

Philippine University Students' Exposure To Political Promotion On Tiktok and Their Political Participation

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Abstract

Using Media Dependency and Social Cognitive Theories, this study determined the relationship between Filipino university students' exposure to political promotion on TikTok and their political participation during the 2022 Philippine National Election. Employing a correlational research method to analyze the self-reported data of 300 respondents, the findings revealed a moderate level of exposure to political content on TikTok. This exposure registered a significant positive correlation with political knowledge, attitude towards political activities, and political behavior, demonstrating TikTok's influence on students' understanding and awareness of political information. Despite the moderate exposure, it was enough to create subsequent media effects on the cognitive, attitude, and behavior of the respondents towards political-related information and activities. This is aligned with the knowledge-attitude-behavior model, which posits knowledge as a crucial precursor to changes in attitude and behavior. This research underscores the significant role of new media, particularly TikTok, in shaping Filipino university students' political engagement, while also acknowledging the potential impact of cultural factors on their political participation

Keywords: *political communication, TikTok, dependency theory, social cognitive theory, media effects*

Introduction

Significant changes have occurred in information and communication technologies, and are continually changing the world (Golan et al., 2019). The innumerable studies conducted by media and communication scholars, political scientists, sociologists, and international relations scholars about social media usage point to how the internet has affected many aspects of human life, especially political events and activities (Golan et al., 2019). With technological advancements and improvements, so with political communication efforts as politicians began using websites and social media platforms for their political campaigns. The evolution of political advertisement is parallel with the evolution of technology, specifically the channels present.

The internet has become a primary platform for political participation, increasing voter awareness and fostering political engagement.(Ahmad et al., 2019). Thus, political knowledge, political participation, and internet use are all interrelated and associated with one another (McAllister, 2015). This phenomenon plays a key role in elections, especially in developing countries like the Philippines. This cements the Internet's important role in disseminating political information (McAllister, 2015). During the pandemic, a political surge was seen on the social media application, TikTok. Carson (2021) contends that TikTok is a new social media platform that political candidates are beginning to give more attention to because a surge of political discourse can be seen on the app in 2020. In the Philippines, political content on TikTok is very visible as many Filipino content creators are vocal about their political stands.

This study established the relationship between the exposure of students of Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU), a Philippine tertiary education institution, to political promotion content posted and shared on TikTok, and their political participation. This population was chosen to be respondents of the study because most college students' ages range from 18 to 29, and according to Mulder (2021), 48% of TikTok users are from this age bracket. At the same time, most college students are registered voters which fits the two criteria the study requires other than being a tertiary student. Overall, the study was expected to determine the profile of the students, the level of their exposure to political promotion content on TikTok, and its subsequent effect on the students' political participation. This study was therefore primed to establish a fundamental understanding of the effects of exposure to political promotion content on TikTok and its power to affect the users' attitude, behavior, and knowledge (cognitive) toward political participation.

Political Power of Social Media

Social media platforms, while serving as primary information sources for billions (Nam, 2012), present a significant risk of disinformation that can manipulate public opinion. These dual impacts of social media on information dissemination and political participation are crucial for understanding contemporary political dynamics. Research indicates that internet usage fosters political engagement and reinforces offline political participation (Nam, 2012).

Kahne, Middaugh, and Allen (2015) demonstrated that new media provides individuals with platforms for information dissemination, broad communication, and political activity participation, thereby facilitating participatory politics.

Studies have also explored the specific applications of social media in political communication. Siluveru (2015) highlighted its role in social networking and information dissemination regarding political events. Stieglitz, Brockmann, and Xuan (2012) identified a strong correlation between politicians' social media usage and user engagement, noting improved interaction between voters and politicians due to social networking sites (SNS). Biswas, Ingle, and Roy (2014) found that social media facilitates political party cohesion by uniting individuals. Storck (2011) documented the use of social media by activists for collective action. Hellweg (2011) observed that voters responded more positively to politicians' personal social media content compared to professional content. Similarly, Kalsnes (2016) examined Facebook's role as a platform for political party-voter interaction, offering best practices for political engagement.

Social Media and Philippine Politics

Buenaobra (2016) argues that after May 2016, social media changed the elections in the Philippines. The 2016 Election campaigns have shown how social media without editorial restraint can throw decency out the window, divide families, and create rifts among friends. Moreover, social media has rendered traditional campaign strategies insufficient, polarizing voters who have pinned their hopes and dreams on candidates who do not exactly personify and reflect the values, morality, and ethics of a nation (Buenaobra, 2016).

Since the current situation of the pandemic, the politicians and candidates for the Philippine Election 2022 took advantage of the usage of the internet and social media to serve as campaign platforms. With this kind of campaign, a lot of Filipino netizens and voters have seen and kept on seeing a lot of advertisements, posts, and different political views from netizens. In this case, many Filipino netizens and voters are influenced by social media and have open eyes because of the social media environment, as well as being able to easily get information, news, and other things that can help them choose their candidates to vote.

Patag (2018) found that 47% of Filipinos are internet users, with the vast majority (94%) accessing it via mobile. Furthermore, PulseAsia Research (2018) found that 51% of Filipino social media users have had their political views influenced by online content and they “changed their opinions concerning politics and governance at least once” (para. 28).

From face-to-face campaigns, phone calls, television, and radio advertisements to online advertisements on social media platforms, the dramatic developments in information technology and communication have brought significant changes in political communication. Emruli and Bača (2011) observed that new media transforms communication into a bidirectional process. Building upon this, Cantijoch et al. (2013) demonstrated that internet use, encompassing e-discussion, e-information, and e-campaigning, significantly impacts political

engagement. Their findings further suggest that e-campaigning serves as a direct conduit for connecting with online users during and after elections.

TikTok as a Political Platform

TikTok is a new social media platform that political candidates are beginning to give more attention to, and a surge of political discourse can be seen on the app in 2020 (Carson, 2021). In the Philippines, political content on TikTok has become very visible recently as many Filipino content creators are vocal about their political stands. There were many trending political hashtags used on the platform, such as #politicsph, #dilawan, #kakampinks, #BBMSara, and #Election2022.

TikTok, as articulated by the platform itself, aims to “inspire creativity and bring joy” (TikTok, 2020), fostering an entertainment-centric community predicated on immediate gratification (Cervi, 2021). The application facilitates the creation of short-form, looping videos (3-60 seconds) by providing users with diverse customization options, including music selection, professional filters, augmented reality effects, and editing tools. Notably, TikTok distinguishes itself through its potential for content replication and viral dissemination (Vijay & Gekker, 2021), where each video can inspire derivative creations. This dynamic is exemplified by the platform’s prevalent genres, duets and challenges (Kennedy, 2020). Duets involve users integrating their own performances with existing videos, while challenges are often sponsored, community-driven hashtag campaigns that encourage user participation in specific actions or trends.

Hindarto (2022) found that there is a significant increase in the interest of youth regarding political practices that could be attributed to the 15-second videos on TikTok in a systematic review of 30 Scopus-indexed articles published from 2018 to 2022. Another systematic literature review by Ali, Soomro, and Chhachhar (2024) point to the pivotal role of the app for campaigning, broadcasting political debates, and assessing public sentiment.

A defining feature of TikTok is its algorithmic recommendation system, which plays a more pivotal role in user experience compared to other social media platforms (Vijay & Gekker, 2021; Guinaudeau, Vottax & Munger, 2020). The algorithm constructs personalized content feeds for users, primarily through the “For You” page, by analyzing user interactions such as likes, comments, and viewing duration. This personalized information flow, based on user activity rather than established social connections, suggests a heightened algorithmic control over content visibility (Vijay & Gekker, 2021). Critically, this algorithmic personalization may contribute to the formation of echo chambers, wherein users are primarily exposed to content that aligns with their existing political ideologies, potentially limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints. This reinforcement effect may be further exacerbated by the observed tendency of users to predominantly engage with the algorithmically curated “For You” page, rather than actively seeking out varied content (Simpson & Semaan, 2021), though further research is warranted to fully explore this dynamic. Empirical evidence indicates that users predominantly

engage with the algorithmically curated “For You” page, rather than actively searching for content (Simpson & Semaan, 2021), though further research is warranted.

TikTok’s exponential rise, evidenced by its status as the most downloaded app globally and third overall after WhatsApp and Messenger (Omnicores, 2020), has been attributed to its ability to resonate with youth preferences (Chen et al., 2021). The platform’s unique affordances, which combine smartphone-captured video, web-sourced photos, emojis, text overlays, and special effects, create a novel information conveyance and consumption experience. This integration of diverse features marks TikTok as a distinctive social media platform.

For the Philippines, as a country with millions of TikTok users of all ages and where it is slowly becoming a platform for political discourse, it is also important to have a deep exploration of its political roles. Moreover, social media in the Philippines is slowly changing and impacting the political landscape especially when it comes to promotion and campaigns. From simple dance and dubbing videos, TikTok also now has become a platform of not only videos of users sharing their political stands or content of them campaigning for particular candidates but also for actual political advertisements.

According to Andrade (2023), TikTok has made it possible for tens of millions of users to easily acquire political information from community organizers, candidates, and journalists because of the platform’s distinctive content-sharing algorithm and vertical-swipe interface. Consumption of media content could result in media-influenced effects (Potter, 2012). The media’s one positive effect on society is connectivity (Akram & Kumar, 2017). Media effects could also be manifested cognitively. In a study by Galeon and Gonzalez-Flor (2021) on university students’ exposure to COVID-19 information on social media, they found a significant positive relationship between exposure and knowledge of respondents about COVID-19. In addition, individual media effects could be in their beliefs, attitudes, affect, physiological effects, and behaviors (Potter, 2012).

Media Exposure and Media Effects Theories

With consideration to the abovementioned, this study aimed to look into the participants’ level of exposure to political promotion on TikTok and its effect on their political participation in terms of their cognitive, attitude, and behavior. The Dependency Theory and Social Cognitive Theory were used as anchors to realize the research objectives.

According to the Dependency Theory proposed by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur in 1976, extensive use of media generates dependent relations in the audience. Through this theory, sufficient exposure of the respondents to political promotion content on TikTok can affect their political participation. As they continuously consume political content, TikTok slowly creates a dependent relationship with its users and because of this, it affects their political attitude, behavior, and knowledge (cognitive).

The second theory is the Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura. Bandura's (2001) Social Cognitive Theory suggests that in the socially mediated pathway, media influences link participants to social networks and community settings that provide natural incentives and continued personalized guidance for desired change. This theory helped determine how TikTok can promote changes in the respondents' attitude, behavior, and knowledge (cognitive) towards political participation through the information and motivation brought by the information available on the platform. Moreover, it determined how TikTok as a platform can guide its users through its content on how they link themselves with their political social networks and community.

Overall, political participation has cognitive, attitude, and behavior as its three (3) dimensions. This study is therefore primed to establish an understanding of the effects of exposure to political promotion content on TikTok and its power to affect the respondents' attitude, behavior, and knowledge (cognitive) toward political participation. Political promotion is any TikTok video that is political in nature, and contains information about any political candidate for the 2022 National Elections.

On one hand, exposure, as the independent variable in this study, refers to the frequency with which the respondents use TikTok. This frequency of being exposed to political information should have developed a dependent relationship between TikTok and the respondents which, in turn, affected their political participation. On the other hand, political participation is the dependent variable, and has cognitive, attitude, and behavior as its dimensions. Cognitive refers to acquiring knowledge and understanding of politics through watching political promotion content on TikTok. Also, attitude is the belief or feeling of the users towards political participation after they are exposed to political information on TikTok. And lastly, behavior is the way the respondents act in response to the political information they are exposed to on TikTok. These aspects of political participation are affected by the respondents' exposure to what they watch on TikTok related to political personas, their platforms, various political parties, and other politics-related information.

The findings of this study could aid in the self-awareness of voters on how they are influenced by information available on social media platforms, especially TikTok. Moreover, politicians and their political campaign managers can get insights from the study about how TikTok can be utilized as a platform to persuade voters to participate in political movements on social media for their electoral advantage. Also given importance is the contribution to policy-planning and decision-making of the Commission of Elections of the Philippines for an informed and participative public, especially the youth, when it comes to electoral registration and improved electoral turnouts.

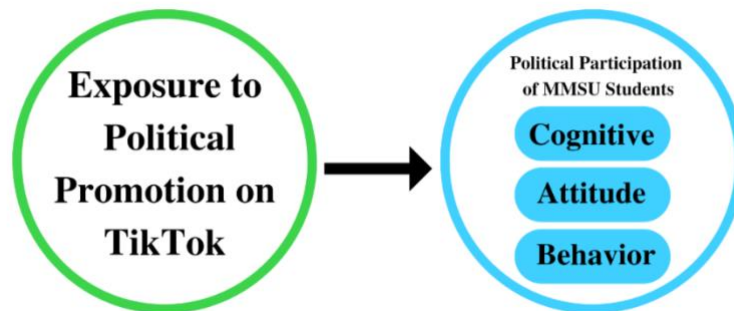


Figure 1. Exposure to political information on TikTok and its effects on the MMSU students' political participation

Methodology

In this study, the quantitative method specifically descriptive-correlational design was applied. One of the major advantages of quantitative research is that it does not require direct observation to be useful (Miller, 2020). This is in favor of the conduct of this study especially with the current situation of the pandemic as the researchers were able to send the online survey questionnaire to the respondents, without the need to meet with them face-to-face.

The study was conducted at the Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU) in the Province of Ilocos Norte, located in the northern part of the Philippines. MMSU possesses a high level of diversity in terms of religious beliefs, levels of various literacies, socioeconomic statuses, and, most especially, political beliefs. The diverse students can offer an all-inclusive perspective about their use of TikTok and their exposure to political content on the platform, and its concurrent effect on their political knowledge, attitude, and behavior.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University Research Ethics and Review Board (URERB) of MMSU, ensuring participant safety throughout the research process. Prior to participation, respondents were provided with an Informed Consent Information form, outlining the study's objectives and potential outcomes. Furthermore, participants were explicitly informed that their responses would be treated as strictly confidential and used solely for research purposes. Participation was entirely voluntary.

With purposive criterion sampling as a technique, the respondents were required to be 18 to 30 years old, registered voters, and TikTok users. The online survey had a total of 353 respondents, but only 300 responses were tabulated and interpreted as only these satisfied the criteria placed.

An online survey questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents. It is important to note that the questionnaire did not undergo formal validity testing, such as content or construct validity assessments, nor was its internal consistency evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. This may limit the

generalizability and reliability of the findings. It had six (6) parts: criteria, profile, exposure, cognitive, attitude, and behavior.

Criteria. This section ensured that the respondents satisfied the three (3) requirements of the study: 18 to 30 years old, registered voter for the 2022 National Election, and have a TikTok account. Any negative response in this section will terminate the ability of a respondent to answer the rest of the survey. The respondent must answer *yes* to all of the questions under this section to be able to proceed to the succeeding sections.

Profile. This section inquired about the respondents' name, age, and address. there were 103 (34%) 21-year-old respondents, 64 (21%) 20-year-old respondents, and 49 (16%) 19-year-old respondents, followed by 39 (13%) 18-year-old respondents and 30 (10%) 22-year-old respondents in this study. Most of the respondents' ages range from 18 to 22 years old. All municipalities and cities in the province of Ilocos Norte are well represented in the study except for two (2) municipalities. Some respondents were also tallied from the neighboring provinces. The City of Batac recorded the highest number of respondents (78) because of the researchers' geographic proximity to the said city.

Exposure. The frequency through which the respondents are exposed to political content on TikTok was asked in varied multiple-choice responses. Respondents were asked the number of times they access TikTok in a week (*rarely, 2 to 3 times a week or every day*), duration of every access (*less than 15 minutes, 15 to 30 minutes, 30 minutes to 1 hour, 1 hour to 2 hours, or more than 2 hours*), and questions that measured the depth of their engagement answerable by *always, very often, rarely, or never*. The questions under the *Exposure* section have been adopted from the studies of Toribio (2019) and Galeon and Gonzales-Flor (2021) about desensitization and cultivation analysis respectively.

Cognitive. The respondents were asked to rate if they *strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree* with statements that pertain to an increase in their knowledge about candidates' platforms, credentials, weaknesses, alliances, and family backgrounds attributable to their exposure to political information on TikTok.

Attitude. The stances on believing that voting matters, TikTok as an effective influence in voter registration, the Philippines having a clean and peaceful 2020 National Elections, and TikTok as a good avenue for political communication were asked from the respondents. Options of *strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree* were given.

Behavior. Actions related to politics were asked from respondents. Five (5) questions such as voting in the upcoming 2022 National Elections, attending political rallies, motorcades, and other activities, making donations to political individuals and causes, and engaging family, friends, and other people about political issues were asked. The questions could be answered by *strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree*.

This study relied on self-reported data, which presents a potential limitation due to the inherent possibility of respondent bias or inaccurate self-assessment.

Furthermore, the scope of this research did not encompass respondents' exposure to political promotion through traditional media or other social media platforms, thereby limiting the holistic understanding of their media consumption.

Frequency, mean, and R correlation as statistical analyses were used to determine the dependence and association of variables. The correlation strength interpretation of the r values is based on Dancey and Reidy's (2004, as cited in Akoglu, 2018) categorization as shown in the table below.

Table 1. r values and its correlation strength interpretation

r Value	Strength of Correlation
± 1	Perfect
$\pm 0.7 - 0.9$	Strong
$\pm 0.4 - 0.69$	Moderate
$\pm 0.1 - 0.39$	Weak
$< \pm 0.1$	Zero

Results And Discussion

A total of 353 responses were recorded through the online survey questionnaire carried out via Google Forms. Despite this, only 300 responses were considered because of the three (3) criteria required to be considered as a respondent in this research. The data were then tabulated with their analyses and implications below.

Exposure to Political Promotion on TikTok

The table below shows that the frequency of the respondents accessing TikTok registered as high exposure (2.60). Seventy percent (70%) of the total respondents said that they access TikTok every day.

The other five (5) item indicators for exposure in the table below reveal a high level of exposure in the respondents' duration of access (2.92), a moderate level of attentiveness of the respondents in watching TikTok videos related to politics (2.50; Moderate Exposure), intention (2.25; Moderate Exposure), and time allocation (2.30; Moderate Exposure) in watching such. Moderate exposure (1.98) could also be seen in the respondents' feeling of incompleteness when they are not able to watch politics-related videos on TikTok. It gained the lowest mean among the exposure item indicators. This could imply that the respondents have other media sources that they rely on and media content that they prefer aside from TikTok videos for political information.

Overall, a moderate exposure (2.43) of the respondents to political promotion on TikTok has been registered. With the contentions of Media Dependency and Social Cognitive Theory, it is assumed that this exposure level could be sufficient to create a dependent relationship with the respondents' political participation to promote changes in the knowledge (cognitive), attitude, and behavior of MMSU students.

Table 2. MMSU students' level of exposure to political promotion on TikTok

Indicators		Mean	Descriptive Rating
How many times do you access TikTok?		2.60	<i>High Exposure</i>
How many minutes do you spend on TikTok every time you visit the platform?		2.92	<i>High Exposure</i>
I intently watch politics-related Tiktok videos.		2.50	<i>Moderate Exposure</i>
I intentionally look for political information on TikTok.		2.25	<i>Moderate Exposure</i>
I allocate time to watch politics-related Tiktok videos.		2.30	<i>Moderate Exposure</i>
I feel like the day is not complete when I did not watch politics related- related videos on TikTok.		1.98	<i>Moderate Exposure</i>
Composite Mean		2.43	<i>Moderate Exposure</i>
<i>Statistical Range</i>			<i>Descriptive Rating</i>
1.00-1.75			<i>Low exposure</i>
1.76-2.50			<i>Moderate Exposure</i>
2.51-3.25			<i>High Exposure</i>
3.26-4.00			<i>Very High Exposure</i>

Knowledge of MMSU students and political promotion on TikTok

Exposure registered a positive response with all of the cognitive item indicators. Of the five-item indicators, *My knowledge of the platforms of the candidates during the 2022 Elections increased because of TikTok* obtained the highest mean of 2.85 (Agree). The other four item indicators for knowledge reveal a positive response in the respondents' knowledge of candidates' family

background (2.84; Agree), credentials (2.78; Agree), weaknesses (2.77; Agree), and alliances (2.77; Agree).

This could then imply that exposure affects the cognition of the respondents even if the overall exposure of the respondents only registered at 2.43 (Moderate Exposure). Cognitive also gained a composite mean of 2.80 (Agree).

Further, this suggests that because of TikTok's interesting feature of algorithmic recommendation system, the exposure of the respondents leads them to explore and watch more about politics. This could be the reason why their knowledge about politics is also continuously increasing. Storm (2022) describes the TikTok algorithm as a personalized recommendation system that curates content for the 'For You' page, aiming to maximize user engagement by delivering videos aligned with individual preferences. Therefore, if one is interested in politics, the TikTok algorithm makes it possible for politically related videos to continuously appear on their "For You" page. Fanbytes (2022) highlights TikTok's algorithmic architecture, which facilitates the rapid dissemination of content. Consequently, a single video containing a resonant message possesses the potential for exponential viewership. In TikTok, information can easily go viral reaching millions of users online, that is why there is no doubt that the platform can help in increasing the knowledge of its users.

Table 3. Knowledge of MMSU students and political promotion on TikTok

Indicators		Mean	Descriptive Rating
My knowledge of the platforms of the candidates during the 2022 Elections increased because of TikTok.		2.85	<i>Agree</i>
My knowledge of the credentials of the candidates during the 2022 Elections increased of TikTok.		2.78	<i>Agree</i>
My knowledge of the weaknesses of the candidates during the 2022 Elections increased because of TikTok.		2.77	<i>Agree</i>
My knowledge of the candidates' alliances increased because of TikTok.		2.77	<i>Agree</i>
My knowledge of the candidate's family background increased because of TikTok.		2.84	<i>Agree</i>
Composite Mean		2.80	<i>Agree</i>
<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Descriptive Rating</i>		
<i>1.00-1.75</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>		
<i>1.76-2.50</i>	<i>Disagree</i>		

2.51-3.25	Agree		
3.26-4.00	Strongly agree		

Attitude of MMSU students and political promotion on TikTok

With exposure, all five (5) attitude item-indicators showed a positive response. The item-indicator *Because of watching politics-related TikTok videos, I believe that my vote was important in the 2022 National Election* gained the highest mean of 3.03 (Agree). Moreover, the four (4) other attitude item-indicators also showed a positive response with exposure: *Through watching politics-related TikTok videos, I believe that a person could be encouraged to be a registered voter* (2.95; Agree), *TikTok is a good avenue for political candidates to reach out to voters* (2.69; Agree); and *Through watching politics related TikTok videos, I believe that the Philippines will have a clean and peace National Elections in the future* (2.58; Agree). The item-indicator *Politics-related TikTok content made me want to attend political rallies* gained the lowest mean of 2.52 (Agree). The area of behavior gained an overall mean of 2.81 (Agree).

Table 4. Attitude of MMSU students and political promotion on TikTok

Indicators		Mean	Descriptive Rating
Because of watching politics- related TikTok videos, I believe that my vote was important in the 2022 National Elections.		3.03	Agree
Through watching politics related TikTok videos, I believe that a person could be encouraged to be a registered voter		2.95	Agree
Through watching politics related TikTok videos, I believe that the Philippines will have a clean and peace National Elections in the future.		2.58	Agree
TikTok is a good avenue for political candidates to reach out to voters.		2.69	Agree
Politics related TikTok contents made me want to attend political rallies.		2.52	Agree
Composite Mean		2.81	Agree
<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Descriptive Rating</i>		
1.00-1.75	Strongly disagree		
1.76-2.50	Disagree		
2.51-3.25	Agree		
3.26-4.00	Strongly agree		

Indicators		Mean	Descriptive Rating
Because of watching politics- related TikTok videos, I believe that my vote was important in the 2022 National Elections.		3.03	<i>Agree</i>
Through watching politics related TikTok videos, I believe that a person could be encouraged to be a registered voter		2.95	<i>Agree</i>
Through watching politics related TikTok videos, I believe that the Philippines will have a clean and peace National Elections in the future.		2.58	<i>Agree</i>
TikTok is a good avenue for political candidates to reach out to voters.		2.69	<i>Agree</i>
Politics related TikTok contents made me want to attend political rallies.		2.52	<i>Agree</i>
Composite Mean		2.81	<i>Agree</i>
<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Descriptive Rating</i>		
<i>1.00-1.75</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>		
<i>1.76-2.50</i>	<i>Disagree</i>		
<i>2.51-3.25</i>	<i>Agree</i>		
<i>3.26-4.00</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>		

According to Hassali et al. (2012), better knowledge can lead to positive attitudes and subsequently good practices. In this study cognitive showed a positive response with exposure; therefore, it led to a positive response in attitude as well.

Behavior of MMSU students and political promotion on TikTok

Out of the five (5) behavior item indicators, only two (2) obtained a positive response with exposure. The behavior item-indicator *Politics-related TikTok videos made me share political information with my family and friends* gained the highest mean of 2.66 (Agree) while the item indicator *Politics-related TikTok videos made me talk to my family, friends, and other people about political issues more* also gained a positive descriptive rating of Agree with a mean of 2.64. The item indicators that gained a positive response with exposure are indicators that are all

about sharing and talking about political information with their family and friends. These aspects of political participation are done only in their inner circle.

The item indicator *I voted for during the 2022 National Elections because of politics-related videos I watched on TikTok* gained a mean of 2.29 with a descriptive rating of *Disagree*. This could suggest that other than their exposure to political promotion on TikTok other factors made the respondents vote during the 2022 elections. Item indicator *Politics-related TikTok videos made me attend political rallies, motorcades, and other activities* also gained a negative descriptive rating of *Disagree* (2.18) with exposure. This could suggest that because the respondents are students, they could not attend political rallies because of their classes. At the same time, Ilokanos are not that vocal with the candidates they support during elections especially since bashing and cancel culture are widespread just like what happened during the recently concluded 2022 elections. Lastly, the item indicator *Politics-related TikTok videos made me donate money to political candidates and causes* gained a mean of 2.02 also with a descriptive rating of *Disagree*. This could suggest that because the respondents are students, most of them are just living off their allowances given by their parents with no extra money to spare for other expenses. Moreover, most of our respondents are Ilokanos and they are known for being thrifty.

Table 5. Behavior of MMSU students and political promotion on TikTok

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
I voted during the 2022 National Elections because of politics-related videos I watched on TikTok.	2.29	<i>Disagree</i>
Politics-related TikTok videos made me attend political rallies, motorcades, and other activities.	2.18	<i>Disagree</i>
Politics-related TikTok videos made me donate money to political candidates and causes.	2.02	<i>Disagree</i>
Politics-related TikTok videos made me talk to my family, friends, and other people about political issues more.	2.64	<i>Agree</i>
Politics-related TikTok videos made me share political information to my family and friends.	2.66	<i>Agree</i>
Composite Mean	2.36	<i>Disagree</i>

<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Descriptive Rating</i>		
1.00-1.75	<i>Strongly disagree</i>		
1.76-2.50	<i>Disagree</i>		
2.51-3.25	<i>Agree</i>		
3.26-4.00	<i>Strongly agree</i>		

Effect of exposure of MMSU students to political promotion on TikTok on their cognitive, attitude, and behavior

All three (3) political participation indicators registered a significant positive correlation with exposure.

Table 6. The relationship between the MMSU students' exposure to their cognitive, attitude, and behavior

Variables	r Value	p Value	Result
Cognitive	0.122*	0.035	<i>Significant</i>
Attitude	0.213**	0.000	<i>Significant</i>
Behavior	0.240**	0.000	<i>significant</i>

*Correlation is significant at 0.05***

*Correlation is Significant at 0.01**

Cognitive.

Overall, the area of cognition obtained a significant positive correlation of 1.22 (correlation strength: weak). This suggests, that as the respondents' exposure to TikTok political promotion content increases, their knowledge about the candidates' platforms, credentials, weaknesses, alliances, and family background also increases. According to the Media Dependency Theory, the extensive use of media in the internal link between media, audience, and an extensive social system generates dependent relations in the audience. In this study, a significant positive effect could be seen between the exposure of the respondents to political promotion on TikTok and their level of knowledge of political information even if the overall exposure is only measured at 2.43 (Moderate Exposure). It was enough to create a dependent relationship between their exposure to political promotion content and their knowledge of political information.

Consistent with the findings of Galeon and Gonzalez-Flor (2021), this study demonstrates a significant positive relationship between exposure and knowledge. Their research on university students' exposure to COVID-19 information on social media revealed a similar pattern, where exposure levels directly influenced knowledge acquisition.

These findings are consistent with Sodani and Mendenhall's (2021) study of 100 American youth (ages 13-20), which demonstrated TikTok's significant influence on online political engagement, particularly in raising awareness of social and political issues. Specifically, 70% of their respondents reported increased knowledge of political issues through TikTok.

Also, Ahmad et al. (2019) found a strong correlation between online political activities, political awareness, and offline political participation among university students. Their study indicated that a majority of respondents perceived themselves as well-informed on political issues through online media, and that online activities significantly enhanced their sense of political efficacy.

Attitude.

With exposure, attitude obtained a significant positive correlation of 2.13 (correlation strength: weak). This finding suggests that the respondents' exposure to TikTok's political promotion content has positively affected their attitude towards their political participation and that it has successfully promoted a change in their beliefs or feelings towards political-related activities. A direct relationship is seen between exposure and attitude. This means that with the increase in exposure, the respondents are more likely to believe that their votes matter in elections, they should be registered voters, and peaceful and clean elections could be achieved. This is in accord with the Social Cognitive Theory that one of the pathways that communications systems operate is the direct pathway in which it promotes changes by informing, enabling, motivating, and guiding participants.

Furthermore, in her study on TikTok's strategic influence on political communication and campaigns, Hernandez (2022) discovered that TikTok does indeed influence the political perspectives of young adults. TikTok is creating an echo chamber by developing a communication system that reaches millions of people online and influences their political views via its algorithm feature.

It is also worth pointing out that even if the overall exposure only measures at 2.43 (Moderate Exposure), the respondents still agreed that their exposure to political promotion on TikTok positively changed their attitude towards political participation. This also could be because, other than their exposure to the actual videos or content on TikTok, they also engage with other users or online communities on the platform, where they can share their opinions, and they also could receive information from others, which could also affect their attitude.

Consistent with this perspective, Velasquez and Quenette (2018) demonstrated that social media's impact on offline political engagement among Hispanic and Latino individuals is primarily driven by interactive behaviors and personal experiences, rather than mere exposure to media content. It suggests that aside from the level of exposure, the kind of online community individuals belong to could also affect the promotion of change in their beliefs or feelings towards political-related activities. This result could also be affected by the respondents' cognitive (knowledge) having a significant positive relationship with exposure. According to Hassali et al. (2012), better knowledge can lead to positive attitudes

and subsequently good practices. If the respondents had a positive increase in knowledge due to their exposure to political information on TikTok, then there is a higher possibility that their attitudes will also be positively affected. In this study, knowledge obtained a positive relationship with exposure; therefore, attitude also registered a positive effect with exposure.

Behavior.

Exposure registered a positive significant relationship with behavior with a correlation coefficient of 2.40 (correlation strength: weak). This means that as the respondents' exposure to political content on TikTok increases, their propensity towards voting, attending political rallies, and motorcades, donating to political causes, and talking and sharing with family, friends, and other people about politics also increases. The knowledge-attitude-behavior model, as articulated by Liu et al. (2016), underscores the fundamental role of knowledge in driving behavioral modifications. In this study a positive effect and relationship is found between exposure and knowledge therefore a positive relationship could also be seen between exposure and behavior.

The present study's results align with Cantijoch, Cutts, and Gibson's (2013) findings, which demonstrated that e-campaigning effectively facilitates direct engagement with internet users throughout electoral cycles.

According to Schrader and Lawless (2004), knowledge is merely the first step to behavioral change. Effective intervention requires a progression from cognitive change to attitudinal adjustment, culminating in behavioral modification, rather than solely providing information. In this study, there was a positive significant effect in both the areas of cognitive and attitude; therefore, leading to a positive effect on the respondents' behavior or practices.

In addition, according to Nawi et al. (2020), the Media Dependency Theory suggests that as people become more dependent on media, the influence of media on their perceptions and behaviors becomes stronger. In this study, as the respondents' exposure to political promotion content on TikTok increases, the influence of media on their perception and behavior towards politics-related activities also increases.

Following the Social Cognitive Theory, the results also suggest that the respondents' exposure to political promotion content on TikTok was enough to promote positive change in their behavior. Even if the total average exposure of the respondents is only 2.43 (Moderate Exposure), subsequent media effects successfully occurred in all three areas: cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between university students' exposure to political promotion content on TikTok and their political participation. Findings revealed that even moderate exposure (mean = 2.43) significantly influenced respondents' cognitive (knowledge), attitudinal, and behavioral engagement in political activities. This aligns with the knowledge-attitude-behavior

model, where cognitive development precedes attitudinal shifts, which in turn drive behavioral changes. Specifically, increased exposure positively correlated with political knowledge, subsequently affecting attitudes and behaviors related to political participation.

The observed media effects, despite moderate exposure levels, support the Media Dependency and Social Cognitive Theories. TikTok, functioning as a direct communication system, effectively informs, enables, motivates, and guides users, thus fostering political engagement. This underscores TikTok's potential as a powerful tool for political communication, particularly during elections.

Implications

Political campaign managers should leverage TikTok's influence to engage voters, while politicians can utilize the platform to enhance their public image. Voters should use TikTok to inform their electoral decisions. The Philippine Commission on Elections can also utilize TikTok to promote voter registration and increase turnout, particularly among youth.

Limitations and Future Research

This study's limitations include its focus on a single university which potentially limits the generalizability of findings. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of respondent bias. The study also did not account for exposure to political promotion on traditional media or other social media platforms.

Future research should address these limitations by employing larger, more diverse samples, and conducting comparative analyses of TikTok's political content with other platforms. Also, the present study did not differentiate between political content types (e.g., satire, news, endorsements, propaganda) and their potential impact on TikTok users. Future research should explore these distinctions. Qualitative studies, such as focus groups or interviews, could provide deeper insights into motivations and attitudes. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the impact of TikTok political content before, during, and after elections would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the platform's influence on political participation. Finally, content analysis on the language, themes, and technicalities of political promotion content on TikTok compared to other platforms would enhance understanding of the platform's unique effects.***

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