



Exploring the Impact of Technology Affordability and Social Media Usage on Socialization and its Influence on Online Political Participation

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: In an increasingly digital civic landscape, understanding the drivers of online political participation (OPP) has become critical. This study investigates the interplay between technological affordances, psychological dispositions, and social media behaviors in shaping citizens' political engagement online.

Methods: Drawing on theories of social capital, self-efficacy, and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), a conceptual model was developed and tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) on survey data (N = 450) collected from active internet users. Results confirmed that use of social media significantly enhances online social capital, which in turn positively influences perceived benefits of political participation. Perceived ease of online participation and technological affordances also emerged as significant predictors of OPP. Notably, political self-efficacy (PSE) not only directly predicted OPP and social media use but also moderated the relationship between online social capital and political participation, amplifying its impact for individuals with higher efficacy.

Findings: These findings highlight the importance of both structural enablers (e.g., digital platforms, social networks) and individual agency (e.g., self-belief) in fostering meaningful online civic engagement.

Implications: The study offers theoretical insights and practical implications for platform designers, policymakers, and civic educators aiming to enhance democratic participation in the digital age.

Originality: The present study offers an original contribution by addressing a gap in existing literature and proposing a novel perspective on the subject. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were employed in the preparation of this research to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and clarity. Statement on AI Use Artificial intelligence tools were used solely to assist with summarizing the research papers for the literature review, language editing, grammar refinement, model creation, and formatting of this manuscript. No AI tool was used to generate original research content, analyze results, or draw conclusions. All ideas, analyses, and interpretations are the sole work of the authors.



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1. Introduction

Nowadays, people are increasingly using social media to express their opinions. After the COVID pandemic and lockdown, due to restrictions on physical movements and interactions among people, the use of social media platforms for expressing opinions and views has increased to a great extent. The penetration of the internet and its increased usage have markedly increased the participation of people in the civic as well as political arena.

In the digital age, technology has dramatically reshaped the way individuals communicate, socialize, and engage in civic activities. The increasing affordability of digital devices and widespread internet access have not only bridged technological divides but also enabled broader social media usage across diverse socioeconomic groups (Hasrullah *et al.*, 2023). These shifts have altered traditional modes of socialization, with online interactions supplementing—and in many cases, replacing—face-to-face communication. At

the heart of this transformation lies a key question: how do changes in technology accessibility and patterns of social media use influence individuals' social behaviors and, subsequently, their political participation online?

In addition, social media platforms, once primarily designed for personal networking, have evolved into critical spaces for political discourse, activism, and mobilization (Matthes, 2022). As more people rely on these platforms for news, discussion, and community engagement, understanding the link between online socialization and political behavior becomes increasingly vital. Furthermore, with the lowering cost of smartphones and data services, marginalized populations who were previously excluded from the digital public sphere are now actively participating, thereby reshaping the demographic landscape of online political engagement (Alodat *et al.*, 2023).

Literature studies in the field of information technology focus on trying to understand how governments use social media platforms to interact with people (Alam, 2016; Bonson *et al.*, 2019; Eom *et al.*, 2018). Various studies (Waeterloos *et al.*, 2021; Chadwick & Dennis, 2017) have tried to study protests and strikes initiated by citizens. However, scant literature is available on the analysis of individuals' use of social media and political participation. Previous studies had concentrated on the impact of media like television, newspapers, and the internet on citizens' political and civic participation (Newton, 1997; Putnam, 1995). The internet comprises varied platforms with varied features. It includes social media, blogs, and websites (Bimber, 2020). The characteristics of each platform are sufficiently varied to consider each platform as a separate entity in influencing citizens' behavior. The aim of the current study is to understand the influence of social media, especially technology affordance and usage, on socialization and citizens' political participation. This study addresses key issues like the characteristics and types of technology affordance involved in influencing political participation among citizens and the factors that influence online social capital and political participation. This study explores the dual impact of technology affordability and social media usage on socialization patterns and examines how these changes influence online political participation. By investigating this interplay, the research aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the digital civic landscape and the socio-technical factors driving modern political behavior (Supriyanto, 2021).

As digital technologies become increasingly accessible, understanding their societal implications is more critical than ever. The affordability of smartphones, data plans, and internet services has significantly increased digital inclusion, especially among youth and low-income populations. Simultaneously, social media has evolved from a mere

communication tool to a powerful platform for socialization, information exchange, and political engagement. Despite this transformation, there remains a gap in understanding how the convergence of technology affordability and social media usage impacts the nature of social interaction and, consequently, online political participation. This research is therefore essential to explore the underlying mechanisms that drive digital civic behavior, especially in emerging democracies and digitally transforming societies.

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To analyze how the affordability of technology influences patterns of social media usage;
- To investigate the role of social media in reshaping modern socialization practices; and
- To examine how these evolving social behaviors affect individuals' engagement in online political activities.

By addressing these objectives, the study aims to contribute to both academic discourse and practical policymaking related to digital inclusion and civic participation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Current Study

The current study concentrated on exploring the impact of social capital, individual characteristics, and technological characteristics.

2.2. Influence of Social Capital

Social capital, in a broader sense, is the "norm and networks facilitating collective actions for group benefit" (Woolcock, 1998). Various forms of social capital can be found in various contexts, including obligations (within groups), trust, intergenerational closure, and norms. Social relationships and interactions are central to social capital. Trust, reciprocity norms, social platforms, and civic engagement constitute its major components. This intangible asset is characterized by shared norms, values, beliefs, trust, relationships, networks, and institutions that facilitate cooperation and collective action for the benefit of the community. Social capital can take the following forms: cognitive, structural, bonding, bridging, and horizontal and vertical. Depending on the social perspective, it can be analyzed at the entity as well as group levels, as well as at micro and macro levels (Oser *et al.*, 2022). This paper considers the social capital theory in the context of interaction among citizens on social platforms for political engagement and attempts to test the theory in the given context. Research conducted by Scheufele and Shah (2000) has put forth a positive impact of social engagement on political participation through their studies. According to Kolsstad (2007), discussions on social media platforms

enable citizens to exchange information and participate in political activities. This study tries to understand the influence of social media on online social capital.

H1: Use of social media positively influences online social capital.

2.3. Online Socialization

Socialization involves skills and habits which help individuals to participate in society (Sadat *et al.*, 2014). The process of socialization is not confined to any age group but spans the complete lifecycle. Family, peers, teachers, and mass media were considered the traditional means of socialization. Technology-empowered social media is gaining importance and is considered a vital source of socialization (Genner & Süss, 2017). Social media is widely used by students for managing their profiles and for making friends (Barkhuus & Tashiro, 2010), as well as in organizations by employees for team building and building workplace relationships (Song *et al.*, 2019). Cia *et al.* (2020) mentioned that new recruits take the help of social media to integrate into the new workplace, to communicate, and to develop a rapport with colleagues and leaders. Kizkin (2019), in his paper, also mentioned the use of social media by immigrants for socializing as well as for political engagement.

2.4. Online Socialization and Political Participation

Sadat *et al.* (2014) tried to understand the role of social media in the process of socialization by mining the social web. They selected seven keywords and tried to understand their popularity. They found that the keyword “politics” enjoyed a popularity rating of 67%, indicating that social media is widely used to disseminate information about politics and help in socialization. The use of technology in democracy is gaining importance in both academic and political fields. Studies conducted by Dimitrova and Bystrom (2013) mentioned that social media influences political participation and candidate image evaluations. The study revealed that social media impacts the perception of candidates’ traits.

The influence of social media and political participation has been investigated by many researchers. A study conducted using Facebook by university students in Pakistan revealed that political participation is affected by the time spent on Facebook specifically for political purposes (Zaheer, 2016). Use of Facebook not only affected online participation but also offline participation (Zaheer, 2016). Studies conducted on the use of Facebook and other social media demonstrated an indirect relationship among mobile and social media usage and political participation. It is suggested that

interpersonal political discussions and political efficacy are the main factors responsible (Chan *et al.*, 2017). Political participation correlates with demographic factors like gender and age (Zaheer, 2016).

H2: Online social capital positively influences citizens’ expected benefits of online political participation.

2.5. Perceived Ease of Online Socialization

Social media characteristics are another point to contemplate while trying to understand the influence of social media. Social media is a platform that goes beyond passive reading to creating content actively. This illustrates the user-oriented, interactive, and collaborative nature of social media (Sharma, 2008). Social networking sites have complemented face-to-face communication and have opened new vistas for developing relationships and enhancing social connections through information sharing (Pilch, 2009; Waters *et al.*, 2009). According to Stephen and Galak (2009), social media provides social utilities. Different social media sites offer varied core utilities, satisfying different needs and enjoying varied levels of popularity. Twitter users are news consumers, MySpace users are interested in games and entertainment, and Facebook users are into content creation and community building (Van Grove, 2010). Certain characteristics are common to most social media sites. Mayfield (2008) identified five common characteristics of social media sites including participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness. Thus, social media platforms have the capacity to disseminate and search information (Woo-Young, 2005). It is important to understand the usage of technology and online information search to establish the relation between social capital and citizens’ political participation. This study puts forth the following hypothesis:

H3: Perceived ease of online participation positively influences online political participation.

2.6. Expected and Online Benefits

Technology affordance provides a platform for citizens to express views and get a feel of performing one’s duty towards society and creating a desirable image among peers (Down, 1957; Phang *et al.*, 2014). According to Down’s Theory (1957), the benefits of political participation are mostly collective in nature, and individual benefits are very meager. According to the theory, the motivation for political participation is therefore low. However, individual benefits and selective incentives, which involve satisfaction from doing something worthy for democracy, self-expression, and social rewards, influence political participation (Olson, 1965). Individuals’ social capital is perceived as the social

rewards that may lead to participation in political affairs (Burt, 2001; Phang *et al.*, 2014).

H4: Perceived ease of participation online has a positive influence on expected benefits from online participation.

2.7. Technology Affordance

The concept of technological affordance comes into play at this juncture. Affordances are perceived as the opportunities enabled by social media (Gibson, 1977; Leonardi, 2011; Leonardi & Barley, 2010; Markus & Silver, 2008; Prakasam & Huxtable-Thomas, 2021). Technology affordance refers to the technological capabilities or opportunities provided by the platform and the intention of the user to harness the potential for a particular activity or action (Faraz & Azad, 2012). Technology affordance is literally what technology allows so that social interaction is possible or is hindered in any way (Hsieh, 2012; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Bucher & Helmond, 2018). Technological affordance is the impact of technological properties that enable and restrict sociability in particular ways. Facilitation of interaction (Jenkins, 2006), and e-expression, participation, and collaboration (Ostman, 2012; Theoclaris, 2015) are the prime considerations in social media technological affordances. This paves the way for differences among social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, for example. Facebook is designed to facilitate communication among close and relatively important ties; many times, there is a strong basis for offline relationships. On the other hand, Twitter facilitates communication based on common interests and weak ties. Thus, the platform may matter while people are communicating about politics and are influenced by political news and messages as the platforms differ (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021). According to Pew Research, 40% of people tweet political content while less than 25% share political content on Facebook. Technological affordances provided by social media platforms generally include visibility, ability to edit, tenacity, association, networked information access, triggered attending, meta voicing, generative role-taking, and persistence (Cabiddu *et al.*, 2014; Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Majchrzak *et al.*, 2013; Vaast & Kaganer, 2013). The possibility of these affordances influencing political participation can be considered to understand the influence of social media on citizens' political participation. The study attempts to understand the following hypothesis:

H5: Technological affordance positively influences online political participation.

2.8. Political Self-Efficacy and Online Socialization / Online Political Participation

Literature on people's behavior suggests that people's characteristics and orientation may lead to different

participative behaviors (Vecchione & Caprara, 2009; Yang & DeHart, 2016). Political self-efficacy refers to citizens' belief that they can influence political affairs and know how to change government for the better (Halpern *et al.*, 2017). It is possible to be politically efficacious through two different means: individual efficacy (belief in the citizen's capacity to comprehend and participate in politics) and state efficacy (faith in the ability of the government to fulfil their requests). Political self-efficacy could be a moderating factor between online socialization and political participation of citizens. The current paper also aims to study the same.

H6: Political self-efficacy positively influences use of social media.

H7: Political self-efficacy positively influences online political participation.

3. Research Methodology

A quantitative, cross-sectional research design is adopted to understand the relationship among social media use, online social capital, perceived ease of online participation, technological affordance, political self-efficacy, and online political participation. Data was collected from the target population comprising citizens aged above 18 years who were digitally active, having regular internet connections, and residing in India. Non-probability purposive sampling was employed to collect responses. The respondents having experience in online political activities such as signing petitions, discussing politics on social media, or engaging in online activities were sent Google Forms via email or social media platforms. A structured questionnaire consisting of previously validated scales was developed and used for the study. A total of about 450 responses were collected.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using a two-step approach (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The collected data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to test the hypothesized relationships.

Descriptive statistics for all the latent variables in the study were computed to ensure the integrity of the subsequent analysis. These statistics included the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of each construct to evaluate central tendency, dispersion, and the assumption of normality, which are essential prerequisites for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (Kline, 2016).

The mean scores of the constructs ranged from 3.40 to 4.20 on a 5-point Likert scale, suggesting that participants reported moderately positive perceptions regarding social media use, political self-efficacy, and their engagement in online political participation. For instance, the relatively

higher mean values for Political Self-Efficacy ($M = 4.18$) and Social Media Use ($M = 4.05$) imply that most participants felt confident in their political understanding and were frequent users of social networking platforms.

Standard deviations (SD) indicate the extent of variation or dispersion from the mean. It ranged between 0.60 and 0.95, reflecting a moderate level of variability in participant responses. These values suggest that while there was some diversity in attitudes and behaviors, the sample was not overly polarized, which is beneficial for model stability in SEM (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

Assessing the normality of data distribution is critical in SEM, especially when using maximum likelihood estimation, which assumes multivariate normality (Byrne, 2016). Normality was evaluated using two metrics—skewness, which measures the asymmetry of the distribution, and kurtosis, which assesses the “peakedness” or flatness of the distribution. All constructs had skewness and kurtosis values within the generally accepted thresholds of ± 2.0 (George & Mallery, 2010; West *et al.*, 1995), indicating that the data were approximately normally distributed. For instance, Online Political Participation exhibited a skewness of 0.45 and kurtosis of -0.65, while Perceived Ease of Participation had values of -0.35 and 0.72, respectively.

Given the above results, the dataset met the assumptions necessary for SEM procedures, allowing the analysis to proceed with confidence in the stability and reliability of parameter estimates.

The reliability and validity of the measurement model were tested using:

- Cronbach’s Alpha: All constructs showed good internal consistency, with $\alpha > 0.80$.
- Composite Reliability (CR): All constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.70.
- Average Variance Extracted (AVE): All AVEs were above 0.50, establishing convergent validity.
- Discriminant Validity: Verified using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. For each construct, the square root of AVE was greater than the inter-construct correlations.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity Studies

Construct	Cronbach’s Alpha	CR	AVE
Social Media Use (SMU)	0.84	0.87	0.62
Online Social Capital (OSC)	0.86	0.89	0.64
Perceived Ease of Participation (PEP)	0.82	0.86	0.60
Technological Affordance (TA)	0.88	0.90	0.67
Political Self-Efficacy (PSE)	0.90	0.92	0.68
Online Political Participation (OPP)	0.85	0.88	0.61
Expected Benefits (EB)	0.83	0.86	0.59

5. Results

Following the confirmation of the measurement model’s validity and reliability, the hypothesized relationships were tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to test the model using maximum likelihood estimation. The adequacy of the structural model was evaluated based on several widely accepted goodness-of-fit indices, which collectively determine whether the model adequately represents the observed data. Following the guidelines of Hu and Bentler (1999) and Kline (2016), multiple indices were used to assess model fit:

Table 2: Goodness of Fit Results

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold	Interpretation
χ^2/df (Chi-square/df)	2.25	< 3.00 (Kline, 2016)	Acceptable
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	0.958	≥ 0.95 (Hu & Bentler, 1999)	Excellent
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	0.944	≥ 0.90 (Bentler & Bonett, 1980)	Good
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	0.045	≤ 0.06 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993)	Excellent
SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual)	0.041	≤ 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999)	Excellent

These indices suggest that the structural model fits the data well, allowing reliable interpretation of the path coefficients.

- Chi-square/df (2.25): This ratio falls below the conservative threshold of 3.0, indicating that the discrepancy between the observed and model-implied covariance matrices is minimal. Although the chi-square test is sensitive to large sample sizes, adjusting it via the ratio offers a more balanced assessment (Kline, 2016).
- CFI (0.958) and TLI (0.944): These incremental fit indices compare the proposed model to a baseline model (typically a null model). Values above 0.95 for CFI and above 0.90 for TLI indicate a strong fit, meaning that the hypothesized paths collectively explain the relationships among constructs better than chance.
- RMSEA (0.045): The RMSEA value falls well below the recommended ceiling of 0.06, indicating that the model has a close approximate fit to the data (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). The 90% confidence interval for RMSEA also fell within acceptable bounds (not shown here, but often reported).

- **SRMR (0.041):** The SRMR value indicates a low standardized difference between observed and predicted correlations. Values under 0.08 are considered acceptable, and those under 0.05 are ideal.

The collective fit indices strongly support the structural validity of the proposed model. The results confirm that the hypothesized paths among constructs such as social media use, online social capital, political self-efficacy, technological affordance, and online political participations are well supported by the empirical data.

This robust model fit forms the basis for evaluating the individual path coefficients and hypothesis testing, which are discussed in the subsequent sections.

After establishing acceptable model fit in the structural model, the next phase of analysis involved testing the study's eight hypotheses (H1–H8). These hypotheses were derived from theoretical frameworks in political communication, media effects, and civic engagement and were tested using standardized path coefficients and maximum likelihood estimation.

Each path was evaluated for:

- Strength of the relationship (standardized regression coefficient, β)
- Statistical significance (p-value)
- Directionality (positive as hypothesized)

The results are summarized in the table below and discussed thereafter.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	CR (t-value)	p-value	Result
H1	SMU $\rightarrow$ OSC	0.61	10.24	< .001	Supported
H2	OSC $\rightarrow$ EB	0.53	9.18	< .001	Supported
H3	PEP $\rightarrow$ OPP	0.49	8.05	< .001	Supported
H4	PEP $\rightarrow$ EB	0.46	7.42	< .001	Supported
H5	TA $\rightarrow$ OPP	0.38	6.21	< .001	Supported
H6	PSE $\rightarrow$ SMU	0.42	7.03	< .001	Supported
H7	PSE $\rightarrow$ OPP	0.45	7.84	< .001	Supported
H8	OSC $\times$ PSE $\rightarrow$ OPP (Moderation)	0.21	3.85	< .01	Supported

- **H1: Social Media Use $\rightarrow$ Online Social Capital**

The relationship between Social Media Use (SMU) and Online Social Capital (OSC) was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < .001$), confirming that frequent use of social media fosters connections, trust, and community interaction—components central to online social capital. This supports prior findings that platforms like Facebook and Twitter enable users to build weak ties and maintain social networks (Ellison *et al.*, 2007).

Interpretation: More active engagement with social media facilitates greater interpersonal trust and online civic connectedness.

- **H2: Online Social Capital $\rightarrow$ Expected Benefits**

The path from OSC to Expected Benefits (EB) was significant ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < .001$), showing that individuals who possess greater online social capital are more likely to perceive benefits from engaging in online political participation—such as influence, voice, or knowledge gain. This aligns with Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital, which argues that social capital enables access to resources, including political influence.

Interpretation: Digital social networks serve as gateways to perceiving online political participation as meaningful and advantageous.

- **H3: Perceived Ease of Participation $\rightarrow$ Online Political Participation**

The influence of Perceived Ease of Participation (PEP) on Online Political Participation (OPP) was strong and positive ($\beta = 0.49$, $p < .001$). This supports the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that ease of use is a determinant of behavioral intention (Davis, 1989).

Interpretation: When individuals feel online political activities are easy to engage in, they are more likely to participate.

- **H4: Perceived Ease of Participation $\rightarrow$ Expected Benefits**

PEP also significantly influenced EB ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < .001$). This implies that when online participation feels accessible and low-effort, people also tend to perceive greater benefits, reinforcing the motivation to engage.

Interpretation: Simplicity in digital political participation enhances perceptions of its potential value and outcomes.

• **H5: Technological Affordance → Online Political Participation**

The construct of Technological Affordance (TA) had a significant positive effect on OPP ($\beta = 0.38, p < .001$). This validates the premise that affordances—such as platform usability, interactivity, and accessibility—shape civic behavior online (Treem & Leonardi, 2013).

Interpretation: The more users perceive digital tools as supporting political expression, the more they engage politically online.

• **H6: Political Self-Efficacy → Social Media Use**

Political Self-Efficacy (PSE) positively influenced SMU ($\beta = 0.42, p < .001$), indicating that individuals who feel confident in their political capabilities are more likely to use social media platforms, possibly as spaces for expression and information seeking (Bandura, 1997).

Interpretation: Politically self-assured individuals actively use social media to reinforce or express their political identity.

• **H7: Political Self-Efficacy → Online Political Participation**

The direct effect of PSE on OPP was also significant ($\beta = 0.45, p < .001$), consistent with existing literature that

links political self-efficacy with higher levels of political engagement (Tedesco, 2007; Velasquez & LaRose, 2015).

Interpretation: Politically confident individuals are more inclined to take action through digital platforms.

• **H8: Moderation Effect of PSE on OSC → OPP**

A moderated SEM analysis tested the interaction between OSC and PSE on OPP. The interaction term was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.21, p < .01$), suggesting a moderating effect.

Interpretation: The impact of online social capital on political participation is stronger when political self-efficacy is high.

A simple slope analysis further confirmed this interaction: those high in PSE demonstrated a stronger positive relationship between social capital and participation compared to those with low PSE.

• **Conclusion of Hypothesis Testing**

All eight hypotheses were empirically supported. The structural model demonstrates that online political participation is a multi-dimensional outcome, influenced by both platform affordances (e.g., ease of use, technological capability) and individual psychological traits (e.g., political self-efficacy). Moreover, social media not only builds social capital but also amplifies perceived civic value.

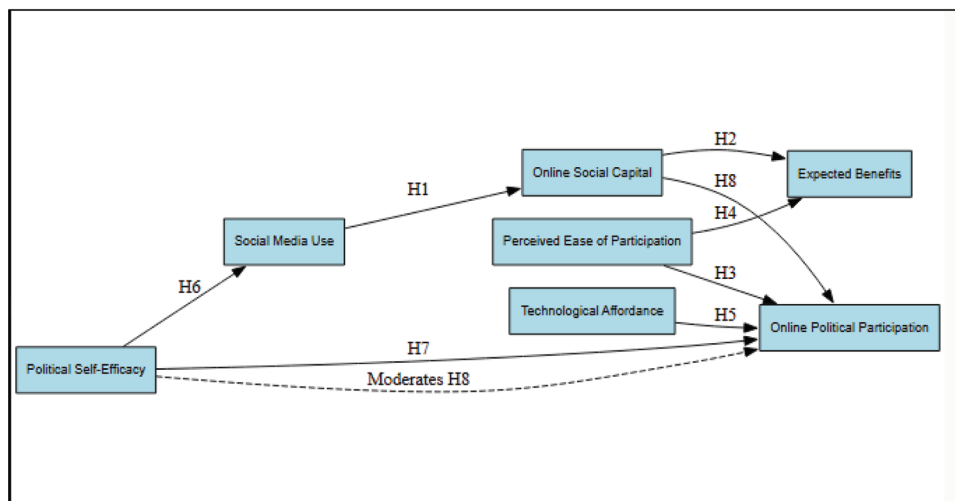


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

6. Discussion

The findings offer strong empirical support for the hypothesized relationships, providing insights into how digital tools and psychological factors influence political behavior in online contexts.

- **H1 and H6** confirm that political self-efficacy and frequent social media use are key antecedents of online social capital, suggesting that those confident in their

political abilities are more likely to build meaningful online networks.

- **H2 and H4** demonstrate that both online social capital and ease of online political participation enhance individuals' perceived benefits from such engagement.
- **H3 and H5** reinforce the role of usability and platform design (technological affordance) in motivating citizens to participate politically online.

- **H7** highlights that political self-efficacy directly influences political participation—a finding consistent with earlier work in digital civic engagement.

Importantly, H8 shows that political self-efficacy moderates the relationship between online social capital and political participation, indicating that efficacy strengthens the effect of socialization on actual engagement.

These results align with theories of social capital, TAM, and political efficacy, offering a multi-dimensional view of digital political behavior.

7. Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing field of digital political engagement by empirically validating a comprehensive model that links social media usage, online social capital, and political self-efficacy to online political participation. All eight hypotheses were supported, highlighting the significance of both platform features and individual psychological readiness.

8. Implications

- **Theoretical:** Reinforces the interplay of TAM and political self-efficacy in digital behavior models.
- **Practical:** Suggests that governments and NGOs should design user-friendly platforms and foster political confidence to increase civic engagement online.
- **Future Research:** Should explore longitudinal data or cross-cultural comparisons to validate findings across different democratic contexts.

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Authorship Contribution

Both authors have made significant and equal contributions to the conception, design, execution, interpretation of this research, and preparation of the final manuscript.

Ethical Approval

This research did not involve studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors. Therefore, ethical approval was not required.

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Declarations

The authors declare no specific declarations. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this work.

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