

# Examining The Connections Between Instagram's Political Use, Passive Political Engagement And Active Political Participation

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## Abstract

Using the audience-centered uses and gratification (U&G) approach, this study investigated the political usage of Instagram by young people. Specifically, the study aimed to evaluate how Instagram-related incentives influence the political behaviors of young people, including accessing political information, expressing political ideas, and following politicians/news media accounts on Instagram. It also investigated the relationship between the passive consumption of political content (passive political engagement) on Instagram and active online political activity. It was revealed that the motivation for political expression impacts the connection between passive political engagement based on the intake and absorption of political information and active online political participation. Furthermore, following politicians on Instagram mediates both passive political involvement and aggressive political activity. In addition, as a co-mediator, age, gender, education, and social status are found to play no major influence in predicting the political behavior of Instagram users. Furthermore, political information seeking is not a predictor of political participation.

**Keywords:** Instagram use, political engagement, political participation, motivations.

## Introduction

Direct political experience is rare. Most people learn about politics through the media, obtaining their political news through newspapers and television (Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre, & Shehata, 2013). As the media environment evolves, individuals are increasingly exposed to politics on social media (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2018). While both provide access to political information, hearing about politics on the news and encountering political material on social media are distinct experiences. A person's exposure to

politics in the news and on social media are two very different things. Political information in the conventional media means information about the political process. Scholars agree that people can be more involved in politics if they are more informed about politics (Lemert, 1984; Druckman, 2005). Thus, media become catalysts for action in this sense (Norris, 2000).

Since Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have emerged as significant sources of political information (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2018), citizens

may simply create their own individualized media diets with varying degrees of political information based on personal inclinations (Arceneaux & Johnson, 2013). These shifts in how and where people get their news and have altered the ways in which they participate in politics. Political participation, for example, no longer consists solely of traditional acts such as voting or attending public protests (Weiss, 2020; Barrett & Pachi, 2020). Instead, it has widened and now occurs both in person and online (Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013).

As the youth of today are the most avid users of digital media their political participation has shifted online from face-to-face activities like voting and protesting (Ruess, Hoffmann, Boulianne, & Hegerc, 2021). They favor inexpensive, rapid, and convenient online political actions over offline, time-consuming ones (Calenda & Meijer, 2009). Reading news, commenting on political topics, and sharing political news are all types of online political involvement (Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Rojas & Puig-i-Abril, 2009).

Media exposure, political involvement, and its linkages may vary by generation. Two are apparent. First, using the cohort approach, society has changed during various generations' formative years. These differences may affect how people navigate the present information environment and how political information affects them. Younger generations are socialized to use social media to get political information, while older generations prefer more traditional media (Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001). Younger individuals may find it easier and more tempting to participate in the digital information age. Younger generations lose media-acquired information faster than older ones but compensate by using the internet well (Kleinberg & Lau, 2019) like political participation. Younger generations may find it easier to adjust to shifting participation forms. Second, the life-cycle theory

may explain generational political participation and media exposure. Younger individuals are more flexible to new political information, whereas elderly people are steadier in their media consumption and political activity (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013).

We will examine whether political news exposure makes younger people more politically active and the link between the two. We believe that understanding our democracies requires a generational perspective. It also lays the groundwork for future understanding.

This study examines young people's political Instagram usage based on the notion that various ages respond differently to social media. This research first examines why young people use Instagram and how they use it for political activities, including seeking political information, expressing political opinions, and following political Instagram accounts. This study examines how young people's growing Instagram use influences their exposure to political content, as well as politically driven Instagram use.

## Literature Review

Taking a generational perspective on issues like media consumption, civic involvement, and political knowledge is essential to making sense of the changes that have occurred. This will help us evaluate the level of young participation by providing insights into the correlations between news consumption and political involvement and how they manifest in society.

Nonetheless, some researchers argue that younger generations are turning away from conventional news media (Blekesaune, Elvestad, & Aalberg, 2012) and are not as politically active as previous generations (Franklin, 2004). Others contend that young people just get political information and engage in politics differently (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018).

To contribute to this conversation, we've decided to look at whether Gen X, millennials and Gen Z approach political information and involvement in distinctive ways. We are also interested in whether or if there have been generational shifts in the ways in which young people consume political news and choose to participate in democratic processes.

### **Political engagement**

Individual motives and attitudes affect political activity. Political information can affect political engagement. Political interest and knowledge are related to media exposure and political engagement (Moeller & de Vreese, 2019). Political interest and knowledge, and may lead to political engagement, but not always. Political engagement, unlike political participation, is not defined by behavior.

Political interest is assessed by an individual's interest in politics. One definition of political interest is the desire to learn about and engage in politics for its own sake, rather than in response to external cues or as a means to an end (Prior, 2018; Shehata, 2016; Shehata & Amnå, 2017). Those who have a keen interest in politics are also more inclined to educate themselves on the subject and participate in political processes. Thus, it is often held that the fundamental predictor of the political actions that make democracy work is political interest (Prior, 2010, p. 747) .

Political Knowledge obtained by consuming political news and information can be broken down into two parts: 1) knowledge of the political system, which is usually gained through education, and 2) knowledge of current political affairs, or contemporary social and political developments (Barabas, Jerit, Pollock, & Rainey, 2014). We focus on the latter because people's knowledge of current political events is more likely to come from their use of the media and to affect their political participation in the future. To

keep things simple, though, we'll use the more general term political knowledge to mean knowledge of current political events.

### **Political participation**

Political participation, unlike political involvement, entails socializing and acting politically. Political involvement is what citizens do to influence government (Van Deth, 2014, p. 351). Politics is any activity that influences government action, either directly by affecting public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of policymakers (Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995, p. 38). Given the growth of digital media and participation options, this definition has been widened to include any kind of political speech that may influence the conduct of their fellow citizens and hence the outcome of a political crisis (Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013; Adegbola & Gearhart, 2023). Dalton (2008) suggested that political participation patterns reflect changes in political behaviour, not just involvement (p. 94). Media coverage and political participation now overlap channels. The internet has changed political participation, for instance. "Liking" a politician on Facebook or signing an online petition are more convenient ways to get involved than walking door-to-door or contacting your legislator (i.e., joining a demonstration). These changes have sparked arguments about political activity and its definition (Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013).

Several recent research have suggested and implemented the online vs. offline distinction for political involvement (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Gibson & Cantijoch, 2013). Elite-directed activities include voting, joining a political party, party-mediated events, and labor unions. Inglehart (1990) defines them as political discussion, involvement in new social movements, rallies, protests, boycotts, petition signing, occupations, and informal strikes. But political participation should be based on sufficient political interest, comprehension, and

efficacy (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). If a person is uninterested in politics, lacks political understanding, or feels incapable of participation, political behaviour makes less sense. Political involvement requires political engagement.

Therefore, exposure to political news is likely to increase political involvement. As individuals learn about various political concerns, people's political interest may increase (Kruike-meier & Shehata, 2017; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2017; Boulianne, 2011). So, political knowledge may also increase people's sense of engagement (Moeller, de Vreese, Esser, & Kunz, 2014). This study examines how young people's Instagram political content influences their political behavior. This study identifies and conceptualizes political Instagram activity before studying the connection. Moreover, Instagram users' reasons for and level of political activity using U&G's knowledge of political social media use is examined.

Therefore, this study seeks:

RQ1: What are the primary motives for young people to use Instagram?

RQ2: How these motives are related to political news exposure correlates?

RQ3: Does passive political engagement and active political participation of Instagram users is mediated by the motivation of political expression?

RQ4: Does passive political engagement and active political participation of Instagram users is mediated by following politicians' accounts?

## **Consumption of Political Information and Expression of Political Opinion on Instagram**

Many researchers categorize political participation on social media as information gathering, opinion sharing, and political action (Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Rojas & Puig-i-Abril, 2009; Ruess, Hoffmann, Boulianne, & Hegerc, 2021). Political information intake includes viewing friends' profiles, following news outlets, searching for political or social concerns, reading the news, and watching videos relating to public problems. Online political participation is safe, inexpensive, and easily accessible (Ekström & Shehata, 2018). Second, people's deliberation about news content and the expression of political perspectives is an example of political opinion presentation. Participating in online forums and sharing or uploading information improves participants' ability to absorb the content (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018).

Involvement with digital media increases the likelihood of youth participation in online politics (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020). Youth are less interested in the tried-and-true methods of offline political activism in favor of more modern forms of online engagement (Kim & Ellison, 2021). They are more likely to participate in political activities online due to the convenience and speed with which they may be engaged in politics through digital media.

This investigation focuses on the consumption of political content and the expression of political views on Instagram. The specific activity of seeking out and digesting news about political concerns is what we mean when we talk about "political information intake" (e.g., reading political news, blog posts, and online comments). Sharing one's ideas on matters of public interest is one kind of political expression (For example, clicking the "like" button, posting, commenting, sending direct

messages to politicians, and submitting news to Instagram Stories). As a result of its greater difficulty, expense, and duration compared to the other two types of participation activities, mobilization action was left out. Instagram has made it easier for young people to take part in its activities, such as reading news items and leaving comments.

### **Motivations for using Instagram for Political News**

Motivation for political information gathering is ubiquitous and substantial in both social media and mainstream media consumption (Wu & Atkin, 2017; Kong, Lai-Ku, Deng, & Yan-Au, 2021). The drive to actively seek knowledge about current topics is referred to as information seeking (Kaye, 2005). A correlation between informative motivation and television news viewing has been validated by existing literature (Gantz, 1978; Rubin & Perse, 1987). In both instances, individuals obtain information from the news in order to maintain their own understanding of public concerns, remain aware of significant news, and learn about unfolding events and happenings in society (Kong, Lai-Ku, Deng, & Yan-Au, 2021). Therefore, those who have a strong drive to learn will be more likely to zero in on the material itself and take an interest in a wide range of subjects. To this purpose, they turn to easy and accessible internet and social media (Raine, 2008). Due to the widespread adoption of Instagram by politicians, political organizations, and the media, users can find a wealth of information on current events there (Peng, 2020). Therefore, Instagram readily satisfies the information-seeking and information-acquiring demands of users seeking the most recent information about certain topics. Moreover, when scrolling down the News Feed page (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018; Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018). Those with a high motivation for information seeking diligently stay current on the day's major concerns.

Accordingly, the initial hypothesis of this research is the following.

H1: There is a positive association information seeking motivation (ISM) between frequent news checking (FNC) on Instagram.

One of the primary drivers of political engagement on social media is the desire to have one's voice heard (Parmelee & Roman, 2019; Shao, 2009). The urge to convey personal thoughts and critique is referred to as motivation for self-expression (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012; Kaye, 2005). Research on online news commenting behavior suggests that blogging in online news comment sections encourages self-expression (Wu & Atkin, 2017). Furthermore, young users who join Facebook mainly for self-expression are eager to share their political opinions by listing their party identity on their Facebook page (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009).

Social media facilitates self-expression. Social media users may simply communicate sentiments and opinions through simple-to-use features (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). According to a recent study, individuals with a strong urge for self-expression frequently use, click "like," and comment on posts to express their ideas (Hunt, Atkin, & Krishnan, 2012). By posting, commenting, and clicking "like" on Instagram, users may instantly express their ideas. Media organizations and politicians utilize "Instagram Live" to communicate with Instagram users (Thompson, 2019). Those wishing to voice their opinions on public topics can view live-streaming recordings of politicians, submit questions, and comment on Instagram live.

As stated previously, social media opinions are public, so anybody may view what others publish, comment on, and share (Ekström & Shehata, 2018). People who wish to persuade

others with their experiences and opinions seek out additional information to strengthen and expand their perspectives (Lyons & Henderson, 2005). Before publishing their opinions on social networks, individuals should seek out and absorb information thoroughly in order to make coherent and convincing arguments.

All of this shows that persons who seek to express their thoughts and feelings regarding trending topics utilize Instagram to obtain news and exchange opinions via posting, commenting, pushing the "like" button, and engaging in Instagram live. Consequently, the following constitutes the second hypothesis:

H2: The motivation for political-expression (PEM) will be associated with frequent news checking (FNC) on Instagram

### **Following on Instagram**

Instagram users "follow" a wide variety of accounts, including those of their friends, celebrities, politicians, and news outlets.

Still, there is a dearth of research on the motivations of social media followers of political figures. On the one hand, the news media's recent tendency of posting political content on Instagram is an image what is frequently referred to as "poster news.". News outlets sometimes use pictures with brief, fact-based subtitles in place of traditional articles and captions (Towner & Muñoz, 2018). Media outlets, for instance, often provide information on Instagram, such as photos of politicians accompanied by succinct, one-sentence captions. It's reasonable to believe that news organizations devised a plan to attract the young people who make up Instagram's core audience by publishing content that is both interesting and easy to understand. As a result, the public has no trouble understanding what the most pressing issue is right now.

Instagram political postings, on the other hand, tend to be long and heavily biased toward the author's own viewpoint. Politicians in the modern day may bypass the media and have direct conversations with voters via social media (Rauchfleisch & Metag, 2016). In order to get their message out to the public unfiltered and uncensored by the media, they set up their own social media profiles (Shogan, 2010).

There are two distinct types of profiles on Instagram that provide political information, and users may have different motivations for following either type of account or making use of the information provided by either. Those who are intrinsically curious in the world around them (motivation for information acquisition) may feel uncomfortable when presented with the complex political knowledge supplied by politicians. They may just need the straightforward, infographic-heavy news updates supplied by the companies on Instagram to be informed on a wide range of topics. However, to exhibit one's expertise and viewpoint on the issues or to influence others is a common goal among those who desire to share their opinions publicly (i.e., motivation for political-expression) (Macafee, 2013). Since sharing opinions online is considered a public act, friends and followers may easily see what you think about certain issues and form opinions about your political leanings based on your posts. It is hypothesized that the public's ability to effectively argue on political topics would improve if they followed and visited the accounts of prominent politicians, giving them insight into how those politicians see important concerns and proposed solutions. Consequently, the third and fourth hypotheses follow:

H3: Information seeking motivation (ISM) is positively associated to following news media accounts (FNMA).

H4: Political expression motivation (PEM) is positively associated with following the accounts of politicians (FPA).

### **Incidental Exposure to Political Information on Instagram**

Political information absorption on social media is two-fold. Internet users actively seek political news or accidentally encounter it while doing other things (Stroud, 2017). Information seeking is the conscious quest for and acquisition of information about a subject, whereas incidental exposure occurs when social media users accidentally encounter political news (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018).

News indirectly improves political behavior and democratic involvement. After seeing a headline, photo, or name in the news, individuals typically seek for further information about the issue (Tewksbury, Weaver, & Maddex, 2001). If they see political material in the news, they may be more inclined to learn more (Baum & Jamison, 2011). This concentrated emphasis on political issues improves political literacy. Mobilizing information also inspires action.

Due to social media networks' architecture and operation, accidental news spread happens. Social media users may encounter political and other viewpoints. Because friends and media sources can access a user's network. Friendships center around discussing every day and political news. Thus, openness and flexible boundaries provide access to a variety of information and foster public discourse. Users mistakenly tag their contacts when they post information. Many news outlets have social media accounts, so subscribers may discover and read relevant content (Ju, Jeong, & Chyi, 2014). When a user clicks on a profile to read their tales, the website refreshes every 20–30 minutes to show the next person's updates. Users will see their friends' images until they close the

Instagram story. This makes it easier for Instagram users to find political content. Thus, non-political social media users encounter political content.

In contrast to the linear news cycle of traditional media, where stories may be out of date by the time they are reported, social media ecosystems are continually updated with new political information (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018). Recent study reveals that the chance of stumbling onto online news items increases with the amount of time spent exploring the web (Tewksbury, Weaver, & Maddex, 2001). Frequent monitoring newsfeed on Instagram might lead to unintentional exposure to political information. Fifth hypothesis is proposed based on literature review and interpretation of Instagram characteristics:

H5: Frequent newsfeed checking (FCN) will associate positively with incidental exposure to political content (INEX) on Instagram.

H6: Motivation for Political Expression mediates the transition from Passive Political Engagement to Active political participation.

H7: Following Politicians on Instagram is a mediator between passive political engagement and active online political participation.

### **Methodology**

Students from five universities in Lahore between the ages of 20 and 35 were asked to take part in a cross-sectional online survey. The survey questionnaire was sent to 100 students at five different universities that were chosen at random.

### **Measures**

### Frequency of Instagram use

On a five-point Likert scale from never to always ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ), respondents were asked how often they use Instagram.

#### Motivations for Instagram use

Existing measures of Internet, Facebook, and Twitter usage motivation were adapted to quantify the reasons for using Instagram. Previous investigations of U&G mostly employed and overlapped with a scale consisting of 18 elements (Parmelee & Roman, 2019; Parmelee & Bichard, 2012; Chan, Wu, Hao, Xi, & Jin, 2012). Five-point Likert scale was used (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree; see Table --)

To begin, a factor analysis was performed. A principal component analysis and a varimax rotation were used to do an EFA. The minimum loading on each factor was set at 0.50. The communality of the scale, which shows how different each dimension is, was also looked at to make sure there was enough explanation. All the communalities were over 0.50, according to the results.

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which provides a measure of the statistical likelihood that the correlation matrix has significant correlations

between some of its components, was a crucial step in determining the correlation matrix's significance. The results were significant:  $\chi^2 (n = 215) = 1531.108$  ( $p = 0.000$ ), which shows that it can be used for factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (MSA), which shows how well the data fit for factor analysis, was 0.887. In this way, MSA values above 0.800 are thought to be good for factor analysis. Lastly, this analysis's factor solution gave us four factors for the scale which explained 78.540% of the variation in the data.

The Bartlett's sphericity proved to be considerable, and all communalities were over the necessary value of 0.5. The four found EFA components were consistent with the theoretical premise of this study. The first factor includes genes IS1 through IS6. For more on this topic, see "**Information Seeking**" (IS). The five **Recreational Activities** (RA) are grouped together as Factor 2 as a representation of this category (RA). The third factor, '**Social Interaction**' (SI) was represented by five items loaded together SI1 to SI5. Five Lastly, '**Political Engagement**' (PI) is covered over elements PE1 to PE2 as factor 4. Table 2 displays the factor loadings, and the descriptive statistics are displayed in the table 3.

**Table 1: EFA Results**

Items	IS	RA	SI	PE
IA1: To get information	.877			
IA2: To know about current events	.851			
IA3: To increase my knowledge base	.837			
IA4: For a quick access to information	.817			
IA5: To understand current events as they happen	.804			
IA6: To stay updated	.793			
RA1: To relax		.877		
RA2: To forget about my problems		.743		
RA3: To kill time		.786		
RA4: Just for entertainment		.748		



RA5: To avoid doing something I should be doing		.690		
SI1: To stay in touch with friends			.575	
SI2: To encourage others			.737	
SI3: I enjoy knowing what others are doing.			.724	
SI4: To share my opinions, ideas, and experiences			.675	
SI5: To get something to discuss			.664	
PE1: To criticize politicians				.898
PE2: To engage in discussion with political figures				.888

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

<sup>a</sup> Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

### Passive Political Engagement (PPE)

Political engagement refers to the level of interest and attention that citizens pay to political issues and events. It can include activities such as following the news, discussing politics with friends and family, and participating in social media discussions about politics. Political participation, on the other hand, refers to the actions that citizens take to directly influence the political process. This can include activities such as voting, joining a political party, volunteering for a campaign, and attending public meetings or rallies. However, in an online setting directly messaging politicians and voicing dissenting views to them is an act of active political participation. In short, political engagement is more passive, while political participation is more active. A person can be politically engaged but not politically active, and vice versa.

The frequency with which Instagram users engage in the following actions ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (very often) on a 6-item scale designed to gauge passive political engagement limited to information acquisition about politics (Cho, et al., 2009). (a) read posts from politicians, (b) read posts from friends or acquaintances, (c) read posts from celebrities, (d) read posts about political issues, (e) read other's comments about political issues, and (f) read news (M = 2.00, SD = .88, Cronbach's = .80).

### Active Political Participation (APP)

In contrast to passively absorbing political information, political opinion expression entails actively engaging in political discourse by making one's own views on public affairs (Rojas & Puig-i-Abril, 2009; Cho, et al., 2009). The active political participation was measured by averaging over eight questions, respondents were asked how often they engage in the following actions on Instagram on a 5-point scale (1=never to 5=frequently) to determine the variable of interest. (a) share their own political views or opinions; (b) like political posts; (c) share a photo or video related to politics; (d) add other users' political posts to their story; (e) send a DM to a politician; (f) comment on political posts; (g) comment on political posts about the 2020 election; and (h) comment on political posts about current issues (M = 1.44, SD = .60, Cronbach's = .89).

### Following Politicians' Accounts (FPA)

Participants were asked to specify how many politicians and political groups they "follow" on Instagram. Those who did not follow politicians were coded as 1 (51%), those who followed 1 to 4 politicians were coded as 2 (32%), those who followed 5 to 10 politicians were coded as 3 (13%), those who followed 11 to 25 politicians were coded as 4 (2%) and those who followed 30

to 100 politicians were coded as 5 (2%). The data was right-skewed with ( $M = 1.72$ ,  $SD = 1.0$ ).

### **Following News Media Accounts (FNMA)**

In an open-ended survey question, participants were asked how many news media profiles (such GEO, ARY, Urdu Point, Vlogs, etc.) they "follow" on Instagram. The replies were recorded into 5 categories: those who do not follow any news media accounts (39%), those who follow 1–2 accounts (33%), those who follow 3–9 accounts (23%), those who follow 10–19 accounts (4%), and those who follow 20 or more accounts (1%). The distribution is right-skewed and statistically significant and ( $M = 1.95$ ,  $SD = .94$ ).

### **Incidental News Exposure (INEX)**

On a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very often), respondents were asked, "Have you randomly come across postings regarding the following subjects on Instagram in the last 3 months?" From "never" (1) to "very often" (5). There were eight different topics covered ( $M = 2.42$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .97$ ): (a) Election news, (b) government's issues, (c) News related to flood and relief activities, (d) Controversies and disputes in politics, (e) politicians' scandals, (f) petrol prices, and (h) dollar rates. I selected eight contentious, divisive topics as indicators since they are often debated and circulated online in the country.

### **Control Variables**

Control factors included participants' gender, age, education, and social class. The present investigation focuses on the connections between Instagram users' intentions and actions in the political sphere, as well as between Instagram users' frequency of usage and their incidental exposure to news. The ratio of male to female Instagram users is largely balanced, with total 50.7% male users slightly outnumbering total 49.2% female users (Statista, 2022). Individuals of various cultural backgrounds, as well as those of all ages, use social media in vastly varied ways and to varying degrees (Barnhart, 2022). The affluent group is more likely to vote and get active in politics than the less affluent (Solt, 2008).

### **Political Interest (PI)**

One question was used to measure political interest: how interested are you in politics? on a 5-point scale (1=not at all to 5=very much) to determine the degree of interest.

### **Results**

After YouTube, our data shows that Instagram is the most popular platform among young people (Figure 1). According to the data, information seeking is the prime motive for Instagram use followed by recreational use. Social interaction came out as the third reason to use Instagram. However, expressing political views is the least common reason to use Instagram (Figure 2).

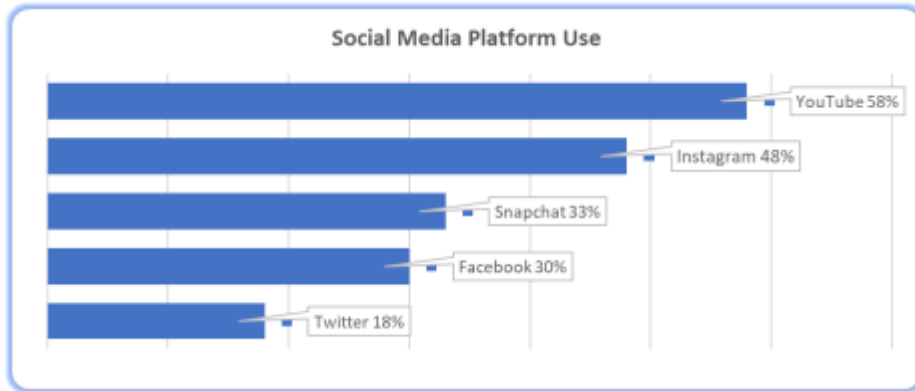


Figure 1: Percentage usage of Social Media Platforms among Youth

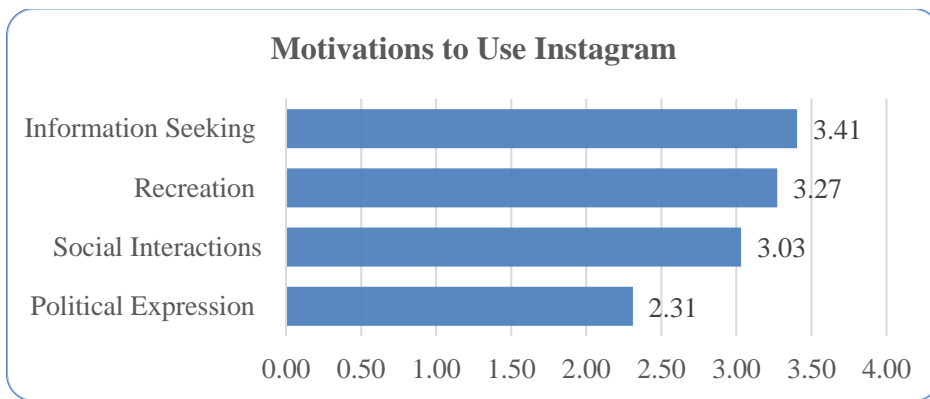


Figure 2: Mean graph of Motivations of Instagram Use

**Table 2 Correlation between the Motives to Use Instagram with Political News Exposure Correlates (N=300)**

	FCN	ISM	RM	SIM	PEM	FNM A	FPA	IEPN
Frequent Checking Newsfeed (FCN)	1							
Information Seeking Motive (ISM)	.22*	1						
Recreational Motive (RM)	.27**	.58**	1					
Social Interaction Motive (SIM)	.26**	.63**	.66**	1				
Political Expression Motive (PEM)	.07	.27**	.27**	.51**	1			
Following News Media Accounts (FNMA)	.22*	0.29* *	0.17	.19	.32**	1		
Following Politicians Accounts (FPA)	0.18	.19	.20*	.21*	.30**	.59**	1	



.45 (.000)	.35 (.000)	H6: Passive political engagement -> Political Expression -> Active political participation	.062	.016	.12	2.31	Partial mediation
		H7: Passive political engagement -> following Politicians on Instagram -> Active political participation	.042	.01	.09	1.83	Partial Mediation

## Discussion

This study used an audience-centred uses and gratification (U&G) approach, which assumes audiences use media for specific reasons to meet their needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). The U&G approach says people use media for a variety of reasons, including acquiring information, engaging in social contact, expressing themselves, and being entertained.

According to our findings, information-seeking and recreational motivations are favorably related with Instagram use. Previous research indicates that young people use Instagram extensively to relieve stress and amuse themselves (Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2019). Based on these results, it's clear that Instagram is a valuable informational resource for today's youth, making it the platform of choice for this demographic.

This study suggests that higher political interest is linked to higher Instagram political participation. To sum up, young individuals who care about politics check Instagram to read

political news, comments, and postings. More significantly, this study demonstrated that expressing oneself and consuming political information are positively associated. It's likely that young people who feel driven to criticize politicians use Instagram to acquire information, form their opinions, then share and remark on their discoveries. Our findings also support earlier research on political activity on social media (Bode & Dalrymple, 2017; Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012).

We found that passive political involvement may increase political participation through online news consumption. Following news media accounts, particularly politician Instagram accounts, was indirectly linked to online political activity. Motivation for political expression and following politicians on Instagram were also positively correlated. Demographic characteristics have minimal effect on the passive-to-active political involvement relationship.

Motivation for political expression mediates between quiet intake and absorption of political material and active online political activity. Following politicians on Instagram mediates passive and active political activity. Following news media accounts, particularly politician Instagram accounts, indirectly links information-seeking to online political activity. Previous study revealed that political social media use increases political awareness and involvement (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012).

This study linked regular Instagram use to unintentional political exposure. It implies young Instagram users stumble into political content. Instagram may explain this (e.g., openness). When using Instagram for other purposes, users see endless posts from contacts. These postings include politics, daily life, and more. Thus, frequent Instagram users may stumble onto political news. This is essential because it increases searches for political content, which leads to information acquisition, opinion expression, and protest involvement, as other studies have found (Baum & Jamison, 2011; Kim & Ellison, 2021).

In addition to that, it is found that as a co-mediator age, gender, education, and social class have no significant role determining the political behaviour of the Instagram user. Moreso, political interest is not a predictor of active political participation.

In conclusion, this study adds to the growing body of literature on the uses and gratifications theory and political engagement on social media. The results demonstrate that young people use Instagram for various purposes, including acquiring information, engaging in social contact, expressing themselves, and being entertained. Moreover, this study highlights the important role of passive political engagement in promoting political participation via online news consumption behaviours. It is imperative that

policymakers and political organizations recognize the potential of social media platforms like Instagram in engaging young people in political discourse and mobilizing them for political action.

### Limitations

This study's conclusions are not conclusive due to several limitations. Our model is based on communication mediation theories, but the cross-sectional data makes it impossible to prove a cause-and-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Second, we did not account for conversation orientation features like political efficacy and discussion network, which boost online political involvement. Thus, the model was likely insufficiently specified. Third, we proposed a digital process that links political action on social media. Thus, its applicability to real-world political engagement is doubtful. Fourth, integrate online acts like sharing trends and hashtags to better depict political activity online.

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