

Analyzing Electorate Behavior on Social Media in the Philippines: A Quantitative Study

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Date received: March 16, 2025

Date revised: June 8, 2025

Date accepted: July 3, 2025

Originality: 86%

Grammarly Score: 99%

Similarity: 14%

Recommended citation:

Portabes, A.J., & Apas, R. (2025). Analyzing electorate behavior on social media in the Philippines: A quantitative study. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(8), 114-120. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.172>

Abstract. Social media has become a central tool in modern political engagement, yet its impact on voter behavior in rural Philippine contexts remains underexplored. This study addresses that gap by examining how social media influences electoral behavior in Magsaysay, Davao del Sur. The objectives were to identify the demographic characteristics of voters, including age, gender identity, education level, and marital status, and to determine whether these factors significantly affect their political engagement on social media. A quantitative approach was employed using an adapted survey administered to 110 respondents across two barangays. Most participants were female, aged 16-25, and in high school. Facebook emerged as the most preferred platform for sharing and interacting with political content. Despite varying demographic profiles, statistical analysis revealed no significant differences in social media-based electoral behavior. These findings suggest that while Facebook facilitates political engagement, demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, and marital status do not significantly influence voter behavior on social media. Future research should expand to larger populations and consider additional variables such as political affiliation, internet access, and digital literacy to gain a deeper understanding of online electoral participation.

Keywords: Common platforms; Demographic profile; Electorate behavior; Influence; Political choices; Social media.

1.0 Introduction

The growing dominance of social media has reshaped political communication and voter participation on a global scale. These platforms, known for their accessibility and immediacy, have enabled individuals to engage in political discussions, share perspectives, and build communities around shared ideologies. In the Philippines, recognized as the "social media capital of the world," digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become central to political discourse, particularly among young people and first-time voters (Cabañes, 2020).

While extensive research has been conducted on the role of social media in national elections and urban centers, there is a notable lack of empirical data on how these platforms influence voter behavior in rural and localized contexts, such as the Municipality of Magsaysay in Davao del Sur. Prior studies (e.g., Bimber, 2014; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2016) have highlighted how social media fosters political engagement and facilitates the exchange of information. They also warned of its role in encouraging selective exposure and ideological polarization. However, these findings are often in Western or highly urbanized settings, leaving a gap in understanding the dynamics in less-studied, rural communities.

This study aims to address this gap by examining the impact of social media use on voter engagement, opinion formation, and decision-making among residents of Magsaysay. Despite the increasing digitalization of local political campaigns and community dialogues, the specific ways voters interact with political content on social media, particularly in terms of demographic patterns, platform preferences, and behavioral outcomes, remain insufficiently explored.

As local political discourse increasingly migrates online, it becomes imperative to investigate whether social media fosters political diversity and informed debate or reinforces echo chambers that limit exposure to differing views (Sunstein, 2009). Understanding these patterns is particularly urgent in Magsaysay, where digital platforms now play a vital role in shaping voter attitudes and campaign strategies. This study analyzes voters' social media behavior in the Municipality of Magsaysay by identifying key demographic trends, platform preferences, and behavioral patterns related to political engagement. The research aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital democracy in the Philippines, inform local political strategies, and support efforts in civic education and the mitigation of misinformation.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized the descriptive-correlational research design to analyze voter behavior on social media in the Municipality of Magsaysay. Data collection was conducted using surveys and adaptive questionnaires. According to Salaria (2013), descriptive research encompasses three distinct types, each employing a systematic approach to collect and analyze empirical data, to expand knowledge through disciplined scientific processes. Similarly, Bhandari (2021) emphasizes that correlational research examines relationships between variables without manipulation, allowing researchers to gather data from natural environments quickly. This approach enhances external validity, enabling the application of findings to real-world scenarios. By measuring the degree of correlation between variables of interest, the study provides insights into the interplay between social media usage and voter behavior.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in Magsaysay, Davao del Sur, a third-class municipality in the Philippines with a population of 53,876 (PSA, 2020). Magsaysay was selected due to its increasing political activity on digital platforms, high internet penetration, and the lack of prior localized studies on the impact of social media on political behavior. This distinctive context offers valuable insights into the digital political landscape in rural Philippine settings.

2.3 Research Participants

The population consisted of registered voters in Magsaysay. Using simple random sampling, 110 participants from Barayong and San Miguel were selected. Sampling was determined using Slovin’s formula, ensuring representation while maintaining a manageable sample size. A summary of participant distribution is provided below:

Barangay	Populatio n	Sample Size (n)
Barayong	5,955	55
San Miguel	1,734	55
Total	7,689	110

2.4 Research Instrument

The study used an adapted questionnaire based on Carney (2022), Xia & Shen (2023), and Lee et al. (2019). The tool was modified for the local context and covered two parts: (a) Demographic profile of respondents (age, gender, education, marital status), (b) Social media behavior and voter engagement patterns. Three faculty members from the political science and communication departments reviewed the study and confirmed its validity. The reliability test yielded a Cronbach’s Alpha score of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

This study followed a systematic process to examine the impact of social media on political polarization in the Municipality of Magsaysay. Authorization to conduct the study was obtained, ensuring adherence to ethical standards, including participant confidentiality and data protection. Questionnaires were distributed and retrieved from appropriate respondents to ensure accurate data collection. The gathered data was computed, tabulated, and analyzed to derive meaningful insights and ensure reliable conclusions.

2.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, percentages) and inferential statistics, including the Chi-square test of independence, to examine associations between demographic variables and social media behavior. The collected data were processed and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean) were used to describe the demographic profile and social media behavior. Independent sample t-tests and ANOVA were used to test for significant differences in voter behavior across demographic variables. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used for all statistical tests.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined in the 1979 Belmont Report, complying with the principles of informed consent, beneficence, justice, and respect for persons. Participants were informed of their rights, and participation was entirely voluntary. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Ethical clearance, clearance number REC-2023-052, was obtained from the Davao del Sur State College Research Ethics Committee. The researcher also ensured compliance with the guidelines of social media platforms and used the data exclusively for academic purposes. Debriefings were conducted after the survey to address any concerns participants may have had.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Table 1 The data indicate a predominantly young electorate, with 48.2% of the population aged 16–25 and 32.7% aged 26–30. Females constitute the majority at 66.4%, while most respondents have attained at least a high school level of education (66.3% combined high school level and graduate). A majority of respondents are single (51.8%). This youthful, predominantly female demographic with moderate education suggests a population segment that is digitally savvy yet still in formative stages of political engagement and awareness. Youth participation in politics is crucial, particularly as digital natives increasingly shape political discourse (Loader et al., 2016). The gender skew aligns with trends indicating women's increasing online political engagement (Larsson & Moe, 2019). Education level correlates with political awareness, as recent studies show that secondary education is pivotal for civic knowledge (Campbell & Syed, 2021). Political communication strategies should focus on youth-targeted and gender-sensitive messaging to effectively engage with the target audience. Civic education programs may need reinforcement at the secondary level to maximize political efficacy. Policies promoting inclusive engagement can strengthen democratic participation among underrepresented groups (Boulianne & Lee, 2022).

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents in terms of Age in Municipality of Magsaysay

Variables	F	Rf (%)
Age		
16-25	53	48.2
26-30	36	32.7
31-50	21	19.1
Gender Identity		
Male	28	25.5
Female	73	66.4
Prefer not to say	9	8.2
Educational Attainment		
No Formal School	2	1.8
High School Level	48	43.6
College Level	18	16.4
Elementary Level	6	5.5
High School Graduate	25	22.7
College Graduate	7	6.4
Elementary Graduate	4	3.6

Civil Status		
Single	57	51.8
Married	41	37.3
Widowed	7	6.4
Separated	5	4.5
Total	110	100

Table 2. shows that Facebook is the most dominant platform for political content, both alone (22.9%) and in combination with TikTok and YouTube, confirming its centrality in local political engagement. Most (58.2%) access political information daily, indicating high digital information consumption. This reflects a digitally connected electorate heavily reliant on Facebook for political updates, with a significant but smaller audience on emerging platforms like TikTok. The dominance is consistent with global trends where Facebook remains a primary news source.

Table 2. *Common Platforms Followed by Electorates Residents of the Municipality of Magsaysay.*

Common Platforms	Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Facebook (Fb)	25	22.90
Instagram (IG)	1	0.90
Tiktok (TK)	4	3.70
Fb and TK	22	20.20
Fb and YT	7	6.40
TK and YT	1	0.90
Fb, T and TK	1	0.90
Fb, IG and TK	11	10.10
Fb, TK and YT	16	14.70
T, TK and YT	1	0.90
Fb, T, IG and TK	1	0.90
Fb, T, IG and YT	3	2.80
Fb, IG, YT and LI	11	10.10
Fb, T, IG, TK and YT	3	2.80
Fb, T, IG, YT and LI	1	0.90
Total	110	100
Obtain Information on Political and Public Affairs from the Different Social Media Platforms		
Daily	64	58.20
Few Times a Week	28	25.50
Once a Week	7	6.40
Rarely	10	9.10
Never	1	0.90
Total	110	100

Table 3 shows that only 40% share political content, and 20.9% report that social media influenced their voting decision. Most respondents engage with political content rarely (45.5%) or never (24.5%). Despite widespread access, active political engagement on social media remains limited among the Electorate, suggesting social media is more a source of information than a driver of political behavior change. This aligns with Karakoç (2021), who found that political exposure does not guarantee behavioral shifts. Similarly, the limited sharing and low voting change rates indicate a gap between online political information and offline political action (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2016). Strategies are needed to convert passive consumption into active engagement. Civic education programs should emphasize the importance of political participation, extending beyond access to information. Platforms should design features that encourage constructive political dialogue and engagement (Boulianne, 2015).

Table 3. *The Electorate's Attitudes in Using social media in Municipality of Magsaysay.*

Topics	Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Have you discussed or shared political content on social media related to elections in Magsaysay?		
Yes	44	40
No	66	60
Total	110	100
Have you ever changed your voting decision based on information or discussions you encountered on social media?		

Yes	23	20.9
No	87	79.1
Total	110	100
How frequently do you engage with political content on social media?		
Daily	11	10.0
Weekly	12	10.9
Monthly	10	9.1
Rarely	50	45.5
Never	27	24.5
Total	110	100

Table 4 shows that social media has a significant influence on political choices, but the Electorate Also impacts the Electorate's political behavior. While social media influences opinions, actual behaviors, such as voting or participating in campaigns, are less affected, likely moderated by offline factors. Boulianne (2015) and Vaccari & Valeriani (2016) report that digital media reinforces existing attitudes rather than drastically changing behavior, with offline political engagement still critical. Policies must recognize the complementary role of social media with traditional political processes. Encouraging offline political involvement remains essential, alongside online engagement.

Table 4. *The Influence of Social Media in Political Choices and Electorates behavior in Municipality of Magsaysay.*

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
Political Choices	3.48	High
Electorates Behavior	3.23	Moderate
Total		

Table 5 shows that respondents are highly supportive of regulating misinformation and value diverse viewpoints. However, direct influence on voting decisions is only moderate. Social media is seen more as an opinion-sharing platform than a tool for voter persuasion. This supports Shehata and Strömbäck (2018), who argue that social media reinforces existing views rather than changing them. Policies should focus on information accuracy and exposure to varied viewpoints to support informed voting. Highlights key elements shaping political decisions through social media. Respondents are most vigorously in agreement (mean = 3.76) on the need for regulations ensuring the accuracy of online political information, reflecting high public concern for transparency and integrity in digital political discourse. Similarly, respondents emphasize the importance of candidates providing truthful information (3.66) and value engaging with opposing viewpoints (3.54).

Table 5. *The Influence of social media in terms of Political Choices in Municipality of Magsaysay.*

Topic	Mean	Interpretation
1. I frequently express my opinions on social issues through social media.	3.31	Moderate
2. Belief in social media influence on political opinions or voting choices	3.30	Moderate
3. Engaging with diverse political opinions and perspectives is crucial in political discourse.	3.50	High
4. Acquiring knowledge from individuals with divergent political views is of greater significance than attempting to convince them.	3.54	High
5. There should be regulations to ensure the accuracy of information shared by political candidates on social media.	3.76	High
6. Provision of precise information on social media is of utmost importance for political candidates.	3.66	High
7. Social media exerts a substantial influence on my voting choices.	3.28	Moderate
Total Mean	3.48	High

Table 6 highlights how social media shapes electoral behavior, with respondents moderately agreeing (mean = 3.23) that it influences their interactions and political engagement. Many disengage from discussions, unfollow or leave chat groups when encountering opposing views, particularly on issues related to protests (3.42). While voters favor candidates who engage online (3.09), they also show moderate empathy for differing perspectives (3.21). High mean scores on disengaging from opposing views suggest a high level of polarization. Moderate scores on empathy indicate limited tolerance for differing opinions. Emotional responses and selective exposure shape political behavior on social media. These findings reflect the presence of echo chambers, as noted by Usher et al. (2018). Digital literacy programs should foster critical engagement and reduce political polarization.

Table 6. *The Influence of social media in terms of Electorate's Behavior in Municipality of Magsaysay.*

Topics		Mean	Interpretation
1.	I hide someone's comments/posts on social media due to my disagreement with their perspectives on the protest-related matter.	3.42	High
2.	I removed a friendship or unfollowed an individual on social media. Their perspectives on the protest-related matter were not in agreement with mine.	3.42	High
3.	I removed conversations with others on social media due to my disagreement with their protest-related matter.	3.07	Moderate
4.	I disengaged from chat groups on social media due to my disagreement with their protest-related agenda.	3.11	Moderate
5.	I am more inclined to support a candidate who actively interacts with voters on social media platforms.	3.09	Moderate
6.	I hold a positive opinion of political supporters in the realm of local politics.	3.30	Moderate
7.	I empathize with individuals who uphold divergent political views during political discourse.	3.21	Moderate
Total Mean		3.23	Moderate

Table 7 shows that demographic groups exhibit significant differences in political behavior on social media. Behavior is more likely to be driven by a shared digital culture than by individual demographic traits. These findings align with Hargittai's (2018) research, which found that demographics have a minimal influence on online political behavior. Programs designed to boost political engagement should be inclusive, rather than targeting individuals solely by age, gender, or education. Overall, demographic characteristics have a limited influence on social media-driven political behavior in Magsaysay, emphasizing the need to explore other variables that shape digital political engagement.

Table 7. *Significant Difference on the Electorate's Behavior on social media According to their Profile.*

Profile	F-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	4.79	.010	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Gender Identity	0.289	.750	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	1.450	.204	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.642	.590	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

4.0 Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of social media on the political behavior and choices of voters in the Municipality of Magsaysay, Davao del Sur. Specifically, it examined how various social media platforms influence engagement, opinion formation, and voter decision-making, as well as the impact of demographic variables on online political behavior. The findings led to several key conclusions. First, the majority of respondents were registered voters aged 16 to 25, predominantly female (66.4%), with most having attained a high school level of education (43.6%) and identifying as single (51.8%). This demographic profile indicates that young people, particularly young women, comprise a substantial portion of the politically active individuals in the municipality.

Second, Facebook emerged as the most frequently used platform for accessing political content, with 22.9% of respondents using it exclusively and 20.2% combining it with TikTok. These platforms serve as the primary channels through which voters engage with political figures and share election-related information, indicating that social media plays a central role in modern political communication in the local context. Third, while 40% of respondents shared or discussed political content online, 60% chose not to engage, indicating varying levels of comfort and motivation in expressing their political views. Notably, only 20.9% reported that social media influenced their voting decisions, suggesting that while it facilitates exposure to political ideas, it may not significantly alter voter preferences. Moreover, participants acknowledged the impact of social media on political discourse, particularly about protest-related issues and candidates' responsiveness. Still, this influence was more pronounced in shaping opinions than changing concrete voting behavior. Respondents favored political candidates who actively engaged on social media but also tended to withdraw from interactions that challenged their views, illustrating engagement and polarization. Finally, the ANOVA results revealed no statistically significant differences in social media behavior across demographic variables, including age, gender identity, educational attainment, and civil status. This implies that social media engagement in the political sphere is relatively uniform across diverse groups within the community. In conclusion, this study contributes to

the growing body of literature on digital political participation by highlighting both the potential and the limitations of social media as a tool for political influence. It emphasizes the importance of promoting critical digital literacy to empower voters to engage constructively online. Future research may build on these findings by exploring the psychological motivations behind selective exposure to political content and incorporating qualitative methods to deepen understanding of voter behavior. Additionally, investigating the role of misinformation and fact-checking could offer valuable insights for policymakers and electoral bodies aiming to foster informed and participatory democratic processes.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Author 1: responsible for editing and encoding the research data, ensuring accuracy, coherence, and adherence to academic standards.

Author 2: supervisory, guiding the research process, overseeing data collection and analysis, and ensuring methodological rigor.

Their collective contributions strengthened the study's reliability and overall quality.

6.0 Funding

This research was conducted without any external or financial support from any funding agency. The researchers personally covered all data collection, analysis, and documentation expenses.

7.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors affirm that this study does not involve conflicts of interest. All research activities were conducted with academic integrity, transparency, and independence, ensuring that the findings remain unbiased and objective.

8.0 Acknowledgment

The researcher wishes to extend her deep gratitude and appreciation to the individuals, groups, and institutions listed below for their valuable contributions to the overall success of this thesis:

The researcher wishes to express her heartfelt gratitude to Davao del Sur State College for facilitating the study's execution.

To Sir Roel Jr. D. Apas, MPA, the unwavering commitment, invaluable insights, and meticulous guidance of her Thesis Adviser have been crucial in shaping the direction and quality of this analysis.

Special thanks to Ma'am Noreen Faithe L. Puzon, CPA, Sir Roy R. Molina, Ma'am Michelle A. Alcebar, MBA, and Sir Zandro Ibañez Ed.D. Contributing their specialized knowledge, offering indispensable mentorship, and allocating their time generously to this thesis.

To the researcher's parents, colleagues, and fiancé, whose consistent faith, encouragement, and unwavering belief in the achievement of this thesis have offered ongoing motivation and support. Their invaluable emotional, physical, and moral support during the study has been incalculable.

The researcher wants to extend her most profound gratitude to the Almighty Father.

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