REVIEW OF LITERATURE INVESTIGATE HOW SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS INFLUENCE POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT, ACTIVISM, AND VOTER BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT Moving beyond the content and use of social media, four contributions in this special issue address important theoretical questions about the effects of social media on various outcomes. These pieces clearly demonstrate that social media "effects" are not uniform. From a normative standpoint, they can be alarming and encouraging at the same time. Cacciatore and colleagues focus on how social media affect learning and demonstrate empirically that use of Facebook for news consumption and news sharing purposes is negatively related to political knowledge, pointing to potential detrimental effects in terms of deliberative democracy. Chan examines social media use among voters in Hong Kong and observes contingent effects of political ambivalence and political disagreement on the relationships between partisan strength and social media use. Moving to the Hungarian context, Marton investigates the link between Facebook performance and electoral success during the Hungarian general election, finding empirical support for the two-step flow model: It is not the political candidates but their followers whose sharing of information on social media has an impact on their friends and acquaintances. Finally, Lee et al. examine how politicians' personal disclosures on social media affect vote intention, suggesting that publicizing politicians' private information may make them appear less competent under certain conditions. Thus, social media can have positive effects in terms of persuasion and turnout, but also may make politicians appear less competent.
Key Words: REVIEW OF LITERATURE, SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS, INFLUENCE, POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of social media in political campaigning around the world is undeniable. Latest statistics show that close to three fourth of U.S. adults use social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, with social network use becoming almost ubiquitous among young adults, according to recent data from the Pew Research Center (2018). Globally, an estimated 2.62 billion people use social networks on a daily basis in 2018, with that number projected to reach 2.77 billion by 2019 (Statista, 2018). With their tremendous growth, social media have become an indispensable part of modern political campaigning, both in the United States and internationally. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or Reddit have changed how political campaigns are run; how politicians and the public access and share political information; and the way we learn about politics, form opinions and attitudes, and ultimately engage in or disengage from the political process.

While social media have clearly affected our understanding of political communication and its effects on the public, it is difficult to see clear monolithic effects. A 2009 meta-analysis showed that Internet use in general had positive, although relatively small, effects on different aspects of political engagement (Boulianne, 2009). Similarly, a 2015 meta-analysis demonstrated only limited effects of digital media use on political participation, showing that only half of 170 reported effects from 36 selected studies were statistically significant (Boulianne, 2015). Yet another meta-analysis found generally positive effects of social media on three different dimensions of engagement, namely, social capital, civic engagement, and political participation, when surveying 116 relationships/effects reported in 22 different studies (Skoric, Zhu, Goh, & Pang, 2016).

These comprehensive aggregate studies offer evidence that the effects of social media consumption and use are hardly uniform across different contexts and groups. For example, studies with random samples of youth are more likely to identify a significant effect, compared with general population samples (Boulianne, 2015). Also, studies that rely on panel data are twice less likely to find positive and statistically significant relationships between social media use and political participation (Boulianne, 2015). Studies have also noted that the relationship between Internet use and political engagement varies depending on type of use. For example, findings by Gil de Zuniga, Bachmann, Hsu, and Brundidge (2013) suggest that only expressive uses of social media predict online as well as offline political participation, including voting, while consumptive uses do not. Similarly, Dimitrova and Bystrom (2017) demonstrate that active social media use positively affects caucus participation while passive use has a negative effect. Yet, other studies have shown strongest effects when online resources are used for informational purposes (Boulianne, 2009).

Findings such as these suggest that social media effects may depend on multiple factors, including what kind of channels are examined (e.g., Twitter vs. Instagram vs. Snapchat), the specific audience characteristics and predispositions (antecedents such age, political interest, campaign involvement, and other psychological factors) and user motivations (e.g., relationship maintenance vs. political engagement vs. self-promotion), what type of social

media use is captured (informational, expressive, or relational use), and the political campaign context overall.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Political Participation

Political participation is an important feature of democratic governance since it involves people participating in the political process through voting, engaging in political debates, joining political parties, and participating in rallies and demonstrations. Political participation is essential for democracy because it allows individuals to express themselves and influence decisions that affect their lives. However, political involvement among Jordan's young people has historically been low **OECD** (**2021**). This is due to people's lack of interest in politics, limited access to political information, and a sense of exclusion from decision-making processes (**Nyberg 2021**; **Barrett and Pachi 2019**). Lack of interest in the subject is one factor for this low level of youth involvement in politics. Only 32% of young Jordanians expressed interest in politics according to the Arab Barometer survey (**Arab Barometer 2019**), in comparison with 60% of older people. This is brought on by their lack of faith in political institutions, the feeling that taking part in politics will not bring about significant change, and the view that politicians are dishonest and self-interested. Another obstacle to youth political involvement in Jordan is limited access to political information due to its ambiguity (**OECD 2021**). There is a sense of isolation from the political process among young people because they are less likely to read or watch political news, and they are also less likely to be exposed to political arguments. Another important aspect is a sense of exclusion from decision-making since young people feel their opinions are not heard and they are not represented in politics. Apathy and disengagement from the political process could come from this (**Arab Barometer 2019**). It is important to increase young people's political literacy and knowledge in order to promote their involvement in politics. Public awareness campaigns, political outreach programs, and educational initiatives can all help with this. Young people are more likely to participate in politics when they have a better understanding of the importance of political participation, according to **Kahne and Bowyer** (**2019**). Political actors should endeavor to meet young people's expectations and concerns in order to ensure that their perspectives are taken into consideration throughout the decision-making process. Third, efforts should be undertaken to increase the representation of young people in political institutions. This can be achieved by either setting quotas for young candidates in elections or by forming youth councils to offer guidance to decision-makers on issues affecting young people (**Stockemer and Sundstorm 2022**). Expanding the use of digital technology could therefore have the effect of involving young people in politics. SMPs can be used to spread political knowledge, energize political discourse, and promote youth participation in politics. The evolution of Jordan's democracy depends, in conclusion, on the participation of young people in politics. However, historically low rates of young people participating have hampered the nation's development (**Al-Anani 2019**). Efforts should be taken to promote political education and awareness, foster trust with young people, boost youth representation in political institutions, and use digital technology to involve young people in the political process in order to increase youth engagement in politics. Taking such steps has the potential to help ensure young people's engagement in the political process and can play an active role in shaping the country's future.

2.2. Social Media

Social media has become one of the pillars of modern society that has a significant impact on the political participation among youth in Jordan. Jordan has over than 6.61 million active social media users in January 2023 which forms 58.4% of the population (**Jordan News 2023**), SMPs like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have developed into effective tools for political activism, mobilization, and communication (**Kidd and McIntosh 2016**). This study explores how SM has affected youth engagement in politics in Jordan and its potential implications for the country's democratic development. SM affects the extent to which youth are engaged in politics in Jordan through its ability to amplify youth voices and provide a platform for political expression (**George and Leidner 2019**). Young people may now share their thoughts, discuss politics, and rally around causes that are important to them because of SMPs. Also, SM has facilitated building groups of young people around similar interests and problems, which has increased the effectiveness of their activism (**González-Bailón and Lelkes 2023**). Young people in Jordan are now more politically engaged and educated due to SM. Young people who have access to a variety of information and news sources can keep up with political events and issues. By offering an environment for political discourse and debate, social media facilitates the dissemination of political information and has prompted younger people to participate more actively in politics (**Alarqan 2020**). Additionally, SM has made it possible for young people to participate in political engagement and advocacy in ways that were before impossible. SMPs have been used, for instance, to plan protests, rallies, and other political activism activities. Furthermore, they have been utilized to start

campaigns and appeals, which have assisted in bringing political issues to light and putting pressure on decision-makers to take action (**Valenzuela 2013**). Despite its benefits, SM has had a negative effect on young people's participation in politics in Jordan since it may be used to disseminate rumors and false information that undermine political literacy and obscure political concerns (**Vaccari and Chadwick 2020**). A negative effect on political stability and social cohesion can result from the use of such platforms to promote hate speech and encourage violence (**Ogbuoshi et al. 2019**). Additionally, they could result in echo chambers where people are only exposed to information and viewpoints that support their preexisting convictions (**Alatawi et al. 2021**). As a result, there might be more political polarisation and division, which would make it harder to reach agreements and engage in productive debate. As a result, SM significantly influenced Jordan's youth participation in politics. SMPs have given youth activism, mobilization, and political expression a potent instrument, but they come with risks and difficulties. Efforts should be made to enhance media literacy and critical thinking, boost transparency and accountability, build productive political conversation and compromise, and raise openness and accountability to ensure that SMPs are utilized positively and contribute to the democratic growth of the nation. By implementing these actions, SM may continue to be a strong tool for Jordanian young participation in politics and contribute to the democratic growth of the nation.

2.3. Empirical Literature

Political participation is considered as a key aspect of democratic governance, and it involves inhabitants' participation in the political process by means of voting, joining political parties, engaging in political debates, and engaging in rallies and demonstrations. Young people's political engagement is an important issue in Jordan, as it is in many other Middle Eastern nations. Jordan is a young nation with more than half of its inhabitants under the age of 25. This younger generation is connecting more through social media, which may have an impact on their political attitudes and actions. Numerous studies have been done in Jordan to examine the factors that influence young people's political participation. One of the most crucial aspects is education where higher-educated people are more likely to engage in political activity, according to research. Higher levels of education were found to be positively correlated with political involvement among Jordanian youth by **Tahat et al.** (**2022**). Another factor that affects young Jordanians' political participation is their gender. In political activities, women are reportedly less likely than men to engage (**Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010**). According to **Tahat et al.** (**2022**), gender has a significant impact on the political participation of Jordanian youth, with males being more likely than females to take part in political activities. SM has become a prominent factor affecting young people's political participation in Jordan. **Al-Mohammad** (**2017**) found a favorable correlation between SM use and political involvement among Jordanian youth. According to the survey, teenagers who utilized social media were more likely to participate in political activities than those who did not use social media. According to the authors, SM is an excellent instrument for youth to share their political beliefs and take part in political debates. Nevertheless, increased political participation does not necessarily result from the use of SM. According to **Chen and Stilinovic** (**2020**) research, although using social media had effect on young people's political participation, the precise relationship is still up for debate, and young participation in politics online is debatable, leaving up the possibility of studying how social media might inspire youths to become politically active. Furthermore, the effect of socioeconomic issues on young people's political engagement in Jordan has been investigated. **Alelaimat** (**2019**) demonstrated that socioeconomic factors like money are highly influencing young people's political participation in Jordan. According to this research, youth from wealthy backgrounds were more likely to get involved in politics than youth from poor backgrounds. In addition, this research found that young people who believed they had a high social position were more motivated to engage and participate in political activities. To summarize, education, gender, use of social media, socioeconomic level, and political opinions are the main factors that affect youth political participation in Jordan. Given the widespread adoption of SM among Jordanian youth, the role of SM in stimulating political participation among youth in that country is particularly crucial. However, the usage of SM alone is insufficient to boost the political participation of young people in Jordan. The underlying socioeconomic variables that may affect young people's ability and tendency to participate in politics should be taken into account when talking about political participation among Jordanian youth. While socioeconomic factors like wealth, employment, and access to resources may be considerably more relevant, political attitudes and gender-related aspects are undoubtedly important as well. Particularly low-income families may encounter major obstacles to political involvement. Due to employment or family obligations, they might have restricted access to knowledge about political issues and candidates, be less likely to have smartphones or internet access, and have less free time to engage in political activities. Furthermore, youth from low-income families might not have the financial means to support political campaigns or attend political events, which could make them feel less empowered to participate in politics. Policymakers and political players in Jordan must endeavor to promote more fair possibilities for young people from all backgrounds to participate in the political process in order to overcome these underlying socioeconomic concerns.

This can involve increasing the availability of political information and materials, including political education manuals or community centers where young people may gather and talk about politics. Establishing laws and policies to increase the involvement of low-income families, such as programs for affordable housing, healthcare access, and job training might reduce some of the financial obstacles to political participation. Also, political actors in Jordan need to engage with young people from all socioeconomic backgrounds more actively. This may require reaching out to young people directly via social media or other online platforms, setting up gatherings and conversations in places with a large number of young people, and giving them the chance to participate in making political choices. Political actors might attempt to build more diverse and inclusive political arenas to motivate young people's political participation from different backgrounds.

To sum up, while SM and other individual-level characteristics may influence how young people participate in politics in Jordan, policymakers and political players must also discuss the underlying socio-economic challenges that may limit young people's ability to participate. By providing more equitable chances for young people from various backgrounds to participate in the political process, policymakers and political players may help Jordan's democracy grow to be more inclusive and representative.

2.4. Theories

A number of theories can be useful for understanding the effect of SM on political participation, such as the spiral of silence theory, the mobilization theory, and the reinforcement theory.

2.4.1. Mobilization Theory

Mobilization theory stated that SM has the potential to be an influential tool for encouraging participation in political activities (**Dunu and Uzochukwu 2015**). It asserts that SM gives political activists the exceptional chance to network with potential supporters and share news about political events and activities (**Casteltrione 2016**). Thus, they may convince individuals to participate in these events who otherwise might not have known about them. The theory is especially applicable to Jordan's youth participation. In this setting, social media (SM) can be used to propagate political gatherings like rallies or protests and to link young people with like-minded political ideologies (**Mandrysz 2016**). As a result, SM can encourage young people to engage in political activities by fostering a sense of belonging and common purpose. Social media platforms include tools that can make it easier to communicate and share ideas. Furthermore, tools like liking, sharing, and commenting on Facebook postings, for instance, may be helpful for expressing support or opposition to a particular political stance or contentious subject. Such SMP functions, for instance, could help a political party ascertain whether the supporters of the political party are in favor of or against an idea. SMPs networked billions of people around the world, and changed how individuals participate in politics by giving activists new ways to reach a larger audience, to express their opinions, share news, and organize social movements (**Agojo et al. 2023**). SM has the ability to help young people interact with their peers and locate and join already-existing social movements. Additionally, SM provides a forum for people to talk about their experiences and hear from others about their own. This can help young people to develop a deeper understanding of political issues, as well as to become more informed and engaged citizens (**Vraga and Tully 2021**). Generally, mobilization theory contends that SM can be a useful instrument for boosting young people's political participation. SM can help to organize youth and inspire them to become more politically active by giving political activists a platform to connect with potential supporters and broadcast information about political events and activities.

2.4.2. Reinforcement Theory

Reinforcement theory advocates that SM might support existing political attitudes and behaviors among individuals instead of mobilizing them to participate in new activities (**Grishin 2021**). Based on this theory, individuals are more likely to be exposed to information and ideas that fit with their pre-existing beliefs because they are expected to seek out and participate in content that supports their pre-existing views (**Cheong et al. 2022**). This has the potential to result in people becoming more rooted in their existing beliefs and less willing to consider alternative perspectives. In terms of political participation among young people in Jordan, reinforcement theory shows that SM may have both good and bad consequences on political activity. On the one hand, social media may provide a venue for young people to communicate with others who share their political beliefs. Individuals who are currently politically active may become more engaged as a result of this (**Diou et al. 2018**). However, SM may also cause political polarization and a fragmentation of the public discourse. This is due to people's increased willingness to interact with others who share their present political beliefs and a decreased tendency to interact with those whose values are in opposition to their own (**Lin et al. 2023**). As a result, SM may reinforce current political attitudes and practices rather than allow young people to connect with new ideas and become more politically conscious and active. According to reinforcement theory, SM can have both favorable and unfavorable consequences on young people's

political participation (**Oser and Boulianne 2020**). Young people can use technology to connect with others who share their political beliefs, but it can also polarize political views and divide the public conversation. In order to advance a broader and more varied political discourse around SM, efforts should be made to raise awareness of these possible downsides.

2.4.3. The Spiral of Silence Theory

According to the spiral of silence theory, people are more inclined to openly express their thoughts if they believe that such opinions are shared by the majority of people and less likely to do so if they believe that same opinions are held only by a small number of people (**Matthes et al. 2018**). According to this theory, individuals are influenced by those around them and may be reluctant to voice their own beliefs if they fear negative repercussions or potential social exclusion (**Chen 2018**). According to the spiral of silence theory, (**Neubaum and Krämer 2017**) stated that social media may have a major impact on young people's views of public opinion and willingness to voice their political convictions. For instance, if young people see their friends engaging in politics and speaking out publicly on social media, they may be more motivated to do the same themselves. However, if young people believe their beliefs are in the minority, they could be less inclined to speak up and engage in political activities (**Norris 2023**). Fear of social rejection or unfavorable consequences for expressing opinions that differ from the majority may be the cause of this. Individuals may be less eager to communicate with those who hold opposing political ideas, which can lead to the polarization of political beliefs and fragmentation of public debate (**Hoffmann and Lutz 2017**). According to the spiral of silence theory, SM can have a substantial impact on young people's desire to express their political beliefs and participate in political activities. By influencing public opinion perceptions and creating a sense of societal obligation to conform to the majority's opinions, SM can either encourage or prevent young people from participating in political debates and actions. Recognizing these possible outcomes is crucial, and efforts should be made to foster a more inclusive and diverse political conversation on SM.

To put it simply, the three theories offer distinct perspectives on the relationship between SM and political participation among Jordanian youth. Each theory provides a unique perspective on the impact of SM on political involvement among young people and outlines the potential benefits and drawbacks of SM in this setting. A deeper understanding of the relationship between SM and political involvement can be created by evaluating these theories together. The potential strengths and weaknesses of SM in encouraging young people's political engagement in Jordan and other contexts are definable. This understanding can guide efforts to increase young people's political engagement through social media. For instance, according to mobilization theory, social media (SM) can be utilized to promote political events and activities among young people and link them with like-minded individuals. SMPs can therefore be used to raise awareness of politics and encourage young people to engage in political activities. On the other hand, the reinforcement theory contends that SM might support current political beliefs and actions. To overcome this, efforts might be made to encourage participation from young people by providing them with information that contradicts their preconceived notions and fosters critical thought. The spiral of silence theory, in addition, contends that SM may have an impact on the interest of young people to publicly share their political opinions. To overcome this, methods might be created to build an online community that is more welcoming and accepting of differing viewpoints and civil conversation. We can create a more thorough and nuanced strategy for utilizing SM to encourage political participation among young people in Jordan and other contexts by taking into account these various perspectives.

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