The Digital Dynamics of Political Engagement Among Filipino Youth: Examining Participation in Social Media Platforms

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ABSTRACT

Youth participation has historically played a critical role in shaping the political landscape of the Philippines. Being immersed in digital technology, Generation Z has mostly shifted their activism from the streets to the virtual realm of diverse social media platforms. Through digital interactions, they champion causes and establish political dialogue by initiating socio-political movements online. This study utilized the Social Media Political Participation Scale to put into perspective the online political behaviors of Filipinos who are part of Generation Z. Specifically, the study centers on Metro Manila, comparing their engagements across various online platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Social media engagements were divided into four aspects: latent engagement, follower engagement, expressive engagement, and system engagement, to identify the digital activities that encourage respondents to participate. The study highlights the nuanced dynamics of digital political engagement and its role in shaping political participation. Results reveal that only Instagram and TikTok encourage respondents to participate politically on different social media platforms.

Keywords: Expressive engagement, follower engagement, generation Z, latent engagement, online engagements, political participation, social media, system engagement

INTRODUCTION

The ubiquitous impact of social media on society has resulted in significant social transformations. It enabled global communication and seamless access to

information. As digital capabilities expand, social media has become prominent in daily life. It subsequently gave rise to Generation Z, a tech-savvy cohort deeply immersed in these platforms (Kim et al., 2015; Radut, 2018). This generation stands as the most engaged age group on social media, showcasing technological competence and a commitment to leveraging platforms. Despite the increase in the said generation's political participation, several studies discovered that this generation may be politically apathetic, politically performative, or suffering from political fatigue. It stems from the rising competition for online attention, fame, and social capital in social media networks (Baym & Evans, 2022), as observed in the social media landscape of the Philippines, where innumerable individuals have become prominent for creating videos with falsified information regarding COVID-19 and the presidential campaign of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (Manavis, 2020; Santos, 2022).

Nevertheless, the surge in performative political acts among Generation Z has transformed social media into a new avenue for engagement, fostering social and political conversations. In the last few years, the hashtag function has been utilized to express dissents related to the state's aggression towards different sectors of society, particularly #NoToExtraJudicialKillings for the condemnation of *Oplan Tokhang*, #JunkAntiTerrorBill for the dangerous provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Bill, and #NasaanAngPangulo for former President Rodrigo Duterte's absence during a typhoon

(Alawi et al., 2020; Madarang, 2020; Macaraig & Hameleers, 2022).

As such, it is evident that existing scholarship continues to advance the notion that social media is a legitimate channel for Generation Z to engage in political participation, which empowers active involvement in the political sphere. However, political involvement comes in many forms. Considering the diverse spectrum of political participation, there is still a dearth of scholarship exploring the actual behavior this generation exhibits online. Likewise, several studies only associate social media political participation with platforms limited to Facebook and Twitter, leaving other platforms unexplored, resulting in limited information and understanding of the capability of networks like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube as a conduit for political expression, mobility, and participation. Thus, the study aims to uncover the different forms of Generation Z's political behavior and its impact on the Philippine political landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Looking at the data over the years, the Philippines topped the world six times with the most time spent on social media and was only outranked in 2021 by South Africa. In the Digital Global Overview Report for January 2023, there were already 84.45 million social media users, equating to approximately 72.5% of the country's total population. Filipinos spend at least three hours and 43 minutes on social media daily. Kemp (2023) reported that

the top social media platforms in the country are Facebook, with an average of 75% active users, 50.5% on YouTube, 49.4% on TikTok, 16.7% on Instagram, and 12.6% on Twitter. From this estimate, more than 50% of these active users belong to Generation Z. Ardèvol-Abreu et al. (2020) discovered that Generation Z's utilization of social media is driven by the sense of belongingness it provides to the said cohort. The engagement of different social groups and online communities on social media platforms influenced Generation Z to express themselves and support certain causes or political advocacy. Lim (2009) further highlights that social media does increase political participation, as it mobilizes individuals and facilitates their political agendas.

In 2015, students from the University of the Philippines initiated an online movement in support of a vulnerable indigenous group known as Lumads (Marcaida, 2020). Their primary hashtag, #StopLumadKillings, was used by thousands of Twitter users, resulting in various information-sharing initiatives and other necessary actions. At the same time, due to restricted healthcare access and incessant lockdowns, some individuals have turned to social media to convey their frustrations and urge the government to administer more comprehensive and humane policies. Similarly, during the 2022 national elections campaign, candidates and voters also relied on producing and consuming visual content on applications such as TikTok and YouTube (Arugay, 2022).

Hite (2010) argues that socioeconomic factors such as household income are to be considered influential toward the political engagement of citizens. Ultimately, she inferred that more financially secure constituents have lesser political efficacy and do not gravitate greatly toward political affairs compared to those who are not as financially stable. Moreover, the sex of individuals as an influential factor has long been incorporated by scholars who have tackled political participation. Bimber et al. (2021) established that similarly, both males and females exhibit their engagement on social media through information dissemination and responding to content online.

Adedokun (2022) further highlighted how social media empowers citizens to be vocal about certain government actions. The study demonstrates the dynamics between social media and political participation. Given that the interface between political participation and social media is becoming more extensive, Mendenhall and Sodani (2021) assert that new platforms should be examined. As a case in point, their study, which focused solely on TikTok, asserts that individuals choose to produce political content on the said platform since its features provide an efficient and convenient experience for younger audiences. Meanwhile, Mariano et al. (2021) found that, for the 2022 national elections, Facebook was generally the primary source of information compared to other social media platforms. Given these initial forays into examining political participation and

social media, our study examined the relationship between digital platforms such as social media and political engagement. Our study builds upon initial investigations of social media and political participation to examine the potential influence of digital platforms on political engagement and participation.

Numerous academic disciplines have explored the notion of political participation. However, digital innovations such as social media have necessitated a continuous examination of its manifestations. As inferred from Hosseinmardi et al. (2021), involvement in political affairs on social media platforms such as YouTube is not limited to nor bounded by simply viewing content. This study, therefore, highlights that social media is not merely regarded as an ordinary tool for participation but rather as an instrument that facilitates deep engagement in political affairs. The insights derived from this study would facilitate further exploration of potential future trends in relation to political participation to effectively and constructively leverage different platforms. In examining online political participation, different forms of engagement were considered, as shown in Table 1, primarily sourced from Waeterloos et al. (2021).

Generation Z's Political Participation in Social Media

Generation Z's profound engagement on social media platforms has transformed them into influential players in political discourse. This study employs the Social Media Participation Scale to delve into the nuances of political behavior within the digital landscape, focusing on the distinctive ways Generation Z actively shapes the political narrative. The study delimits Generation Z as individuals born between 1993 and 2005 and considers that the influence of five major social media platforms significantly drives them to participate politically. The researchers employed a multi-faceted approach, seeking to answer three pivotal questions that shape the narrative of Generation Z's political involvement on social media. More specifically, the study seeks to respond to these questions:

1. How does respondents' interaction with political content on social media translate to active and passive political engagement?

2. What factors play a role in shaping respondents' decision to participate politically through social media platforms?

3. How do the different types of online engagement contribute to the respondents' political participation and political behavior?

The study's research questions aim to explicate the intricacies inherent in Generation Z's interaction with political content across social media platforms. Through a quantitative approach, the article endeavors to discern the patterns, preferences, and frequency that characterize

Generation Z's engagement with political content. Moreover, the research gauges the implications of these interactions on real-world political engagement, which involves electoral participation and community organizing. In addition, examining factors influencing Generation Z's decisions to participate actively in political discourse through social media reveals the complex interplay among technology, sociopolitical conditions, and even personal motivations. This analytical endeavor aims to enhance the nuanced comprehension of the motivating forces underlying Generation Z's involvement with political content in the online domain. Therefore, it ascertains whether social media operates as a catalyst for constructive political involvement or if it fosters polarization and disengagement.

Conceptual Framework

The widespread use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok increased the political engagement of the youth in Metro Manila through the ability of these platforms to facilitate social influence, mobilize political action, increase accountability, and foster participation. Such participation may lead to four main forms of engagement: latent, follower, expressive, and system. It is primarily derived from Waeterloos et. al. (2021) (Table 1). Latent engagement is the passive consumption of political material, whereas expressive engagement is the active sharing and voicing of political beliefs. Follower engagement, on the other hand, pertains to the integration of the public figure and audiences in any action initiated politically. Meanwhile, expressive engagement is directed toward a wider audience to convey one's viewpoint. Finally, system engagement is a more structured and institutionalized form of political participation (Figure 1).
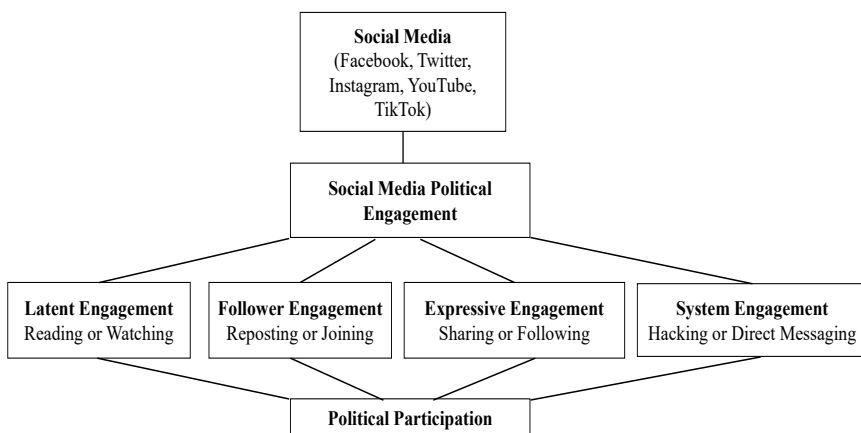

Figure 1. Social media engagement in relation to political participation

Source: Authors' work

Table 1
Forms of engagement and sample items

Form of Engagement	Example of Manifestation
Latent engagement	Read the whole posts related to political issues and news on Facebook
	Watched videos and lives linked to political issues and news on Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok
Follower engagement	Signed petitions that were seen on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok
	Became a member of a politically related group or community on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube
Expressive engagement	Posted a text, photo, video, or other forms of creative media to express my opinions on Twitter politically
	Publicly retweeted or reposted politically related information and news
	Watched online protests and engaged in political discourse in the comment section
System engagement	Participated in the mass emailing activity of politicians or any government agency to express political dissent
	Privately messaged a politician, government agency, or any political organization and figure to express political suggestions
	Hacked a website or social media account of a political figure to achieve a particular political objective

Source: Waeterloos et al. (2021)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Purposive sampling was utilized to recruit 300 eligible survey respondents. Specifically, the study looked into Generation Z respondents in Metro Manila who are social media users, most of whom are university students. The study considered the homogeneity of respondents to pool their shared characteristics and interests that serve the purpose and object of this study, hence allowing the researchers to select efficiently online. Quotas were considered to select respondents based on particular criteria such as age and socioeconomic level to guarantee that the sample accurately reflects the range of the examined population. The online survey was designed as a five-point Likert scale to easily measure the frequency of Generation Z's online activity and social media political participation. It was divided into seven parts to maintain the questionnaire's cohesiveness and prevent survey exhaustion. These parts involved data privacy and consent, the personal information of participants, and political engagement on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, respectively.

Since social media remains a broad digital sphere, the study limited its measurement of political participation to the five platforms above. These selections were based on constituents' utilization of

such platforms and the youth's popularity levels on social media networks. Social media engagements were divided into four categories: latent engagement, follower engagement, expressive engagement, and system engagement, to identify the digital activities that encourage respondents to participate. The data was analyzed through SPSS, particularly through multiple regression, linear regression, and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Type of Social Media Usage

In total, 300 respondents agreed to participate, with 68% females (n=204) and 32% males (n=96). Most participants were 21 years old (mean=21.03, min=18, max=25, SD=1.23). Most Generation Z respondents who fall between 1993 and 2005 belong to the younger end of the spectrum. Their social media usage results indicated that respondents are only active online users on Instagram, constituting 56% (n=167) of the population. Meanwhile, most respondents display passive online usage habits on the remaining platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok.

Table 3 shows the descriptive results of the profile variables in the study, where most respondents (N=300) are female (n=204, 68%), while males constituted less than half of the population (n=96, 32%).

Table 2

Demographic information of the respondents and social media platform usage (n= 300)

	n	% of sample
Gender		
Male	96	32
Female	204	68
Age		
18	9	3
19	24	8
20	46	15.33
21	130	43.33
22	61	20.33
23	23	7.67
24	5	1.67
25	2	0.67
Household Income		
Less than Php25,000	49	16.33
Php25,000 to Php50,000	50	16.67
Php50,000 to Php75,000	47	15.67
Php75,000 to Php100,000	46	15.33
above Php100,000	108	36

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Table 2 *(Continue)*

	n	% of sample
Type of Social Media Usage		
Facebook		
Active	127	42.33
Passive	133	57.67
Twitter		
Active	112	37.33
Passive	188	62.67
Instagram		
Active	167	55.67
Passive	133	44.33
YouTube		
Active	66	22
Passive	234	78
TikTok		
Active	97	32.33
Passive	203	67.67

Source: Authors' work

Based on social media usage, the female respondents are only active online users on Instagram but remain passive online users on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok. Contrary to the male respondents, most of their population are passive online users on the mentioned social media platforms. The data reported that both sexes have a low influence on college respondents' political participation in social media. For female respondents, Facebook is the closest to a moderate degree of influence (M=2.26, SD=0.04), followed by Twitter (M=2.01, SD=0.05), Instagram (M=1.82, SD=0.05), TikTok (M=1.61, SD=0.04), and YouTube (M=1.54, SD=0.04). Similarly, with male respondents, sex has a limited impact on their political participation on Facebook (M=2.06, SD=0.06), Twitter (M=1.77, SD=0.07), Instagram (M=1.65, SD=0.07), YouTube (M=1.52, SD=0.06), and TikTok (M=1.49, SD=0.04).

Likewise, in terms of monthly household income, the findings show that living under Php25,000 to Php50,000 income moderately influences respondents' political participation on Facebook. Although all the income ranges on the platform remain low, its degree levels are less than Php25,000 (M=2.17, SD=0.09), Php50,000 to Php75,000 (M=2.24, SD=0.09). Php75,000 to Php100,000 (M=2.15, SD=0.09) and above Php100,000 (M=2.14, SD=0.06) are the closest to moderate influence. Regardless, all the income categories have a low influence on respondents' online political participation for the remaining popular social media platforms.

Table 3
Profile of the respondents and their online participation

Online Participation

Variable	Facebook				Twitter				Instagram			
	Mean	SD	Social Media Use		Mean	SD	Social Media Use		Mean	SD	Social Media Use	
			Active	Passive			Active	Passive			Active	Passive
Sex												
Male	2.06	0.06	44	52	1.77	0.07	25	71	1.65	0.07	49	47
Female	2.26	0.04	83	121	2.01	0.05	87	117	1.82	0.05	118	86
Monthly Household Income												
Less than Php 25,000	2.17	0.09	-	-	1.92	0.10	-	-	1.72	0.10	-	-
Php 25,000 to Php 50,000	2.34	0.08	-	-	2.13	0.10	-	-	1.81	0.10	-	-
Php 50,000 to Php 75,000	2.24	0.09	-	-	1.94	0.11	-	-	1.77	0.10	-	-
Php 75,000 to Php 100,000	2.15	0.09	-	-	1.84	0.11	-	-	1.74	0.10	-	-
Above Php 100,000	2.14	0.06	-	-	1.88	0.07	-	-	1.78	0.07	-	-

Online Participation

Variable	YouTube				TikTok			
	Mean	SD	Social Media Use		Mean	SD	Social Media Use	
			Active	Passive			Active	Passive
Sex								
Male	1.52	0.06	33	63	1.49	0.06	26	70
Female	1.54	0.04	33	171	1.62	0.04	71	133
Monthly Household Income								
Less than Php 25,000	1.60	0.08	-	-	1.55	0.09	-	-
Php 25,000 to Php 50,000	1.58	0.08	-	-	1.68	0.09	-	-
Php 50,000 to Php 75,000	1.58	0.08	-	-	1.64	0.09	-	-
Php 75,000 to Php 100,000	1.40	0.08	-	-	1.54	0.09	-	-
Above Php 100,000	1.51	0.05	-	-	1.54	0.06	-	-

Note: n=300. Low - 1.00 - 2.33; Moderate - 2.34 - 3.66; High - 3.67 - 5.00

Source: Authors' work

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Table 4
Social media participation and social media usage

Platform	Online Engagement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Facebook	Latent	3.11	0.71	Moderate
	System	1.21	0.58	Low
	Follower	2.34	0.88	Moderate
	Expressive	2.12	0.77	Low
	Overall Mean	2.19	0.78	Low
Twitter	Latent	2.76	1.11	Moderate
	System	1.14	0.55	Low
	Follower	2.07	0.97	Low
	Expressive	1.77	0.85	Low
	Overall Mean	1.93	0.67	Low
Instagram	Latent	2.34	1.07	Moderate
	System	1.12	0.49	Low
	Follower	1.83	0.87	Low
	Expressive	1.78	0.81	Low
	Overall Mean	1.77	0.50	Low
Youtube	Latent	2.25	0.99	Low
	System	1.11	0.48	Low
	Follower	1.43	0.65	Low
	Expressive	1.34	0.58	Low
	Overall Mean	1.53	0.50	Low
TikTok	Latent	2.25	1.06	Low
	System	1.12	0.53	Low
	Follower	1.53	0.75	Low
	Expressive	1.41	0.61	Low
	Overall Mean	1.58	0.48	Low

Note: n=300. Low: 1.00–2.33, Moderate: 2.34–3.66, High: 3.67–5.00.
Source: Authors' work

The findings showed respondents' low political participation on the five popular social media platforms. It can be seen in the low overall marks of Facebook (M=2.19, SD=0.78), Twitter (M=1.93, SD=0.67), Instagram (M=1.77, SD=0.50), YouTube (M=1.53, SD=0.50), and TikTok (M=1.58, SD=0.48) indicating that the political engagements of the respondents on popular social media platforms are weak and only limited to selective political actions. Although there is a predominantly low level of participation amongst the respondents, the respondents exhibit moderate political participation in Follower (M=2.34, SD=0.88) engagement on Facebook, which

shows that the respondents are not limited to passive political online actions. They participate actively through digital petitions, post-sharing, and the like. Additionally, this moderate level can also be observed in the latent engagements for Facebook (M=3.11, SD=0.71), Twitter (M=2.76, SD=1.11), and Instagram (M=2.34, SD=1.07). This data shows that respondents tend to engage more politically on these platforms passively.

Similarly, latent engagement remains the most practiced form of political participation by the respondents on YouTube and TikTok. However, the respondents exhibited only low-level scores (M=2.25, SD=0.99) and (M=2.25, 1.06) of political participation in the mentioned platforms, respectively. Hence, passive political participation is the most practiced form of online engagement across all platforms, limited to reading and watching social media content. Concurrently, system engagement is the lowest-scored form of online engagement practiced by the respondents across all five platforms. Specifically, it only exhibited a weak degree of political participation on Facebook (M=1.21, SD=0.58), Twitter (M=1.14, SD=0.55), Instagram (M=1.12, SD=0.49), YouTube (M=1.11, SD=0.48), and TikTok (M=1.12, SD=0.53) entailing that respondents have a very low tendency to participate in online political actions that involve hacking, spreading information, and the like.

The table presented above indicates the results of a regression analysis examining how respondents' online political engagement on Facebook is affected by their platform usage. The r values of 0.147–0.176 generally indicate a very weak correlation strength between the two, conveying that their use of Facebook has a limited impact on their political behavior. Therefore, the platform does not notably push the respondents to participate politically.

Based on the findings, latent engagement was significantly predicted by respondents' Facebook usage (F=3.1541, p=0.0252) and was the most influenced, with a 3.10% (r2=0.0310) variance. It indicates that they primarily interact with political content by viewing posts. Regarding follower and expressive engagement, they were also significantly predicted by time spent on Facebook (F=2.5954, p=0.0527) and (F=0.2861, p=0.0368), respectively. The said usage influenced the respondents' follower engagement by 2.56% (r2=0.0256) and 2.83% (r2=0.283) for the respondents' expressive engagement variance, illustrating that the passive viewing of posts is followed by more active forms, such as sharing posts, joining groups, and signing petitions. However, for the remaining engagement, the results indicated that respondents' Facebook usage could not predict their system engagement (F=2.1924, p=0.0890). It is the least influenced by online consumption on Facebook as it can only explain 2.17% (r2=0.0217) of its variance.

Based on the results above and the r values of 0.054-0.270, there is a very weak to weak correlation strength between Generation Z's online usage on Twitter and political participation. Among the four types of online engagements, expressive

Table 5
Generation Z's political participation on Facebook

Social Media Usage	Latent Engagement $r^2 = 0.0310$, $F = 3.1541$***, Pr > F = 0.0252			System Engagement $r^2 = 0.0217$, $F = 2.1924$***, Pr > F = 0.0890			Follower Engagement $r^2 = 0.0127$, $F = 1.2692$***, Pr > F = 0.2851			Expressive Engagement $r^2 = 0.0067$, $F = 0.6705$***, Pr > F = 0.5710		
	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
0–3 hrs	-0.2264	0.1584	0.1540	-0.2209	0.1592	0.1662	-0.3005	0.1589	0.0595	-0.3062	0.1587	0.0545
4–6 hrs	-0.1068	0.1509	0.4797	-0.1561	0.1517	0.3042	-0.1998	0.1514	0.1879	-0.0416	0.1512	0.3499
7–9 hrs	-0.0263	0.1012	0.7949	0.0102	0.01017	0.9204	-0.0453	0.1015	0.6558	-0.1171	0.1013	0.2488
More than 10 hrs	-			-			-			-		

Note: Values are regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

Source: Authors' work

Table 6
Generation Z's political participation on Twitter

Social Media Usage	Latent Engagement $r^2 = 0.0614$, $F = 6.4589$***, Pr > F = 0.0003			System Engagement $r^2 = 0.0029$, $F = 0.2881$***, Pr > F = 0.834			Follower Engagement $r^2 = 0.0498$, $F = 5.1695$***, Pr > F = 0.002			Expressive Engagement $r^2 = 0.0731$, $F = 7.7855$***, Pr > F = <0.0001		
	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
0–3 hrs	-0.1563	0.1693	0.3564	0.1053	0.1745	0.5466	0.0748	0.1703	0.6610	-0.0781	0.1682	0.6428
4–6 hrs	0.1001	0.1558	0.5211	0.0664	0.1606	0.6798	0.1114	0.1568	0.4780	0.1650	0.1548	0.2875
7–9 hrs	0.0097	0.0959	0.9194	0.0132	0.0988	0.8942	0.1144	0.0965	0.2365	0.1184	0.0953	0.2149
More than 10 hrs	-			-			-			-		

Note: Values are regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

Source: Authors' work

engagement was predicted significantly by the generation's Twitter usage (F=7.7855, $p=<.0.0001$) and considered the most influenced with a 7.31% ($r^2=0.0731$) variance. Subsequently, follower engagement was statistically predicted by the same usage (F=,5.1695, $p=<.0.002$), and 4.98% of its variance is influenced, indicating a higher yet moderate association level between the two variables. However, for latent and system engagement, social media usage has a weak impact, which only explains 6.14% and 0.29% of their variance, respectively. The multiple linear regression analysis showed no statistically significant relationship between the four types of social media engagements and time spent on Twitter. Thus, Twitter usage does not notably influence the respondents to participate politically. In latent, the results showed a positive relationship wherein the engagement could increase to 0.010 per unit change in the 7–9 hours of usage. However, this relationship remains statistically insignificant as the p-value, 0.919, is greater than the set alpha, 0.05, indicating that it only occurred by chance.

Based on the data presented above, there is a very weak to weak level of correlation between Instagram usage and respondents' online political participation, as supported by the *r* values of 0.126-0.233. Of the four types, follower engagement was the most influenced by respondents' Instagram usage, with a 5.42% ($r^2=0.0542$) variance and significant predictability of (F=5.6490, $p=<0.001$). Following this, latent engagement was significantly predicted by respondents' time spent on Instagram (F=5.3346, $p=<0.001$) with a variance of 5.13% ($r^2=0.0513$). Expressive engagement was significantly predicted by the same variables (F=4.8437, $p=<0.003$) and displayed a variance of 4.68% ($r^2=0.0468$). However, the results indicated that respondents' Instagram usage could not predict system engagement (F=1.5853, $p=0.193$). It is even least influenced by online consumption on Instagram as it can only explain 1.58% ($r^2=0.0158$) of its variance.

The results of the multiple linear regression showed a statistically significant negative relationship in latent engagement within 0–3 hours, 4–6 hours, and 7–9 hours of Instagram consumption. At a 99.9% confidence level, the latent engagement of respondents decreases by -0.6600 per unit change in their Instagram exposure within the 0–3 hours range. Meanwhile, there is a decrease of -0.4982 within the 4–6 hours and -0.2484 within the 7–9 hours usage at a 99% and 95% confidence level, respectively. Hence, in this aspect, the platform's usage remarkably propels the respondents to engage in political matters.

On the contrary, there is no statistically significant relationship between respondents' follower engagement, expressive engagement, and system engagement based on the mentioned data. Although their political behavior is manifested through their frequent viewing of political posts, stories, and reels, such passive action does not necessarily translate to active engagements. The *p*-values for the

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Table 7
Generation Z's political participation on Instagram

Social Media Usage	Latent Engagement $r^2 = 0.0513$, $F= 5.3346$***, Pr > F = <0.001			System Engagement $r^2 = 0.0158$, $F= 1.5853$***, Pr > F = 0.193			Follower Engagement $r^2 = 0.0542$, $F= 5.6490$***, Pr > F = <0.001			Expressive Engagement $r^2 = 0.0468$, $F= 4.8437$***, Pr > F = <0.003		
	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
0–3 hrs	-0.6600	0.1955	0.0008	0.0742	0.1992	0.7096	-0.3089	0.1952	0.1147	-0.3060	0.1960	0.1195
4–6 hrs	-0.4892	0.1861	0.0090	0.1926	0.1895	0.3103	-0.0751	0.1858	0.6865	-0.1049	0.1865	0.5742
7–9 hrs	-0.2484	0.1118	0.0271	0.0630	0.1139	0.5807	-0.0448	0.1117	0.6889	-0.0218	0.1121	0.8462
More than 10 hrs	-			-			-			-		

Note: Values are regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. *$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$.

Source: Authors' work

Table 8
Generation Z's political participation on YouTube

Social Media Usage	Latent Engagement $r^2 = 0.0092$, $F= 0.9133$***, Pr > F = 0.4338			System Engagement $r^2 = 0.0073$, $F= 0.7304$***, Pr > F = 0.5346			Follower Engagement $r^2 = 0.0127$, $F= 1.2692$***, Pr > F = 0.2851			Expressive Engagement $r^2 = 0.0067$, $F= 0.6705$***, Pr > F = 0.5710		
	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
0–3 hrs	0.0206	0.1633	0.8998	0.1168	0.1635	0.4755	-0.1093	0.1630	0.5031	-0.0343	0.1635	0.8341
4–6 hrs	0.1091	0.1563	0.4857	0.0298	0.1565	0.8492	-0.1291	0.1560	0.4086	0.0057	0.1565	0.9712
7–9 hrs	-0.0098	0.0938	0.9167	0.0248	0.0939	0.7921	-0.1547	0.0937	0.0996	-0.0832	0.0939	0.3766
More than 10 hrs	-			-			-			-		

Note: Values are regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. *$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$.

Source: Authors' work

remaining three engagements are below the significance level of 0.05, and no domain in Instagram usage significantly predicts respondents' political activity in terms of the engagements.

Based on the results and as indicated by the r values of 0.082–0.113, there is a very weak association between Generation Z's online political participation and YouTube usage. With 1.27% ($r^2=0.0127$) of its variance, follower engagement (F=0.0127, p=0.2851) was the most influenced among the four types of online engagement. It is followed by the data emanating from latent engagement (F=0.9133, p=0.4338) and system engagement (F=0.0073, p=0.5346), with a variance of 0.92% ($r^2=0.0092$) and 0.73% ($r^2=0.0073$) that did not fully produce a statistically significant association with usage. Finally, expressive engagement (F=0.0067, p=0.5710) holds the least influenced value attributed to its variance of 0.67% ($r^2=0.0067$). Meanwhile, the multiple regression analysis indicates no statistically significant relationship between the four types of online engagement and time spent on YouTube. That being the case, time spent on YouTube does not propel political participation among the respondents. Although latent engagement could decrease to -0.098 in 7–9 hours of YouTube usage, this relationship does not equate to a statistically significant figure as the p-value 0.917 is greater than the set alpha, 0.05, indicating that it may have occurred coincidentally.

For TikTok, the r values of 0.146–0.372 illustrate a very weak to weak link

Table 9
Generation Z's political participation in TikTok

Social Media Usage	Latent Engagement $r^2 = 0.1384, F= 15.8529***,$ Pr > F = <0.0001			System Engagement $r^2 = 0.0212, F= 2.1457***,$ Pr > F = 0.095			Follower Engagement $r^2 = 0.1120, F= 12.4459***,$ Pr > F = <0.0001			Expressive Engagement $r^2 = 0.1161, F= 12.9579***,$ Pr > F = <0.0001		
	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
0–3 hrs	-0.5198	0.1265	<0.0001	-0.1898	0.1348	0.1603	-0.4666	0.1284	0.0003	-0.4992	0.1281	0.0001
4–6 hrs	-0.1527	0.1236	0.2177	-0.0610	0.1317	0.6437	-0.1380	0.1255	0.2722	-0.1640	0.1252	0.1911
7–9 hrs	-0.1382	0.0852	0.1060	-0.1389	0.0909	0.1274	-0.1159	0.0865	0.1817	-0.1651	0.0863	0.0568
More than 10 hrs	-			-			-			-		

Note: Values are regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.
Source: Authors' work

between Generation Z's usage and political participation. The latent engagement was found to be significantly predicted ($F=15.8529$, $p=<0.0001$) and the most influenced by Generation Z's time spent on TikTok with a 13.84% ($r^2=0.1384$) variance. It is followed by expressive engagement ($F=12.9579$, $p=<0.0001$) and follower engagement ($F=12.4459$, $p=<0.0001$) with a variance of 11.61% ($r^2=0.1161$) and 11.20% ($r^2=0.1120$) correspondingly. Similar to latent engagement, expressive and follower engagement were significantly predicted by the generation's TikTok usage. The figures are observably much lower for System engagement, given that only 2.13% ($r^2=0.0212$) of its variance is explained by Generation Z's TikTok usage ($F=2.1457$, $p=0.095$). It indicates that system engagement is the least influenced and is not significantly predicted using the given platform.

In the multiple regression analysis, three of the four forms of engagement all have a statistically significant relationship when Generation Z's TikTok usage is within the 0–3-hour range. At a 99.9% confidence level, latent engagement decreases by -0.5198 per unit change in online exposure on TikTok within the range above. At the same confidence level and hours spent on TikTok, follower and expressive engagement decreased by -0.4666 and -0.4992 per unit change, respectively. With this, the respondents' usage of the given platform notably influences their participation.

In contrast, the 0.095 p-value in system engagement is greater than the set alpha.

Thus, there is no significant relationship between system engagement and TikTok usage. Although a -0.1389 per unit change is present within the 7–9-hour range, it is still not statistically significant as its p-value of 0.1274 is greater than the set significance level.

DISCUSSION

The study incorporated Waeterloos et al. (2021) four categories of online engagement (i.e., latent, follower, expressive, and system) and their classifications as either active or passive to examine the dynamics of participation in the social media realm. Ultimately, the findings reject the argument that usage of all five social media platforms influences participation amongst Generation Z. Findings from the multiple linear regression analysis highlight that exposure only to TikTok and Instagram holds the potential to influence the respondents' online political engagement.

The results revealed that political content could spur participation in three distinct manners: passive latent political engagement, more active modes of follower engagement, and expressive engagement. Such findings are validated by Waeterloos et al. (2021) assertion that online political participation is determined to be manifested through the said forms of engagement. As discussed by Mendenhall and Sodani (2021), TikTok emerges as a catalyst for diverse forms of political involvement due to its attributes that enable content creators to present comprehensible political information tailored to a younger

audience. It was particularly evident in the controversial 2022 Philippine presidential and vice-presidential elections, where content about President Bongbong Marcos Jr. and his family was widely circulated on the platform. Mendoza (2022) explained that aside from disinformation machinery and campaign teams, the popular videos were also directly sourced from ordinary social media users. It substantiates the theory that latent, follower, and expressive engagement are utilized to participate in political affairs. However, the findings also indicate that prolonged exposure to TikTok correlates with diminished political participation. With its predominant content focus on humor and pop culture-related material (Vijay & Gekker, 2021; Mendoza, 2022), individuals inclined toward entertainment may encounter a scarcity of political content on their personalized homepages. It implies the limits of the relationship dynamics between social media usage and political participation.

Instagram is also extensively used by political media outlets, institutions, parties, and officials to connect more intimately with constituents, which Generation Z predominantly employs for political education and understanding (Beriansyah & Qibtiyah, 2023). Despite the observable consumption of political information, the study's findings indicate that the youth's inclination to learn about politics weakens as they continue to access the platform. Compared to TikTok, participants' political engagement on Instagram falls within the less active spectrum, a paradox when contrasted with their 'active' response concerning online utilization on the platform. Instead, their activities revolve around cognitive engagement, encompassing activities like reading posts, visiting profiles of political figures, and consuming reels and stories. Such findings align with the study's results, highlighting how individuals manifest their involvement in socio-political matters, specifically through latent engagement. Additionally, the results indicate a heightened inclination among participants to seek information on Instagram compared to other social media platforms. It contrasts with Mariano et al.'s (2021) study, which determined that Facebook was the most used platform to retrieve political content during the 2022 elections.

On the other hand, a very weak correlation exists between respondents' engagement on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Despite the Philippines being widely recognized as the 'social media capital' of the world due to its extensive Facebook usage, the findings surprisingly indicate a moderate level of participation, with latent engagement emerging as the dominant mode. Generation Z often concentrates on information-seeking activities, prioritizing self-education about pertinent matters over concrete actions on specific issues. The findings convey that Generation Z primarily engages on Twitter through expressive participation. The influential nature of Twitter, which contributes to creating a 'temporal unfolding' of incidents, enables individuals to construct larger narratives, often shaped by the different narratives aggregated by hashtags

(Yang, 2016). Meanwhile, with YouTube's built-in recommendation system as a pivotal indicator of maximal content consumption, Hosseinmardi et al. (2021) highlight how political engagement extends beyond merely seeking further insight into political matters. The findings validate this notion, indicating that Generation Z primarily expresses political participation on YouTube through follower engagement. However, as indicated by the findings, such platform usage does not significantly affect online participation, thus leading to the rejection of the assertion.

Apart from the vast array of features possessed by each platform, household income and sex were also delved into as potential factors influencing online political participation. As revealed by the findings, one's monthly household income holds a moderate degree of influence, underscoring that socioeconomic status does not dictate the extent of online political engagement among the respondents. It puts a different perspective from Western democracies, where socioeconomic status is often used to explain political participation, positing that individuals of higher status are more inclined to engage in political activities (Verba & Nie, 1974; Hite, 2010). Accounting for the influence of clientelism in the Philippines, this model does not necessarily align well with the political psychology in the country. This finding supports Hite's (2010) proposition that individuals with greater financial stability tend to exhibit lower political efficacy. Subsequently, this leads to reduced engagement in political actions and behaviors. Likewise, the findings suggest that gender divisions and societal norms only partially influence engagement. It further supports the conclusion of Bimber et al. (2021) that both sexes express themselves politically through sharing and commenting on social media platforms. Nevertheless, these scholars argue that gender-specific political voices exist, with women often encountering reduced political expression in open public discourse spaces.

CONCLUSION

The study examined four types of political engagement, i.e., latent, system, follower, and expressive online political engagement. These were examined across five prominent social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Among these platforms, the study's findings suggest that only Instagram and TikTok have effectively advanced political participation among the respondents. As noted in this study, Instagram seems to be the principal source of political information for the younger generation, which predominantly elicits passive participation. On the other hand, TikTok possibly facilitated further political involvement through its algorithm, enabling users to access political themes and issues readily.

TikTok's tools allowed creators to create appealing video content, subsequently creating user engagement. Respondents employed TikTok to express political viewpoints by uploading content, engaging in peer messaging, and sharing politically oriented information. Nonetheless, given TikTok's primary entertainment

and socializing orientation, the impact of political engagement waned as users spent more time on the platform. Individuals from Generation Z are extensively immersed in various online social media platforms. Consequently, emerging new and evolving networks like Threads and Snapchat may deepen the exploration of how Generation Z leverages social media to navigate socio-political matters.

Implication to Theory and Practice

Political participation is gradually being redefined with the introduction of emerging technologies and platforms. Traditional understanding of political participation includes voting, campaigning, protesting, and engaging in civic education. However, the changing communication landscape calls for a broader consideration of the practice of political participation. Specifically, social media has become an inherent part of society, changing how individuals communicate, consume information, and create communities. It subsequently opened new opportunities for mobilization and even activism in the digital realm. Since the youth are primarily adept at taking advantage of these new communication platforms, studies must explore how new and emerging technologies might hinder or enable political participation. The idea of amplification is linked with political participation in social media. Traditionally marginalized voices, which might have gone unnoticed previously, are now amplified.

Aside from amplifying voices from marginalized communities, this also points toward another outcome: democratizing political discourse. New social media platforms have created new opportunities for political participation beyond traditional boundaries. It allows for creating communities of individuals with shared ideologies and interests. While the potential for political participation on social media is immense, such comes with pitfalls. Issues such as disinformation and the creation of echo chambers are counterproductive outcomes against informed political participation. Likewise, the opaque algorithms of platforms influence what users see on their feeds, limiting an individual's exposure to diverse political perspectives.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study seeks to expound on the political participation of individuals from Generation Z in the Philippines. There are some limitations to consider in terms of the possible temporal validity. Platforms are continuously evolving, requiring continuous examination of the phenomenon. Future studies could delve into Generation Z's information-seeking behavior and background research, particularly considering their inclination toward passive engagement as the predominant form of participation. This avenue of investigation might further elucidate how online interactions translate into active involvement in social justice rallies and protests. It leads to implications both in theory and practice. Specifically, the extensive use of these social media platforms enables

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new forms of socio-political engagements. Considering the respondent's predilection for passive engagement on social media, there is a need to investigate how this shift in consuming information influences their ability to discern and assess credible sources of information.

Geographic coverage could also be broadened to encompass regions beyond Metro Manila. It enriches the dataset for a comprehensive understanding of political engagement. Moreover, statistical analyses beyond ANOVA and multiple linear regression could provide deeper insights into the relationship between social media usage and user perspectives. Future research might pivot to qualitative methods for a more holistic grasp of social reality and user behaviors. Alternatively, drawing on studies like Waeterloos et al. (2021) and other scholarly articles could serve as a foundation or framework for refining the Social Media Participation Scale, tailoring it to reflect Filipino behaviors and integrating the cultural and societal context of the country more accurately.

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