The Mediating Effect of Digital Information Literacy on the Correlation Between Online Platform Political Participation and Social Media-Inspired Voting Decisions Among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Poor voting decisions are widespread. This study examined the mediating role of digital information literacy in students' voting decisions. Using mediation analysis with 383 college students selected through proportionate stratified sampling, it was found that digital information literacy partially and significantly mediates this relationship (48.5%), supporting the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Future research using other mediators not covered in this study to elucidate further the 51.5% variance in social media-inspired voting decisions may be conducted. Likewise, qualitative methods and institutional programs are recommended to enhance digital information literacy.

Keywords: Mediating effect, digital information literacy, online platform political participation, social media-inspired voting decisions, college students

INTRODUCTION

Poor voting decisions are prevalent in many modern electorates. In recent global elections, studies reveal a challenge in making well-informed voting decisions, particularly among young voters, marked by low engagement, uninformed decision-making, and susceptibility to misinformation (Kulachai et. al., 2023). International studies demonstrate that young voters often face significant challenges in making electoral decisions due to a lack of robust political information, which can lead to biased voting choices (Carvalho et al., 2023; Kops et al., 2025).

Recent analysis of the United States' 2024 presidential election, in which nearly half of young adults aged 18-29 participated, shows poor voting decisions stemming from inadequate information at the ballot box (Gentry, 2026). Moreover, youth turnout in the United Kingdom suggests that young people make poor voting decisions, relying more on social influences and emotional appeals than on sustained issue-based assessments (Behrens, 2023). Further, studies on youth electoral engagement in South Africa identify poor voting decisions that undermine the quality of electoral decision-making (Chauke, 2020).

In the Philippines, where Millennials and Generation Z together account for over 60% of registered voters, the stakes of youth poor voting behaviour are especially high (Philippine Star, 2025). Quantitative studies of Filipino university students indicate challenges in the quality of voting decisions, suggesting disparities in the quality of informed decisions among student voters (Bulajao et. al., 2025). As identified in studies on young Filipino voter behavior, there are notable weaknesses in political literacy, media literacy, and critical thinking. Such weaknesses have led to bad decision-making and biased preferences among election candidates (Cadayday et al., 2024; Amante, Tabigue, & Lumintao, 2024).

Research conducted in the Davao region reveals a challenge to the quality of voting decisions, marked by the tendency of social media and other digital platforms to perpetuate misinformation and foster superficial engagement (Morales et al., 2025). Research on political awareness in Panabo City further suggests that the

youth's indifference towards active civic engagement may contribute to informed decision-making in elections (Ayop et al., 2025).

Various literature documents the consequences of poor voting judgments among young voters. Low decision quality among young voters (Mandakh et. al., 2024) and patterns of uninformed or insufficiently reasoned voting decisions, which affect longitudinal rates of democratic participation (Kulachai, 2023). However, most quantitative studies remain limited to descriptive analyses or direct-effect models that fail to explain the underlying mechanisms, such as the link between social media and media information literacy to voting decisions. Hence, within the Philippine democratic environment, if the quality of voting choices remains substandard among significant voting blocs such as college students, electoral outcomes risk perpetuating governance mismatches and reducing the effectiveness of representative mechanisms. This trend has broader implications for political responsiveness and democratic legitimacy when significant portions of the electorate do not consistently produce high-quality decision outcomes. As a result, this study must be pursued.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in advancing Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by generating evidence that can inform the strengthening of civic, media, and democratic education among college students, thereby promoting informed and responsible citizenship. It supports SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by addressing disparities in the quality of electoral participation and contributing knowledge to enhance inclusive political engagement and the integrity of democratic decision-making among young voters. Anchored in Holy Cross of Davao College's mission, the study reinforces the institution's commitment to holistic formation, social responsibility, and nation-building by providing empirical insights that can guide values-driven education and community-oriented initiatives toward ethical leadership and participatory democracy.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the mediating effect of digital Information literacy on the relationship between online political participation on platforms and social media-inspired voting decisions among college students. Specifically, the research aims:

1. To determine the level of online platform political participation in terms of social media political issues, news articles on political events, comments and discussions on political debates, and social media profiles of politicians and public figures; digital information literacy in terms of access, analysis and evaluate, create, reflect and act; and social media-inspired voting decisions in terms of awareness and information, influence on perception, engagement and interaction, trust and credibility, comparative influence and overall influence.
2. To determine the significance of the relationship between online platform political participation and social media-inspired voting decisions, between online platform political participation and digital information literacy, and between digital information literacy and social media-inspired voting decisions.
3. To determine the significance of the direct effect of online platform political participation on social media-inspired voting decision, controlling for digital information literacy, the indirect effect of online platform political participation on media-inspired voting decision, controlling for the determinant, and the total effect of online platform political participation on social media-inspired voting decision.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were examined at the 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: Online platform political participation and social media-inspired voting decisions are not significantly correlated.

Ho2: Online platform political participation and digital information literacy are not significantly correlated.

H03: Digital information literacy and social media-inspired voting decisions are not significantly correlated.

Ho4: The direct effect of online platform political participation on social media-inspired voting decision, controlling for digital information literacy, is not significant

Ho5: The indirect effect of online platform political participation on social media-inspired voting decisions, controlling for the determinant, is not significant

Ho6: The total effect of online platform political participation on social media-inspired voting decisions is not significant.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research was anchored in Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), introduced by Blumler and Katz in 1974, which explains three steps in media use: motives for media use, factors influencing these motives, and the outcomes of media use.

In this study, Online Platform Political Participation stands for factors influencing motives for media use indicated by social media political issues, news articles on political events, comments and discussions on political debates, and social media profiles of politicians and public figures (Waeterloos, Walrave, & Ponnet, 2021); Digital Information Literacy defines the motives for media use indicated by access, analysis and evaluate, create, reflect and act (Hassan et al., 2020); lastly Social Media-Inspired Voting Decisions represents the outcomes of using the media indicated by awareness and information, influence on perception, engagement and interaction, trust and credibility, comparative influence and overall influence (Nicolas & Donguiz, 2024).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study's conceptual framework illustrates the relationships among the independent variable (online platform political participation), the dependent variable (social media-inspired voting decisions), and the mediating variable (digital information literacy).

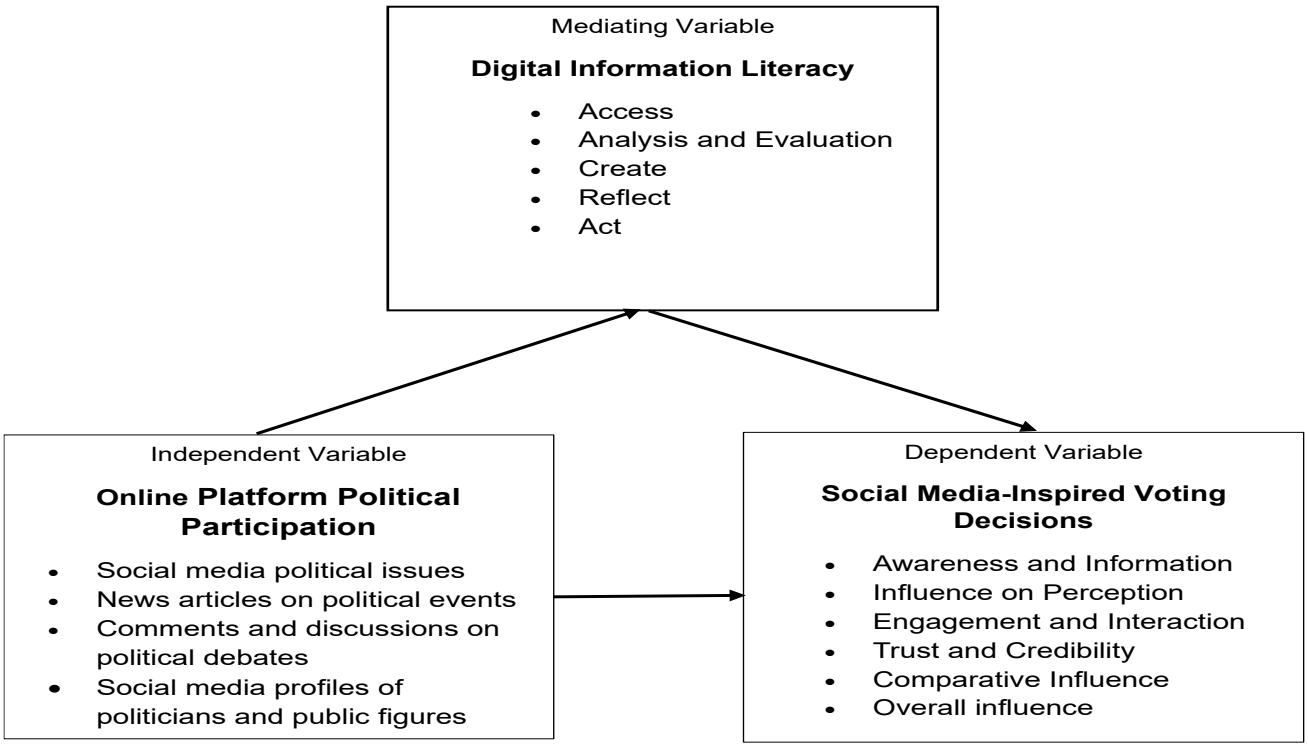


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHODOLOGY

In this section, the researcher presented the methods and procedures used to conduct the study. Specifically, research design, study locale, sample and sampling, data collection and analysis techniques, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

The mediation analysis was employed in this investigation. It was used to determine whether the effect of an independent variable on an outcome is mediated by an intervening variable, offering insights into the mechanisms that shape complex relationships (Bozkurt et al., 2026). It is widely used in behavioural and social science research to investigate potential mediating pathways (Schuler et al., 2025). Using validated, adapted survey questionnaires, this study enabled the analysis of the direct, indirect, and total effects of the tested variables (Hayes, 2022; MacKinnon & Pirlott, 2023).

Locale of the Study

This research was carried out at a leading local college in Monkayo, Davao de Oro, Philippines, with over 5,000 registered student voters from different barangays and nearby municipalities and provinces, including the Agusan and CARAGA regions.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The respondents for this study were the college students aged 18-35 years old, registered on the Commission of Election, voted at least once in a local or national election, and most importantly, active on any social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube. Using a software population sample calculator with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level, the total number of respondents for this study is 383.

The respondents were distributed across four academic programs of Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) with 91 respondents, Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) with 37 respondents, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA) with 29 respondents, and Bachelor of Business Administration (BSBA) with 226 respondents, using a proportionate stratified sampling method to include all relevant population subgroups.

Proportionate stratified sampling is a statistical sampling technique that divides a population into subgroups (strata) based on certain characteristics, then selects a proportional number of individuals from each stratum relative to the total population to be included in the sample (Makwana et al., 2023).

Data Gathering Technique

The survey questionnaire was the data-gathering technique used in this study. The tool was adapted and modified to use a four-point Likert Scale to measure the items, and disseminated online via Google Forms via Facebook, Messenger, and students' online groups to gather responses. There are three questionnaires: digital information literacy, online platform political participation, and social media-inspired voting decisions. Cronbach's Alpha was used for pilot testing and analysis. The results showed that the instrument was reliable.

Data Analysis Technique

The data collected for this study were analysed using descriptive, correlational, and mediation analysis methods. Specifically, the following statistics were applied, namely, mean, standard deviation, Pearson r, Beta (β) Coefficient, and Process macro.

Descriptive Level Interpretation

Scale	Level	Online Platform Political Participation	Digital Information Literacy	Media-Inspired Voting Decisions
3.25 - 4.00	Very High	Extremely Intense	Very Good	Very Good

2.50 - 3.24	High	More Intense	Good	Good
1.75 - 2.49	Low	Less Intense	Poor	Poor
1.0 - 1.74	Very Low	Not Intense	Very Poor	Very Poor

Standard Deviation Value Interpretation:

Range	Description	Interpretation
SD ≤ 0.50	Highly Consistent Responses	strong and uniform perception
SD = 0.51 – 1.00	Moderately Consistent Responses	acceptable consistency
SD = 1.01 – 1.50	Low Consistency Responses	differing views or experiences
SD ≥ 1.49	Very Low Consistency Responses	high variability and lack of consistency

Standard Interpretation of the Correlation Coefficient (r)

Range of r-value	Strength of Correlation	Interpretation
±0.91 – ±1.00	Very Strong	Very high or near-perfect relationship
±0.71 – ±0.90	Strong	High degree of relationship
±0.41 – ±0.70	Moderate	Moderate degree of relationship
±0.21 – ±0.40	Weak	Low degree of relationship
±0.00 – ±0.20	Very Weak	Negligible or almost no relationship

Standard Beta (β) Coefficient Strength Interpretation

(β) Value Range	Strength of Relationship
±0.70 and above	Very Strong
±0.50 - ±0.69	Strong
±0.30 - ±0.49	Moderate
±0.10 - ±0.29	Weak
±0.00 - ±0.09	Very Weak

Ethical Consideration

This study was evaluated and approved by the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) of Holy Cross of Davao College. Approval and a permit to conduct the study were secured, and respondents were provided with and signed an informed consent form detailing the study's purpose, that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw if needed.

RESULTS

This research was evaluated and approved by the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) of Holy Cross of Davao College. Approval and permission to conduct the study were obtained, and respondents were provided with and signed an informed consent form detailing the study's purpose, that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw if needed.

Descriptive Analysis of the Independent, Dependent, and Mediating Variables

Table 1 is descriptive. The table includes the study's variables and its indicators. Online platform political participation, digital information literacy, and social media-inspired voting decisions were the variables tested for this study. Additionally, this includes the number of samples, the standard deviation, the mean, and the corresponding descriptive level.

Specifically, the table shows that online platform political participation had a mean of 3.13, which is high, suggesting that respondents are more engaged in this form of political participation. A standard deviation of 0.660 suggests a moderate, consistent response. Out of the variable’s indicators, three were rated high and one

very high. The level of digital information literacy obtained a mean of 2.80, described as high, indicating that the respondents have a good level of digital and information literacy. Digital information literacy received a standard deviation of 0.600, indicating a moderately consistent response. One of its indicators was characterized as low, while the others were high. Last but not least, the mean of social media-inspired voting decisions was 2.82, which was regarded as high, indicating that respondents have a good level of social media-inspired voting decisions. A moderately consistent response is indicated by the obtained standard deviation of 0.674. It was revealed that all six of its indicators were marked as high.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis, n= 383

Variables	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Online Platform Political Participation (IV)	**0.660**	**3.13**	**High**
social media political issues	0.790	3.30	Very High
news articles on political events	0.781	3.18	High
comments and discussions on political debates	0.779	3.15	High
social media profiles of politicians and public figures	0.859	2.90	High
Digital Information Literacy (MV)	**0.600**	**2.80**	**High**
Access	0.660	3.03	High
Analysis and Evaluation	0.667	2.92	High
Create	0.720	2.75	High
Reflect	0.667	2.83	High
Act	0.771	2.49	Low
Social Media-Inspired Voting Decisions (DV)	**0.674**	**2.82**	**High**
Awareness and Information	0.746	3.10	High
Influence on Perception	0.752	2.97	High
Engagement and Interaction	0.811	2.68	High
Trust and Credibility	0.785	2.68	High
Comparative Influence	0.817	2.68	High
Overall Influence	0.885	2.78	High

The table indicates that online platform political participation, digital information literacy, and social media-inspired voting decisions were all interpreted as high, suggesting that respondents demonstrate active political engagement online, possess generally strong digital information literacy, and exhibit well-informed voting decisions influenced by social media. In comparison, online platform political participation showed the most intense engagement, with one indicator reaching a very high level; digital information literacy reflected generally strong skills, with one weaker area; and social media-inspired voting decisions displayed consistently high levels across all indicators.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the correlation analysis, testing the significance of the relationships among the variables: online platform political participation and social media-inspired voting decisions; online platform political participation and digital information literacy; and digital information literacy and social media-inspired voting decisions. The table above also reports the r-value, p-value, null hypothesis testing at the 0.05 level of significance, and interpretations.

The correlation results indicate that Online Platform Political Participation is significantly and moderately associated with Social Media–Inspired Voting Decisions ($r = 0.519$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that greater engagement in online political spaces is associated with greater social media influence on voting-related choices. The relationship is supported by descriptive findings indicating generally high to very high engagement in Online Platform Political Participation indicators, particularly in exposure to social media political issues, news articles, and political discussions or debates. The indicators reflect active information-seeking and deliberative

behaviours, which likely enhance voters' awareness, perceptions, and comparative evaluations of political choices, as shown in the dimensions of social media-inspired voting decisions.

Table 2. Correlation analysis

Variables			r	p-value	Decision on Ho @ 0.05 level of significance	Interpretation
Online Platform Political Participation (IV)	-	Social media-Inspired Voting Decisions (DV)	0.519	p<0.001	Reject Ho	Significant
Online Platform Political Participation (IV)	-	Digital Information Literacy (MV)	0.488	p<0.001	Reject Ho	Significant
Digital Information Literacy (MV)	-	Social media-Inspired Voting Decisions (DV)	0.646	p<0.001	Reject Ho	Significant

Furthermore, correlation analysis revealed that Online Platform Political Participation is significantly and moderately associated with Digital Information Literacy ($r = 0.488$, $p < .001$), which indicates that higher levels of engagement in online political activities, such as interacting with political content, participating in discussions, and following political figures on digital platforms, are associated with greater digital information literacy among respondents. A moderate correlation suggests that as individuals become more politically active on online platforms, they exhibit improved digital information literacy, including accessing, analysing, evaluating, creating, reflecting on, and acting upon digital information.

Moreover, Digital Information Literacy demonstrates a significant and stronger correlation with social media–Inspired Voting Decisions ($r = 0.646$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting its critical role in shaping how online political participation translates into voting decisions. Descriptive levels of Digital Information Literacy indicators were consistently high, suggesting that individuals are not merely exposed to political content but can critically process it. This capacity is expected to increase social media's influence on voting decisions by encouraging informed trust, involvement, and comparison judgment, emphasizing Digital Information Literacy as a critical mechanism for improving the quality and impact of online political participation.

Mediation Analysis

Table 3 presents the mediation analysis, showing the direct, indirect, and total effects of the tested variables. Relationships among the variables, estimates, Standard Errors, z-values, p-values, and interpretations were also reflected in the table.

The direct effect shows that online platform political participation significantly predicts social media-inspired voting decisions ($\beta = 0.273$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that individuals' engagement in political activities on online platforms has a meaningful, independent influence on their voting behaviour, shaped by social media. The strength of the direct path implies that political decision-making is influenced solely by online engagement.

Table 4. Mediation analysis

Direct effects							
Variables			**Estimate**	**Std. error**	**z-value**	**p-Value**	**Interpretation**
Online Platform Political Participation (IV)	→	Social Media-Inspired Voting Decisions (DV)	0.273	0.058	4.689	p < 0.001	Significant

Indirect effects									
Variables					**Estimate**	**Std. error**	**z-value**	**p-Value**	**Interpretation**
Online Platform Political Participation (IV)	→	Digital Information Literacy (MV)	→	Social Media-Inspired Voting Decisions (DV)	0.257	0.032	8.122	p< 0.001	Significant

Total effects							
Variables			**Estimate**	**Std. error**	**z-value**	**p-Value**	**Interpretation**
Online Platform Political Participation (IV)	→	Social Media-Inspired Voting Decisions (DV)	0.530	0.045	11.88	p< 0.001	Significant

Model Summary: Proportion Mediated = 0.485

The indirect effect through digital information literacy is also significant (β = 0.257, p < 0.001), highlighting that online political participation enhances individuals' digital literacy, which, in turn, influences their likelihood of making voting decisions influenced by social media. The pathway between the variables underscores the mediating role of digital information literacy, showing that the effect of online participation is not only direct but also operates through improved capacity to engage critically with digital information. The total effect (β = 0.530, p < 0.001) is larger than either the direct or indirect effect alone, confirming that both pathways contribute substantially. The result indicates partial mediation as the direct effect remains significant even after accounting for the mediator. Moreover, digital information literacy accounts for a considerable portion of the relationship, but participation on online platforms still exerts an independent influence on social media-inspired voting decisions. Furthermore, the total effect estimate is 0.530, which is the sum of the direct (0.273) and indirect (0.257) effects. This direct effect was still significant even after the mediator was included, indicating partial mediation. Results for digital information literacy explain part of the relationship, but not all of it. Because if the direct effect had become non-significant, that would indicate a full mediation. In this study, both pathways contribute, so the mediation is partial. Finally, the table shows the proportion mediated (0.485), indicating that Digital Information Literacy mediates 48.5% of the correlation between Online Platform Political Participation and Social Media-Inspired Voting Decisions.

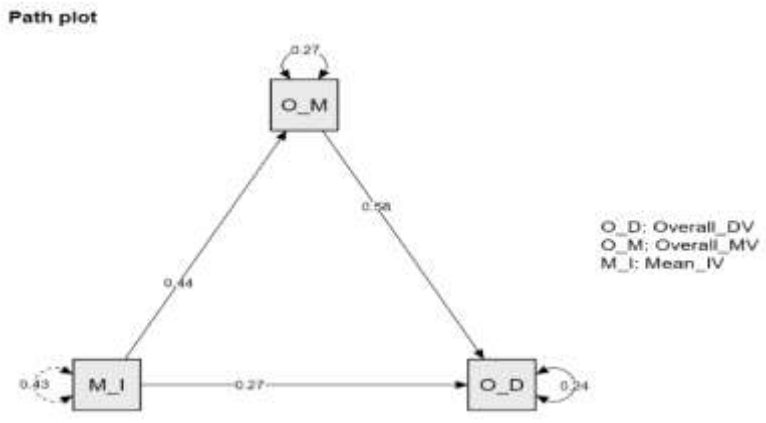


Figure 1. Path Diagram for the Direct, Indirect, and Total Effect Coefficient

The path analysis demonstrates that online platform political participation significantly predicts both digital information literacy (0.443, $p<0.001$) and social media-inspired voting decisions (0.273, $p<0.001$). On the other hand, voting decisions were strongly predicted by digital information literacy itself (0.580, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that participation improves voters' digital literacy, which in turn has a significant impact on their voting behaviour, in addition to a smaller but still significant direct effect of participation. Partial mediation was confirmed with the presence of both direct and indirect pathways, with digital information literacy serving as a key mechanism through which online political engagement shapes social media-influenced voting decisions.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Online platform political participation and social media-inspired voting decisions are significantly correlated.
2. Online platform political participation and digital information literacy are significantly correlated.
3. Digital information literacy and social media-inspired voting decisions are significantly correlated.
4. The direct effect of online platform political participation on social media-inspired voting decisions, controlling for digital information literacy, is significant.
5. The indirect effect of online platform political participation on social media-inspired voting decisions, controlling for the determinant, is significant.
6. The total effect of online platform political participation on social media-inspired voting decisions is significant.

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the discussions, conclusions, and recommendations based on the study's findings. These findings are interpreted in light of their relationship to existing literature, serving either to support or to challenge previous studies. The goal is to provide a clear pathway from the results to broader academic conversations.

Correlation of Online Platform Political Participation and Social Media-Inspired Voting Decisions

The link between online platform political participation and social media-inspired voting decisions supports the findings of Nicolas and Donguiz (2024), which revealed that engagement with social media content, including political posts, candidate information, and campaign communications, was associated with changes in voter awareness and moderate shifts in voting choices. Additionally, Cadayday, Jimenez, and Boiser (2024) also examined the Generation Z voters in the Philippines and found that social media platforms serve as primary channels for political information and discussion. The research reports that a large majority of Filipino Gen Z respondents (81%) rely on social media more than other media for communication, thereby providing unmediated access to political content that can shape political opinions and eventual voting decisions.

However, in contrast to these findings, a recent study on Facebook and Instagram deactivation experiment led by Allcott, Gentzkow, Mason, et al. (2024) revealed that deactivation of major social platforms did not produce measurable changes in voter turnout, political polarisation, perceived election legitimacy, or candidate favorability, unlike the effects observed in this study.

Connection Between Online Political Activity and Digital Information Literacy

Some recent research has established a relationship between digital information literacy and online political participation on platforms. Research from Indonesia demonstrates a significant positive association between online political participation and digital literacy, where a regression model showed that digital literacy accounts for a large proportion of variation in online political engagement behaviours, suggesting that respondents with higher digital literacy participated more actively in political discussions and online civic activities (Hasrullah et al, 2023). Additionally, findings from U.S. youth studies indicate that young people who rely on social media for political information are more likely to engage in political behaviours, such as checking information sources and voting, when they have higher media literacy skills (Siegel-Stechler, Hilton, & Medina, 2025). The study

above suggested that media literacy functions as a gateway to meaningful political participation through digital platforms.

On the contrary, this study contradicts Polizzi (2025), who argued that individuals with advanced digital literacy skills sometimes deliberately choose not to participate online. Participants in his study used their literacy to evaluate risks (e.g., misinformation, privacy concerns) and, at times, withdrew from political engagements as a protective choice. Thus, higher literacy does not always increase participation; it may transform how and when individuals engage.

Relationship Between Digital Information Literacy and Social Media-Inspired Voting Decisions

The findings of Hasrullah, Arya, and Hidayatullah (2023) show that higher levels of digital literacy significantly increase online political engagement, a key precursor to voting behaviour and other forms of political participation. This study supports the finding that individuals with stronger digital information skills are more likely to engage politically via social media. Similarly, Garcia et al. (2025) found that higher social media literacy was associated with more positive attitudes toward voting, reduced susceptibility to misinformation, and stronger behavioural intentions to vote. It indicates that digital literacy skills shape how individuals process political information on social media, which, in turn, influences their voting behaviour, and is supported by evidence.

On the other hand, the relationship between digital information literacy and social media-inspired voting decisions disagrees with the previous finding of Barati (2023), stating that while casual social media use significantly increased online political participation, it had no statistically significant effect, or only a negligible effect on offline political activities like voting behaviour.

Online Platform Political Participation Directly and Totally Affects Social Media-Inspired Voting Decision

Indryani et al. (2025) found that active engagement with political content on major social media platforms

significantly shaped the political preferences and final voting choices of Millennials and Generation Z, demonstrating a direct effect of online participation on electoral decision-making. Such a statement was supported by the current finding that political participation on online platforms directly and entirely affects social media-inspired voting decisions. Similarly, frequent exposure to political information on social networking platforms was a significant predictor of students' voting preferences, indicating that online political participation played a decisive role in shaping young voters' electoral choices, as noted by Morales et al. (2025).

In opposition, Tonin, Lepri, and Tizzoni (2025) argued that offline partisan exposure—measured through physical co-location and in-person interactions—consistently predicted voting outcomes more accurately than online social connections. It stands in direct contrast to this study's claim that online participation alone is the dominant, or even the sole, driver of electoral decisions.

Online Platform Political Participation Indirectly Affects Social Media-Inspired Voting Decisions

The current study, supported by Rabaca and Butalid (2025) and Tariq, Zolkepli, and Ahmad (2022) found that online platform political participation indirectly affects social media-inspired voting decisions. The previous studies demonstrated that students' engagement on social networking sites influences political participation through cognitive and communicative mediators, such as news consumption, political expression, and political efficacy, highlighting that the effect of online participation on broader political behavior operates largely through indirect pathways; and that social media use affects young voters' political participation indirectly via political orientations and expressive behaviors, indicating that online engagement fosters intermediate psychological and participatory processes that ultimately shape political outcomes, including voting decisions.

The current study directly challenges the claim that online political participation on platforms fails to consistently translate into measurable changes in offline voting decisions, thus undermining strong versions of this assertion (Kurniawan, Arham, & Muluk, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Digital information literacy partially and significantly mediates the correlation between online platform political participation and social media-inspired voting decisions. Its mediation strength is 48.5%. This conclusion affirms the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), which explains the three steps in media use: motives for media use, factors influencing these motives, and the outcomes of media use.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the conclusion, to explain 51.5% of the variance in the mediating effect, it is advised that future research examine other possible mediators that were not addressed in this study. Qualitative research can be used to develop themes that function as mediator variables. Finally, educational institutions may initiate programs to enhance students' digital information literacy, ensuring that social media-inspired voting decisions are informed.

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