

Social Media and Youth Political Engagement: A Bibliometric Analysis with Emerging Attention to TikTok

Wan Rosmaria Wan Ismail¹, Mumtaz Aini Alivi¹, Nasrullah Dharejo^{1 2}

¹Department of Media and Communication Studies, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

²Department of Media and Communication, Sukkur IBA University, Pakistan

Correspondence: Mumtaz Aini Alivi, Department of Media and Communication Studies, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Email: mumtazaini_alivi@um.edu.my

Received: March 12, 2026

Accepted: May 7, 2026

Online Published: May 21, 2026

doi:10.11114/smc.v14i3.8858

URL: <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v14i3.8858>

Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of research on social media's influence on young voters' political engagement and voting behaviour, with a particular focus on the emerging role of TikTok. Using data from the Scopus database from 2015 to 2024, we analysed 893 documents from 404 sources, employing keyword co-occurrence, co-authorship, and bibliographic coupling techniques. The results reveal a significant growth in research output, with a notable surge between 2018 and 2020, reflecting increased academic interest in this field. Our analysis identifies key thematic clusters, including political participation, civic engagement, and misinformation, while highlighting a shift in focus towards newer platforms, particularly TikTok. The study underscores TikTok's rising prominence in recent research, with an average publication year of 2023.4167, indicating its growing influence on youth political behaviour. The United States emerges as the leading contributor to this field, followed by the United Kingdom and Germany, emphasising the global nature of this research area. Key researchers and their collaborative networks are also identified. This study provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of digital political communication among young voters. It highlights the need for focused research on TikTok's unique features and their impact on youth political participation. Our findings serve as a foundation for future research in this rapidly evolving area, emphasising the importance of understanding TikTok's role in shaping young voters' political engagement in the digital age.

Keywords: TikTok, youth political engagement, social media influence, voting behaviour, political participation, bibliometric analysis

1. Introduction

Over the past few years, social media platforms have significantly impacted the political sphere. Among these social media platforms, TikTok stands out as one of the most powerful, especially among young voters. As of 2024, TikTok had more than 1 billion active users worldwide, with a substantial share of these users belonging to Generation Z, as reported by Ahlse et al. (2020) and Brony, Alivi, et al. (2024).

In this sense, it has given rise to a unique form of political communication informed by short-form video content and algorithmic amplification mechanisms that emphasise visual appeal, emotional connection, and shareability. These characteristics have increasingly been utilised by political actors, activists, and movements to reach out to young voters, thus contributing to the increasing trend of political content on the platform (Karimi & Fox, 2023). Since its global debut in 2018, TikTok has grown exponentially, reaching over one billion active users by 2020 (Bley, 2023), with its users being mostly young adults. Its global audience comprises 43% users aged 18-24, indicating that it has tremendous potential to shape political attitudes and voting behaviours among first-time voters (Kemp, 2023; Jiaqing et al., 2023). Unlike other social media platforms that focus on text-based content, TikTok has given rise to emotionally appealing video content that can influence political perceptions, salience, and evaluation judgments, which in turn inform voting decisions (Vijay & Gekker, 2021). Moreover, its focus on providing an entertaining experience for users has given it an edge in promoting informal political expression, thereby lowering barriers to engaging in political discussions (Abbas et al., 2022; Lee & Abidin, 2023). Recent studies have indicated that it is increasingly used for political communication, which can influence users' voting behaviour and shape their decisions through exposure to information, personalisation, authenticity, and the humanisation of political actors (Zamora-Medina et al., 2023).

Although prior research has sought to understand the impact of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter on political engagement (Bossetta et al., 2017; Boulianne & Larsson, 2023; Chan, 2016; Effing et al., 2011; Brony, Aini Alivi, et al., 2024), it is important to note that TikTok's unique characteristics and younger user demographics require an analysis of its impact. For instance, the recent emergence of TikTok in the literature on social media and politics suggests a shift in the dynamics of social media platforms, particularly relevant to younger voters. (Gui, 2023; Khasabu & Rahmanto, 2023). Although extensive research has been conducted on the impact of social media platforms on political engagement (Bossetta, 2018; Boulianne et al., 2024; Chan, 2016; Mitchelstein et al., 2023; Dharejo et al., 2023), it is important to note that there is a noticeable gap in the literature on TikTok's impact on the political views and behaviours of young voters.

This study advances the literature by positioning TikTok not merely as an additional social media platform, but as a distinct digital environment that reshapes political communication among young users. Unlike earlier platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, TikTok is driven by short-form video content, algorithmic curation, and highly visual and emotional forms of expression.

This study, using a bibliometric analysis, seeks to analyse the literature on the effects of TikTok on the political attitudes of young voters. This study seeks to contribute to the literature on the effects of TikTok on the political attitudes of young voters by providing an overview of the current literature.

This study will utilise a bibliometric analysis to examine the literature on the effects of TikTok on the political attitudes of young voters. Through the analysis of the literature on the effects of social media on the political attitude of young voters, this study seeks to:

1. Map the current research landscape on social media's influence on young voters' political engagement and voting behaviour, specifically focusing on TikTok.
2. Identify key contributors, emerging themes, and methodological approaches in this field.
3. Highlight the specific gap in research regarding TikTok's impact and its implications for future studies.

Through this analysis, we seek to synthesise the current state of knowledge and chart a course for future research that can keep pace with the rapidly evolving landscape of social media and political engagement among young voters.

Based on these objectives, the following research questions guide our study:

1. What is the current volume, growth trajectory, and geographic distribution of the literature on TikTok's influence on young voters' political engagement and voting behaviour?
2. Who are the key authors, institutions, and countries contributing to research on social media and TikTok's impact on youth political participation, and what are their collaboration patterns?
3. What are the main thematic clusters and intellectual structure of research on social media and TikTok's role in shaping young voters' political views and behaviours, as revealed by co-occurrence and bibliographic coupling analyses?
4. How has the research focus on social media's political influence on young voters evolved, particularly with the emergence of TikTok, as shown by temporal analysis of publications and keywords?

By addressing these questions, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on TikTok's influence on young voters' political engagement and voting behaviour, offering insights that may inform future research and policy discussions regarding the role of social media in electoral processes.

2. Literature Review

The dynamic nature of social media has significantly changed the face of political communication and participation, especially among the youth vote. Social media and digital tools have been very instrumental in mobilising and educating the youth vote, creating a platform for them to discuss and share information about political issues and mobilise campaigns (Kashyap & Jonjua, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to provide them with some form of decent political education through this medium. Education, in the context of the election, refers to the process of instilling values in the life of the nation and the state regarding the election (Okunzuwa, 2024).

A new dimension to the political education of younger generations has emerged through social media platforms such as TikTok. This app, which features short-form videos, is used to politically educate and engage younger people in a politically informed and active manner. This is due to its user-friendly interface and popularity among younger people.

One of the most important benefits of using TikTok for political education is its bite-sized content. Short, interesting videos are more likely to attract the attention of younger generations than long pieces of writing and other educational methods. (Akbari et al., 2022). TikTok users have used their creative skills to present political issues, policies, and events in a way that is easily digestible for younger generations. This helps break down barriers for the younger generation and engage them more and more in politics.

Existing research has shown that social media can support youth political engagement by increasing access to political information, enabling peer-to-peer discussion, and lowering the barriers to participation (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018); (Mohamad et al., 2018); (Rehman, 2025). However, the literature remains divided on whether such engagement leads to meaningful civic and electoral participation or whether it mainly encourages low-effort forms of expression, such as liking, sharing, commenting, and symbolic activism (Leyva, 2017); (Lonkila & Jokivuori, 2022); (Yessenbekova, 2020). Much of the existing scholarship has also focused on older platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, where political communication is often shaped by text-based discussion, networked publics, and news-sharing practices (Shahid, 2025); (Kashaka, 2025). TikTok complicates these debates because its political influence is shaped by short-form video, algorithmic recommendation, humour, affective storytelling, creator authenticity, and entertainment-oriented communication (Cervi et al., 2021); (Hindarto, 2022). These features suggest that youth political engagement on TikTok may operate differently from engagement on earlier platforms. Therefore, the present bibliometric analysis does not simply summarise previous studies; it maps how the field has conceptually developed, identifies which themes dominate the literature, and highlights where TikTok remains under-theorised in relation to young voters' political attitudes, participation, and voting behaviour.

In this bibliometric analysis, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current research landscape surrounding social media's influence on young voters. By identifying key trends, contributors, and gaps in the literature, we hope to pave the way for future studies to further explore the complex relationship among social media, youth political engagement, and democratic processes in the digital age.

3. Methods

This study employs a bibliometric approach to analyse the influence of TikTok on the voting choices of young voters, using the PRISMA 2020 framework to ensure a transparent and systematic review process (Page et al., 2021). The Scopus database was selected as the primary source for data collection due to its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed literature across various disciplines, its rigorous indexing standards, and its comprehensive metadata, which are crucial for conducting reliable bibliometric analyses (Mustapha, Khan, Qureshi, Sikandar, Hassan, et al., 2024; Sikandar et al., 2023). Data were sourced from the Scopus database, utilizing the query TITLE-ABS-KEY ("TikTok" OR "social media") AND ("vote choice" OR "voting behaviour" OR "political engagement") AND ("young voters" OR "youth" OR "Gen Z") AND ("influence" OR "impact" OR "effect"), yielding 1323 articles. Applying inclusion criteria—articles published between 2015 and 2024, in English, and final journal versions reduced the dataset to 893 studies. Bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOS viewer to identify co-authorship, keyword co-occurrence, and citation networks, revealing key trends and clusters in the field (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). This methodological approach, combining the comprehensive coverage of Scopus with the analytical power of VOSviewer, enabled a thorough exploration of the research landscape (Mustapha, Khan, Qureshi, Sikandar, & Nu'man, 2024), highlighting key trends, influential authors, and emerging themes in the study of social media and TikTok's influence on young voters' political engagement. Visualizations of these networks were generated to provide insights into the dominant themes and influential contributors to the research area.

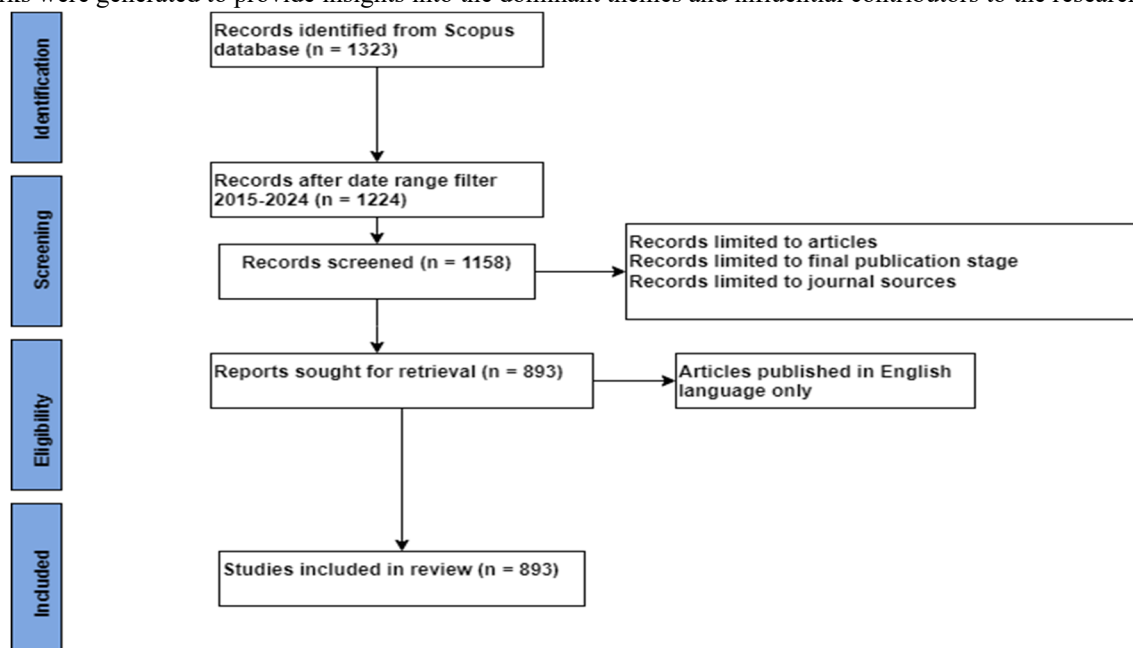


Figure 1. Prisma Flow chart for inclusion and exclusion criteria of the articles (Source: Authors)

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 provides an overview of the data characteristics related to research on TikTok usage and its influence on vote choice from 2015 to 2024. It highlights 893 documents from 404 publications, with an annual growth rate of 12.66%, indicating growing interest in the topic. The main summary of the articles is shown in the table below.

Table 1. MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA

Description	Results
Timespan	2015:2024
Sources (Journals, Books, etc.)	404
Documents	893
Annual Growth Rate %	12.66
Document Average Age	3.64
Average citations per doc	23.61
References	50757
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	1303
Author's Keywords (DE)	2167
AUTHORS	
Authors	1810
Authors of single-authored docs	174
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	205
Co-Authors per Doc	2.59
International co-authorships %	23.96
DOCUMENT TYPES	
article	859
conference paper	5
editorial	3
note	2
review	23
short survey	1

Publication Output

The data presented in Figure 2 illustrate the annual and cumulative growth in publications on the influence of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok on vote choice among young voters from 2015 to 2024. In 2015, there were 39 publications, which steadily increased to 62 by 2017, bringing the cumulative total to 161 publications. A notable surge in research output occurred between 2018 and 2020, with annual publications rising from 85 to 109, resulting in a cumulative total of 429 by the end of 2020. Although there was a slight decline in 2021, with 105 publications, the upward trend resumed in subsequent years, peaking at 136 publications in 2023. The year 2024 saw a slight decline to 114 publications, yet the cumulative total reached 893. This upward trajectory in publications over the decade reflects a growing academic interest in understanding the relationship between TikTok usage and political engagement among young voters, particularly regarding vote choice.

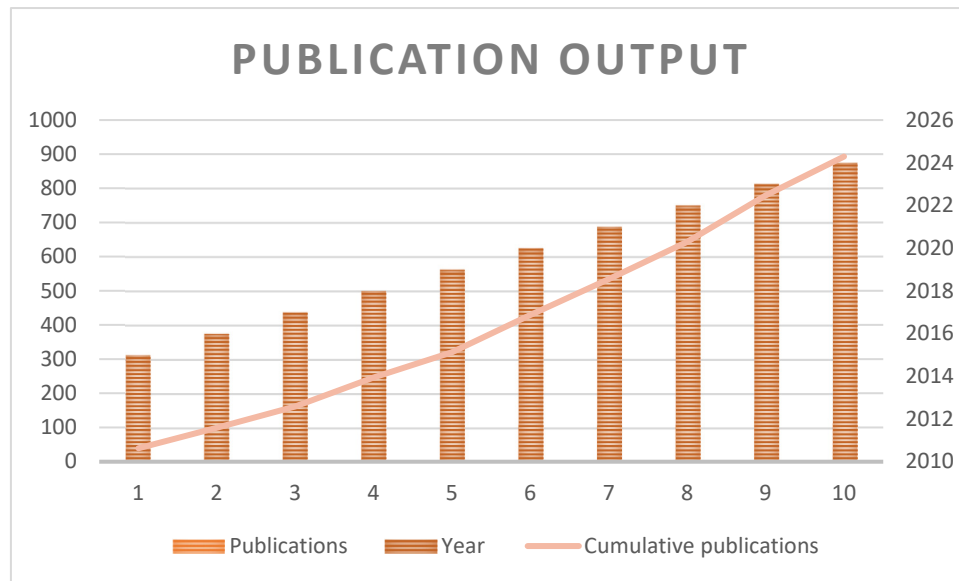


Figure 2. Publication Output (Source: Vos Viewer)

Most Influential Authors

Table 2 identifies the most influential authors in research related to social media usage and its impact on vote choice among young voters, based on their number of publications (at least 10) and academic standing. Pang Hua from Tianjin University, China, is the most prolific author with 15 publications and an H-index of 20, indicating both productivity and citation impact in this area. Gil de Zúñiga, affiliated with Pennsylvania State University, USA, has 14 publications and a significantly higher H-index of 44, reflecting his influence and widespread citation in related fields. Jörg Matthes from the University of Vienna, Austria, has 13 publications and an H-index of 48, making him a highly impactful researcher in the field. Saifuddin Ahmed from the University of California, Davis, USA, has contributed 11 publications with an H-index of 17, while Shelley Boulianne from the Weizenbaum Institute, Germany, also has 11 publications but a slightly higher H-index of 21, demonstrating her notable impact on this research topic. Lastly, Daniel S. Lane from the University of California, Santa Barbara, has 10 publications and an H-index of 14, rounding out the list of key contributors. These authors are central figures in shaping the academic discourse on the influence of social media on political behaviour and young voters.

Table 2. Authors, their publications, affiliation and H-Index

Author	Publications	Affiliation	H index
Pang, Hua	15	Tianjin University, Tianjin, China	20
Gil de Zúñiga, Homero	14	Pennsylvania State University. University Park, United States	44
Matthes, Jörg	13	Universität Wien, Vienna, Austria	48
Ahmed, Saifuddin	11	University of California, Davis, United States	17
Boulianne, Shelley	11	Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society, Germany	21
Lane, Daniel S.	10	University of California, Santa Barbara, United States	14

Most Influential Countries

Figure 3 presents the distribution of publications by country on TikTok usage and its influence on vote choice among young voters. The United States leads significantly with 298 publications, reflecting its dominant role in this research area. This may be due to the early adoption of TikTok and extensive political research in U.S. academia. The United Kingdom follows with 70 publications, indicating substantial academic interest in social media and political engagement in this context. Germany (59 publications) and China (53 publications) also contribute notably, with China's presence highlighting its connection to TikTok as the platform's country of origin. Hong Kong (45 publications) reflects its active role in political and social media research. Other notable contributors include Spain (41), Austria (37), and Canada (37), showing a broad international interest in the subject. Countries like Australia (31), Malaysia (30), and Chile (25) demonstrate that this topic is gaining traction in regions beyond Europe and North America, underscoring the global relevance of social media platforms such as TikTok in shaping political behaviour among young voters.

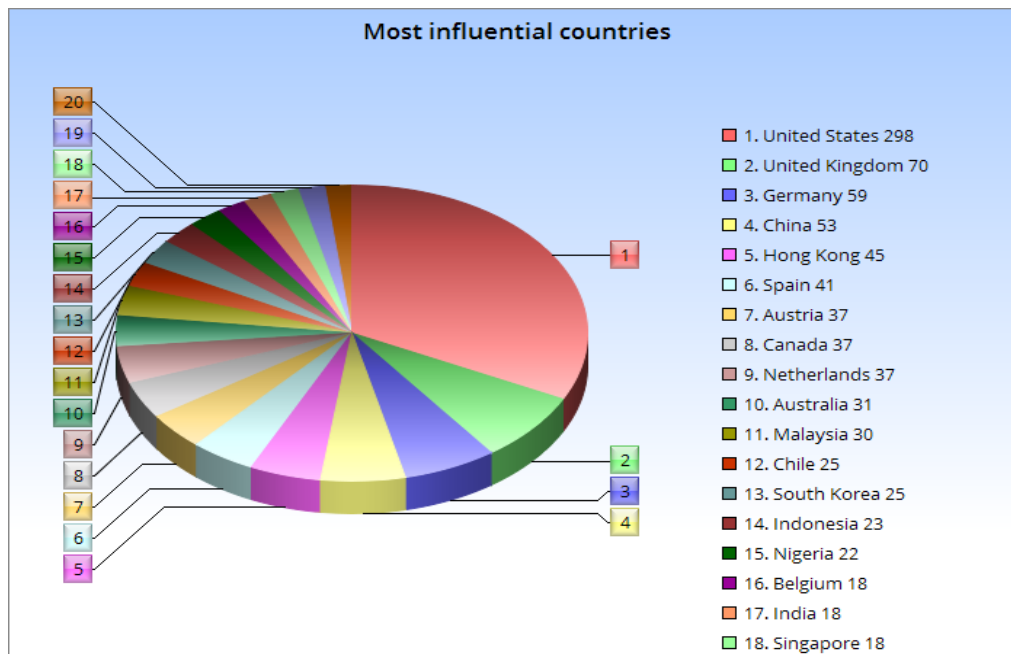


Figure 3. Most influential countries (Source: Vos Viewer)

4.2 Bibliometric Analysis

Co-occurrence of keywords

To identify the prominent research themes and concepts, we conducted a co-occurrence analysis of keywords and author keywords. In this case, the analysis was conducted using the author-provided keywords from publications on the psychological and social implications of digital technology use for the well-being of children and young people in online environments.

The first step in the analysis was to set a minimum occurrence threshold of 5, resulting in 113 keywords out of the 2167 meeting the criteria. To further refine the dataset and consolidate similar keywords, a thesaurus was employed in VOSviewer. This function groups related terms into a unified representation, reducing redundancy and enhancing the clarity of keyword associations. After applying the thesaurus key, the number of keywords was reduced to 84 out of the initial 2138, while maintaining the minimum occurrence threshold of five.

The co-occurrence analysis of keywords for the study on social media and TikTok usage, and its influence on the voting choices of young voters, reveals several important thematic clusters. Keywords such as 'social media use,' 'political participation,' 'youth,' 'civic engagement,' 'news media,' and 'political engagement' are significant nodes that connect various research topics. Cluster 1 is dominated by terms like 'social media use,' 'news media,' 'online political participation,' 'comparative research,' and 'mobilisation,' indicating a focus on how digital platforms influence political mobilisation and the consumption of news. Cluster 2 includes terms like 'Facebook,' 'misinformation,' 'YouTube,' 'disinformation,' and 'fake news,' highlighting the role of misinformation in social media during elections and political campaigns.

Cluster 3 encompasses 'social networks,' 'elections,' 'political expression,' 'political polarisation,' and 'self-presentation,' suggesting a focus on political discourse, polarisation, and individual expression on digital platforms. Cluster 4 includes 'activism,' 'protests,' 'collective action,' 'slacktivism,' and 'new media,' pointing to the study of activism and the use of social media in collective political action. Cluster 5 emphasises 'youth,' 'social capital,' 'adolescents,' 'civic education,' and 'network heterogeneity,' focusing on the engagement and socialisation of young voters through social media. Cluster 6 comprises 'political participation,' 'political efficacy,' 'political trust,' and 'digital divide,' suggesting an interest in digital inequalities and their impact on political engagement.

Other notable clusters include Cluster 7, with keywords like 'Twitter,' 'civic participation,' 'media literacy,' and 'public sphere,' emphasizing the educational and participatory role of social media platforms, and Cluster 8, which contains 'digital media,' 'political consumerism,' 'voting,' and 'climate change,' focusing on broader societal issues like consumer behaviour and climate activism in the political sphere. Finally, Cluster 9 is characterised by terms such as 'media effects,' 'digital activism,' 'public engagement,' and 'climate change,' indicating research interests in digital activism, public engagement, and the intersection of media and climate change.

Figure 4 and Table 3 show that 'social media use' (cluster 1) has the highest TLS (951) and the highest number of

occurrences (529), indicating its central importance in the research. Other terms, such as 'political participation' (cluster 6) and 'youth' (cluster 5), also show strong link strength and recency, with average publication years around 2020, suggesting these topics are actively discussed in the current literature. Keywords such as 'Facebook' (cluster 2) and 'Twitter' (cluster 7), with average publication years of around 2018–2019, suggest that interest in these platforms may have peaked earlier in the research period. Facebook, with a TLS of 159, and Twitter, with a TLS of 114, remain relevant but are less central in recent discussions. In contrast, 'TikTok' (TLS 31, 2023.42) shows a sharp rise in importance and recency, reflecting its growing influence in contemporary research on political communication and youth engagement. This indicates a transition from older platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to newer ones such as TikTok, particularly in discussions about elections, political expression, and mobilisation. In Figure 3, the emerging topics are represented in yellow.

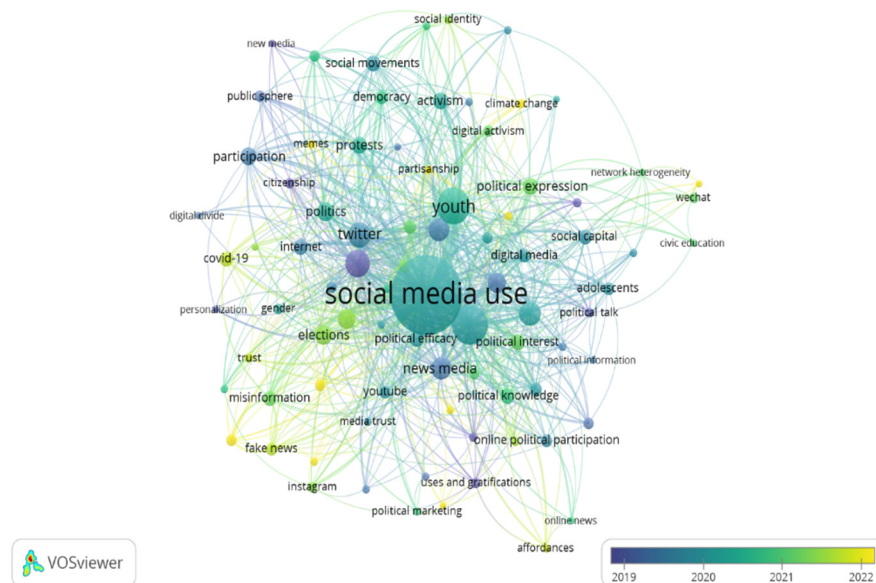


Figure 4. Results of Co-occurrence of keywords analysis (Source: Vos Viewer)

Table 3. Key word occurrences

Keyword	Links	Total link strength	Occurrences	Avg. pub. year
social media use	81	951	529	2020.1229
political participation	58	317	135	2020.0519
youth	59	275	113	2020.4159
facebook	49	159	62	2018.871
civic engagement	40	124	48	2020.125
news media	38	121	43	2019.4186
twitter	41	114	55	2019.6182
social networks	44	112	45	2019.5333
political engagement	33	73	35	2019.3714
elections	28	70	31	2021.3548
political communication	29	69	33	2021.3939
participation	20	69	27	2019.5185
political interest	28	67	22	2021.1364
politics	29	67	30	2020.3333
political expression	27	66	25	2021.16
protests	26	61	26	2020.4231
internet	26	58	23	2019.6522
activism	19	52	26	2020.2308
political efficacy	18	50	21	2020.0476

In Figure 3, the newly emerging topics are represented in yellow, and their descriptions are presented in Table 4. Table 4 highlights the importance of TikTok in recent research, particularly regarding social media and its influence on young voters. With a 'Total Link Strength' of 31 and 'Occurrences' of 12, TikTok has a relatively high co-occurrence with other keywords, indicating its centrality in current research discussions. Most notably, the 'Average Publication Year' for

TikTok-related studies is 2023.4167, making it the most recent topic in this analysis. This reflects the growing academic interest in TikTok, particularly regarding its influence on political behaviour and participation.

Other terms like 'literature review,' 'political consumerism,' and 'partisanship' also have recent average publication years, around 2023, showing that these topics are currently trending in research. However, TikTok's higher Total Link Strength demonstrates its unique relevance and the frequency of its use in the context of political mobilisation, disinformation, and youth engagement. In contrast, terms like 'memes' and 'university students,' while still current (2022), appear slightly earlier, showing that TikTok is a more emergent focal point in these discussions.

Table 4. Results of Co-occurrence of keywords analysis for the most recent keywords

Keyword	Links	Total link strength	Occurrences	Avg. pub. year
tiktok	18	31	12	2023.4167
literature review	7	9	5	2023.2
political consumerism	9	14	6	2023.1667
partisanship	13	18	6	2023
mobilization	8	11	6	2023
mobile social media	5	10	5	2022.6
climate change	8	12	8	2022.375
disinformation	10	29	12	2022.25
memes	10	16	6	2022.1667
university students	8	11	6	2022

Collaboration and Co-Authorship Patterns

To understand the landscape of collaboration and co-authorship in the relevant research field, the networks of co-authors and countries have been analysed. The purpose of the analysis was to reveal the influence of the researchers and the collaborations between the countries. The results revealed the interconnectedness, density, and clustering of the authors and countries.

Co-authorship of authors

We used VOS viewer to examine the pattern of co-authorship among researchers in their field of study. We focused on researchers with at least 5 documented publications, reducing the number of researchers to 32 out of 1855. This helped us in identifying the most prominent researchers in the field.

A comprehensive overview of the best authors in the field, ranked by Total Link Strength (TLS), is provided in Table 5 and Figure 5. The "Links" column represents the number of direct connections an author has with other authors, while "Total link strength" represents the strength of these collaborative works. "Documents" represents the number of documents produced, while "Citations" represents their impact.

Brian E. Weeks leads in total link strength (13) and has a high number of links (5), suggesting strong collaborative ties. Homero Gil de Zúñiga stands out with the most documents (14) and a high citation count (756), indicating both productivity and impact. Shelley Boulianne, while having moderate link strength (7), boasts the highest citation count (1205), demonstrating significant influence in the field. Leticia Bode also shows high impact with 895 citations.

The data reveals a mix of established researchers with high citation counts and emerging scholars with strong collaborative networks. Some researchers, such as Jörg Matthes and Daniel S. Lane, demonstrate a balanced profile across metrics, indicating consistent contributions to both output and collaboration. This analysis provides a significant overview of the key players in the field, highlighting both individual contributions and the importance of collaborative efforts in advancing knowledge about social media's influence on young voters.

Table 5. Top authors involved in collaborative research

Authors	Links	Total link strength	Documents	Citations
weeks, brian e.	5	13	6	522
kwak, nojin	3	12	5	318
lane, daniel s.	4	12	9	376
gil de zúñiga, homero	4	10	14	756
kim, dam hee	3	10	6	401
matthes, jörg	3	9	13	373
heiss, raffael	2	8	9	261
boulianne, shelley	5	7	11	1205
diehl, trevor	4	7	5	357
valenzuela, sebastián	4	7	7	486
vraga, emily k.	2	7	7	743
bode, Leticia	2	6	9	895
hoffmann, christian pieter	2	6	6	228
koc-michalska, karolina	3	6	5	287
barnidge, matthew	4	5	6	313
lee, sangwon	4	5	9	144
lutz, Christoph	1	5	5	205
scherman, andrés	3	5	5	307
theocharis, yannis	3	4	7	351
thorson, kjerstin	3	4	5	352

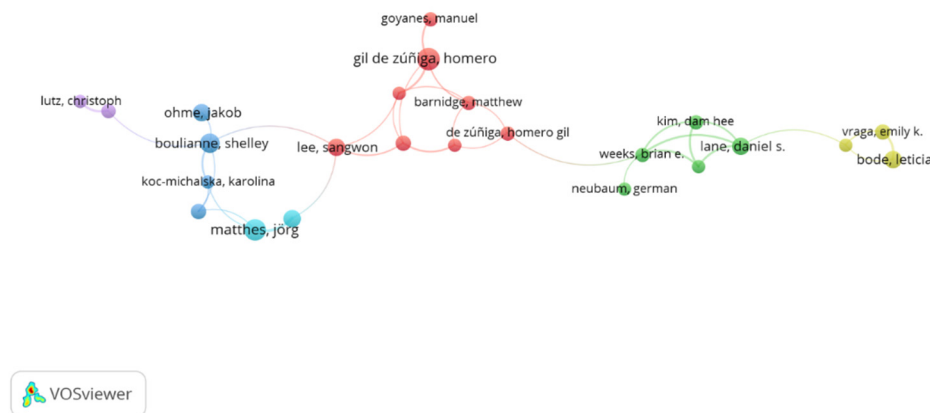


Figure 5. Results of co-authorship analysis of authors in the network visualisation mode of VOS viewer (Source: Vos Viewer)

Co-authorship of countries

The co-authorship analysis of countries provides valuable insights into the international collaboration patterns and research dynamics within the field under investigation. In this section, the analysis was conducted with a minimum threshold of 10 documents per country and 10 citations, resulting in the inclusion of 35 countries from the initial 84 in the dataset.

This co-authorship analysis (Figure 6) reveals significant variations in international collaboration within the field. The United States emerges as the clear leader, boasting the highest TLS (111), document count (297), and citations (9345), underscoring its central role in this research area. Following closely are the United Kingdom, Austria, Germany, and Spain, all of which demonstrate strong collaborative networks, with TLS ranging from 39 to 57. These countries not only show robust international partnerships but also contribute significantly to the field's body of knowledge.

However, countries such as Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines, and South Africa, which have generated a significant

number of documents, have surprisingly low TLS ratings of 1 or 2. These countries need to strengthen their partnerships. Middle-tier countries like Japan, India, and Egypt have a slightly better TLS of 3 or 4. This study has shown that global collaboration in the field is uneven, with only a few countries at the core of the global collaboration network, while others remain isolated. The level of global partnerships for countries with low TLS could significantly impact the study's effectiveness in the global arena, providing a diverse perspective on the effects of online social media platforms like TikTok on young voters.

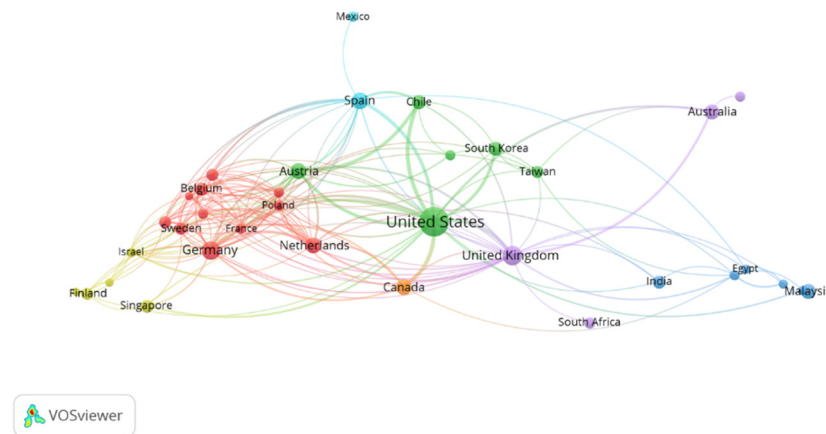


Figure 6. Co-authorship analysis of countries (Source: Vos Viewer)

Bibliographic coupling

A bibliographic coupling of countries represents the strength of research collaboration between them. Bibliographic coupling was done to identify Intellectual Bases and Knowledge Domains. Minimum citations set to 5 documents per country and 0 citations. 35 countries met the threshold out of 84.

The bibliographic coupling analysis using Vosviewer (Figure 7) provides insights into the research landscape on the influence of social media platforms on young voters across countries.

An analysis of the table above reveals that the United States is the leading entity in this research field, as it ranks highest in every aspect, including the highest total link strength (104,479), document count (297), and citations (9,345). This reveals that research conducted in the United States is not only more numerous but also highly impactful and closely connected to the global research community. Germany and Austria are in second position, reflecting their collaborative strength with other entities despite having fewer documents. This reveals that research conducted in these countries is highly impactful and connected with the global research community. The United Kingdom and Chile are in fifth position, reflecting their research output and connectivity with other entities.

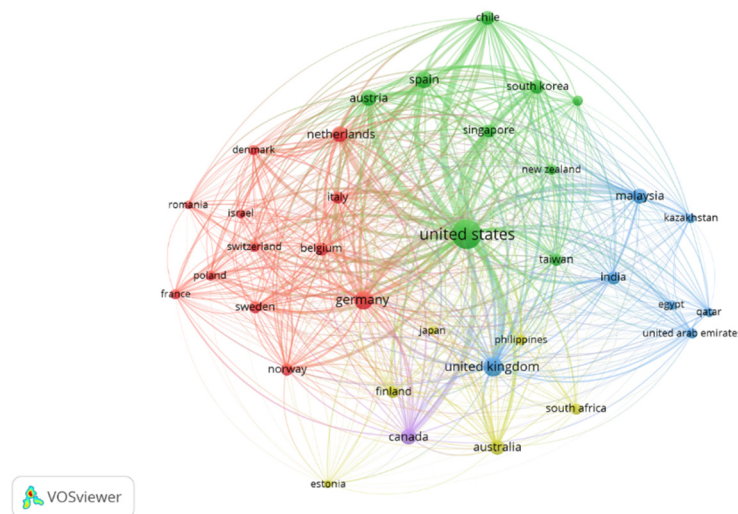


Figure 7. Bibliographic coupling of countries (Source: Vos Viewer)

Interestingly, countries like South Korea, Spain, and the Netherlands show strong link strength despite relatively low

document counts, indicating that their research, while not as voluminous, is well integrated into the global research network. Canada stands out with a high citation count (1,933) relative to its document output, suggesting particularly impactful research. The United States, Austria, Chile, South Korea, Spain, and Singapore are part of cluster 2, indicating a shared research approach or focus area. Countries like Malaysia, Australia, and Taiwan, while producing substantial document output, exhibit lower total link strength, suggesting opportunities to increase international collaboration and integration into the broader research network.

Overall, this analysis highlights the global nature of research on the topic with strong contributions from countries across multiple continents. It also underscores the importance of not just research output, but also the strength of international collaborations and citations in shaping the field's research landscape.

Table 7. Results of bibliometric coupling of countries

Country	Cluster	Links	Total link strength	Documents	Citations
United States	2	34	104479	297	9345
Germany	1	34	29853	58	1476
Austria	2	34	27161	37	1652
United Kingdom	3	34	25913	69	2124
Chile	2	34	25422	25	1264
South Korea	2	34	19405	25	651
Spain	2	34	17991	41	668
Netherlands	1	34	17640	37	1228
Canada	5	34	15793	37	1933
Belgium	1	34	12329	18	324
Singapore	2	34	11897	18	649
Malaysia	3	34	9415	30	329
Italy	1	34	8272	15	232
Sweden	1	34	7843	17	753
Australia	4	34	7697	31	583
Denmark	1	34	7548	10	272
Norway	1	34	7403	16	481
Taiwan	2	34	6948	14	174
Poland	1	34	5478	10	175
France	1	34	5261	9	302

5. Discussion

This bibliometric analysis provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of research on social media's influence on young voters' political engagement and voting behaviour, with a particular emphasis on the emerging role of TikTok. The study reveals several key findings that have significant implications for understanding the impact of social media platforms, especially TikTok, on youth political participation.

The analysis demonstrates a steady growth in research output from 2015 to 2024, with a notable surge between 2018 and 2020. This trend reflects growing academic interest in understanding the relationship between social media use and political engagement among young voters. The diverse geographical distribution of research, led by the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and China, underscores the global relevance of this topic.

The co-occurrence analysis of keywords reveals distinct thematic clusters, highlighting the multifaceted nature of this research area. Themes such as political participation, civic engagement, misinformation, activism, and digital divide emerge as central to the discourse. Notably, the analysis indicates a shift in focus from traditional social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter towards newer platforms, particularly TikTok (Cervi & Marín-Lladó, 2021; Moir, 2023).

TikTok's emergence as a key topic in recent research is particularly significant. With an average publication year of 2023.4167 and a relatively high total link strength, TikTok is positioned at the forefront of current academic discussions. This prominence reflects the platform's growing influence on youth political behaviour and its unique characteristics that set it apart from other social media platforms.

The co-authorship analysis reveals a network of influential researchers contributing to this field. Scholars like Brian E. Weeks, Homero Gil de Zúñiga, and Shelley Boulianne stand out for their significant contributions and collaborative efforts. This collaborative landscape suggests a rich, interdisciplinary approach to studying social media's impact on young voters.

The bibliographic coupling analysis further highlights the global nature of this research field, with strong contributions from countries across multiple continents. It also underscores the importance of international collaborations in shaping the research landscape.

This study is limited to a bibliometric mapping of the field and does not aim to provide a detailed behavioural analysis. Rather, it establishes a structured foundation upon which future empirical research can build, particularly in examining the relationship between TikTok use and youth voting behaviour.

6. Conclusion

This bibliometric study provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of research on social media's influence on young voters' political engagement and voting behaviour, with a particular focus on the emerging role of TikTok. The findings underscore the need for dedicated research on TikTok's unique features and their potential to shape youth political participation.

Recent studies on TikTok's rapid growth suggest a notable shift in the social media landscape, especially among young voters. TikTok's short-form, visually driven format represents a new paradigm for how political information is consumed and shared among youth. This shift necessitates a re-evaluation of existing theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches in studying political communication and engagement.

In conclusion, as TikTok continues to grow in popularity among youth, understanding its role in shaping political engagement and voting behaviour becomes increasingly crucial. This study serves as a foundation for future research in this rapidly evolving area of digital political communication, highlighting the need for continued scholarly attention to TikTok's unique influence on young voters' political participation.

Limitations and future directions

This study, while comprehensive, faces several limitations that should be addressed in future research. The reliance on a single database (Scopus) may have excluded relevant publications, particularly those in non-English or regional languages. The keyword-based search strategy, though broad, might have missed articles using different terminology, especially given the rapidly evolving nature of social media platforms. There's also a potential recency bias, given TikTok's recent emergence, which may underrepresent older but still relevant studies on the effects of social media more broadly. The bibliometric approach, while offering valuable quantitative insights, lacks qualitative content analysis that could provide a more nuanced understanding. Additionally, the fast-paced evolution of TikTok means some findings may quickly become outdated, a challenge inherent in studying emerging technologies. Lastly, the geographical imbalance in research output may lead to a skewed understanding that doesn't fully represent global perspectives on TikTok's influence.

To address these limitations and advance the field, future research should consider several recommendations. Mixed-methods approaches combining bibliometric analysis with qualitative content analysis would provide a more comprehensive understanding. Longitudinal studies are crucial to track changes in TikTok's influence over time, given its rapid evolution. More cross-platform comparative analyses are needed to understand TikTok's unique impact compared to other social media platforms. Interdisciplinary collaborations should be encouraged to provide a more holistic understanding. Future studies should also focus more on emerging markets and developing countries, where TikTok's influence might differ from that in Western contexts. In-depth studies of TikTok's algorithm and its role in the dissemination of political content are essential, as is a more granular analysis of user behaviour regarding political content. Research examining the implications for policy-making and platform regulation is also crucial. Methodological innovations tailored to the study of short-form video content and its impact on political attitudes are needed. Finally, investigating how cultural differences affect TikTok's influence across regions and demographics will yield valuable insights. By pursuing these recommendations, future research can offer a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of TikTok's role in shaping young voters' political engagement and voting behaviour.

Acknowledgments

Not applicable.

Author contributions

Not applicable.

Funding

Not applicable.

Competing interests

Not applicable.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Redfame Publishing.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

References

- Abbas, L., Fahmy, S. S., Ayad, S., Ibrahim, M., & Ali, A. H. (2022). TikTok Intifada: Analyzing Social Media Activism Among Youth. *Online Media and Global Communication*, 1(2), 287–314. <https://doi.org/10.1515/omgc-2022-0014>
- Ahlse, J., Nilsson, F., & Sandström, N. (2020). *It's time to TikTok: Exploring Generation Z's motivations to participate in# Challenges*. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:1434091>
- Akbari, D. A., Jastacia, B., Setiawan, E., & Ningsih, D. W. (2022). The marketing power of TikTok: A content analysis in higher education. *Binus Business Review*, 13(2), 159–170. <https://doi.org/10.21512/bbr.v13i2.8014>
- Bley, D. (2023). And the Oscar Goes To... TikTok. *Senior Honors Theses*. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/honors/1302>
- Bossetta, M. (2018). The Digital Architectures of Social Media: Comparing Political Campaigning on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat in the 2016 U.S. Election. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95(2), 471–496. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018763307>
- Bossetta, M., Dutceac Segesten, A., & Trenz, H. J. (2017). Engaging with European Politics Through Twitter and Facebook: Participation Beyond the National? In M. Barisione & A. Michailidou (Eds.), *Social Media and European Politics* (pp. 53–76). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59890-5_3
- Boulianne, S., & Larsson, A. O. (2023). Engagement with candidate posts on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook during the 2019 election. *New Media & Society*, 25(1), 119–140. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211009504>
- Boulianne, S., & Theocharis, Y. (2018). Young people, digital media, and engagement: A meta-analysis of research. *Social Science Computer Review*, 38(2), 111–127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439318814190>
- Boulianne, S., Hoffmann, C. P., & Bossetta, M. (2024). Social media platforms for politics: A comparison of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Reddit, Snapchat, and WhatsApp. *New Media & Society*, 14614448241262415. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448241262415>
- Brony, M., Alivi, M. A., Syed, M. A. M., & Dharejo, N. (2024). A Systematic Review on Social Media Health Communications and Behavioural Development among Indians in the COVID-19 Context. *Studies in Media and Communication*, 12(2), 37–49. <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v12i2.6585>
- Brony, M., Alivi, M. A., Syed, M. A. M., Dharejo, N., & Jiaqing, X. (2024). A systematic review on social media utilization by health communicators in India: Insights from COVID-19 pandemic. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 14(4), e202449. <https://doi.org/10.30935/ojcm/15007>
- Cervi, L., & Marín-Lladó, C. (2021). What are political parties doing on TikTok? The Spanish case. *Profesional de La Información*, 30(4). <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2021.jul.03>
- Chan, M. (2016). Social Network Sites and Political Engagement: Exploring the Impact of Facebook Connections and Uses on Political Protest and Participation. *Mass Communication and Society*, 19(4), 430–451. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2016.1161803>

- Dharejo, N., Alivi, M. A., Rahamad, M. S., Jiaqing, X., & Brony, M. (2023). Effects of Social Media Use on Adolescent Psychological Well-Being: A Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies*, 17(20). <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v17i20.44663>
- Effing, R., Van Hillegersberg, J., & Huibers, T. (2011). Social Media and Political Participation: Are Facebook, Twitter and YouTube Democratizing Our Political Systems? In E. Tambouris, A. Macintosh, & H. De Bruijn (Eds.), *Electronic Participation* (Vol. 6847, pp. 25–35). Springer Berlin Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-23333-3_3
- Gui, S. C. F. (2023). *The influence of celebrity politician's tiktok towards young voters' voting behaviour* [PhD Thesis, UTAR]. <http://eprints.utar.edu.my/5914/>
- Hindarto, I. H. (2022). TikTok and political communication of youth: A systematic review. *JRP (Jurnal Review Politik)*. <https://doi.org/10.15642/jrp.2022.12.2.146-176>
- Jiaqing, X., Alivi, M. A., Mustafa, S. E., & Dharejo, N. (2023). The Impact of Social Media on Women's Body Image Perception: A Meta-Analysis of Well-being Outcomes. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies*, 17(20). <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v17i20.44665>
- Karimi, K., & Fox, R. (2023). Scrolling, Simping, and Mobilizing: TikTok's influence over Generation Z's Political Behavior. *The Journal of Social Media in Society*, 12(1), 181–208.
- Kashaka, N. D. (2025). The impact of social media on political engagement. *Research Invention Journal of Law, Communication and Languages*. <https://doi.org/10.59298/RIJLCL/2025/523037>
- Kashyap, A., & Jonjua, M. (2020). Social media-a new digital power to influence voters. *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research*, 9(4), 693–699.
- Kemp, S. (2023). *It's a Mean, Mean World: Social Media and Mean World Syndrome*. <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/honorstheses/1302/>
- Khasabu, S., & Rahmanto, A. N. (2023). Social Media Preference to Reach Young Indonesian Voters. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1991.06.01.399>
- Lee, J., & Abidin, C. (2023). Introduction to the Special Issue of “TikTok and Social Movements.” *Social Media + Society*, 9(1), 205630512311574. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231157452>
- Leyva, R. (2017). Exploring UK millennials' social media consumption patterns and participation in elections, activism, and “slacktivism”. *Social Science Computer Review*, 35(4), 462–479. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439316655738>
- Lonkila, M., & Jokivuori, P. (2022). Sharing and liking as youth nano-level participation: Finnish students' civic and political engagement in social media. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 26(6), 803–820. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2022.2049731>
- Mitchelstein, E., Boczkowski, P., & Giuliano, C. (2023). Platform matters: Political opinion expression on social media. *Weizenbaum Journal of the Digital Society*, 3(3), w1-1.
- Mohamad, B., Dauda, S., & Halim, H. (2018). Youth offline political participation: Trends and role of social media. *Jurnal Komunikasi, Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 34(3), 11–28. <https://doi.org/10.17576/jkmjc-2018-3403-11>
- Moir, A. (2023). The Use of TikTok for Political Campaigning in Canada: The Case of Jagmeet Singh. *Social Media + Society*, 9(1), 205630512311576. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231157604>
- Mustapha, I., Khan, N., Qureshi, M. I., Sikandar, H., & Nu'man, D. (2024). Revolutionising the Tourism Industry: The Role of Innovative Technologies in Enhancing Tourist Experiences. In A. Ismail, F. N. Zulkipli, R. Mahat, M. A. Mohd Daril, & A. Öchsner (Eds.), *Innovative Technologies for Enhancing Experiences and Engagement* (pp. 79–86). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-55558-9_9
- Mustapha, I., Khan, N., Qureshi, M. I., Sikandar, H., Hassan, M., & Simarmata, J. (2024). Revolutionizing Supply Chain Processes: Harnessing the Power of IoT and Blockchain Technology to Enhance Opportunities. In A. Ismail, F. N. Zulkipli, R. Mahat, M. A. Mohd Daril, & A. Öchsner (Eds.), *Innovative Technologies for Enhancing Experiences and Engagement* (pp. 87–94). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-55558-9_10
- Okunzuwa, U. R. (2024). Social Studies and Citizenship Education: Its Role in Entrenching Right Democratic Values in Students. *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 7(1), 162–173. <https://doi.org/10.52589/AJSSHR-AFZLK50U>
- Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., & Brennan, S. E. (2021).

- The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *Bmj*, 372. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>
- Rehman, A. U. (2025). Youth engagement in politics through social media: A study of political communication tactics targeting young voters. *Social Science Review Archives*. <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i3.933>
- Shahid, A. (2025). Exploring the hashtag movements role on Facebook in political activism among youth of Pakistan: A digital ethnography. *International Journal of Management Thinking*. <https://doi.org/10.56868/ijmt.v3i1.81>
- Sikandar, H., Kohar, U. H. A., Sanda, G., Salman, A., Cilan, T., Shabbir, M. S., & Ramos-Meza, C. S. (2023). Eco-innovation in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): A Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 15(2), 5841–5863. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-023-01367-w>
- Van Eck, N., & Waltman, L. (2010). Software survey: VOSviewer, a computer program for bibliometric mapping. *Scientometrics*, 84(2), 523–538. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-009-0146-3>
- Vijay, D., & Gekker, A. (2021). Playing Politics: How Sabarimala Played Out on TikTok. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 65(5), 712–734. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764221989769>
- Yessenbekova, U. (2020). Social media and slacktivism in young people's life. *Media Watch*, 11(3), 515–524. <https://doi.org/10.15655/mw/2020/v11i3/202950>
- Zamora-Medina, R., Suminas, A., & Fahmy, S. S. (2023). Securing the youth vote: A comparative analysis of digital persuasion on TikTok among political actors. *Media and Communication*, 11(2), 218–231. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i2.6348>