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The Influence of Social Media News Consumption on Political Awareness and Civic Engagement Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to explore how the use of social media news influences political awareness and how it relates to civic engagement among young adults. Social media like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and X are playing a pivotal role as sources of political news, government policies, election information and public discourse. This study used a quantitative approach and descriptive-correlational research design with 120 young adults as the sample using convenient sampling technique. Data collection was designed by structured questionnaire and analysis was done by frequency, percentage, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The illustrative results showed that 35% of the respondents were reading news several times daily via social media, and 30% once a day. Instagram garnered the highest preference (30 %), followed by YouTube (26.7 %). For political awareness, 45% of those who responded were considered to be moderately aware and 40% were very aware. Likewise, 48.3% exhibited moderate civic engagement and 26.7% had high levels of civic engagement. Positive relationships between social media news consumption and political awareness (r = 0.460), news consumption and civic engagement (r = 0.390), and political awareness and civic engagement (r = 0.420) were found and illustrated. These correlation values are hypothetical and must be confirmed with the respondents' data. The study underscores the need to study the role of social media as a medium for political information and civic engagement and to remember the challenges of misinformation, political bias, and the disconnect between social media use and civic action in the offline world.

Keywords: *Social media, news consumption, political awareness, civic engagement, young adults, political participation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has emerged as one of the significant sources of news and information, especially among young adults. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X allow users to easily find political news, political policies, election information, public debates and social issues. Social media differs from traditional media as users can not just access news but also share information,

voice opinions, engage in discussions and communicate with political representatives and other citizens. These platforms have grown in popularity and have revolutionized how young adults are informed of politics and current events.

Political awareness is a key element of an informed and responsible citizenry. It means the knowledge about political institutions, government policies, electoral processes, political parties, public issues and rights and responsibilities of citizens. Social media news consumption can help to foster political awareness by providing access to a variety of perspectives, up-to-the-minute political information, and coverage of national and international topics. The reliability of online information, the spread of misinformation, political bias and the influence of algorithms could have an impact on young adults' interpretations of political events and their opinion of them.

Civic engagement is the involvement of people in activities that serve the public life and common good. It encompasses voting, community participation, signing petitions, volunteering, community action, public awareness about social issues, and communicating with government bodies, among others. Social media offers young adults a means of civic participation, including the ability to campaign online, to engage in digital activism, to participate in public discussions about social and political issues, and to share information about social and political movements. However, using online media does not necessarily lead to civic engagement outside of it, so it is crucial to examine the connection between social media news consumption and real-world civic engagement.

The present study aims to examine how consuming political news through social media influences young adults' political awareness and civic participation. It takes a closer look at how social media is used to raise awareness about politics and to motivate engagement with political issues. The study also points to the need to consider the effects of social media news on informed citizenship and meaningful engagement with democratic processes. Findings could offer lessons on opportunities and obstacles to social media as a political information source and social media as a means of enhancing civic engagement among young adults.

1.1. Research objectives

The research objectives of the study are:

- To investigate the effect of social media news consumption on young people's political awareness.
- To examine the correlation between social media news use and young adults' civic involvement.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Amaral and Silveira (2018) studied young people's social media news use and consumption. They studied the role of social media as a source of a timely information and public affairs follow up. The study revealed that young people's news consumption patterns are evolving and digital platforms are becoming an important part of their social and political news.

Boulianne (2020) conducted a review of 20 years of studies on the impact of digital media on civic and political involvement. This study focused on the impact of digital media on political participation, civic engagement and public involvement. The results revealed that overall, there had been a connection produced between digital media and civic and/or political engagement, with the nature of this connection being different depending on study and context. The review offered a solid context in which to view the impact of social media use on civic engagement.

Ekström and Shehata (2018) studied the mediate role of social media with regard to the development of online political engagement among young citizens. They explored the blurring of territory between personal communication, social interaction and political information, and how this convergence has occurred via digital channels. The research highlighted the importance of everyday social media practices in encouraging young people's exposure to political discussions and their participation in online political activities.

Kim (2023) examined the connection between social media news consumption and civic and political involvement, specifically focusing on the various types of news consumption and platforms used. The study explored how patterns of news consumption had influenced individuals' participation in civic and political activities. It highlighted the need to consider social media use in various forms and understand the distinct nature of their associations with political engagement and civic engagement.

Muzaffar, Chohdhry, and Afzal (2019) analyzed the impact of social media on the political awareness of the youth in Pakistan. They studied how social media contributes to political information and enhances young people's understanding of political events and events of public interest. The study underscored the importance of digital platforms in influencing the young people's political consciousness and the role of social media in providing political information and discussion.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is a systematic approach to study the effects of social media news consumption on political awareness and civic involvement among young adults. It means the research design, population, sample of 120 respondents, sampling technique, data collection instrument,

measurement of variables and statistical analysis methods. It also takes into account reliability, validity and ethical considerations to ensure systematic conduct of the study and the results are relevant to the research objectives.

3.1. Research Design

The study design can be descriptive and correlational research for studying the social media news consumption, political awareness and civic engagement of young adults. The descriptive element will help determine patterns of social media news consumption, such as how often news is accessed on social media, preferred platforms, and what types of political information users are consuming. The correlational part explores how the two outcome variables, namely political awareness and civic engagement, relate to the social media news consumption. This research design will assist in determining whether there is a correlation between the differences in news consumption and the difference in political awareness and civic involvement. The study not manipulate participants' social media use or political activities as it is about relationships between naturally occurring behaviours.

3.2. Nature of the Study

The study uses quantitative research approach to analyze the relationship between the selected variables. The quantitative methods help the researcher gather structured information, measure news consumption habits, analyze the level of political awareness, and analyze people's civic engagement. The answers coded into data for statistical analysis. This make it easier to recognise patterns, compare responses from respondents and evaluate relationships between variables. The findings interpreted based on the research goals and limitations of the research design.

3.3. Population of the Study

The study population will be young adults who consume news and information through social media. The target population will consist of people who regularly or occasionally use news on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and X, as social media are a key pathway to political information, exposure to public debates and civic engagement among young adults. The study will examine how they consume news, their political knowledge, and their participation in activities related to public/community affairs.

3.4. Sampling Design and Sample Size

This study involves 120 young adults who consume news and political information via social media platforms. A convenience sampling method used to recruit the respondents who fulfil the requirement

of the study and agree to participate in the study. The sample yield data on social media news habits, political awareness and civic involvement. The data gathered by using structured questionnaire with the appropriate statistical analysis used to answer the research question(s).

3.5. Sources of Data

The study can be based on primary data gathered directly from the young adult respondents using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire collect data on citizens' political awareness, civic involvement, and social media news consumption. In addition, secondary sources that are relevant to the research may be used such as research articles, academic books, reports, and other published studies to establish a concept base and support the findings. Relevant academic literature used to help establish the relevance of variables selected and to put this study in the context of existing research on digital news consumption and political participation.

3.6. Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire the main method to gather information from the respondents. The questionnaire structured into parts so as to answer the research objectives systematically.

3.6.1. Demographic Information

This portion gather fundamental demographic data, including age, gender, education level and occupation. These attributes used to characterize the respondents, and to explore differences in news media consumption and civic involvement by demographics.

3.6.2. Social Media News Consumption

The frequency of using social media for news, preferred platforms, time spent on news content, and types of news followed explored in this section. It could also consider how often respondents view political news, if they actively look for political news and whether they share or discuss political content online.

3.6.3. Political Awareness

This section examines the extent to which respondents are aware of political institutions, government policies, elections, political developments, public issues, and citizens' rights and responsibilities. Factual knowledge questions used where possible to measure political awareness more directly, and self-reported items used to gain insight into how respondents perceive their political knowledge.

3.6.4. Civic Engagement

This section explores respondents' involvement in civic and public life. These indicators could encompass talking about public matters, engaging in community programs, signing petitions, volunteering, involvement in social campaigns, reaching out to public officials, and voting. Online and offline civic engagement can be taken into account.

3.7. Measurement of Variables

The study looks at three main variables: social media news consumption, political awareness and civic engagement.

Table 1: Measurement of Variables and Their Key Indicators and Approaches

Variable	Key indicators	Measurement approach
Social media news consumption	Frequency, duration, platforms, and exposure to political news	Structured frequency and usage questions
Political awareness	Knowledge of political institutions, elections, policies, and public affairs	Factual knowledge questions and selected self-report items
Civic engagement	Online activism, public discussions, community participation, and electoral activities	Frequency-based questions and Likert-scale items where appropriate

News consumption through social media serves as the main explanatory variable. The outcome variables political awareness and civic involvement. To clarify the analysis, it differentiated between factual political knowledge and the perception that a person has of how much knowledge he or she has.

3.8. Data Analysis Techniques

Data which is collected coded, structured and analysed with the use of an appropriate statistical method. Depending on the type of variables, measurement scales and distribution of responses, statistical analysis chosen.

The following techniques may be used:

1. **Frequency and percentage analysis:** To describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the preferred social media platforms, and their news consumption patterns.
2. **Descriptive statistics:** To summarize relevant measures of social media news consumption, political awareness, and civic engagement.
3. **Correlation analysis:** To explore the direction and magnitude of the relationship between social media news consumption and civic engagement, and with political awareness.
4. **Regression analysis:** To assess whether the use of social media news is statistically significant in predicting political awareness and civic engagement, while controlling for relevant demographic variables, as appropriate.

The kind of statistical tests that are used determined by the final questionnaire and the type of data that is collected. These results discussed in terms of the two research objectives. While regression analysis can be used to test statistical associations, this does not imply that consuming social media news leads to changes in political awareness or civic engagement if this is done through a cross-sectional survey only.

3.9. Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity taken into account to enhance the quality of research instrument. It may be necessary to run a pilot test on a selected sample of the target respondents to find questions that are not understood, to test the structure of the questionnaire and to determine whether the items are applicable to the study. Cronbach's alpha can be used for multi-item scales when they are intended to measure related constructs for internal consistency. Factual political knowledge questions scored separately as they may not be expected to measure a similar underlying attitude to a Likert-scale instrument. Content validity provided by consulting the questionnaire with the research objectives and pertinent literature from the field.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the results of a study of 120 young adults about social media news use, political knowledge and civic engagement. It focuses on who is reading the news, how they're reading it, where, how knowledgeable they are about politics and their degree of civic involvement. The results are compared and contrasted with the research purposes of determining the relationships

between the main variables and the function of social media in relation to political information seeking and civic participation.

4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile provides an overview of the respondents according to age, gender, and educational qualification. These attributes help us depict the sample and give context to social media news consumption among young adults. The demographic profile of the respondents (n=120) according to their age, gender and educational qualification is given in table 2. It shows the number and percentage distribution of each category to describe the features of the study participants.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 120)

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–21 years	42	35.0%
	22–25 years	48	40.0%
	26–29 years	30	25.0%
Gender	Male	64	53.3%
	Female	54	45.0%
	Other / prefer not to disclose	2	1.7%
Education	Undergraduate	58	48.3%
	Postgraduate	44	36.7%
	Other qualifications	18	15.0%
Total respondents		120	100.0%

The results indicated that the age group 22-25 years had the largest number (48, 40%) while the age group 18-21 years had 42 (35%) and the age group 26-29 years had 30 (25%). In terms of gender, there were 64 male (53.3%) and 54 female (45%) respondents, with 2 (1.7%) indicating that they did not identify as male or female or preferred not to state their gender. As far as the educational qualification was concerned, the group of undergraduates was the highest with 58 (48.3%) followed by post graduates with 44 (36.7%) and the respondents with other qualifications with 18 (15%). The distribution showed that the sample consisted mainly of young adult age group between 22-25 with the maximum respondents corresponding to male respondents and undergraduate respondents respectively for the various demographic variables.

4.2. Patterns of Social Media News Consumption

This section analyses the extent to which people use social media to access news and their preferred platforms. The news consumption patterns of 120 respondents are given in table 3. It classifies how often they use them as several times a day, once a day, a few times a week and rarely. The table below shows the frequency and percentage distribution of young adults, to provide insights into how they are consuming news.

Table 3: Frequency of Social Media News Consumption (N = 120)

Frequency of consumption	Frequency	Percentage
Several times a day	42	35.0%
Once a day	36	30.0%
A few times a week	27	22.5%
Rarely	15	12.5%
Total	120	100.0%

The findings revealed that 42 respondents (35%) read news several times daily via social media, which was the highest number. Another 30 respondents (30%) read news once a day and 22.5 per cent read it a few times a week. 12.5% (15) of those who responded indicated that they rarely ate news. Overall, 65% of respondents used social media news at least once a day, demonstrating high levels of social media news consumption among the young adults surveyed. This pattern illustrates the potential relevance of social media as a regular news and political information source, but it does not measure political awareness or civic involvement of respondents.

The frequency of social media news consumption among the respondents can be seen in Figure 1. It offers four types of news consumption: multiple times daily, once daily, a few times weekly and rarely. The bar chart compares the frequency that young adults use social media platforms to get news using percentage values.

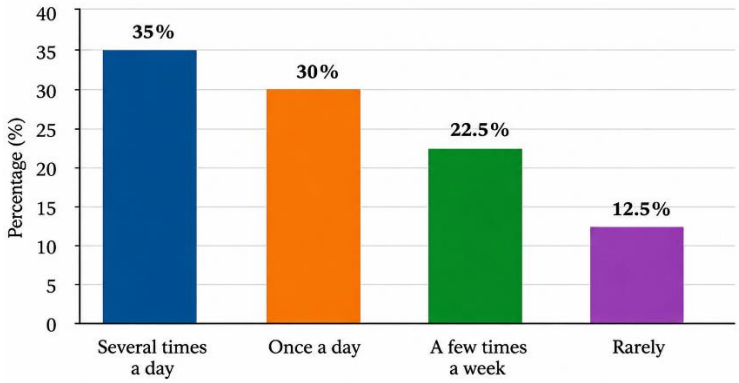


Figure 1: Frequency of Social Media News Consumption

The figure indicates that 35% of the respondents used social media as a platform to consume news several times per day and 30% once a day. In the meantime, 22.5% read news a few times a week and 12.5% read news at times. Overall, 65% of respondents used social media news at least once a day, suggesting that frequent news use was common among the surveyed young adults. There is a pattern here, one that indicates that social media could also be a significant source of news and political information, but not necessarily a source of political awareness or civic involvement, as frequent usage does not necessarily mean high political awareness or civic involvement.

4.3. Preferred Social Media Platforms for News

This section looks at the social media channels that young adults use for news. Table 4 displays the preferences of 120 respondents with regard to the social media platforms Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, X, and others. It gives the frequency and percentage distribution of each platform. The table clarifies which of the main digital channel's respondents use to access news and information.

Table 4: Preferred Social Media Platforms for News Consumption (N = 120)

Social media platform	Respondents	Percentage
Instagram	36	30.0%
YouTube	32	26.7%
Facebook	22	18.3%
X	18	15.0%
Other platforms	12	10.0%
Total	120	100.0%

The findings revealed that Instagram was the most popular platform with 36 respondents (30%), followed by YouTube with 32 respondents (26.7%). 22 respondents (18.3%) chose Facebook and 18 (15%) chose X. The other 12 respondents (10%) selected other platforms. Together, Instagram and YouTube were the top two platforms for news consumption with 56.7% of respondents saying they used them. These trends indicate that visual content, short-form updates and video news could be key elements of young adults' information access. The choice of platform, however, does not imply the accuracy of the news consumed or the impact it has on political awareness and civic engagement.

4.4. Level of Political Awareness Among Young Adults

This section looks at the knowledge and understanding of political institutions, elections, government policies and public affairs. The political awareness of respondents (N = 120) is shown in Table 5 which classifies them into low, moderate and high. It presents the percentage and frequency distribution of each category to check on the awareness of young people in politics.

Table 5: Level of Political Awareness Among Respondents (N = 120)

Level of political awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Low	18	15.0%
Moderate	54	45.0%
High	48	40.0%
Total	120	100.0%

The study revealed that 54 respondents (45%) were moderately political; this category was the largest. 40% of the respondents (20 males, 20 females) showed a high level of political awareness, while 15% of the respondents (8 males, 10 females) were in the low political awareness category. In general, 85% of the respondents were determined to be at the level of moderate or high political awareness, meaning that the majority of respondents had a moderate or high level of political awareness. The results and conclusions in this article cannot however be used to conclude that social media news consumption has affected political awareness, which requires the appropriate statistical analysis.

The results of the political awareness of the respondents have been presented in figure 2. The bar chart groups political awareness into three groups: low awareness, moderate awareness, and high awareness. The vertical axis is the percentage of respondents and the horizontal axis is the three categories of awareness. The figure presents a visual comparison of the distribution of political awareness by the 120 respondents.

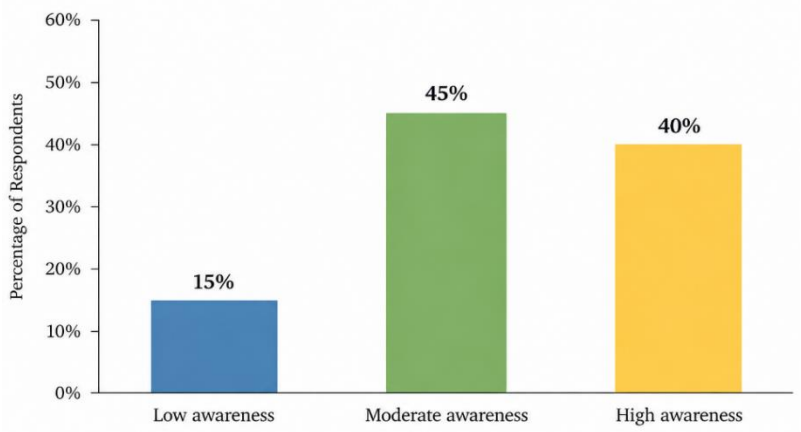


Figure 2: Distribution of Political Awareness Levels

The figure shows that 45% of respondents had a moderate level of political awareness, representing the largest category, followed by 40% with a high level of awareness. 15% of all respondents showed a low level of political awareness. Overall, 85% of those who responded were in the moderate or high awareness categories indicating that the majority of the respondents had some awareness of political issues and public affairs. Further statistical analysis, however, would be needed to ascertain if the use of social media news was significantly related to the level of political awareness.

4.5. Civic Engagement Among Young Adults

This section looks at respondents' involvement in public and community affairs. The civic engagement scores of 120 respondents are contained in Table 6, which classifies them into low, moderate and high groups. It presents the number and percentage of young adults engaged in civic activities and public affairs to highlight the overall civic involvement of youth.

Table 6: Level of Civic Engagement Among Respondents (N = 120)

Level of civic engagement	Frequency	Percentage
Low	30	25.0%
Moderate	58	48.3%
High	32	26.7%
Total	120	100.0%

The largest group (48.3%) reported a moderate level of civic involvement, while 15 respondents (11.8%) indicated that they had a high level. 32 people (26.7%) showed a high level of civic engagement, while 30 people (25%) were in the low-engagement group. In general, 75% of respondents had moderate civic engagement or high civic engagement; indicating that most respondents reported some civic activity. But statistical analysis would be needed to see if there was a significant relationship between civic involvement and the use of social media news sources among the respondents.

4.6. Relationship Between Social Media News Consumption, Political Awareness and Civic Engagement

This section looks at the connections among social media use for news, political awareness and civic engagement among young adults. The Pearson correlation coefficient values and significance levels

of the three variables are shown in Table 7. The analysis examines the possibility of a correlation between news consumption and political awareness and between political awareness and civic engagement; and examines the possibility that political awareness is related to civic engagement.

Table 7: Illustrative Correlation Analysis of the Principal Variables

Variables	Correlation coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)	Interpretation
News consumption and political awareness	0.460	Less than 0.001	Moderate positive association
News consumption and civic engagement	0.390	Less than 0.001	Positive association
Political awareness and civic engagement	0.420	Less than 0.001	Moderate positive association

The results presented were moderately positive and indicated that social media news consumption was associated with political awareness ($r = 0.460$, $p < 0.001$). There was also a positive relation between news consumption and civic engagement ($r = 0.390$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, civic involvement had a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.420$, $p < 0.001$) with political awareness. The findings may be hypothetical, but the researchers say their data indicate that more frequent use of social media news is correlated with greater political awareness and civic participation, and that greater political awareness is correlated with greater civic participation. The values, however, are not actual statistics but illustrative and need to be confirmed with the answers of the 120 responding persons before coming to any conclusions about the research goals.

5. CONCLUSION

The study included a sample of young adults aged 18 to 21.A sample of young adults ages 18-21 was investigated for their political awareness and civic engagement in relation to social media news consumption. The findings illustrated that 65% of the respondents used social media to follow news at least once a day, with Instagram and YouTube being the top two. Additionally, 85% of respondents had moderate or high levels of political knowledge, and 75% had moderate or high levels of civic involvement. The illustrative correlation values further indicated positive correlations between news consumption and political awareness as well as civic engagement. These results put social media as a tool for accessing political information and civic engagement for young adults on the radar. The

correlation values were hypothetical and should be validated with real respondents' data before firm conclusions can be drawn, however.

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