



The Impact of Social Media on Political Engagement Among Urban and Rural Youth

Rino Noviyantho¹, Andi Dasmawati¹, Hartawati¹

¹Faculty of law, Andi Sudirman university, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Rino Noviyantho

Email: rinonoviyantho@gmail.com

Article Info

Article History:

Received November 8, 2025

Revised November 13, 2025

Accepted: December 14, 2025

Keywords:

Social media, Political Engagement, Urban Youth, Rural Youth, Civic Participation.

Abstract

The present quantitative study examines how social media affects youth political engagement between urban-based and rural-based participants. Data acquisition occurred through surveys directed at 500 youth participants ranging from 18 to 24 years old who resided in urban as well as rural areas. Urban young participants demonstrated higher levels of political participation than young people in rural areas. The study discovered through its results that social media usage duration enhances political participation among young people. The available social media tools which urban fixated youths used for political discussions included Facebook and Instagram but rural youths expressed limited interaction because these platforms lack accessibility. This study addresses existing literature gaps about geographic variations of youth political activism to demonstrate why rural youth need higher digital literacy and their political activity levels increased. The conclusions offer different approaches that enhance political activism through increased use of social media recommendations in both city and country areas. The findings from this study will be beneficial for those in education and policymaking who wish to improve youth political participation via social media.

Introduction

The youth experience revolutionary changes in their political involvement through modern social media platforms. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok function both as social networking and social political networking platforms. The current youth was shaped by information technology that exists since their birth thus influencing their perspectives on both liberal democracy and civic participation (Chong et al., 2022; Prasetyo et al., 2021). This research evaluates how social media affects political activities while comparing how city and country youth communities interact with political content and political processes.

Combined activities that aim to define public policy through political activism constitute voting according to Traber et al. (2022). Youth remain the primary target audience because they possess idealism and social sensitivity as the main segment of the audience. A range of factors related to geographic location and social economic status distinguishes how young people avoid political activities. Youth in urban areas have better political engagement resources than their rural counterparts since urban areas offer higher access to political involvement (Botrić, 2023).

Research has demonstrated that social media functions as a two-edged instrument for affecting political activities. The youth possess the ability to voice their opinions and defend selected issues through social media while finding like-minded individuals (Liou & Literat, 2020). Social media activated youth involvement during Black Lives Matter protests in diverse metropolitan areas demonstrating its effectiveness as a circulation technique according to Chen & Lin (2021). Social media generates false information as well as social division that prevents genuine interpersonal exchanges (Reza et al., 2024). This dual character of social media platforms creates various issues when used to enhance political involvement among youth populations between urban and rural settings.

The urban youth demonstrate better political consciousness because they encounter diverse viewpoints through local community assets (Carey et al., 2021) and participate more actively in politics than their rural counterparts state Chen & Barcus (2024). Active social networks in towns create areas where political activists can connect with citizens because of their operational social structures. The rural youth encounter three primary obstacles which feature insufficient information access combined with lower numbers of peer connections and a political system that fails to detect their existence (Kormos & Wisdom, 2021; Ninsiima et al., 2021).

Social media operates as a specific channel to shape how people think about politics along with how they act politically particularly within the young population. Student voting decisions are mainly influenced by political information that appears on social media networks. Algorithms that manipulate content selection double the effect of social media influences which results in politically isolated communities (Saurwein & Spencer, 2021; Guess et al., 2023). Understandable patterns of social media impacts on youth political engagement in urban and rural areas can lead to developing successful measures to enhance their participation.

This research investigates how social media affects youth political engagement by studying both urban and rural populations since these areas have minimal academic focus. Research must establish whether urban youth have alternative social media behavior patterns than rural youth while their political engagement demonstrates distinct patterns. Research on political participation through social media lacks awareness regarding population differences based on geography and socio-economic standing (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021).

A quantitative research design enables the evaluation of survey results obtained from youth participants from urban and rural backgrounds. The research evaluates social media-based political participation levels of users to determine how efficiently users participate politically. These results will support theory-building by developing an extensive social media use framework which will also deliver vital social media literacy and engagement approaches to government officials who work with youth across urban and rural communities.

Method

The authors used a quantitative methodology because they wanted to analyze how urban and rural youth engage with social media platforms for political actions. The primary-purpose of choosing this research method was to obtain numerical data that allowed statistical analysis to detect patterns between social media usage and political activism levels.

Youths between 18 to 24 years old living in both urban and rural areas made up the target audience of this study. A stratified sampling method was selected because it served to obtain participants from these two distinct groups. The participants came from dense urban populations yet the rural participants originated from a sparsely populated area. The research contains two equal subgroups of 300 young adults from urban and rural regions. Researchers believed that these sample sizes would produce good statistical values while making it possible to analyze the differences across the two groups.

An online questionnaire designed from social network user questions and political engagement inquiries collected participant responses. The survey had two segments where Segment one obtained the respondent's fundamental information (age, gender, education, residence type in urban or rural) while Segment two contained Likert-based questions about SMO and political Participation behaviors.

The survey examined social media usage by asking how often people engage and which networks including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok or other they use and also their responses to political posts. Survey participants evaluated political activity based on their voting participation together with their physical event attendance and online political discourse along with other political behaviors.

They prepared the survey survey and disseminated it via university mailing lists combined with social media networks. A short introductory statement instructed participants about the research aim and acquisition of consent. The study proceeded with data collection attempts although researchers followed up participants through reminders spread across four consecutive weeks.

SPSS processed the scored questionnaires which participants returned at the study conclusion. The researchers computed descriptive statistics because they aimed to analyze the demographic structure of their participant sample and create initial insights about social media habits and political activities.

Research analysts utilized descriptive statistical methods to study the social media usage relationships with political activities. Both rural areas and urban centers were analyzed for their political activity changes using linear regression that measured social media level fluctuations. To determine how political engagement differed between these groups the independent samples t-tests were performed. The obtained results reached statistical significance at $p < 0.05$ after conducting statistical analyses.

Result and Discussion

The research developed various patterns to demonstrate how young people participate in politics through social media tools while showing effective use of these tools for civic involvement. The study indicates how various social networking platforms combined with the duration spent on them impacts the political experiences of young adults by demonstrating their political engagement levels. A complete analysis of the research and its statistical examining process can be found here although it presents established trends and comparative distinctions that shaped the study research. This study makes an additional contribution to scholarly inquiry regarding how social media impacts contemporary political action and youth political behavior across different locations.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Urban Youth (N = 300)	Rural Youth (N = 300)	Total (N = 600)
Age (Mean ± SD)	21.5 ± 1.8	20.9 ± 1.7	21.2 ± 1.8
Gender (N, %)			
- Male	120 (40.0%)	140 (46.7%)	260 (43.3%)
- Female	180 (60.0%)	160 (53.3%)	340 (56.7%)
Education Level (N, %)			
- High School	90 (30.0%)	150 (50.0%)	240 (40.0%)
- College	180 (60.0%)	120 (40.0%)	300 (50.0%)
- Postgraduate	30 (10.0%)	30 (10.0%)	60 (10.0%)

The table displays the research participant demographics between students from urban areas and students from rural areas. It displays statistical data about respondent age groups together with the distribution of male and female participants and their educational attainment levels. Urban youth have an average age that exceeds that of rural youth participants. Men make up a minority compared to females in both segments of the sample while urban participants with college degrees outnumber their rural counterparts. The provided demographic information establishes a base for understanding the participants while allowing better interpretation of future political engagement results.

Table 2. Social Media Usage Patterns

Social Media Platform	Urban Youth (Mean Usage Hours/Week)	Rural Youth (Mean Usage Hours/Week)
Facebook	6.4	4.2
Twitter	4.3	2.5
Instagram	7.1	3.8
TikTok	5.6	2.1

A summary shows that urban youth spend greater time on social media than rural youth during each week. The social media platforms received greater use from urban youth who especially spent the most time on Facebook and Instagram when compared to rural youth. Social media engagement differs significantly between urban and rural youth groups because this distinction indicates how much political content and discussions their platforms deliver.

Table 3. Political Engagement Activities

Political Engagement Activity	Urban Youth (N = 300, %)	Rural Youth (N = 300, %)	p-value
Voted in Last Election	250 (83.3%)	180 (60.0%)	< 0.001
Attended a Political Event	120 (40.0%)	60 (20.0%)	< 0.001
Engaged in Political Discussions Online	220 (73.3%)	80 (26.7%)	< 0.001
Shared Political Content on social media	190 (63.3%)	70 (23.3%)	< 0.001

This table compares the political engagement activities of urban and rural youth. Urban youth members demonstrate higher rates of political involvement than rural youth members because they show increased voting behavior alongside their presence at political gatherings and their involvement in social media political discussions. The analyzed data through p-values shows that substantial statistical variances exist between political content use and political participation between urban and rural youth communities. Social media has the potential to promote political engagement among urban youth to a greater extent compared to rural youth populations.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Results for Social Media Usage Predicting Political Engagement

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value
Social Media Usage (Hours/Week)	0.45	0.52	10.24	< 0.001
Urban vs. Rural (Urban = 1, Rural = 0)	0.30	0.25	4.56	< 0.001

The results of a regression analysis regarding social media exposure alongside urban or rural living show in this table. Each additional hour devoted to social media activity during a week result in a substantial growth of political engagement scores. Social media usage demonstrates a strong positive connection to political engagement according to the standardized coefficient output which applies to urban youth population. Social media stands as an essential determinant which affects political engagement levels especially when individuals live in cities.

Table 5. Comparison of Political Engagement Levels Between Urban and Rural Youth

Measure of Political Engagement	Urban Youth (Mean \pm SD)	Rural Youth (Mean \pm SD)	p-value
Overall Political Engagement Score	3.8 \pm 0.9	2.4 \pm 0.8	< 0.001

The table provides a comparison between urban and rural youth in their overall political engagement measures. The scores obtained by urban participants showed higher engagement levels with politics than rural youth did. Statistical analysis through the p-value established that this observed difference proves to be significant. The results emphasize how geographical location alongside social media habits create different levels of political involvement because they highlight the role that this relationship plays in youth political conduct patterns.

Research outcomes provide essential knowledge about how social media affects political engagement between young adults residing in metropolitan and country settings. The study data shows that urban residents practice more political engagement compared to their rural counterparts even though the scholarly literature firmly establishes urban environments provide broader civil and media involvement options (Sawyer et al., 2022). Research indicates that urban youth show higher political involvement through social media no matter how often they use it because they participate in voting and political events. Youths' political participation receives strong influences from the techno digital culture with social media taking a significant role in the process.

The research established that additional social media usage time corresponded with elevated civic participation measures in participants thereby reconfirming the findings of Vaccari & Valeriani (2021). Studies confirm social media plays an essential role in political activity

among populations who assert their political identities during the ongoing transformation of our post-social media culture (Workneh, 2021).

The research findings have potential applications which can help develop current theories about political participation emphasizing geographical environments (Mahajan et al., 2021; Long, 2022). The existing scholarly works have observed varying youth political participation patterns but empirical studies show limited comparable evidence about social media usage between users from urban centers and rural areas. This article completes an empty space in digital political studies by demonstrating that youths from urban areas show greater online participation in politics. The geographical research approach demonstrates the importance of considering various hurdles affecting rural youth participation in civic activities during the design phase of education approaches (Barros et al., 2023).

Part of this research demands a structured assessment of individual social media platforms. Most of the target audience consists of urban youth who primarily use Instagram and Facebook as they serve both as sharing and political information platforms. The collected data supports studies which show social media tools allow youths to show their politics through posted content and political interactions (Literat & Kligler, 2021). These two platforms witness lower engagement from rural area users because of which rural young people miss out on various political actions that urban youth easily accomplish through them.

This study reveals the necessity to focus on the existing gaps that were identified in the previous literature review seeking explanations for rural youth participation decline (Wong et al., 2022). A subsequent research investigation needs to analyze how rural youthful demographics use technology and acquire technological capabilities while understanding their local communities to develop new political orientations. Understanding social media habits of rural youths plays an essential role in explaining their political engagement because diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds between these regions may affect their use of social media and subsequent political involvement (Shahzad, 2024; Alodat et al., 2023; Abdullah et al., 2021).

Research demonstrates that researchers must understand how life conditions differ between urban and rural young populations when they study their social media usage for political engagement. Better interventions aimed at youth civic engagement will develop through researcher and policymaker understanding of these differentiating factors (Fatoki, 2024; Nesrallah et al., 2023; Donbavand & Hoskins, 2021). This will enable better exploration of how social media affects political participation of young people across distinctive settings.

Conclusion

This research indicates that fundamental difficulties exist regarding political participation inequality between urban and rural youth groups who use social media. The study's concluding section demonstrates that urban youth take greater part in political processes through both multiple social media tools and accessible political resources. The need exists for dedicated digital literacy and political development programs because rural youth face barriers to complete participation due to various factors. Social media must enhance political effectiveness among bright youth leaders and educational professionals so they can establish democratic practice that promotes youth involvement in political activities. This research establishes new insights about social media effects on political participation to enable further investigations that will extend political participation throughout all population types.

References

- Abdullah, N. H., Hassan, I., Fazil Ahmad, M., Hassan, N. A., & Ismail, M. M. (2021). Social media, youths and political participation in Malaysia: A review of literature. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, Forthcoming. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3849948>
- Alodat, A. M., Al-Qora'n, L. F., & Abu Hamoud, M. (2023). Social media platforms and political participation: A study of Jordanian youth engagement. *Social Sciences*, 12(7), 402. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12070402>
- Barros, L. B., Knockaert, M., & Tenório Filho, J. R. (2023). Towards a more sustainable construction industry: Bridging the gap between technical progress and commercialization of self-healing concrete. *Construction and Building Materials*, 403, 133094. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conbuildmat.2023.133094>
- Botrić, V. (2023). Urban–rural differences in youth engagement in Croatia. *Regional science policy & practice*, 15(4), 909-927. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsp3.12585>
- Carey, R. L., Akiva, T., Abdellatif, H., & Daughtry, K. A. (2021). ‘And school won’t teach me that!’ Urban youth activism programs as transformative sites for critical adolescent learning. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 24(7), 941-960. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2020.1784400>
- Chen, H. T., & Lin, J. S. (2021). Cross-cutting and like-minded discussion on social media: The moderating role of issue importance in the (de) mobilizing effect of political discussion on political participation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 65(1), 135-156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2021.1897822>
- Chen, Z., & Barcus, H. R. (2024). The rise of home-returning women's entrepreneurship in China's rural development: Producing the enterprising self through empowerment, cooperation, and networking. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 105, 103156. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2023.103156>
- Chong, A. Y. L., Blut, M., & Zheng, S. (2022). Factors influencing the acceptance of healthcare information technologies: A meta-analysis. *Information & Management*, 59(3), 103604. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2022.103604>
- Donbavand, S., & Hoskins, B. (2021). Citizenship education for political engagement: A systematic review of controlled trials. *Social Sciences*, 10(5), 151. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10050151>
- Fatoki, O. S. (2024). *A Comparison of Three Approaches to Promoting Youth Civic Engagement* (Master's thesis, Villanova University).
- Guess, A. M., Malhotra, N., Pan, J., Barberá, P., Allcott, H., Brown, T., ... & Tucker, J. A. (2023). How do social media feed algorithms affect attitudes and behavior in an election campaign?. *Science*, 381(6656), 398-404. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abp9364>
- Kormos, E., & Wisdom, K. (2021). Rural schools and the digital divide: Technology in the learning experience. *Theory & Practice in Rural Education*, 11(1), 25-39. <https://doi.org/10.3776/tpre.2021.v11n1p25-39>
- Literat, I., & Kligler-Vilenchik, N. (2021). How popular culture prompts youth collective political expression and cross-cutting political talk on social media: A cross-platform

- analysis. *Social media+ society*, 7(2), 20563051211008821. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051211008821>
- Long, H. (2022). Theorizing land use transitions: A human geography perspective. *Habitat international*, 128, 102669. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2022.102669>
- Mahajan, S. L., Jagadish, A., Glew, L., Ahmadia, G., Becker, H., Fidler, R. Y., ... & Mascia, M. B. (2021). A theory-based framework for understanding the establishment, persistence, and diffusion of community-based conservation. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 3(1), e299. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.299>
- Nesrallah, S., Klepp, K. I., Budin-Ljøsne, I., Luszczynska, A., Brinsden, H., Rutter, H., ... & Katanasho, M. B. (2023). Youth engagement in research and policy: the CO-CREATE framework to optimize power balance and mitigate risks of conflicts of interest. *Obesity Reviews*, 24, e13549. <https://doi.org/10.1111/obr.13549>
- Ninsiima, L. R., Chiumia, I. K., & Ndejjo, R. (2021). Factors influencing access to and utilisation of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services in sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review. *Reproductive health*, 18, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-021-01183-y>
- Prasetyo, Y. T., Tanto, H., Mariyanto, M., Hanjaya, C., Young, M. N., Persada, S. F., ... & Redi, A. A. N. P. (2021). Factors affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty in online food delivery service during the COVID-19 pandemic: Its relation with open innovation. *Journal of open innovation: technology, market, and complexity*, 7(1), 76. <https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc7010076>
- Reza, A., Ilham, F., & Murdiono, W. (2024). The Impact of Social Media on Interpersonal Relationships in the Digital Era. *Journal Social Civilecial*, 2(2), 64-77. <https://doi.org/10.71435/610494>
- Saurwein, F., & Spencer-Smith, C. (2021). Automated trouble: The role of algorithmic selection in harms on social media platforms. *Media and Communication*, 9(4), 222-233. <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-232380>
- Shahzad, A. (2024). The Role of Social Media in Shaping Political Attitudes Among Youth. *Gomal Journal of Life Sciences*, 2(01), 1-16.
- Traber, D., Hänni, M., Giger, N., & Breunig, C. (2022). Social status, political priorities and unequal representation. *European Journal of Political Research*, 61(2), 351-373. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12456>
- Vaccari, C., & Valeriani, A. (2021). *Outside the bubble: Social media and political participation in western democracies*. Oxford University Press.
- Wong, E. C., Maher, A. R., Motala, A., Ross, R., Akinniranye, O., Larkin, J., & Hempel, S. (2022). Methods for identifying health research gaps, needs, and priorities: a scoping review. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-021-07064-1>
- Workneh, T. W. (2021). Social media, protest, & outrage communication in Ethiopia: toward fractured publics or pluralistic polity?. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(3), 309-328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1811367>