

# Social Medias' Influence on Political Participation of Social Studies Students in Davao Central College

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## ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to explore the social medias' influence on political participation of Social Studies students in Davao Central College. The study took place in Toril, Davao City. The study identified fourteen 4th year Social Studies students as participants of the study through an in-depth-interview in Davao Central College. The study conducted in the month of March 2023 and is carried out through qualitative research method in a phenomenological approach. Moreover, the researchers prepared and organized data for analysis. Then, reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally presenting the data intablesto come up with the discussion, implications and recommendations. This was mainly to know the social medias' influence on political participation of Social Studies students in Davao Central College. The study emerged three themes on the social medias' influence on political participation of Social Studies students, these are data collection, impactful, and responsible use of social media.

**Keywords:** social media, influence, political participation

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In a world where pencils are no longer much needed, and as technology keeps evolving, it can never deny that the traditional way of getting information slowly fading away. Technology keeps invading the lives of humanity where people tend to depend on it like in communication, education, news, work, as well as in politics.

In Southern Asia, internet usage is linked to political participation, particularly in developing countries such as Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, and this tendency is heavily impacting elections. The internet and social media have grown in importance for communicating political information (McAllister, 2016).

In a study conducted by Ahmad, Alvi, and Ittefaq (2019) cited that, most students use social media to stay politically aware and informed. Political effectiveness is substantially influenced by online political participation. Furthermore, social media platforms are critical for netizens to engage in actual political participation.

In the Philippines, a study made of Misamis University (2016), showed the relative influence of social media in choosing a president. Various platforms have been included in the survey including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

In the Philippines Sociological review of Niño Lim (2009) states that, a new definition of political

engagement, particularly among young people, has been made possible by social media platforms' emergence as political venues. Their participatory nature, particularly blogging, social networking, and content sharing, has encouraged more individuals to become active in political concerns and has helped shift the form of protest from public spaces to the internet.

In Davao Central College many students utilize their social media not just for the mean of communication but also for gaining information. Students in Social Studies are taught the value of political involvement and are prepared to participate in the political life of their communities and the nation. Thus, they are expected to be knowledgeable in terms of politics including the utilization of social media.

Further, there is no available studies and literature about the influence of social media towards political participation in the local setting thus paved the way to the researchers to conduct this study.

## **THEORETICAL LENS**

This study is anchored on Social Influence Theory of Herbert Kelman (1958). According to Kelman (1958), people are profoundly influenced by the opinions and actions of others. This idea is typically used to persuade large groups of people or to change behavior over time. Social influence theory's fundamental element is that when people observe another person acting in a certain way, they tend to assume that there is a good explanation and justification behind it. This facilitates their adoption of the same attitudes and behaviors.

Further, the students' experiences are connected to social influence theory because students' behavior is determined by how other people perceive to certain situation. This is greatly anchored to our study because many students utilize social media in different aspect thus it greatly influences their behavior and actions in online world particularly in terms of politics.

Also, this study is anchored to the agenda-setting theory that posits that the media can shape the public's perception of what issues are important. In the context of social media and politics, this theory suggests that the issues that are discussed and emphasized on social media can influence the issues that people see as important and relevant to the political conversation (McCombs & Shaw, 1968).

## **METHODS**

In this context, the researchers conceptualized about qualitative study through thematic analysis, for the study entailed to determine and take a basis to look on the social medias' influence on political participation of Social Studies students at Davao Central College. Likewise it addresses to the different behavior approach by operating their desires that included to the data analysis to measure.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Data Collection**

The participants said that they used social media to collect information on specific political candidates and issues. This information allows them to become more knowledgeable about the subject matter at hand. They believed that social media provided them with a valuable platform to stay informed and engaged in the political process.

Their observations were supported by other participants who acknowledged the effectiveness of social media in gathering information. The collective agreement among the participants reinforces the notion that

social media has become a source of information in today's world. They relayed:

*"I do gain a lot of information..."* -**Esang**

*"I can get many information..."* -**Matt**

In a study by Enli and Skogerbo (2013), they found that social media has allowed for a more decentralized flow of political information, enabling citizens to have direct access to political news and to engage in political discussions without relying solely on traditional media sources.

*So through social media, I was able to gather different information and backgrounds about the events related to politics...* -**Wen Wen**

*I've seen and read information...* -**Vien**

Furthermore, Tang and Wen (2023) asserted that social media has slowly become a part of young people's daily life and has emerged as the primary platform for young people, especially college students, to share information, experiences, and ideas. By enabling people to express themselves and participate in political activities online, frequently outside of formal organizations, social media has further expanded the notion of political engagement. These actions include starting and participating in online communities, working with friends virtually, and setting up self-contained online signatures.

### **Facebook Utilization**

According to some participants, Facebook was a preferred platform for gathering political information. The participants revealed that they utilized the social media platform to stay updated on current political events and news. It was evident that Facebook played a significant role in their political awareness and decision-making processes.

*"I use Facebook because a lot of different information circulates there, that's why it's the most commonly used social media platform..."* -**WenWen**

*"Upon using Facebook I've seen and read information a lot that includes fake news. But I stand in factual information..."*

-**Vien**

Several participants supported the statement of WenWen and Vien (2023), stating that:

*"Facebook is vast and diverse so you could get a lot of information..."*

-**Lady Gaga**

*"Facebook because that's where we usually see many videos regarding about someone's political identity..."*

-**Hulyo**

*"I used Facebook because it contains a lot of current issues and it has a lot of accessible information..."*

-**Ystela**

Shehzad et al., (2021) discovered a correlation between Facebook usage and online political participation. Facebook is one of the most widely used online tools for enabling user interaction in the virtual world. Facebook users grant access to their profiles and share their information with other Facebook users. Facebook offers a platform for teenagers to engage in a variety of activities, including as messaging,

uploading images, leaving comments, and sharing information, all of which have varying effects on their participation.

Furthermore, the reliance of every individual is acceptable since Facebook is a legitimate platform for civic and political participation, as well as a significant source of political news in the most industrialized countries. The impact of social media in the complicated interaction between news consumption and political engagement has been extensively researched, with most findings indicating that platforms such as Facebook have beneficial influences on political outcomes (David, 2019). Thus, Facebook provides a forum for its users to discuss a specific topic and exchange political information. Individuals in Facebook groups communicate their various social and political viewpoints.

### **Gain Information**

Several participants shared that they had successfully obtained information about specific political candidates and issues via social media. This suggests that social media is a platform that many people use to stay informed about politics. Given the widespread use of social media, it is likely that many people rely on it as a source of political news and information.

*“I gain many different knowledge about different political issues and concerns...”-Lady Gaga*

*“I do gain some knowledge because there are things that I can read and learn from...”-Repet*

Several participants concurred with Lady Gaga and Repet’s assertion that social media is a valuable tool for accessing information, particularly in the realm of politics. They said:

*“I can get knowledge or information about politicians...”*

**-Johnny Bravo**

*“I do gain a lot of information...”- Esang*

*“I can get many information...” -Matt*

Yan (2021)cited that social media has become an important part of people’s daily lives and the entire society, not only because it transforms forms of communication, but also because it has the ability to redistribute power by transforming the relationship between governments and citizens, giving citizens more opportunities to participate in politics, spreading democracy awareness, having the power to contend against unfair social events, and monitoring government behavior. And it has caused a fundamental shift in the political environment, altering not only how people interact with one another, access and obtain information, but also how they “ultimately use this information to choose who governs,” altering the existing media landscape and “structures guiding political communication.”

### **Backtracking**

The abundance of information available on the internet has made it difficult for individuals to discern what is true and what is not. As a result, people are becoming more cautious about the information they receive from social media, especially when it comes to politics. They have adopted the practice of fact-checking and backtracking every piece of information they come across to ensure its accuracy.

*“Verify information online, in order for me to a have the correct information and have informed decisions...”-Matt*

*“I conduct a background check on the information to make an informed decision...”*

**-WenWen**

Some participants concurred with Matt and WenWen that due to the abundance of political information available online, they often feel compelled to backtrack and verify the accuracy of the information. They said:

*“I conduct further research if he/she really is true, if that candidate is good...”*

**-Anje**

*“I usually evaluate if that information is reliable or not. I make sure to verify its credibility before considering it as reliable information...”*

**-Esang**

*“I filter it and I am careful about spreading wrong information like ruining someone’s personality...”*

**-Johnny Bravo**

Social media makes it easy to get information, knowledge, education, and enjoyment. Political information, in particular, is widely available on online platforms with ease of access for potential users (Ali, Habes,&Qamar, 2020). Furthermore, the internet allows billions of people to access information with a few keystrokes. However, it also makes false information easy to spread, which can be disastrous for both individuals and society as a whole. As a result, it is critical to verify information sources. When determining whether or not information is based on facts, most people do background checks to confirm the information’s reliability.

Shapiro and Winters’ study from 2017, political accountability necessitates both the availability of reliable information regarding politician behavior and the ability of the general public to recognize reliable information when they see it. Studies have revealed that people base their judgements of a source’s credibility on its knowledge and dependability since the beginning of credibility research (Johnson and Kaye, 2014).

### **Impactful**

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool that has impacted users in various ways. One of the areas where it has had a significant impact is political discourse. Through the use of social media platforms, users can easily access a vast amount of information, and this has led to an increase in political awareness and engagement.

*“Really social media has shape or change my political views, and also my views on different social issues and concern...”-Lady Gaga*

*“For me it has a big influence though I’m not really into politics but sometimes my urges in politics is arise or to improve and to enhance...”- Anje*

Several participants agreed to the response of Lady Gaga and Anje that their use of social media had a notable impact on their political participation. They said:

*“It was influential because I could see the different perspectives on political issues from various sources...”-*

**Repet**

*“So, using social media I was able to know that person and realize how good or bad he/she...” - Vien*

In a study conducted Gibson, Lusoli, & Ward (2014) examined the impact of social media on political participation in developing democracies. The study found that social media can facilitate political mobilization and increase citizens’ willingness to participate in political activities.

### **Frame of Mind**

Some participants revealed that with the abundance of political information on social media has a significant impact on our perspective and mindset. The sheer volume of content available can expose us to a wide range of opinions and viewpoints, which can challenge our existing beliefs and shape our understanding of complex political issues.

*“It changes my perspective on different political issues and concern during the time of election...”*

**-Lady Gaga**

*“I gain new knowledge and information that help me to change my perspective especially in politics...”*

**-Matt**

Lady Gaga and Matt’s views were supported by several participants, who acknowledged that social media has influence their mindset and perspectives on political matters. They said:

*“It can also change my mindset and perspective...”*

**-WenWen**

*“Through social media platform I am able to change my viewpoints, my perspectives especially in information I read...”*

**-Anje**

In a study conducted by Drina, Eni, and Antir (2021), showed that political knowledge is influence by the use of social media through mediating online discussions over different social media platforms. The more students use social media and discuss political issues, the higher their level of knowledge. Their study implies that instructors can utilize social media to integrate the instructional design of relevant courses which facilitate political discussion to learn the extent of the students political knowledge acquisition.

### **New Knowledge**

Social media platforms have proven instrumental in enhancing participants’ knowledge, particularly in the realm of politics. Numerous individuals revealed that they have gained valuable insights and information through their engagement with social media. The accessibility and widespread availability of political discussions and news on these platforms have contributed to their knowledge acquisition.

Some participants agreed with Lady Gaga that they were able to gather new information, especially about politics, through social media. They recognized that using social media platforms helped them access a wide range of knowledge and stay informed about political events. They said:

*“I gain new knowledge and information that help me to change my perspective especially in politics...”*

**- Lady Gaga**

*“So using social media I was able to know that person and realize how good or bad him/her...”*

**-Vien**

*“We can gain other information even though it’s facts or false but then we can gain information or ideas...”*

**-Binibini**

Social media has become a daily source of information on politics and latest events for millennials ([Evans, 2019](#)). They believe that social media is a source of information that has great credibility and reputation for obtaining political information. The information sources presented on a social media will be trusted once they contain accurate, relevant, sustainable and consistent information.

### **Responsible use of Social Media**

The participants emphasized the need for responsible use of social media, particularly when it comes to political information. They acknowledged the abundance of different viewpoints available online and highlighted the importance of being discerning and critical consumers of information. Ultimately, the group agreed that taking responsibility for our own social media use is crucial for maintaining a healthy and informed public discourse.

*“Social media user who uses different social media platforms is that you need to be a responsible user and not impulsively share your information...” - WenWen*

*“it is important to be responsible. Don’t always comment or rant without fully understanding the reason and deeper meaning behind...” - Raycee*

Several participants agreed to WenWen and Raycee, that the abundance of information on various social media platforms highlights the importance of responsible usage. As users, we must be mindful of our actions and take responsibility for the content we consume, share, and engage with. They said:

*“We should be responsible in using social media, we should connect people not destroy others...”*

**- Hulyo**

*“We should be aware of the information that is shared on social media platforms...”*

**- Esang**

According to Social Care Wales (2019), many of us use social media to communicate with others both personally and in our working lives. It helps us connect with people and keep in touch. If used responsibly, social media can offer many benefits, including accessing professional and support networks, learning resources and information.

In fact, according to Clavite (2018), we need to first verify information before “sharing” it on social media to avoid spreading false information. “Responsible sharing of information is not just an advocacy that starts with the government, nor with whoever runs social media platforms. He described a responsible social media user as someone who “provides and shares only the right information to empower people and communities.”

### **Reliability**

The participants recommended that in light of the abundance of political information available on social media, it is important to only rely on factual information. The participants stressed that by prioritizing facts and avoiding sensationalized or biased content, individuals can make more informed decisions.

*“We should ensure that all our posts are facts and we should have reliable sources to support our posts...”*

**-Hulyo**

*“Share information that are accurate and credible...” –Lady Gaga*

*“Be sure that the information that you are using is factual or based on facts...”*

**-Max**

Some participants agreed to Lady Gaga, Hulyo, and Max that it is essential to prioritize sharing and gaining information that is solely based on factual evidence. By acknowledging the importance of using reliable sources and avoiding the spread of misinformation, we can maintain the integrity of our field and contribute to informed decision-making in society. They said:

*“We should have different reliable sources and not just focus to one information only...”*

**-Ystela**

*“Avoid spreading or producing any form of fake news...”*

**-Johny Bravo**

*“Make sure that your post on social media is really relevant and based on facts...”*

**-Binibini**

*“You should create your own research and not just rely on social media...”*

**-Repet**

In fact, according to Tang and Wen (2023), Social media has slowly becoming a part of young people’s daily life and has emerged as the primary platform for young people, especially college students, to share information, experiences, and ideas. By enabling people to express themselves and participate in political activities online, frequently outside of formal organizations, social media has further expanded the notion of political engagement. These actions include starting and participating in online communities, working with friends virtually, and setting up self-contained online signatures. In seeking information, one should especially pay attention in evaluating the reliability of information in social media (Päivitetty, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

The political participation of the Social Studies students was highly influence by social media. Based on the findings, observation, and data collected from the participants and the literature, the researchers identified a significant theme in the experiences of Social Studies students regarding their online participation in politics, which is data collection. This theme encompassed three subthemes: Facebook utilization, gaining information, and backtracking. By exploring the implications of data collection within these subthemes, we could gain a deeper understanding of the students’ experiences.

Facebook utilization plays a crucial role in the data collection aspect of online political participation. Social media platforms like Facebook often serve as a primary means of communication and engagement for students. Gaining information is another subtheme related to data collection in the context of online political participation. Students actively seek information through various online sources such as news articles, blogs, and social media platforms. Given the abundance of information on various social media platforms, students have developed a tendency to engage in backtracking, meticulously verifying the credibility of each piece of information they come across.

The frame of mind and the acquisition of new knowledge have profound implications for the influence of social media on the political participation of students. The frame of mind refers to the mindset or



perspective that social media platforms can shape among students. Through exposure to diverse opinions, discussions, and information, social media can influence the way students perceive and interpret political issues. This could impact their political participation by reinforcing their preconceived notions, limiting exposure to opposing viewpoints, and potentially hindering open-mindedness and critical thinking. Also, social media platforms provided students with access to an abundance of information and resources related to politics. They could engage with news articles, opinion pieces, videos, and discussions that cover a wide range of political topics. This exposure to new knowledge could expand students' understanding of political issues, increase their awareness of different perspectives, and potentially motivate them to participate in political activities.

During discussions with Social Studies students, the responsible use of social media emerged as a major theme, with a subtheme focused on reliability. The participants emphasized the importance of utilizing social media with proper etiquette, particularly in political matters. They suggested that it is crucial to fact-check information before sharing it to avoid misinformation and misinterpretation. Some participants stressed the need for Social Studies students to be especially cautious about the information they share or consume, as they work with facts regularly. This highlights the power of social media in shaping individuals' perspectives and attitudes towards political matters.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools should play a pivotal role in educating students about responsible social media usage by emphasizing the importance of fact-checking before sharing information and modeling responsible behavior. Teachers should instruct students on proper social media etiquette, especially regarding political topics, to help them understand the potential consequences of their actions online. Students themselves should prioritize thinking before posting, fact-checking before sharing, and being positive digital citizens to contribute to a safe online environment. For future researchers, employing a quantitative approach will offer a broader scope for analyzing data across various populations and contexts. This study will also raise awareness within the community about the appropriate use of social media, particularly concerning political information.

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