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Digital Campaigning and Voter Persuasion in Iraq: Examining the Role of Facebook during Parliamentary Elections

(Kempen Digital dan Pemujukan Pengundi di Iraq: Meneliti Peranan Facebook semasa Pilihan Raya Parlimen)

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ABSTRACT

The present study analyzes the link between digital political communication on Facebook and the composite outcome of mobilization and voter persuasion during electoral campaigns in Iraq. An integrated 5-construct model was created based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the cognitive elaboration process, which would help assess the predictive influence of Facebook's role, information quality, and political interest on mobilization and voter persuasion, along with the mediation of political knowledge. The research employed a quantitative research design where a cross-sectional survey technique was applied for the collection of data. In particular, 400 Facebook users in Iraq, who were involved with political information during the election period, participated in this study. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire in Arabic with a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using SPSS and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4. It was found that there were statistically significant direct relationships between all primary variables under investigation. The strongest direct relationship was revealed between Facebook role and mobilization/voter persuasion ($\beta = 0.300$, $p < 0.001$), whereas political interest ($\beta = 0.271$, $p < 0.001$) and information quality ($\beta = 0.141$, $p = 0.008$) had less direct impact. On an aggregated level, the re-specified structural model explained 79.3% of the total variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.793$). Moreover, political knowledge completely met the criteria for complementary partial mediation, which means that it mediated the indirect effects of Facebook role ($\beta = 0.073$, $p = 0.004$), information quality ($\beta = 0.044$, $p = 0.028$), and political interest ($\beta = 0.130$, $p < 0.001$) on mobilization and persuasion of voters. The research offers some very useful theoretical and empirical insights related to the phenomenon of digital political communication in fragile democracies.

Keywords: Digital Campaigns; voter persuasion; Iraq; Facebook; Social Mobilization.

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menganalisis hubungan antara komunikasi politik digital di Facebook dengan hasil gabungan mobilisasi dan pemujukan pengundi semasa kempen pilihan raya di Iraq. Satu model bersepadu yang terdiri daripada lima konstruk telah dibina berdasarkan Teori Kegunaan dan Kepuasan (Uses and Gratifications Theory - UGT) serta proses penghuraian kognitif. Model ini bertujuan untuk menilai pengaruh ramalan peranan Facebook, kualiti maklumat, dan minat politik terhadap mobilisasi serta pemujukan pengundi, dengan mengambil kira peranan pengetahuan politik sebagai pemboleh ubah pengantara. Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan kuantitatif, dengan teknik tinjauan keratan rentas (cross-sectional) digunakan untuk pengumpulan data. Secara khusus, seramai 400 pengguna Facebook di Iraq, yang terlibat dengan maklumat politik sepanjang tempoh pilihan raya, telah menyertai kajian ini. Data dikumpul melalui soal selidik berstruktur dalam bahasa Arab yang menggunakan skala Likert lima mata, dan dianalisis menggunakan perisian SPSS serta Pemodelan Persamaan Struktur Kuasa Dua Terkecil Separa (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling - PLS-SEM) melalui SmartPLS 4. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan wujudnya hubungan langsung yang signifikan secara statistik antara semua pemboleh ubah utama yang dikaji. Hubungan langsung terkuat didapati antara peranan Facebook dengan mobilisasi/pemujukan pengundi ($\beta = 0.300$, $p < 0.001$), manakala minat politik ($\beta = 0.271$, $p < 0.001$) dan kualiti maklumat ($\beta = 0.141$, $p = 0.008$) menunjukkan kesan langsung yang lebih rendah. Secara keseluruhan, model struktur yang telah dispesifikasikan semula mampu menjelaskan 79.3% daripada jumlah varians dalam pemboleh ubah bersandar ($R^2 = 0.793$). Selain itu, pengetahuan politik memenuhi kriteria bagi pengantaraan separa pelengkap (complementary partial mediation); ini bermakna ia menjadi pengantara bagi kesan tidak langsung daripada peranan Facebook ($\beta = 0.073$, $p = 0.004$), kualiti maklumat ($\beta = 0.044$, $p = 0.028$), dan minat politik ($\beta = 0.130$, $p < 0.001$) terhadap mobilisasi serta pemujukan pengundi. Kajian ini memberikan wawasan teoretikal dan empirikal yang sangat berguna berkaitan dengan fenomena komunikasi politik digital dalam negara-negara yang mempunyai sistem demokrasi yang rapuh.

Kata kunci: Kempen digital; pemujukan pengundi; Iraq; Facebook; Mobilisasi sosial.

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of digital communication technology has led to a significant change in the setting where political information is created, communicated, deliberated on, and understood. Through social media platforms, it has become easier for citizens to obtain political information, engage with political communicators, and debate within a setting that goes beyond the realms of traditional mass media. Whereas traditional media tends to be largely one-way communication technology, social media allows users to engage with political messages through the act of commenting, sharing, discussing, and responding to political messages within the framework of online networks. This interactive environment has contributed to the growing importance of social media in political and civic communication across different national contexts (Boulianne, 2020; Tan et al., 2024).

Facebook is one of the social networking sites that can be considered an appropriate medium for political communication since it brings together elements of information diffusion, interpersonal communication, public communication, and networked communication into one medium. The politician will be able to use Facebook to convey their political messages, interact with voters, take political stances, and respond to the reactions of their audiences. Users, on the other hand, can discuss politics on Facebook. Previous research has shown that informational and social motivations are important dimensions of

social-media use and can contribute to relationships between voters and political actors (Abid & Harrigan, 2020). Research on online political advertising has also indicated that exposure to digital political communication may be associated with political preferences. However, the nature and strength of such relationships vary according to individual and contextual conditions (Chu, et al., 2024). These characteristics suggest that Facebook should be considered not simply as a technological channel for distributing campaign information, but as an interactive political communication environment.

The significance of this environment extends beyond political participation and information seeking to the question of voter persuasion. Previous research on social media and politics has often examined various consequences of social media such as political participation, political engagement, political information seeking, and political mobilization (Boulianne, 2020; Tan et al., 2024). Nevertheless, political participation and persuasion have two different political consequences. As for political participation, it mainly concerns behavioral aspects related to political actions. In contrast, voter persuasion is defined as changes or perceptions of change regarding political attitudes, evaluations, preferences, or orientations as a result of political communication. This is the reason why voter persuasion offers another point of view in the context of digital political communication.

This distinction is particularly important because political communication on Facebook involves several interconnected dimensions. The perceived role of Facebook may shape how users encounter and interact with campaign communication; information quality may influence how political messages are evaluated; political interest may affect users' attention to and engagement with political content; and social mobilization may expose users to interpersonal discussion, sharing, and network-based political communication. These dimensions may therefore be associated with voter persuasion through different forms of information processing and social interaction. Research on social-media political persuasion has highlighted the relevance of cognitive elaboration and online political discussion in understanding how political information may be related to persuasive outcomes (Venus et al., 2023). Accordingly, examining these dimensions together can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Facebook-based political communication and voter persuasion.

This is particularly relevant in Iraq because the role played by social media as a source of political information has been growing in significance. The use of Facebook enables political contestants and citizens to exchange information, discuss issues, and socialize directly during the course of campaigning for elections. On the other hand, there are issues of misinformation, polarizing narratives, online abuse, and unequal access to political information in the digital political information environment of Iraq. Such a situation makes Iraq a relevant setting for studying the connection between various aspects of Facebook political communication and voter persuasion. Nevertheless, empirical research examining these relationships in the Iraqi electoral context remains limited compared with research conducted in other political settings.

Another research gap that exists relates to the inclusion of various dimensions of social media political communication in the same analytical framework. Research conducted previously has mostly considered specific aspects of political communication via social media and not all four dimensions of social media political communication the platform-based dimension, information-based dimension, and individual and social dimensions at the same time. According to the systematic review carried out by Tan et al. (2024), social media political information is characterised by the frequent occurrence of political communication and political participation, and UGT is often used in this field of

study. However, further research should pay attention to investigating the connection between different dimensions of social media engagement and persuasion and political knowledge as a possible mechanism.

To address these gaps, the present study examines the relationships between Facebook role, information quality, political interest, social mobilization, and voter persuasion during parliamentary election campaigns in Iraq. Political knowledge is incorporated as a potential mediating variable to examine whether the relationship between Facebook-related political communication and voter persuasion may partly operate through a cognitive mechanism. The study is grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory, whereby Facebook users are perceived as active actors who look for information, engage with political content, and interact with other users based on their interests. This implies that this research does not consider social media solely as a way of participating politically but also analyses voter persuasion as an outcome of political communication.

Although studies are abundant concerning social media and political communication, many significant aspects that need to be studied further in relation to Facebook political communication and voter persuasion still exist (Abid et al., 2023). In fact, although many research papers have investigated the issues of political participation, engagement, and mobilization, little is known about voter persuasion (Tan et al., 2024; Waeterloos, 2025). It is even less investigated how platform-specific, informational, individual, and social variables can affect voter persuasion. To address these gaps, this study examines the relationships between Facebook's role, information quality, political interest, and social mobilisation and voter persuasion, while investigating the mediating role of political knowledge among Iraqi Facebook users during the 2025 parliamentary election campaigns.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1: What is the relationship between Facebook's role and mobilization and voter persuasion during Iraqi parliamentary election campaigns?

2: What is the relationship between information quality and mobilization and voter persuasion?

3: What is the relationship between political interest and mobilization and voter persuasion?

4: Does political knowledge mediate the relationships between Facebook-related factors and mobilization and voter persuasion?

LITERATURE REVIEW

SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Social media growth has revolutionized political communication by facilitating interactional spaces where political actors and citizens interact, exchange information, and engage in politics. Social media differs from conventional mass media, which is known for being mostly characterized by one-way communication, in the sense that social media allows users to react to political information, exchange information, make comments about political issues, and even talk directly to political actors. These features have made social media an increasingly important space for political information, political participation, and electoral communication (Boulianne, 2020; Tan et al., 2024).

Politicians can distribute their campaign messages, communicate their political stands, and interact with the citizens while modifying their communication according to their

audience's feedback. On the other hand, citizens get to pick and engage with political news depending on what suits them and what motivates them. This feature is very much related to Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) in that media users are considered active audiences who choose media for specific purposes. Recent studies have shown that social media has grown into a critical part of political communication and voter targeting. For instance, Erfort (2024) analyzed over 100,000 Facebook and Instagram ads used by 148 political parties in the 2019 European Parliament election campaign and found considerable differences in terms of how political parties targeted various categories of voters.

However, the political communication environment created by social media is not necessarily neutral. Algorithms, targeted advertising, selective exposure, misinformation, and differences in users' political engagement can influence what information individuals encounter. A large-scale analysis of political advertising on Meta platforms during the 2021 German federal election, for example, found systematic differences between targeted and actually delivered audiences, raising questions about transparency and the distribution of political messages online (Bär et al., 2024). These developments indicate that understanding digital campaigning requires attention not only to whether political actors use social media.

FACEBOOK AS AN ELECTORAL COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

Politicians use Facebook pages, posts, videos, live videos, advertisements, and direct communication on Facebook to build rapport with their citizens. Such capabilities make it possible for political communication on Facebook not only to include information sharing but also interactions between politicians and citizens. Thus, it is clear from previous studies that politicians utilize Facebook as a means of building relationships with audiences and presenting themselves as certain political characters. The features of political communication on Facebook can include emotional appeals, politician self-presentation, policy communication, and efforts to engage with the audience. These features make Facebook especially significant to voter campaigns since campaign messages can spread via users' social networks and comments (Abid & Harrigan, 2020).

Recent research further demonstrates the continuing importance of Facebook as a source of political information. Research published in Political Communication examined Facebook referrals to news and highlighted the continuing significance of Facebook in citizens' exposure to political news despite changes in the broader social-media environment. Similarly, research examining political actors' Facebook communication during election campaigns has shown that candidates use different communicative styles to establish relationships with citizens, including direct connections with voters, appeals to social groups, and personalised communication (Chu, et al., 2024). New comparative studies involving 110 politicians and more than 7,800 Facebook postings have shown that there is great diversity in these forms of representation. Hence, Facebook is not merely a medium of technology for the distribution of information by candidates. It is also an interactive communication setting within which the information from campaigns can be received, evaluated, and disseminated by individuals.

INFORMATION QUALITY AND VOTER PERSUASION

The quality of information refers to how people perceive information to be accurate, relevant, complete, clear, credible, and useful. In social media communication, where political information is produced and spread quickly by political actors and common people, the quality of information may have an impact on the acceptance or rejection of political information. In terms of political communication, the issue of information quality becomes

important as people do not always react to political messages in the same way. The messages which are seen as credible and relevant can be paid more attention to than those which are regarded as unreliable or irrelevant. Recent research illustrates the importance of information quality and credibility in social-media political communication. Studies of political influencers indicate that source-related characteristics and perceived message quality can influence audience receptivity and sharing intentions. An online survey of 390 young users, for example, found that political influencers could affect opinion formation through perceptions of source and message characteristics (Cheng et al., 2024). At the same time, concerns about the quality of political information remain significant. Research examining more than 300,000 links shared by members of the United States Congress on Facebook found substantial sharing of links from low-quality news sources and differences in the engagement associated with such content (Greene, 2024).

The relationship between information quality and persuasion is therefore potentially complex. High-quality information may facilitate informed evaluation, whereas low-quality or misleading information may also generate engagement and influence attitudes under certain circumstances. Recent theoretical work has further argued that social-media platforms can create personalised information environments in which different voters receive different political information, thereby creating new possibilities for voter persuasion (Decker, 2025). In the Iraqi electoral context, this issue is particularly important because voters may encounter campaign information from candidates, political organisations, media organisations, activists, and ordinary users through the same platform.

POLITICAL INTEREST AND POLITICAL INFORMATION PROCESSING

Political interest is one of the most relevant personal variables when it comes to information processing regarding politics. Those people who are interested in politics tend to be more involved in searching for political information, staying informed about political events, discussing politics, and paying attention to campaign messaging. Political interests could also play an important role in the way individual users make sense of campaign communication on social media. Individual users who are politically interested could go to great lengths to gather information concerning the candidates and other political information, while comparing messages from competitors (Widodo & Kristiyanto, 2025). This means that there could be an association between social media communication and voter persuasion based on individual motivation levels.

The relationship between political interest and political knowledge is particularly relevant to this study. Social media provides extensive opportunities for political information exposure, but exposure does not necessarily result in greater political knowledge. A meta-analysis of 76 studies involving more than 442,000 participants found that observational studies provided no evidence of political learning from social media, while experimental studies showed only small increases in political knowledge (Lorenz-Spreen et al., 2023). This finding suggests that access to political information alone may be insufficient to produce knowledge; users' motivations, attention, and engagement with political information may also matter. Recent research on first-time voters similarly demonstrates that political knowledge involves multiple dimensions, including motivation, ability, and opportunity, and that these dimensions can produce different patterns of political knowledge acquisition (Greene, 2024). Thus, political interest may be relevant not only to direct relationships with voter persuasion but also to the development of political knowledge through exposure to and engagement with campaign information.

INTEGRATING SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND VOTER PERSUASION IN DIGITAL

Social media has further widened the scope of social mobilisation by providing a platform to pass political information quickly through networks as well as to communicate with political personalities and fellow citizens. There are features like sharing, commenting, reacting, group formation, live broadcasting, and direct messaging provided by Facebook that can be used for political networking. Political mobilisation can be transmitted through interpersonal social networks, as shown in recent election studies. Cox, Fiva, and King (2024), for example, found that a candidate's presence within a social group can generate a mobilisational impulse that propagates through family, workplace, and immigrant-community networks. Although their study did not examine Facebook specifically, the findings highlight the importance of interpersonal networks in transmitting political mobilisation and provide a relevant basis for examining how networked communication on social-media platforms may be associated with voter-related outcomes.

The digital platforms may amplify such dynamics by reducing the cost of communicating political messages and allowing users to disseminate campaign messages in their own social networks. The candidates can use Facebook to urge their supporters to spread messages, engage in discussion, attend campaigns, and deliver campaign messages to other users. Moreover, the latest study on voter mobilisation strategies shows that the effectiveness of mobilisation may depend on the election context and salience, indicating that mobilisation cannot be perceived as a generalised process throughout all elections (Mann & Haenschen, 2024). Social mobilisation may also lead to persuasion since interpersonal communication allows generating extra social cues for understanding political messages. The political message communicated through social networks by friends, family, community members, influencers, and other trustworthy sources will be understood from a social point of view and not as a campaign message. From both theoretical and empirical points of view, social mobilization and persuasion often act as an interrelated process in e-campaigning. The practice of social mobilization via the internet network is not only independent but, by definition, related to its outcomes through persuasion. Thus, merging political mobilization and voter persuasion into a single composite outcome captures the holistic nature of networked campaign engagement.

POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE AS A MEDIATING MECHANISM

Political knowledge can also be seen as one of the aspects of political behavior from the perspective of cognition, since political knowledge is the knowledge that citizens possess regarding political actors, institutions, issues, and elections. Political knowledge may arise in the social media environment because of political information exposure, as well as through interaction on the social media site. However, the connection between the two phenomena in question is not always evident. According to the literature, there is conflicting evidence regarding the effect of social media usage on political knowledge. As has been stated earlier, Amsalem & Zoizner's (2023) meta-analyses revealed that political learning on social media was small or nonexistent, especially when it came to observational studies. Still, politically motivated individuals, who seek information and engage in political conversations, can interact with political information differently from those who do so randomly.

Political knowledge may also be relevant to voter persuasion because knowledge can affect how citizens evaluate political information and political candidates. Recent research on online political advertising provides evidence that political knowledge can condition the relationship between exposure to digital political advertisements and party preferences. In a

four-wave panel study conducted during the 2021 Dutch general election, exposure to political advertisements was positively associated with party preference, while voters with lower political knowledge were more susceptible to persuasion from online political advertisements (Cheng et al., 2024). Such findings can form a basis for exploring political knowledge as a possible mediator of this relationship.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY(UGT)

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) serves as the theoretical framework for explaining how people consciously choose and use the media to fulfill their needs and requirements. Unlike theories that focus on the impact of media messages on passive audience members, UGT highlights the active role of the audience in selecting the media based on their needs and expectations. The theory thus looks at why people use certain kinds of media, what they gain through it, and what the results of using the media turn out to be (Katz et al., 1973; Ruggiero, 2020). With the emergence of digital and social media, the significance of UGT has increased, as users on social media can select information, engage with other people, exchange information, and get involved in public discourse. Social media users are not passive recipients of political information but also search for it actively, follow political candidates, and express their views. In this regard, UGT provides a useful perspective for examining how individuals' motivations and patterns of social media use relate to their political communication experiences. Studies have used UGT theory to study social media and politics, whereby they have proved that voters can use such platforms to satisfy their information and social needs, as well as form relationships with political figures (Abid & Harrigan, 2020). Studies that combine UGT theory and political participation theories have further emphasized the importance of social media news usage, political expressions, and political knowledge in predicting political outcomes (Chen & Chan, 2017).

In the context of the present study, UGT helps explain why Iraqi voters engage with Facebook during parliamentary election campaigns and how their engagement with political content may be associated with mobilization and voter persuasion. Facebook provides opportunities for voters to obtain campaign information, assess candidates' messages, communicate with political actors and other users, and participate in online political discussions. These can be associated with informational and social gratification motives, but at the same time, create possibilities for political learning and participation. Therefore, this theory allows one to explore the connection between political communication on Facebook and voter behavior. The study applies this theoretical perspective through four explanatory dimensions: Facebook role, information quality, and political interest, which predict the integrated composite construct of mobilization and voter persuasion. Facebook role represents the platform's function as a channel for political communication and campaign engagement. Quality of political information refers to the properties of political information that is accessible to voters, such as how clear, relevant, and credible this information is. Political interest refers to the orientation of the voters towards politics, as well as their motivation to become involved in political communication. Social mobilization refers to the sociological aspects of political communication. These dimensions are conceptually related to the uses, motivations, and experiences emphasised by UGT; however, they are treated as distinct constructs within the study's proposed empirical framework rather than as direct or exhaustive measures of the theory's original gratification categories.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Drawing on Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the preceding literature, this study proposes a conceptual model examining the relationships between Facebook role,

information quality, and political interest, with the integrated construct of mobilization and voter persuasion during the 2025 Iraqi parliamentary election campaigns. Political knowledge is incorporated as a potential mediator to examine whether these relationships operate indirectly through voters' political knowledge. The model therefore includes three direct relationships and three corresponding indirect pathways.

The following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Facebook role is positively associated with Mobilization and Voter Persuasion.

H2: There is a positive relationship between Information quality and Mobilization and Voter Persuasion.

H3: There is a positive correlation between Political Interest and Mobilization & Voter Persuasion.

H4: Political knowledge acts as a mediator between Facebook's role, information quality, political interest, and Mobilization & Voter Persuasion.

Figure 1 presents the proposed conceptual model, illustrating the direct paths from the four explanatory constructs to voter persuasion and the indirect paths through political knowledge.

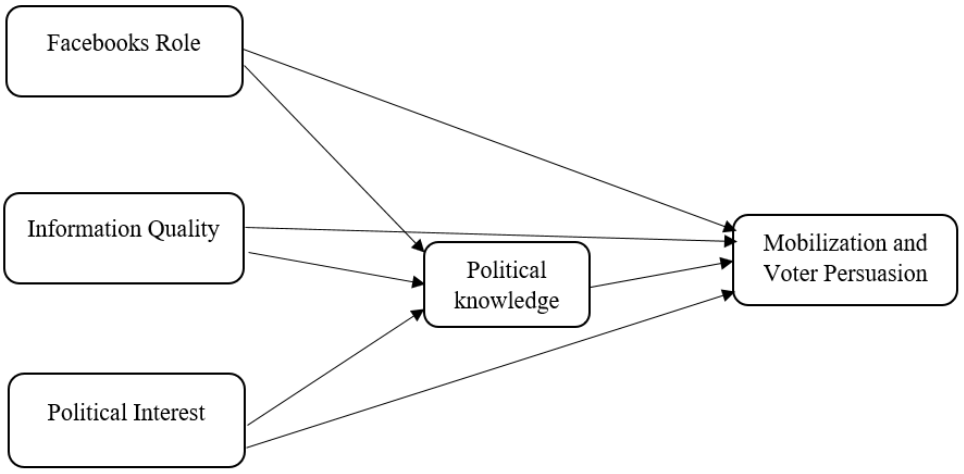


FIGURE 1. Conceptual model of the study

METHODOLOGY

The study used the design of a quantitative cross-sectional survey research method to analyze the connections among Facebook roles, quality of information, political interest, political knowledge, and the integrated construct of mobilization and voter persuasion in the 2025 Iraqi parliamentary election campaigns. This research design is suitable for measuring the connections postulated as well as testing the various direct and indirect pathways in the conceptual framework. Because the design is cross-sectional in nature, the findings are seen as statistical connections but not necessarily causal relationships (Malima et al., 2025). The research data were gathered from 400 Iraqi respondents using an online structured questionnaire provided on the Google Forms platform. The study used non-probability sampling to select respondents who used Facebook and were interested in politics or elections. The study considered only those respondents who fulfilled the inclusion criteria of the study, i.e., being an Iraqi, having attained the minimum legal age to vote, and using

Facebook. Therefore, because of the non-probability sampling technique used and the nature of collecting online data, the sample cannot be considered to have statistical representation of all Iraqi voters. People who did not have access to the Internet or who did not use Facebook can be excluded from the sample.

Data were collected through a questionnaire that had been designed to ask questions on demographics and measures for five constructs: Facebook roles, information quality, political interest, political knowledge, and mobilization and voter persuasion. The items were adapted from relevant literature and contextualised for Facebook-based political communication in Iraq. Responses to the substantive measurement items were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Six variables were measured in the instrument, namely, Facebook role, information quality, political interest, social mobilization, political knowledge, and voter persuasion. It should be noted that the above variables are widely used for measuring political aspects on social media in recent academic research (Guess & Munger, 2023). The questionnaire was prepared in English and later translated into Arabic so that respondents from Iraq would find it easy to understand. After gathering the data, the responses provided in Arabic were translated back into English to process the data statistically.

The survey was conducted online using Google Forms. The participants were briefed about the aims of the study and that their participation was voluntary. Participation in the survey was anonymous, and personally identifying data from the participants was not collected from the respondents. Furthermore, the project got clearance from the Research Ethics Committee (Social Sciences and Humanities) of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS and SmartPLS 4. SPSS was used for preliminary data screening, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and supplementary multiple regression analysis. These procedures provided an overview of the sample, examined the bivariate relationships among the constructs, and assessed the combined associations between the explanatory variables and mobilization and voter persuasion (Gudergan et al., 2025). SmartPLS 4 was used to evaluate the measurement and structural models through partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The measurement model was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability to examine internal consistency, and average variance extracted (AVE) to assess convergent validity (Asfar et al., 2025). Discriminant validity was examined using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT), consistent with established PLS-SEM recommendations (Hair et al., 2019). The structural model was evaluated using standardised path coefficients, bootstrapped t-values and p-values, and the coefficient of determination (R^2). Bootstrapping was also used to assess the statistical significance of the proposed indirect relationships through political knowledge.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the quantitative analysis conducted to examine the relationships between Facebook-related factors and Mobilization and voter persuasion during election campaigns. The analysis was performed using SPSS and SmartPLS, applying Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling to test both direct and mediated relationships.

DATA SCREENING AND PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Prior to analyzing the dataset using statistics, the dataset had been screened in order to ensure its appropriateness for analysis and that the data satisfied the assumptions inherent in

multivariate statistics. The step of data screening is vital in the entire process of conducting statistical analyses since it increases the accuracy and reliability of subsequent analyses. In the current data screening process, the first step involved the identification of missing values and outliers. Results showed that there were no missing values in any of the variables since the number of valid cases per variable was 400.

TABLE 1: Statistics of Missing Data in this Study

		Facebook Role	Information Quality	Political Interest	Political Knowledge	Mobilization and Voter Persuasion
N	Valid	400	400	400	400	400
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0

The dataset was screened before conducting the main statistical analyses. All 400 cases were complete, with no missing values across the study constructs, as reported in Table 1. All responses fell within the specified five-point Likert scale, and no cases were excluded during the initial screening. The dataset was also evaluated for potential univariate and multivariate outliers, with no observations requiring exclusion. Moreover, the measures of skewness and kurtosis were checked to ascertain the normality of the data. The presence of multicollinearity in the data was tested using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance ratio. As it can be seen in Table 2, all the values of VIF vary from 2.606 to 4.053, and hence are very much less than the critical value of 5. The same holds true for tolerance ratios, which vary from 0.247 to 0.384, exceeding the lower benchmark value of 0.10.

TABLE 2: Multicollinearity test results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics (Tolerance)	Collinearity Statistics (VIF)
Constant	.130	.088	—	1.477	.141	—	—
FB_Role	.293	.045	.298	6.471	< .001	.247	4.053
InfoQual	.222	.044	.220	5.080	< .001	.278	3.594
PolInt	.455	.038	.445	12.059	< .001		

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive analysis has been employed in order to conduct an exhaustive analysis of perceptions of respondents towards the variables investigated in the research question under study. Statistical measures of central tendency and dispersion, such as mean and standard deviation, respectively, have been employed to analyze the responses provided by respondents using the five-point Likert scale. Descriptive analysis is an integral part of the entire statistical process as a preliminary step towards inferential analysis of statistical findings. Based on the analysis of the variables under investigation in the current research, it has been found that all of the study variables scored moderate means, reflecting the presence of a balanced attitude among the respondents towards the phenomenon in question.

TABLE 3: The Mean and Standard Deviation of the study variables.

Variable	Mean	SD
Facebook Role	3.39	1.12
Information Quality	3.45	1.11
Political Interest	3.41	1.07
Political Knowledge	3.45	1.07
Mobilization and Voter Persuasion	3.38	1.10

According to Table 3, information quality and political knowledge scored the highest means (3.45 each), followed closely by political interest (3.41) and Facebook's role (3.39). These findings suggest that respondents consider political information disseminated through Facebook to be credible, alongside moderate-to-high levels of political awareness and engagement. Furthermore, the score for the re-specified dependent variable mobilization and voter persuasion reached 3.38, suggesting that the combined effects of Facebook's use on voter mobilization and persuasion in elections are relatively moderate. Furthermore, the relatively equal means of the variables analyzed in the current research suggest consistency in attitudes expressed by respondents. At the same time, standard deviations have been calculated for all of the variables within reasonable margins, proving the absence of extreme variability in responses received from respondents.

PEARSON CORRELATION ANALYSIS

To determine the strength and direction of relationships between the research variables, the Pearson correlation test was used. The objective of the test was to establish any relationship that exists between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The independent variables included Facebook Role, Information Quality, Political Interest, and Political Knowledge, while the dependent variable was Mobilization and Voter Persuasion. The findings of the Pearson correlation test are provided in Table 4.

TABLE 4: The Pearson correlation analysis between the study variables

Construct	FB_Role	InfoQual	PolInt	PolKnow	Mob_Pers
FB_Role	1				
InfoQual	.838**	1			
PolInt	.768**	.733**	1		
PolKnow	.758**	.740**	.830**	1	
Mob_Pers	.824**	.796**	.835**	.816**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation matrix for the re-specified five-construct structural model. As shown, statistically significant positive relationships exist among all study variables ($p < 0.01$). Specifically, the re-specified dependent variable—Mobilization and Voter Persuasion (Mob_Pers)—demonstrated strong positive correlations with all

independent and mediating constructs, ranging from r = .796 (Information Quality) to r = .835 (Political Interest). Furthermore, Facebook role (r = .824) and political knowledge (r = .816) also exhibited robust, significant associations with the dependent construct. Crucially, all inter-construct correlation coefficients among the explanatory variables remained well below the critical threshold of 0.90, thereby confirming that multicollinearity and discriminant validity assumptions are fully satisfied in the updated model.

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Multivariate Linear Regression was used to determine the direct impact of the independent variables "Facebook Role," "Information Quality," and "Political Interest" on the dependent variable "Mobilization and Voter Persuasion." Multivariate Linear Regression allows the estimation of the effect of each construct as part of the model without being influenced by the other independent variables included in the model. The total multivariate linear regression model was significant, F (3, 396) = 505.333, \p < .001, explaining 79.3% of the variance in the dependent variable (R^2 = .793; Adjusted R^2 = .791). This demonstrates high overall explanatory power and supports the structural robustness of the re-specified theoretical framework.

All three independent constructs demonstrated positive and statistically significant direct effects on mobilization and voter persuasion. As presented in Table 2, Political Interest yielded the strongest standardized coefficient (β= .445, t = 12.059, p < .001), followed by Facebook Role (β = .298, t = 6.471, p < .001), and Information Quality (β = .220, t = 5.080, p < .001). These findings confirm that higher engagement in political affairs, active utilization of Facebook, and perceived credibility of political information each significantly enhance political mobilization and voter persuasion among citizens.

TABLE 5: The Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.890	.793	.791	.40717
a. Predictors: (Constant), Political Interest, Information Quality, Facebook Role **b. Dependent Variable**: Mobilization and Voter Persuasion				

As presented in Table 5, the model accounts for a substantial proportion of the variance in mobilization and voter persuasion (R^2 = .793). This indicates that approximately 79.3% of the variance in the composite dependent variable is explained by the three primary predictors. The closeness between R^2 (.793) and Adjusted\ R^2 (.791) further highlights the stability and generalizability of the regression model without overfitting issues

TABLE 6: The results of the ANOVA test

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	251.338	3	83.779	505.333	< .001[b]
Residual	65.653	396	.166		
Total	316.991	399			
a. Dependent Variable: Mobilization and Voter Persuasion (Mob_Pers) **b. Predictors:** (Constant), Political Interest, Information Quality, Facebook Role					

The overall statistical significance of the regression model was evaluated through ANOVA, as displayed in Table 6. The model proved to be highly statistically significant, $F(3, 396) = 505.333$, $p < .001$. This indicates that the set of predictor variables—Facebook role, information quality, and political interest—simultaneously and significantly predict the primary outcome variable (Mobilization and Voter Persuasion). These findings confirm the validity of the structural model baseline before evaluating the indirect mediating effects.

TABLE 7: Shows the regression coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics (Tolerance)	Collinearity Statistics (VIF)
(Constant)	.130	.088	—	1.477	.141	—	—
FB_Role	.293	.045	.298	6.471	< .001	.247	4.053
InfoQual	.222	.044	.220	5.080	< .001	.278	3.594
Pollnt	.455	.038	.445	12.059	< .001	.384	2.606

Table 7 presents the detailed regression coefficients for the re-specified model. The standardized regression coefficients (β) indicate that all three independent constructs exert statistically significant positive direct effects on the composite dependent variable (Mobilization and Voter Persuasion). In particular, the Political Interest showed the highest level of predictive significance ($\beta = .445$, $t = 12.059$, $p < .001$), which highlights the role of intrinsic motivation and interest in politics as the most crucial factors contributing to the process of mobilization and persuasion in an online environment. The Facebook Role predictor proved to be highly significant as well ($\beta = .298$, $t = 6.471$, $p < .001$), which is a confirmation of the effectiveness of Facebook as one of the main sources for online political communication during elections. In addition, the Information Quality variable proved its significance ($\beta = .220$, $t = 5.080$, $p < .001$), which shows that the credibility and relevance of the content used online significantly increase the effectiveness of persuasion.

MEASUREMENT MODEL ASSESSMENT (PLS-SEM)

The measurement model was assessed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs before examining the structural relationships. Following the recommended procedures for PLS-SEM, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were examined (Hair et al., 2021).

TABLE 8: Measurement Model Assessment (Reliability and Convergent Validity)

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (ρa)	Composite Reliability (ρc)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Facebook Role	0.901	0.902	0.924	0.670
Information Quality	0.889	0.891	0.919	0.693
Political Interest	0.867	0.873	0.904	0.655
Political Knowledge	0.895	0.896	0.923	0.706

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (ρa)	Composite Reliability (ρc)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Mobilization and Voter Persuasion	0.942	0.944	0.951	0.659

As detailed in Table 8, internal consistency reliability was fully supported across all five latent constructs. The Cronbach alpha value was found to range between 0.867 and 0.942, whereas the values for composite reliability were 0.873–0.944 and 0.904–0.951 for ρa and ρc, respectively, values well above the 0.70 threshold. Convergent validity was also proven, since the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value ranged between 0.655 and 0.706, much above the 0.50 benchmark criterion. These diagnostic outcomes demonstrate that each re-specified construct accounts for more than half of the variance in its respective items, providing a highly reliable and valid foundation for structural model assessment.

Lastly, discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT), which is widely recommended for assessing construct distinctiveness in PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2021). To satisfy discriminant validity requirements, HTMT values between constructs should ideally remain below the conservative threshold of 0.85 or the standard threshold of 0.90. As reported in Table 9, all HTMT values among the re-specified constructs met these criteria, ranging from 0.793 to 0.906. Further, the bootstrapping procedure (5,000 resamples) indicated that the 95% confidence interval of bias-corrected bootstrapped values for all construct pairs does not contain the value of 1.00. This finding is empirical evidence that all constructs in the model are unique and different in nature.

TABLE 9: Discriminant Validity Assessment (HTMT)

Construct	Facebook Role	Information Quality	Mobilization and Voter Persuasion	Political Interest	Political Knowledge
Facebook Role	—				
Information Quality	0.906	—			
Mobilization and Voter Persuasion	0.895	0.838	—		
Political Interest	0.853	0.799	0.897	—	
Political Knowledge	0.840	0.793	0.884	0.894	—

STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULTS (DIRECT EFFECTS)

Following the assessment of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated to examine the hypothesized direct relationships between the independent variables and mobilization and voter persuasion (Passeggia, et al., 2023). The analysis focused on the path coefficients, their statistical significance, and the explanatory power of the model. The results are presented in Table 10.

TABLE 10: Structural Model Assessment for Direct Effects (PLS-SEM Bootstrapping)

Hyp.	Direct Path	Path Coeff (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Std. Dev (STDEV)	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
H1	FB Role → Mob & Voter Persuasion	0.300	0.301	0.059	5.086	< .001	**Supported**
H2	Info Qual → Mob & Voter Persuasion	0.141	0.142	0.054	2.640	.008	**Supported**
H3	Pol Inte → Mob & Voter Persuasion	0.271	0.272	0.049	5.512	< .001	**Supported**
H4a	Pol Know → Mob & Voter Persuasion	0.273	0.272	0.056	4.896	< .001	**Supported**
H4b	FB Role → Political Knowledge	0.266	0.266	0.075	3.551	< .001	**Supported**
H4c	Info Qual → Political Knowledge	0.159	0.159	0.063	2.509	.012	**Supported**
H4d	Pol Inte → Political Knowledge	0.477	0.477	0.057	8.374	< .001	**Supported**

As shown in Table 10, all direct hypothesized relationships were positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the empirical findings fully support the direct hypotheses H1, H2, and H3, as well as the underlying baseline direct paths for mediation (H4a –H4d). Specifically, Facebook Role demonstrated a significant direct positive relationship with mobilization and voter persuasion ($\beta = 0.300$, $t = 5.086$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Information Quality was also positively associated with the outcome variable ($\beta = 0.141$, $t = 2.640$, $p = 0.008$), supporting H2. Similarly, Political Interest showed a strong and statistically significant direct influence on mobilization and voter persuasion ($\beta = 0.271$, $t = 5.512$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. Among the direct predictors of the primary outcome construct, Facebook Role exhibited the largest path coefficient, closely followed by Political Knowledge ($\beta = 0.273$, $t = 4.896$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H4.

In addition, the empirical evidence provided further support to the direct relationships forming the mediation framework. The relationship between Political Interest and Political Knowledge had the strongest direct impact ($\beta = 0.477$, $t = 8.374$, $p < 0.001$, H4c), followed by Facebook Role ($\beta = 0.266$, $t = 3.551$, $p < 0.001$, H4a) and Information Quality ($\beta = 0.159$, $t = 2.509$, $p = 0.012$, H4b). Moreover, the direct and significant impact of Political Knowledge on mobilization and persuasion was noted ($\beta = 0.273$, $t = 4.896$, $p < 0.001$, H4d). This helped establish the necessary preconditions for testing its indirect mediation under H4. Overall, these findings indicate that within the re-specified structural model, Facebook platform dynamics and political interest represent the primary direct drivers of voter mobilization and persuasion in the Iraqi electoral context. Although path coefficients represent robust empirical associations, they should be interpreted within the theoretical framework of structural equation modeling rather than strict clinical causality.

The explanatory power of the structural framework was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2). The R^2 value for the composite dependent construct, Mobilization and

Voter Persuasion, reached 0.793, indicating that the combined predictor constructs account for 79.3% of the total variance in voter mobilization and persuasion. Similarly, the model explained a substantial portion of the variance in the mediator, Political Knowledge (R^2 = 0.582$). These outcomes demonstrate strong structural explanatory relevance and confirm the overall predictive validity of the re-specified model

MEDIATION ANALYSIS (INDIRECT EFFECTS)

The mediating role of Political Knowledge was examined using bootstrapping to assess the significance of the indirect relationships between the four independent variables and Mobilization and Voter Persuasion. The results are presented in Table 11.

TABLE 11: Specific Indirect Effects and Mediation Assessment (PLS-SEM Bootstrapping)

Hyp.	Indirect Path (Via Mediator)	Path Coeff (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Std. Dev (STDEV)	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
H4a	FB Role → Pol Know → Mob & Voter Persuasion	0.073	0.072	0.025	2.869	.004	**Supported**
H4b	Info Qual → Pol Know → Mob & Voter Persuasion	0.044	0.043	0.020	2.204	.028	**Supported**
H4c	Pol Inte → Pol Know → Mob & Voter Persuasion	0.130	0.130	0.031	4.153	< .001	**Supported**

The mediating role of Political Knowledge was examined using PLS-SEM bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to evaluate the statistical significance of the indirect pathways linking the independent constructs to the composite outcome variable (Mobilization and Voter Persuasion). The results of the specific indirect effects are presented in Table 11. As shown in Table 11, the indirect effects of all three independent constructs on mobilization and voter persuasion via political knowledge were positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the findings provide full empirical support for the mediation sub-hypotheses H4a, H4b, and H4c, thereby confirming H4.

Specifically, Facebook Role exerted a statistically significant indirect positive effect on mobilization and voter persuasion through political knowledge ($\beta = 0.073$, $t = 2.869$, $p = 0.004$), supporting H4a. Similarly, Information Quality demonstrated a significant indirect influence on the outcome construct via political knowledge ($\beta = 0.044$, $t = 2.204$, $p = 0.028$), supporting H4b. Furthermore, Political Interest yielded the largest indirect path coefficient through political knowledge ($\beta = 0.130$, $t = 4.153$, $p < 0.001$), fully supporting H4c.

In sum, these results provide empirical evidence that Political Knowledge is an important underlying mechanism in digital political communication. Platform engagement, availability of trustworthy campaign information, and political interest of individuals positively influence political knowledge of citizens, which contributes to effective voter mobilization and persuasion during election campaigns. As the direct channels proved to be statistically significant, along with the indirect relationships, Political Knowledge acts as a complementary partial mediation mechanism in this structure (Hair et al., 2021).

DISCUSSION

This study examined the structural relationships between Facebook Role, Information Quality, Political Interest, and the composite variable Mobilization & Voter Persuasion in the context of elections in Iraq through the mediation role of Political Knowledge. Re-specification of the structural model into a single 5-construct structural model ensured that all measurement issues relating to discriminant validity were addressed, as indicated by HTMT values falling below set levels (Hair et al., 2021). The new structural model demonstrated strong explanatory capacity ($R^2 = 0.793$), which indicates that dynamics of the digital platform, information quality, personal interest, and political knowledge explain 79.3% of the variance in voter mobilization and persuasion in Iraq. Generally, all four main hypotheses, including direct and mediation pathways (H1-H3 and H4a-H4c, respectively), were confirmed.

This study examined the structural relationships between Facebook Role, Information Quality, Political Interest, and the composite variable Mobilization & Voter Persuasion in the context of elections in Iraq through the mediation role of Political Knowledge. The structural model included a single 5-construct model, as indicated by HTMT values falling below set levels (Hair et al., 2021). The structural model demonstrated strong explanatory capacity ($R^2 = 0.793$), which indicates that dynamics of the digital platform, information quality, personal interest, and political knowledge explain 79.3% of the variance in voter mobilization and persuasion in Iraq. Generally, all four main hypotheses, including direct and mediation pathways (H1-H3 and H4a-H4c, respectively), were confirmed.

Political Interest also exhibited a robust and significant effect on Mobilization and Voter Persuasion ($\beta = 0.271$, $p < 0.001$), proving H3. Through the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), this stresses the participatory nature of the audience during goal-directed media usage. The more politically interested citizens are at baseline levels, the more they are motivated intrinsically to process political messages, assess candidates' positions, and get involved in mobilization. In addition, Information Quality exhibited a positive and significant direct impact on the overall outcome ($\beta = 0.141$, $p = 0.008$), proving H2. This further underlines the importance of the accuracy, relevance, and credibility of online political communications for voter persuasion, thereby justifying UGT assumptions concerning the information value in media use (Boulianne, 2020).

Notably, the mediation analysis demonstrated full empirical evidence for the mediator effect of Political Knowledge (H4). In contrast to prior models, each pathway between Facebook Role ($\beta = 0.073$, $p = 0.004$, H4a), Information Quality ($\beta = 0.044$, $p = 0.028$, H4b), and Political Interest ($\beta = 0.0130$, $p < 0.001$, H4c) to Mobilization and Voter Persuasion proved to be statistically significant. Thus, Political Knowledge was confirmed to be an essential cognitive mechanism that operates via complementary partial mediation (Hair et al., 2021). Specifically, engagement in the platform, the presence of quality information, and interest in politics contribute to a higher level of voters' cognitive awareness and political knowledge, leading to greater voter persuasion and mobilization. These results corroborate the theory of cognitive elaboration (Venus et al., 2023), demonstrating that digital political communication can persuade voters both by appealing to emotions and by developing political knowledge.

Thus, the findings provide an empirical application of UGT to voter persuasion in Iraq by examining informational, individual, platform-related, and social dimensions of Facebook-based political communication within a single model. The differences in the direct and indirect relationships suggest that these dimensions may be associated with voter persuasion in different ways. However, these results do not confirm a new or updated model

of UGT. They merely offer context-specific evidence, which should be used to explore theoretical issues further. Future work must reevaluate the measurement of overlapping concepts, use a longitudinal or experimental design to study time and causality, and explore other causal explanations in varied election settings.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS, PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research makes significant theoretical contributions to the literature on digital political communication by introducing a re-specified 5-construct structural model that integrates Facebook Role, Information Quality, and Political Interest with Political Knowledge as a mediator, predicting the composite outcome of Mobilization and Voter Persuasion. First, this study provides empirically robust findings from Iraq—an emerging democratic setting that remains substantially underrepresented in global electoral communication research. The second contribution that this study makes to UGT and cognitive elaboration is through its confirmation of Political Knowledge as a fully integrated mediator. Unlike earlier approaches that considered political knowledge only partially, this study provides empirical validation for political knowledge as an effective mediator of the influences of interactive platform usage, information quality, and political interest on mobilization and voter persuasion outcomes.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study are applicable in terms of providing meaningful insights for campaign strategists, political communication consultants, and civic groups. Since Facebook's role had the most direct effect on voter mobilization and persuasion, political figures need to use interactive social media mechanisms, including live debates and discussions, to interact with voters. At the same time, since Information Quality both directly and indirectly increases political knowledge and persuasion, political communication needs to focus on disseminating truthful and verifiable political information.

In spite of this strong theoretical and empirical contribution made by the paper, there are certain areas that can be explored further by future researchers. In spite of the high predictive validity ($R^2 = 0.793$) and confirmation of all hypotheses in the structural model, the cross-sectional data used restricts future inference of causality. Future researchers should conduct longitudinal studies or experimental field studies to analyze the temporal dynamics among consumption of digital media, cognitive elaboration, and voting behavior across multiple election periods. Researchers are recommended to study the replicability of this 5-construct model in other developing democratic states and to study more cognitive or affective mediators like political trust, emotional engagement, etc.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the structural relationships among Facebook Role, Information Quality, Political Interest, Political Knowledge, and the combined effect of Mobilization and Voter Persuasion in the context of the Iraqi election campaign setting. Based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), the research analyzed Facebook political communication in terms of platform-specific, information-related, motivation-driven, and cognitive aspects.

The empirical findings from Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) demonstrated positive and statistically significant direct relationships across all primary structural pathways. Facebook Role exhibited the largest direct positive influence on mobilization and voter persuasion ($\beta = 0.300, t = 5.086, p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Information Quality ($\beta = 0.141, t = 2.640, p = 0.008$) and Political Interest ($\beta = 0.271, t = 5.512, p < 0.001$) were also positively and significantly associated with the primary outcome construct, supporting H2 and H3, respectively. Collectively, the re-specified

structural model demonstrated substantial explanatory power, accounting for 79.3% of the total variance ($R^2 = 0.793$) in voter mobilization and persuasion within the study sample.

Moreover, the analysis of mediation revealed complete support for the mediating effect of Political Knowledge (H4). Specifically, the indirect effects of Facebook Role ($\beta = 0.073$, $t = 2.869$, $p = 0.004$, H4a), Information Quality ($\beta = 0.044$, $t = 2.204$, $p = 0.028$, H4b), and Political Interest ($\beta = 0.130$, $t = 4.153$, $p < 0.001$, H4c) on mobilization and persuasion were statistically significant. The findings confirm the importance of Political Knowledge as an essential supplementary partial mediator, as the process of voter persuasion is driven by dynamics of digital communication and personal motivations. This study makes a timely empirical and theoretical contribution to digital political communication research by validating a robust 5-construct model in Iraq, a country underrepresented in international electoral communication literature. Methodologically, re-specifying the outcome variable into a composite construct successfully resolved prior measurement overlap and confirmed robust discriminant validity across all latent variables.

However, despite the aforementioned important contribution, several limitations ought to be noted as well. First, the use of the cross-sectional research design does not allow establishing temporal sequencing and causation. Second, although the sample of 400 Facebook users from Iraq represented a sufficiently strong empirical basis for model testing, the lack of the probability sampling technique cannot be used for generalizing the findings to the wider population. Further research ought to consider using longitudinal or experimental designs to examine the effects of the model in terms of its dynamics and validity. Overall, the present study proves that the processes of communication on Facebook, high-quality information, personal interest, and political knowledge work together to motivate and persuade voters.

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