

Explicating the relationship between social media and offline political engagement among American youths

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Objective & Hypotheses

Objective: Explore the relationship between political media consumption and political activity among young people in the United States.

H1: There is a relationship between frequency of social media use and the level of importance placed on offline political involvement among Americans ages 16-29.

H2: There is a positive relationship between exposure to diverse political opinions and the level of importance placed on offline political involvement among Americans ages 16-29

H3: There is a positive relationship between the amount of attention paid to political news and the level of importance placed on offline political involvement by Americans ages 16-29.

Method

- Secondary data analysis
- Data pulled from The Civic Network: A Comparative Study of the Use of Social Media for Enhancing Young People's Political Engagement, Australia, United Kingdom, & United States, 2013 (ICPSR 37023)
- Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS.
- H1 was tested using a one-way ANOVA.
- H2 was tested using a Pearson's r correlation.
- H3 was tested using a simple linear regression.

Literature Review

- Political participation includes donating to campaigns, attending rallies and events, encouraging others to vote, voting, working/volunteering for campaigns, signing/distributing petitions, and displaying political (Lee et al., 2012; Shah et al., 2005; Shah et al., 2007).
- Young people's peer relationships and political deliberation in the classroom influence their political involvement as they use use media to seek information and communicate with others (Lee et al., 2012).
- Online media consumption is more strongly associated with political thoughts and expressions than traditional media, yet traditional media still complements online media (Lee et al., 2012; Shah et al., 2005).
- Prosumption is the process of producing and consuming social media (Arvidsson & Colleoni, 2012); prosumption and online political participation are indirectly linked through online information seeking and discussion heterogeneity (Yamamoto et al., 2020).
- A strong positive link between online political observation and political activity among homogenous political networks illustrates the increased polarization of social media and engaging on- and offline (Kim et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2018).

References

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Results

- **H1:** Respondents' who have used a social networking site but not in the last week place significantly more importance on offline political involvement than respondents who have never used a social networking site.
- **H2:** The more respondents are exposed to diverse political opinions, the more importance they place on offline political involvement.
- **H3:** The amount of attention respondents pay to political news significantly impacts the the level of importance they place on offline political involvement.

Discussion/Conclusion

- Our results indicate social media has a significant impact on the level of importance American youths place on offline political involvement.
- Social media appears to motivate American youths to be politically active offline.
- More research is necessary to confirm these findings and explore whether there is a relationship between the level of importance placed on offline political involvement and actual levels of political activity.
- A limitation of our study is that we used previously collected data, so we were unable to decide how the variables were measured.

