of the exposure and the population used in the study were also recorded, including the number of participants, gender percentage, and mean age. In addition, a summary of the main findings of each of the study was recorded. The studies were further classified according to design: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method.

Evidence was synthesized according to which aspect of political behaviour was being investigated. The aspects of political behaviour being investigated were either positive or negative behaviour.

Assessment of trustworthiness

This study uses the Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP) to evaluate the credibility, importance, and usability of selected research papers (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2023). A complete strategy to evaluating systematic literature reviews with these three main criteria ensures that the synthesis of findings is high-quality and relevant to the research. This approach also contributes to the accuracy and reliability of systematic literature.

RESULT

On November 18, 2023, an initial database search retrieved 2,307 studies from eight databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, Pro Quest, Springer Link, Science Direct, Emerald, Taylor Francis, and Sage Journal. Titles and abstracts were reviewed, and 184 records were excluded, then followed by full-text screening was done, and 2,089 records were removed. Exclusion criteria include book chapters, conference papers, book reviews, case studies, dissertations, editorials, features, general information, news, literature reviews, and wire feeds. Papers may have had population, result, and exposure terms in their titles, but did not meet the inclusion requirements upon inspection of the full text, that focused on youth, political behaviour, and the nature of social media.

The search was narrowed down to 40 relevant articles, and after screening for eligibility criteria, resulting in 10 exclusions. A final number of 30 studies were included in the review. Figure 1, as recommended by PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) (Liberati et al., 2009), shows how the papers were selected: The studies were mostly cross-sectional research and, 8 studies were longitudinal studies. Table 2 shows a complete list of studies considered in the review, with 17 studies analysed the relationship between social media platforms that provide a wide range of information and youth political behaviour. Ten studies examined on online communication, and three longitudinal studies explored on followed politicians and political influencers on social media.
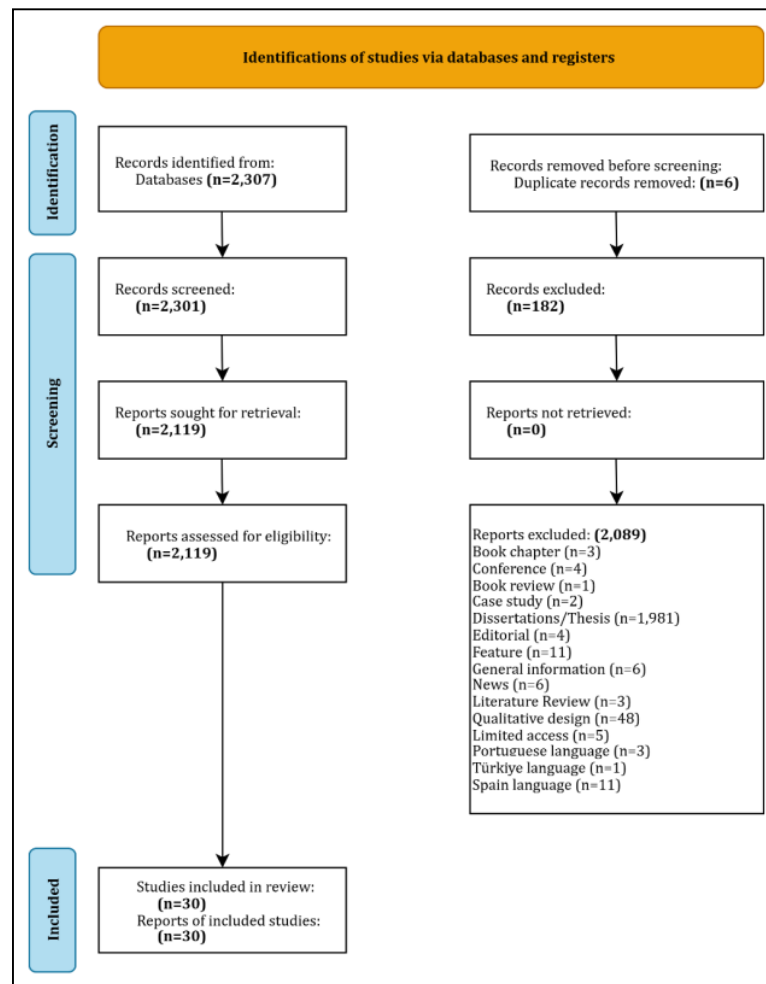

Figure 1. Study selection flowchart

Table 2. Summary of the studies

Study	Design	Range age	Sample size	Country	Independent variable	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Results
Scherman et al. , 2021	Cross-sectional design with multilevel structure. Used the Annual Surveys of the Youth, Media, and Participation study conducted by the School of Journalism at Universidad Diego Portales and Feedback, a Professional polling firm based in Chile.	Random individuals 18-29	11,020	Chile; Greater Santiago Greater Valparaiso Greater Concepcion	Social media use TV use Newspapers use Digital news media use	NA	Participation in environmental activities	Social media > Environmental Activism – positive. Newspaper consumption > Environmental activism – positive. TV consumption > Environmental activism – negative. Digital news Media consumption > environmental activism – negative.
Marquat et al., 2020	Cross-sectional design with two-wave panel component. W1 - was conducted before the start of the municipality elections in October 2017, W2 - same participants after the elections. Young Danish recruited that participated in a non-partisan get-out-the-vote campaign called STEM' RNE (The Voices).	General and vocational upper secondary school 15-25	567	Island Funen, Denmark	Following politicians on social media	Moderator: Political interest Political peer talk Gender Mediator: Number of political posts Political actors News media Friends or follower Paid Ads	Civic messaging Campaign Participation	Following politicians on social media > political interest, political peer talk, male – positively related. Following politicians on social media > Number of political posts encountered on social media from political actors and friends or followers –positively correlated. Following politicians on social media > civic messaging, campaign participation – positively related.
Ganduri et al. , 2020	Cross-sectional survey through questionnaire administered to the voters during 2019 general elections.	Voters GE 2019 18 – above	606	India; Andhra Pradesh Telangana	Social media for political use	Mediator: Social media communication	Political participation Political knowledge Political interest	Social media communication > political participation, political knowledge, political interest – significant. Social media for political use > political participation – positive. Social media for political use > political knowledge – positive. Social media for political use > political interest – positive. Social media platforms > Facebook – positive. Social media platforms > Twitter - less political use. Social media platforms > YouTube and other platforms – significant.

Study	Design	Range age	Sample size	Country	Independent variable	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Results
Ibanez et al., 2015	Cross-sectional studies with Quantitative research design. Non-Probability sampling method.	National Electoral Council (CNE) participants 16 – above	3, 535	Ecuador	Using social networks for political and electoral information Search for information and need for political deliberation	Moderator: Age	Decision to vote	Using social networks for political and electoral information > Decision to vote –not Significant. Using social networks for political information and the search for information and political deliberation > age – significantly moderated.
Harff et al., 2023	Longitudinal design with two-wave panel component. Recruited through a private survey institute (Dynata) using a quota-based approach.	Young adults & Adolescents 16-25	W1–1, 007 W2-496	Germany	Following political influencers	Moderator: Perceived simplifications of politics	Online political participation Offline political participation Internal political efficacy	Following political influencers > online & offline political participation – positive. Following political influencers > perceived simplifications of politics > online & offline political participation – significant. Following political influencers > internal political efficacy – not significant. Following political influencers > perceived simplifications of politics > internal political efficacy – significant.
Halpern et al., 2017	Longitudinal design with two-wave panel component. Participants were drawn from an opt-in Internet panel administered by Tren Digital, a research unit at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile	NA	W1-850 W2-527	Chile	Political sharing on Facebook Political sharing on Twitter	Mediator: Internal efficacy Collective efficacy	Political participation	Political sharing on Facebook > political participation – correlated. Political sharing on Twitter > political participation – negligible. Political sharing on Facebook > collective efficacy – stronger. Political sharing on Twitter > internal efficacy – stronger association. Internal & collective efficacy > political participation – positive.
Dekoninck et al., 2023	Cross-sectional and longitudinal design with two-wave panel survey.	Generation Z 16-25	W1-1,007 W2-496	German	Following influencers who talk about the environment more frequently.	Moderator: Para social Relationships (PSRs) Perceived self-disclosure of influencers.	Political sphere-oriented participation Cause-oriented participation	Following influencers who frequently talk about the environment > political sphere-oriented & cause-oriented participation – positive. Following influencers who frequently talk about the environment > Para social relationships (PSRs) > cause-oriented participation – moderated.
Ahmad et al., 2019	Cross sectional design through distributes questionnaire.	Students at the University of Narowal 18-28	200	Pakistan	Online political activities	NA	Political efficacy Real-life participation	Online political activities > political efficacy – positive. Online political activities > real-life participation – significant.
Goa, 2022	Cross-sectional design with quantitative research design through distributes questionnaire.	Young Chinese 18-30	386	Beijing, China	Social media use	Mediator: Political knowledge Political participation	Political efficacy Government trust	Social media use > political participation - +ve female /-ve male. Social media use > political knowledge & political participation - +ve both groups. Social media use > government trust – no direct impact. Social media use > political participation > +ve both groups.

Study	Design	Range age	Sample size	Country	Independent variable	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Results
Scherman et al., 2022	Cross-sectional design with quantitative research design.	Surveys from the Comparative National Elections project 18 – over	1,625	Latin American; Chile Colombia.	WhatsApp usage frequency	NA	Perceived political polarization Affective polarization	WhatsApp usage frequency > affective polarization - not significantly related in both countries. WhatsApp usage frequency > perceived political polarization - positive relationship.
Boulianne et al., 2022	Cross-sectional design through a survey administered to an online panel in February 2021. No specific age.	NA	Canada (1,568), UK (1,500), France (1,500), US (1,500).	Canada United Kingdom France United States	Use of social media platforms Exposure to misinformation on social media Conspiracy beliefs	NA	Protest participation	Use of social media > protest participation - Twitch & TikTok is significantly correlated/ YouTube & Facebook are not related. Exposure to misinformation & Conspiracy beliefs > Protest participation - increase the odds of protest participation.
Wunderlich et al., 2022	Cross-sectional design through a in-person surveys administered.	Random individual 14–17, 18–24,	1,508	Germany	Information orientation; Journalistically Non-journalistically Comprehensively Slightly	NA	Knowledge levels	Journalistically & comprehensively information-oriented type > knowledge levels - higher knowledge levels Non-journalistically and slightly information-oriented types > knowledge levels - lower knowledge levels
Ltaifa et al., 2022	Cross-sectional design through a survey questionnaire to gather data from participants.	Students NA	1,000	Saudi Arabia	Social networks	NA	Dimension of citizenship Acquisition of knowledge related to citizenship Community participation Political participation Digital citizenship	Social network > acquisition of knowledge related to citizenship – positive. Social network > community participation – facilitated. Social network > political participation - less significant compared to other dimensions. Social network > digital citizenship – contributed.
Tariq et al., 2022	Cross-sectional design with quantitative research design. Uses online survey as its primary data collection method.	Young voters 18-29	410	Pakistan	Political interest (Social media use)	Political efficacy Political expression Partisanship	Online political participation Offline political participation	Social media use > political efficacy/ political expression / partisanship – positive. Political efficacy > online political participation - +ve / offline political participation - -ve. Political expression > online/ offline political participation – positive. Partisanship > online/ offline political participation – positive. Social media use > political expression/ partisanship > online/offline political participation – positive.
Munger et al., 2020	Longitudinal design through four-wave panel survey July and December 2014, and March and June 2015.	Voter GE 2015 18 years old	NA	United Kingdom	Exposure to political tweets	NA	Political knowledge Belief change	Exposure to tweets related to political topics > Political knowledge – positive. Exposure to tweets related to political topics > Belief change – positive.
Yelpaze, 2021	Cross-sectional design with quantitative research design.	Volunteer university students from six different faculties 18-30	554	Tukey	Perceived social recognition Impulsiveness	Collective opinion Risk-taking	Political content sharing on social media	Perceived social recognition/impulsiveness > collective opinion/risk-taking – positive. Impulsiveness > risk-taking – positive. Perceived social recognition > collective opinion/ risk-raking > political content sharing – positively correlated.

Study	Design	Range age	Sample size	Country	Independent variable	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Results
Halim et al., 2021	Cross-sectional design with quantitative research design through online due to prevailing lockdown situation.	Malaysian youth 18-30	525	Malaysia	Social media usage Perceived information quality Political interest	Political knowledge	Online political participation	Social media usage/ perceived information quality > political knowledge > online political participation – positive effects. Social media usage > online political participation – do not have direct effect.
Pavan et al., 2019	Cross-sectional design with questionnaire quantitative approach.	Undergraduate or graduate students universities 17-30	467	Brazil	Perceived ease of use Perceived usefulness Perceived innovativeness Social influence Trust	NA	Engagement in the participation of actions	All five relationships is significant.
Casteltrione et al., 2018	Cross-sectional design with mixed method approach.	NA	NA	Italy United Kingdom	Italian Facebook usage British Facebook Usage	NA	Citizens' political participation	Italian Facebook usage > Citizens' political participation – positive. Italian Facebook usage > Citizens' political participation – negative.
Pang et al., 2018	Cross-sectional design on online survey.	College students 18 years old	282	China	Intensity of WeChat use Motivations of WeChat use Political Interest	NA	Online political discussion External Political efficacy Internal political efficacy	Intensity of WeChat use > online political discussion – positive. Motivations of WeChat use > online political discussion – positive. Motivations of WeChat use > external/internal political efficacy – positive.
Feezell et al., 2017	Longitudinal design involved a pre–post survey conducted over a period of seventy-five days among student of the University of New Mexico (UNM), a large public university in the Southwest.	NA	NA	NA	Exposure to political information through the Facebook "Groups" function	NA	Perceived importance of political issues	Exposure to political information through the Facebook "Groups" function > perceived importance of political issues – positively correlated.
Vorkapic et al., 2018	Cross-sectional design through online survey.	15-29	220	Croatia	Usage of social media for political discussion	NA	Political interest among youth	Usage Facebook for political discussion > political interest among youth – positive influence. Usage Twitter for political discussion > political interest among youth – not significant.
Wang et al., 2018	Cross-sectional design using a paper-and-pencil survey administered.	College students 18-22	650	Southern China	Media exposure patterns State-owned mass media Western media Incidental exposure	NA	Attitudes toward maritime claims Support for military force	Media exposure on state-owned > attitudes toward maritime claims - did not significantly affect attitudes. Media exposure on western media > support for military force – reduce support. Incidental exposure (political news) > using military force to resolve disputes over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands – increased support. Incidental exposure (cross-cutting views) > using military force to resolve disputes over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands – reduced support.
Al-Mohammad, 2017	Cross-sectional design through a questionnaire administered at a specific point in time to bachelor's degree students studying at a university in Jordan.	NA	461	Jordan	Level of exposure to online political content	NA	Attitudes toward active political participation Perceived behavioural control	Exposure to online political content > attitudes toward active political participation – positively impacts. Exposure to online political content > perceived behavioural control – positive.
Naqbi et al., 2022	Cross-sectional design through questionnaire for data collection.	Young people 20-20	1, 185	United Arab Emirates	Implications of social media; Cultural and societal implications	NA	Perceived level of national security	Highest influence – political implications on social media. 2nd highest influence – economic implications on social media.

Study	Design	Range age	Sample size	Country	Independent variable	Moderator/ Mediator	Dependent variable	Results
					Ethical and religious implications Political implications Economic implications Security implications			3rd highest influence – cultural/societal implications. 4th highest influence – ethical/religious implications. Lowest influence – security implications.
Catalina et al., 2019	Cross-sectional design based on a self-administered survey among undergraduate students at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Spain.	NA	461	Spain	Level of involvement of young university students in association networks or activities	NA	Use of social networks for participation and engagement by young university students	Highly active in using the internet and social networks, not necessarily correlated with greater levels of civic and political engagement.
David et al., 2019	Cross-sectional design utilizing an online survey administered through the SurveyMonkey platform among Filipinos based in the Philippines.	Individuals use Facebook. Aged below 30	1, 555	Philippines	Reliance on Facebook for news	NA	Political knowledge Political interest Political engagement Exposure to political content Politically active friends	Reliance on Facebook news > political knowledge – positively associated with incidental exposure. Reliance on Facebook news > political interest/engagement – positively associated. Reliance on Facebook news > politically active friends – positively associated.
Ismail et al., 2022	Cross-sectional study conducted an online survey.	Malaysian youth 18-30	400	Malaysia	Perceived usefulness Perceived ease of use Information/argument quality Perceptions towards violent extremism	NA	Attitude towards violent extremism on social media	Perceived usefulness/ perceived ease of use/ information quality > attitude towards violent extremism on social media – significant relationship. Perceptions towards violent extremism > attitude towards violent extremism on social media – did not significant.
Hamid et al., 2022	Cross-sectional study conducted using questionnaire-based survey among millennial generation.	NA	NA	Indonesia	Information quality of social media Reputation of social media Social media political marketing activities	Trust	Political involvement	Information quality of social media > Trust– significant. Reputation of social media > Trust – significant. Social media political marketing activities > Trust – significant. Information quality of social media > political involvement – not significant. Reputation of social media > Political involvement – significant. Social media political marketing activities > Political involvement– significant. Trust > political involvement – significant.
Martinović et al., 2020	Cross-sectional design with mixed-method approach through in-depth semi-structured interview and survey using google forms among larger number of young respondents.	Young participants 18-30	557	Croatia	Use of Facebook and social media by Croatian political parties	Moderator - age	Voting decisions of the electorate Frequency of visits to political parties' Facebook pages Interactivity and communication of the electorate on Facebook	Use of Facebook and social media > Voting decisions – not significant. Use of Facebook and social media > frequency of visits to political parties' Facebook pages – positively correlated. Use of Facebook and social media > interactivity and communication of the electorate on Facebook – not significant.

Is there a relationship between the nature of social media and youth political behaviour?

The review includes only 17 studies that examined the relationship between the nature of social media and youth political behaviour. The studies discovered the relationship between social media and political behaviour, either positively correlation indicating increased political discourse and civic participation, or negatively correlation indicating potential polarization and misinformation within the political sphere. Ahmad et al. (2019) & Munger et al. (2020) found that exposing youth to political tweets in Twitter applications during the United Kingdom's 2015 general election campaign, resulted in higher levels of knowledge about politics and public affairs among youth. Furthermore, it also highlighted the possibility for political parties to manipulate information, since messaging from the parties modified youths' judgments of some issues, leaving certain voters with more inaccurate notions after the campaign. This highlights the dual role of social media in both fostering political awareness and posing challenges related to the potential manipulation of information and perceptions.

Meanwhile online communication also affected youth political behaviour. Ten studies found (Ganduri et al., 2020; Halpern et al., 2017; Ltaifa et al., 2022; Tariq et al., 2022; Yelpaze, 2021; Pang et al., 2018; Vorkapic et al., 2018; Catalina et al., 2019; Ismail et al., 2022; Martinović et al., 2020) social media communication had a significant impact on political engagement among youth, as was shown during the 2019 general elections in India (Ganduri et al., 2020). The study highlighted the significant impact of social media communication on political engagement among youth with significant b-values, indicates a positive correlation between political social media use and youth political participation, knowledge, and interest. The research also emphasized the distinct roles of specific social media platforms, with Facebook emerged as a prominent platform in facilitating political participation, while Twitter shown less political influence. This study reveals the intricate nature of social media communication, especially during elections (Halpern et al., 2017), for example, Saudi Arabian youth demonstrate that social media platform such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube, significantly improve citizenship development (Ltaifa et al, 2022).

Three articles (Marquat et al., 2020; Harff et al., 2023; Dekoninck et al., 2023) examine how the nature of following politicians on social media influences youth political behaviour. Following politicians on social media will increase political interest, political participation, peer's political discussions, exposure to political content from official political sources, social connections, and active civic engagement, which includes sharing civic-minded messages and participating in political campaigns (p = 0.004). This study emphasises that social media, particularly following politicians, influences youth political behaviour, providing useful insights into the various aspects of political engagement in the digital era (Marquat et al., 2020). Eight studies, including those conducted research on the exploration the nature of online expression on youth. According to Yelpaze (2021), the impact of perceived social recognition and impulsiveness on sharing political content among Turkish University students on social media, showed the significant correlations between perceived social recognition (p ≤ 0.001) and impulsiveness (p ≤ 0.05) when sharing political content. This suggests that social recognition and impulsivity may motivate young people to post political content online, thereby increasing their political engagement.

What is the most used nature of social media related to politics?

A widely explored nature of social media's impact on political behaviour revolves around the acquisition of various political information. 17 studies conducted across various countries and diverse demographic groups, show that diversified political information in shaping individual political beliefs and behaviour. A study in Chile revealed a positive correlation between social media use and environmental activism (Scherman et al., 2021). Meanwhile In Ecuador, Ibanez et al. (2015) found that social media use for political information does not influence voting, but it does significantly affect political judgments. The importance of numerous views in shaping the informed decision-making process is highlighted, adding to a broader discourse on the effects of diverse

political information. In Pakistan, Ahmad et al. (2019) found that diverse online political activities were positively associated with political efficacy and real-life participation among university students, highlighting the cascading effects of diverse politics.

This study identified a positive correlation between social media use and political participation, supporting the theme that social media platforms' plays an important role in shaping people's political attitudes, knowledge, and active participation in political process.

DISCUSSION

Is there a relationship between the nature of social media and youth political behaviour?

The study indicated the nature of social media has a greater influence on youth political behaviour more than politicians and political influencers. This circumstance has made it hard for researchers to obtain articles related on how social media influence youth political behaviour who follow politicians and political influencers.

Nonetheless, the articles' findings found that, most youth who follow politicians and political influencers describe how interacting with them influence their political interest, political conversations, public advertising, and participation in political campaigns. This is because, most of the politicians and political influencers use social media to provide political information, facilitate political communication, and engage with political figures (Marquat et al., 2020; Harff et al., 2023; Dekoninck et al., 2023). Meanwhile youth political behaviour is primarily influenced by political information on social media, which influences them to vote for any politician during elections. As the election approaches, political information will spread widely on social media platforms, capturing the interest of many young voters through various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp (Wang et al., 2018). Munger et al. (2020) assert this sharing will be useful to apprise voters of current political issues and influence their future political behaviour.

David et al., 2019; Hamid et al., 2022 emphasized the importance of social media in disseminating political information to the youth. According to Scherman et al. (2021) the usage of social media has beneficial effect on environmental activism in Chile, whereas Boulianne et al. (2022) revealed a positive relationship between the use of specific social media platforms and participation in protests in Canada. Ten articles (Ganduri et al., 2020; Halpern et al., 2017; Ltaifa et al., 2022; Tariq et al., 2022; Yelpaze, 2021; Pang et al., 2018; Vorkapic et al., 2018; Catalina et al., 2019; Ismail et al., 2022; Martinović et al., 2020) examine political communication, social media influence, and the impact of political influence on youth political behaviour. For example, in Pakistan youth political beliefs, political expression, and loyalty towards political parties are influenced by social media Tariq et al. (2022).

In contrast with three others articles (Marquat et al., 2020; Harff, 2023; Dekoninck, 2023) that examine the behaviour of following politicians in social media, revealed that engagement with political leaders on social media has influenced youth political interest, conversation, public advertising, and political campaign. The preceding argument clearly demonstrates the significance of social media in imparting political information, facilitating political communication, and providing opportunities to engage with political figures.

What is the nature of social media that are most prevalent in politics?

This study revealed the nature of social media can affect youth political behaviour. They will react positively or negatively depending on the political information received on social media and online political communication.

Wide Range of Information. Digital media like Facebook and Twitter, as well as traditional media such as television and newspapers, have a substantial impact on influencing youth political behaviour. Besides, the influence of diversified political information from interviews with political figures on social media is related positively with both online and offline political engagement (Harff et al., 2023;

Scherman et al., 2021). Since political information and interest in politics are important, social media has less impact on youth political participation in Malaysia (Halim et al., 2021). If the information does not in line with them, they will reject it, and political trust in social media will continue to erode (Goa, 2022; Hamid et al., 2022). Thus, social media information quality, either beneficial or detrimental plays a role in influencing youth political engagement (Ltaifa et al., 2022).

Social media platforms share political content differently (Halpern, 2017; Dekoninck, 2023). Sharing political content on social media differs among platforms. (Halpern et al., 2017; Dekoninck et al., 2023). Although there is evidence of a direct relationship between political sharing on Facebook and political participation, the impact of Twitter in this aspect has been rather neglected. This indicates that various channels might play distinct roles in influencing political behaviour, requiring specialized strategies for effective youth engagement. Since the importance of each platform is different in each country, therefore the effective use of social media platforms needs to be designed to encourage youth involvement in politics (Boulianne et al., 2022). Al-Mohammad (2017) found that exposure to online political content positively impacts behaviour towards active political participation ($p < 0.05$) and perceived behavioral control ($p < 0.05$) among undergraduate students in Jordan. Meanwhile, university students' involvement in association networks or activities in Spain is positively related to their usage of social media for participation (Catalina et al., 2019 Although the study does not state statistical findings, it suggests that high internet and social network use among youth may not necessarily be related to higher levels of civic and political involvement. This indicates that online political content can shape the willingness and perceived capability of youth to actively participate in politics.

Thus, the government must obtain consistent and high-quality political information in order to educate youth the importance of social media platform involving in political activities (Tariq et al., 2022). Besides, the ethical, cultural, and social implications of social media indicate that youth political behaviour are more influenced by political influences and ethical concerns. (Naqbi et al., 2022).

Online expression. Digital platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others serve as transformative spaces for the free expression of political views, which shapes youth political behaviour. A cross-sectional survey conducted during the 2019 general elections in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, India, on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube found a positive relationship between political social media use and key political variables like participation, knowledge, and interest (Ganduri et al., 2020).

Besides, the accessibility of sharing information online has allowed users to be exposed to various political information and political ideologies. Tariq et al. (2022) found a substantial relationship between online and offline political involvement among youth, demonstrating the influence of digital platforms on political attitudes and behaviour. Interactive and freely accessible social media platforms have enhanced youth online expression and become an essential force in nation-building. In Pakistan, a study on young voters found a positive correlation between online political involvement and political interest, suggesting that youth with more online expression participate more in online politics (Yelpaze, 2021).

Political Communication on Media Social. This discussion synthesizes findings from 10 studies and emphasizes social media's influence on youth political activity. A study in Saudi indicates that social media usage improves the acquisition of citizenship-related knowledge and community participation, although the influence on political participation is less significant (Ltaifa et al., 2022; Tariq et al., 2022). A study in Chile found that the usage of social media, together with television and newspapers, has a significant impact on engagement in environmental activism, increasing youth involvement in politics. Although social media has a positively effect on environmental activism, watching television has a negative impact, and this study emphasises how different media affect political behaviour (Scherman et al., 2021). Besides, one study indicated that WeChat usage

intensity significantly correlates with online political conversations, showing how social media communication promotes political engagement (Pang et al., 2018).

The Chinese government uses social media to disseminating policies and get public feedback. There are 53,546 official government accounts on Weibo, China's most popular social network, and over 32% of the population receives e-government services (Tariq et al., 2022). During the 2019 Indian general election, social media was the key driver of youth political activity (Ganduri et al., 2020). Besides, a study in Pakistan identified a significant relationship between social media usage and political effectiveness and expression play an important role in moulding both online and offline political engagement among youths (Tariq et al., 2022). Therefore, political communication through social media has contributed to the development of political effectiveness among youth (Yelapze, 2021).

Following politicians and political influencers. Following politicians and political influencers on social media is statistically significant relationship with various aspects of political engagement among Danish youth aged 15 to 25. This result in increases political interest, peer discussions, exposure to political content from official political sources and social relationships, and active civic engagement, such as sharing civic-minded messages and participating in political campaigns (Marquat et al., 2020). According to Ganduri et al., 2020, social media is used in politics by posting images of politicians or political parties, following them, adding them to friends' lists, starting political debates, expressing support for political ideologies, spreading political messages, campaigning for them, and fundraising effort. This is evidenced by the use of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which positively influence political engagement (b = 0.075), knowledge (b = 0.191), and interest (b = 0.142) among voters aged 18 and above.

Youth prefer to follow politicians on social media since they are responsive to public opinion and promote activities that benefit society (Halpern et al., 2017). Social media also affects youth political behaviour, as evidenced of political posts on Twitter during the United Kingdom's 2015 general election campaign. It found that exposure to political tweets was positively increased youth political knowledge and changes in political belief towards political party (Ahmad et al., 2019; Munger et al., 2020). This study also showed politicians who use Twitter for sharing political party information, will indirectly allow voters to become acquainted with party's goals. While the inclination of some politicians to disclose their personal life and political experience, will increase voters' loyalty, especially among youth (Harff et al., 2023).

Strengths and Limitations

This study has successfully identified four main natures of social media that influence youth political behaviour; variety of information, online freedom of expression, political communication, and following politicians and political influencers.

Despite it provides on how social media influence on youth political behaviour, it has limitations. Research design, respondent demographics, and data collection methods varied across the 30 articles reviewed, and the limitation is lies in the difficulty of directly comparing the findings. Reading articles using different research methods without assessing potential biases might lead to biased interpretations. Besides, it also coincides with the inclusion of articles that use self-reported data, which can be affected by recall bias and social bias, as it relies on respondents falsely remembering past occurrences. The analysis includes articles that used questionnaires to collect data, which could raise trust difficulties due to the subjective nature of self-reported data provided by the participants. This limitation will cause publication bias because newer and developing findings may not be given enough attention in published articles.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

In future research, longitudinal studies should be prioritized since they can detect changes in youth political behaviour caused by the influence of social media. The study may also focus on comparing the effectiveness of each social media site in capturing youth political activity.

CONCLUSION

World today is a digitally connected and it is inevitable to conduct research on how social media affects certain behaviour. This study carried out an extensive search strategy across seven databases. The 30 articles chosen after rigorous a systematic literature review process indicate a relationship between the influence of social media and youth political behaviour. The analysis demonstrates the nature of social media can influence youth political behaviour, including following politicians and influencers, freely express online, political discussion, and a wide source of information.

This thorough analysis found that social media platforms strongly affect youth politics. Following politicians and political influencers on social media lets users share opinions and new ideas that can improve politic knowledge. Political content on social media strongly influences youths' perception and behaviour. Social media also facilitates political discussions, information sharing, and networking with national leaders. Due to the widespread political coverage on social media, youth have become more prominent in influencing political landscape by using their voting power in elections.

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