

DOCTORAL THESIS

Impact of social media use on political participation: narcissism, perceived anonymity and social norms as mediators

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Abstract

Social media use is a pivotal driver for political engagement. The present study extended previous research by exploring the simple and serial mediating roles of narcissism, perceived anonymity, descriptive norms, and subjective norms in this relationship. Structural equation modeling (SEM) with bootstrapping estimation was conducted for hypothesis testing using data from 579 Hong Kong university students. Modeling results revealed that perceived anonymity, descriptive norms, and subjective norms are significant mediators of the relationship between social media use and political participation. Moreover, descriptive norms, together with perceived anonymity, were found to mediate the relationship. Likewise, narcissism combined with descriptive norms proved to be significant mediators of the relationship. Additionally, a distal mediation effect of descriptive norms and subjective norms proved to be significant. Based on these results, a subsequent parallel mediation analysis was conducted, revealing that perceived anonymity is the most influential indicator among perceived anonymity, subjective norms, and descriptive norms of the relationship of social media use and political participation. The study concluded by comparing male and female respondents in terms of political participation. The result showed that male respondents were generally more active than female respondents in both online and offline political activities, which agrees with prior research findings. Collectively, the current study provides a new perspective from which we can further understand the effects of social media use on political engagement.

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