



Impact of Social Media and Political Participation on Political Efficacy of Political Science Students of Al al-Bayt University

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In this study, the main aim is to investigate the relationships between social media, political efficacy, and political participation. The study employed a quantitative method, with data gathered from 495 political students studying in Al al-bayt University, via questionnaires, after which data analysis was conducted using SPSS 25. The study findings supported the direct relationship between social media, political participation and political efficacy. This study is significant owing to its implications for researcher, political and policy-making circles that are responsible for assessing and reaching decisions as to the phenomenon that brings about the relationship among the variables. This study is unique as it addresses social media, political efficacy, and political participation connection in a comprehensive manner and compared the results with prior results in literature.

Key words: *Political Efficacy, Political Participation, Social Media, Political Science Students.*

Introduction

A decade ago, the introduction of ICT has made dramatic world changes, with one of them being the transformation of interpersonal interaction, patterns of communication, political and social debates brought about by new media and technology. Studies dedicated to different social media use aspects have carried out by political scholars and international relations scholars (Adesina, 2017; Kapoor et al., 2018).

More specifically, The Internet has played a key role in providing the public with information regarding political events, allowing users to participate in the political activities. In fact, the



Internet becomes a necessity for political participation. At the onset, the use of the Internet was confined to one-way communication by political parties in order to provide information to the public via websites. Nevertheless, the new media and tools changed the forms and channels of communications into a two-way direction (Friemel & Bixler, 2018). In this regard, the millennials are the most active Internet and social media users, and in terms of political events, online activities foster youth engagement in politics (David, San Pascual, & Torres, 2019).

In other words, direct relationships exist between use of the Internet, political knowledge and political participation, particularly during elections in developing nations like Jordan. Thus, the Internet and social media have become significant in the dissemination of political information (Gil de Zúñiga & Chen, 2019). However, this also threatens democracies as evidenced by the US presidential elections in 2016 and elections in some countries in the EU.

Moreover, social media is among the top information sources for majority of users and as such, it has a possibility of disseminating misinformation that could lead to skewed public opinion. Social media effects on political activities reflect the political dynamics. Added to this, the Internet boosts users' to participate in politics, online and offline, indicating its dual impact on political information and participation (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2018).

Furthermore, millennial use of social media is popular in developing and developed nations alike. Within Jordan, political entities and politicians maintain accounts of social media to provide users and voters with information (Kofi Frimpong, Li, Nyame, & Hossin, 2020). Suffice it to say that new technology and social media both affect political communication in both country types (developed and developing), despite the fact that the latter feel more effects owing to the Internet proliferation (Li et al., 2020).

According to Kim and Chen (2016), social networking is having a significant impact on netizens' social and political learning. Also, Kahne and Bowyer (2018) indicated the robust political impact of social networking on individuals in various countries. In the context of students, they are active users of new media to obtain political information, share opinions about it and discuss political issues with other members of the community (Hampton, Shin, & Lu, 2017).

In the context of Jordan, social media has been evidenced to be the top utilized network by people to receive political information and these include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and the like. The dissemination of the Internet is at an increased rate in Jordan in comparison to its neighboring countries, with users increasing through the years. Based on the most current statistics, 98% of Jordanian people has access to the Internet, divided between different sectors (i.e., politics, health and education), boosting the analysis of social media in the country



(Yamamoto & Kushin, 2014). This opens up opportunities for discussion regarding different issues currently present in the Jordanian society, encouraging individuals to take part for best turnout in the electoral process at national elections. Participating in politics through Facebook and other social media by university students promotes their offline activities and is related to their time of political participation online.

This study highlighted the literature gap with respect to the effect of social media on political participation and the way university students can be urged to increase their participation in political activities, with the core discussion theme being social media. Additionally, the study conducted an investigation into the effects on participants of the use of social media and their actual political participation; with an emphasis on the relationship between political participation and efficacy. In prior literature, studies focused their work on the social media role in major cities and societal sectors (e.g., education, health and politics), with areas marginalized areas left out. In this study, the focus is placed on the students of Al al-Bayt University in Jordan and their political participation.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Opportunities have been paved for political discussion by the Internet and social media among individuals via online groups, pages and accounts. The new media role in the provision of a political participation platform was noted by Karakaya and Glazier (2019), while Jamil (2018) revealed that social media users reflect active policy discourse and involvement. Also, the impact of the Internet on individuals' participation in politics were examined by Chae, Lee, and Kim (2019) and their study, with particular attention to the role of the Internet in shaping political perception.

Thus, Internet use has become the primary source of political information among users, urging them to be active in voting and campaigning. Along with this is accompanied by the growing role of social media in maximizing voter turnout, developing methods to assist voting and campaign donation (Granger-Frye, 2018). In the same line of study, the relationship between youth, new media and the increasing trend in their participation in politics was examined in Kim and Chen (2016) study, and they found blog and use of the social media relate positively to political participation online.

Meanwhile, Skoric and Zhu (2016) investigated offline media usage in political activities. The authors found a significant linkage between participation and use of offline media. Political participation of social networking was also the focus of Elhadidi (2019) study, and the findings indicated a positive response to Facebook in terms of user participation in the political process.



In addition, Yang and DeHart (2016) conducted an evaluation of online social relationships and political participation, to investigate the way online platforms contribute to increasing interaction with politics. Additionally, online interaction improves the connection among networks that are unrelated. The author found that Facebook and Twitter generally constituted a positive predictor of online political participation. In the same domain, Vissers and Stolle (2014) looked into the relationship between political engagement and participation in online channels and they revealed that the new media enable political participants to be involved and express their views in a frank and open way. Attitudes towards digital usage of media and actual political participation differ from one individual to the next.

Nonetheless, social media also has its drawbacks as highlighted in many studies in literature (Knoll, Matthes, & Heiss, 2018; Valenzuela, Halpern, Katz, & Miranda, 2019). Online media use has been investigated in activities of political among university-level students by Yang and DeHart (2016), after which they found that Twitter and Facebook are significantly related to political participation. In the same Theocharis and Lowe (2016) focused their efforts on relationship between social networking and political engagement and concluded that Facebook content has a positive response to participation of political. Thus, Internet usage and e-activities enhances the online users' knowledge of politics and drives their participation in politics.

The influence of social media on behavior of voting was the core of Hebllich (2016) study and the authors found social media to have key role in uniting people within political parties. According to Bart (2015), social media usage among activists is directed towards a collective purpose, while (Ahmad, Alvi, & Ittefaq, 2019) Concentrated on the relationship between political activity and political awareness among Pakistani citizens and conclude that online political activity has a close correlation with political awareness and offline political involvement. On the basis of the above reviewed literature, this study proposes the following model and hypotheses to be tested;

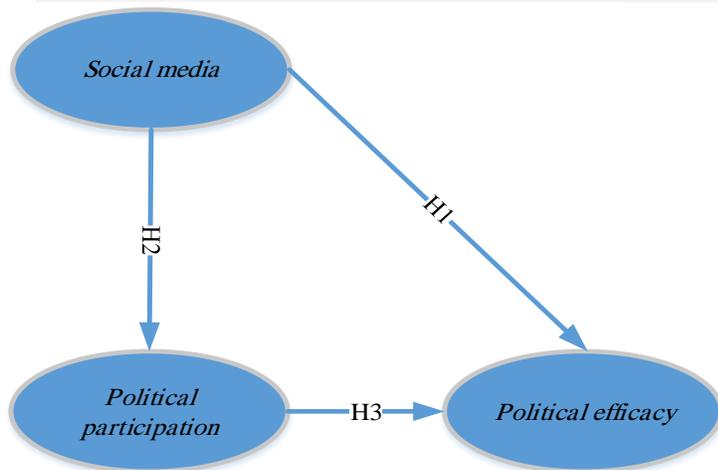


Figure 1: Research model.

H1: Social media has a positive impact on political efficacy.

H2: Social media has a positive impact on political participation.

H3: Political participation has a positive impact on political efficacy.

Method

The sample of the present study consisted of students of University Al-Albayt in Jordan, totaling 579 respondents, with the following division 521 BS (Hons.) students and 58 MA students. From the retrieved questionnaires, only 495 were deemed usable and thus, the rate of response is 85.4%. The author followed a convention way of conducting the survey by handing them out to the respondents in person. From the data-collection methods, quantitative survey method has long been utilized for its ability to garner better outcomes. With regards to data collection from the respondents, a suitable questionnaire was developed with the measurement used being the 5-point Likert scale, where 1 depicts strongly disagree, 2 depicts disagree, 3 depicts neutral, 4 depicts agree and lastly, 5 depicts strongly agree.

Respondents were requested to choose an answer to every question, which was adopted from prior literature. The questions were operationalized and modified to suit the study objectives, which is to study the effect of social media on political efficacy and political participation, and to determine the effect of political participation on political efficacy. Scales from previous studies have been adopted for items measuring social media, political participation, and political efficacy (see Table 1).

Specifically, the respondents were studying in the political department in the University of Al al-Bayt in Jordan. Following data collection, the researcher exposed the data to descriptive

statistical processes in SPSS to determine inconsistencies and errors. The data analysis processes included regression analysis, correlations and descriptive statistics for testing the hypotheses.

Table 1: Measurements Development

Construct	Items	Adapted from
Social media	Social media use helped them: 1. Staying updated on current events and public affairs. 2. Staying updated about the local community. 3. To get news from mainstream news media about the current events. 4. To get news from friends about the current events.	(Ahmad et al., 2019; Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012)
Political participation	1. Write to policymaker 2. Create a donation to the initiative. 3. Sign up for a party listserv. 4. Sign up for a campaign / topic volunteer, 5. Send an e-mail with a political message. 6. Submit a letter to newspaper publisher.	(Ahmad et al., 2019; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012)
Political efficacy	1. I'm more conscious of politics than those people my generation. 2. I am keen on politics. 3. When the political issues or problems are discussed. Usually, I got to say something. 4. I can easily grasp most political issues.	(Diemer & Rapa, 2016)

Data Analysis and Result

Respondents' Profile

The results of the preliminary analysis of respondents' characteristics (refer to Table 2) indicated that 51.1% of the respondents were male students, with the largest age group being 18-25 years of age (49.1%), and the largest degree category being Bachelor's degree (88.5%).

Table 2: Respondents Demographic Profile (n=495)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	252	50.9
	Female	243	49.1
Age	18-25	423	85.5
	26-33	44	8.9
	34-41	28	5.7
Degree	Bachelor degree	438	88.5
	Master degree	57	11.5

Validity and Reliability

According to Al Shbail, Salleh, and Nor (2018), Cronbach's alpha value that is less than 0.50 is reliable, 0.70 is decent and 0.80 is very good, while 0.90 is excellent. From Table 1, it is clear that the Cronbach's alpha values from the study ranged from 0.791 to 0.901, which indicates a decent to excellent reliability level. Obeid, Salleh, and Nor (2017) proceeded to explain that factor loading values should be (≥ 0.5), with high factor loading showing high convergence. In Table 1, factor loadings for the variables of social media, political efficacy, and political participation exceeded the 0.50 threshold, with KMO of the constructs varying from 0.767 and 0.867. These values indicated close compatibility of formulations. Table 1 contains the values of reliability and validity.

Table 3: Reliability and Validity

Construct	Factor loading		KMO	Cronbach's Alpha
Social media	SM1	.841	0.767	0.791
	SM2	.730		
	SM3	.748		
	SM4	.813		
Political participation	PP1	.773	0.867	0.878
	PP2	.841		
	PP3	.743		
	PP4	.828		
	PP5	.827		
	PP6	.719		

Political efficacy	PE1	.913	0.824	0.901
	PE2	.877		
	PE3	.861		
	PE4	.862		

Correlations

The correlation among the study variables namely social media, political efficacy and political participation in the perception of participants were obtained through Pearson correlation coefficient and the analysis indicated that there was a significant correlation between the social media and political participation at ($p = 0.000$), in the positive direction with the correlation coefficient being ($r = 0.663$), indicating good level of correlation. Based on this result, a rise in social media would lead to an increase in the mean political participation score. The Pearson correlation values for the study variables are depicted in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlations Matrix

	Social media	Political participation	Political efficacy
Social media	1		
Political participation	.663**	1	
Political efficacy	.551**	.628**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis Testing

Under hypothesis testing phase, the researcher made use of regression analysis to determine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The results of the testing hypothesis one are tabulated in Table 5. Based on the results obtained from the regression analysis, social media and political efficacy have a positive and significant relationship. ($t=10.545$, $\beta=2.267$, $P=0.000$), with 55.1% of the variance in political efficacy explained by social media. The result supports hypothesis H1.

Table 5: Regression Model for Hypothesis 1

Independent variable (Social media)	Dependent variable (Political efficacy)			
	B	t	Sig	R
	2.267	10.545	.000	.551

In Table 6, the results contained showed a positive and significant relationship between social media and participation of political. More specifically, the regression analysis result between the two variables was found to be positive and significant at ($t=11.919$, $\beta=2.060$, $P=0.000$), and that 66.3% of the political participation variance was explained by social media. The result indicates support for hypothesis H2.

Table 6: Regression Model for Hypothesis 2

Independent variable (Social media)	Dependent variable (Political participation)			
	B	t	Sig	R
	2.060	11.919	.000	.663

Moving on to the last hypothesis (H3), corresponding regression analysis results is tabulated in Table 7 and conclude that the relationship between political participation and political efficacy is positive and significant. In other words, political participation affects political efficacy directly, positively, and significantly ($t=7.378$, $\beta=1.580$, $P=0.000$). The result also shows that political participation managed to explain 62.8% of the political efficacy variance, which means hypothesis H3 is supported.

Table 7: Regression Model for Hypothesis 3

Independent variable (political participation)	Dependent variable (Political efficacy)			
	B	t	Sig	R
	1.580	7.378	.000	.628

Conclusion

This study primarily aimed to investigate the relationships between social media and political efficacy, the relationships between political participation and political efficacy in the perceptions of political students in Al al-Bayt University in Jordan. According to outcome of the validity and reliability analysis of the model and its constructs, reliability and validity was confirmed. Empirical findings obtained support the social media role on both political efficacy and political participation as well as political participation role in political efficacy. The findings have practical implications for the political and practitioner circles, providing them with data and information concerning the efficacy of political activities and reinforcing the social media roles in eventually bringing about efficacy of political.



Limitation and Future Studies

The findings showed the importance of measuring political efficacy in political activities. In this regard, future studies should further explore the relationship between the two variables. Also, future studies may also focus on other factors that were not included in this study as well as other universities to conduct a comparison among the findings. Authors of future studies may employ other methods of data gathering other than survey questionnaire and in effect other data analysis methods other than survey analysis.



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