

Impact Factor 6.1



# Journal of Cyber Security

ISSN:2096-1146

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## **The Impact of Social Identity Dimensions on Palestinian Youth Activism: The Mediating Role of Social Media**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The availability of civic and political action is crucially limited under the occupation of the West Bank, forcing the Palestinian youth to base their alternative expression and organised activism on social media.

The research problem of the proposed study is to determine whether cognitive, evaluative, and affective aspects of social identity affect Palestinian youth activation and whether social media mediates the relationship between social media and social identity.

The West Bank was surveyed across 400 and sampled youths (18 to 29) in a cross-sectional quantitative survey.

The resulting data were processed with the help of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to evaluate both direct and indirect links between the dimensions of social identity, use of social media, and the degree of activism.

The findings demonstrate that the three dimensions of identity are important predictors of activism, and social media acts as a mediator between identity and participation to some extent. The strongest effect was observed in the affective dimension, implying that political participation by young people is largely influenced by emotional attachment.

The model accounted for 67 per cent of the activism variance, which is high predictive power.

The findings show that identity is mediated by social media in connection with collective action.

The study helps comprehend better how the social identity becomes political action in the online space, and provides a holistic view of how the younger generations can use digital space to maintain agency, solidarity, and civic participation despite those limiting conditions.

**Keywords:** social identity, Palestinian youth, digital activism, social media, youth activism, political engagement

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Palestinian youths have always held pivotal roles in the political challenges in resistance taking part in mobilisation, organisational projects and identity building. Within the framework of deep-seated occupation, limited civic rights, and disjointed governance, online platforms have become the essential alternative platforms of activism and political activity (Sayigh, 2019). Faced with structural constraints and oppression, the rising tendency of the youth Palestinians has turned to mobilisation efforts using social media as a two-fold tool, both mobilisation tool and the social and political expression tool.

The use of social media by Palestine is largely socio-political and not a technological phenomenon influenced by the structural limitations and overall exclusions. These online platforms increase communicative possibilities, increase visibility, and build solidarity, which enable young people to challenge hegemonic discourses and express collective complaints (Tawil-Souri & Matar, 2016). However, these emerging online platforms come with increased surveillance, censorship and danger that adds to the way Palestinian youth are negotiating their identity and resistance online.

The present research paper places itself in this dynamic context to explore how the dimensions of social identity (cognitive, the group membership awareness), evaluative (value judgment and pride in group affiliation), and affective (emotional attachment to the group) are predictive of Palestinian youth activism. It examines the effect of these identity elements on political behaviour, namely political brand participation (PBP), using mediating variables of social media by implementing the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), the Hierarchical Model of Political commitment (George and Leidner, 2018), and the Positive Youth Development framework (Lerner, 2005).

The current paper covers digital platforms as the place of resistance, communication, and empowerment among Palestinian youth, driven by collective awareness and solidarity. The paper adds to the body of theoretical literature on the nexus between identity and activism because it reviews the importance of social media in digital political practice under high-conflict situations, and critically evaluates empirically generated data on the political behaviour of young people in oppressive environments. The bottom line is that this dynamic should be comprehended to facilitate the empowerment of the Palestinian youth and promote scholarship in the field of digital activism and social identity studies.

### 1.1 Research Objectives

This study will undertake the analysis of the effects of the triad of social identity dimensions on Palestinian youth activism through social media in a mediating role, i.e. cognitive, evaluative, and affective dimensions. The specific objectives are:

1. To determine the direct dependency relationships between cognitive, evaluative, and affective variables of the social identity and youth activism.
2. To determine the mediating impact of social media on the correlation between the aspects of social identity and youth activism.
3. To combine the Social Identity Theory with the Positive Youth Development and the Hierarchical Model of Political Commitment to become the explanation of how identity-driven motivation can shape political participation in the digital environment.
4. To examine the two sides of the coin of social media as a source of empowerment and as a medium connecting the self with the politics of community among Palestinian youth.
5. To increase academic understanding about digital activism and the involvement of the young in the conflict-prone societies.

### 1.2 Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the effects of cognitive, evaluative, and affective components of social identity on political activism among the Palestinian youth?
2. And what mediator is the social media between social identity and youth activism in this specific area?
3. What aspect of social identity describes Palestinian young activists most of all?
4. How can online places become empowering locations of collective action in opposition to oppressive circumstances?
5. What is the relationship between identity formation and political activism, and how would it be explained by integrating the Social Identity Theory, the Hierarchy Model of Political Commitment, and Positive Youth Development?

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

This research paper is of significance to the body of knowledge since it clarifies the patterns of interaction between identity and technology in the formulation of the political behaviour of youth in conflict-prone environments where freedoms are highly curtailed. It uses empirical evidence to prove how social identity affects media-mediated activism in Palestinian youth. The paper generalises the Social Identity Theory to social media set-ups, conceptualises the Hierarchical Model of Political Commitment and the Positive Youth Development paradigm, and justifies the importance of social media as a bridging system and civic space. Recommendations to build the capacity of educators, policymakers, and civil society actors working in limited settings to increase youth engagement, digital literacy, and political participation are provided by the findings.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Youth Activism in the Palestinian Context**

Youth activism is an action of collective sociopolitics that is based on the values, justice, and social change (Sherrod, 2006). This activism in Palestine goes beyond the usual civic involvement; a lack of state organisational availability and the lack of civil-rights limits the usual political involvement. The Palestinian youth have continuously been involved in resistance movements since the First Intifada in the 1980s, and they have become more active in digital spaces (Sayigh, 2019). The youth activism in this extraordinary situation serves actively as a deed of political protest, as well as a way of identity and belonging during the occupation.

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS, 2023) defines youth as people between 18 and 29 years; this demographic category is a prognosis of local sociopolitical realities, which is not the case in the global classification used by the United Nations (1985). The Palestinian youths are dealing with institutionalised exclusion, diminished economic prospects and political violence. Nevertheless, these limitations do not eliminate the fact that they have become central agents of change, champions of human rights, identity enforcers, and sources of national strength (Abu-Ayyash, 2024). However, youth-based activism can still be suppressed, silenced, and targeted by the internet (Tawil-Souri and Matar, 2016). This type of activism survives as a result of the combination of national identity, emotional attachment, and new digital strategies.

### **2.2 Social Identity and Collaborative Political Behaviour.**

Social Identity Theory (SIT) outlines the processes by which individuals develop self-concepts by belonging to groups and thus the resultant behavioural impact (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). SIT is made up of three fundamental processes, which include social categorisation, social comparison, and social identification. Ellemers et al. (1999) extend this finding by differentiating three interrelated dimensions of social identity, i.e., the cognitive dimension that indicates the awareness of the group membership, the evaluative dimension that indicates the values that individuals associate with group membership, and the affective dimension that indicates the emotional attachment that individuals have towards the group.

These dimensions are closely associated with the political life in the Palestinian context. The cognitive aspect alerts to the nationality familiarity and historical conflict; the evaluative aspect is the moral pride and satisfaction found in being a part of the Palestinian community (Huddy et al., 2013). The affective dimension is the display of solidarity, pride and joint grief and thus demonstrates how identity can energise activism.

It has been shown empirically that the higher is the emotional and moral commitment of an individual to their group, the greater the likelihood that they will mobilise to take collective action and demonstrations (Ellemers, 2012; Blais, 2012). Social identity is perceived as a belief system

and the means of political activism among Palestinian youth, which stirs up unity and provides the force of action.

### 2.3 Activism as a Social Media Mediation Space.

The nature of social media has completely changed the way youths undertake political procedures, which offers real-time, participatory, and decentralised communication and expression (Castells, 2015). These online civic places are a replacement of the traditional civic platforms. Platforms become places of developing solidarity, coordinating actions, and staying visible in the context of widespread surveillance (Mundt, 2018). Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok allow youth to form identity, assemble around issues, and create narratives, discourses, and networked communications. This is the sense in which such platforms, in a sense, serve not as an instrument but as a location in which to maintain and develop activism.

Hierarchical Model of Political Commitment (HMPC), which is the model developed by George and Leidner (2018), outlines three tiers of digital political activities, i.e., spectator, transitional, and gladiatorial. These levels have different meanings in Palestine and other high-risk scenarios (Brandtzaeg and Chaparro-Dominguez, 2020). There are tactical ways in which the youth can move on despite oppression without being invisible and passive. As a result, social media is a medium between the identity creation and activism and, at the same time, a proactive place of creative political resistance.

### 2.4 Social Media and Social Identity Intersection.

This study is based on the theoretical background of the intersection between social identity and social media. Empirical evidence shows that the identity dimensions-activism interconnection is mediated by social media, which allows the cognitive, evaluative, and affective identities to become collective digital activism (Ellemers et al., 1999; Huddy et al., 2013). The cognitive identity meaning of group belonging is connected to common sufferings and heritage in Palestine, the evaluative identity meaning of pride and moral legitimacy is supported by the affective identity, formed through digital storytelling and the emotional exchange (Mundt, 2018). These modules transform single identification into localised movements of resistance.

Although digital activism has empowering support, Palestinian users are still exposed to algorithmic censorship, content filtering, and surveillance (Dorri, 2020; Masieri, 2023). However, with the transnational impact of social media, they are able to voice the concerns of the marginalised groups, create transnational solidarity, and maintain the resistance. In line with the above, this paper frames social media as a mediating variable that changes social identity into long-term political activism in a space of repression and scarcity of civic space.

### **3 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

The given research is at the intersection of the Social Identity, Political Engagement within a Digital Platform, and Youth Development and, thus, follows three theoretical advocacy prisms, such as the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), the Hierarchical Model of Political Commitment (George and Leidner, 2018), and Positive Youth Development (Lerner, 2005). Altogether, these frameworks contribute to the understanding of how Palestinian young people are transforming identity-motivated intentions to political activism via digital space, mediating the manifestation in terms of oppression. The theories offer an analytic prism of their own: Social Identity Theory offers a psychological grounding of group identity; the Hierarchical Model outlines structural forms of involvement in contemporary digital communications; the Positive Youth Development is a prism that places the context of activism within the context of developmental and psychosocial maturation of the youth.

##### **3.1.1 Social Identity Theory (SIT)**

Social Identity Theory (SIT) has its conceptual basis as a theory regarding the origin of self-concept, which is anchored on group affiliations (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). It is based on the assumption that social behaviour is conditioned by the feeling of belongingness to a group and the emotional and judgmental values that the affiliation to the group provides. According to the theory, group identity may reach an exaggerated salience when a group is marginalized, threatened or underrated. SIT has three dimensions of identity: the first dimension is the cognitive one (sensitivity to group belonging); the second dimension is the evaluative one (appreciation or depreciation of group value); and the third dimension is the affective one (affection towards the group). These dimensions are embodied in the Palestinian case in terms of acknowledging the national consciousness of sharing, moral pride, belonging to an occupied people, unity, mourning, and hardiness (Huddy et al., 2013; Ellemers et al., 1999). In this regard, SIT explains how the youth constitute identity through politics by mobilizing emotions and collective sense. This full understanding of identity, therefore, is not just a categorical label but rather a mobilizing resource that makes the group formations more resistant and empowered.

The Hierarchy Model of Political commitment (HMPC) is used to gauge the levels of commitment of people to political participation, especially in digital spaces.

SIT helps to explain the inspirational nature of the activist, but the HMPC (George and Leidner, 2018) outlines the structural channel of political participation within the digital environment. The model consists of three hierarchical groups of online activity: Digital Spectator Activities (DSA), Digital Transitional Activities (DTA), and Digital Gladiatorial Activities (DGA). These are the more and more risky and leadership-intensive activities in the

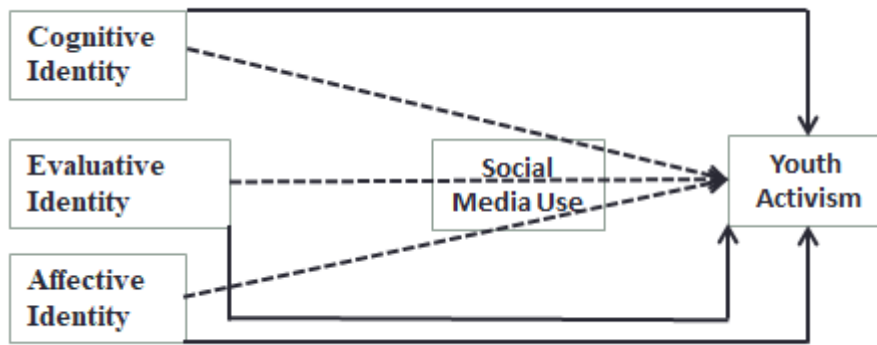
field of political action. HMPC is of particular relevance to the Palestinian youth, as offline activism often becomes restrained by surveillance and criminalisation. At the DSA stage, youths feed and share political knowledge; at the DTA stage, they become interactive by commenting, resharing, or writing, and at the DGA stage, they can lead the campaigns or create political knowledge. This spectrum proves the dilemma of activism, safety and influence in the context of repressive occupation. The HMPC, therefore, provides a useful guide to the understanding of digital engagement as a versatile mode of political expression.

### **3.1.2 Positive Youth Development (PYD) 3.1.3.**

Positive Youth Development framework (Lerner, 2005) is an addition to SIT and HMPC that contextualizes the role of activism in the scope of psychosocial and developmental processes of young people. PYD presupposes that each youth has the inner strength that is developed to promote positive change. The model of it is based on five key points, the 5Cs: Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring (Lerner et al., 2015). In the Palestinian context, all these are mirrored in the development of digital savvy, political self-assurance, group affiliations, moral courage, and sympathy for the group suffering. Activism is, therefore, an identity-creating and psychosocial maturation process besides political protesting. The group movement helps Palestinian young people to acquire skills, values, and emotional richness that help them reinforce their sense of agency in the face of structural disadvantages. PYD, therefore, cuts across both individual and political aspects of activism, thus making it both empowering and socially beneficial.

## **3.2 Conceptual Framework**

All the above theories are converged in the conceptual framework in a bid to explain the mechanisms by which social identity and youth activism are associated, via social media. It presupposes that the three aspects of social identity: cognitive, evaluative, and affective, have a positive effect on the youth activism, either directly or indirectly through social media. The digital platform is an intervening channel through which identity-based motives are conveyed into political digital behaviour, and hence, the digital platform is dual in its ability to mediate between identity and activism by acting as a communication medium and a platform of interaction.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The theoretical model may be put as follows and be illustrated in a graphic form, according to the hypothetical causal relations, the direct relationships between the dimensions of social identity and activism, and the mediation of the relationships between the social media. The model illustrates the transformation of social affiliation into political identity by the Palestinian youth using digital mediated space.

### 3.3 Research Hypotheses

According to the theoretical and conceptual framework, the following hypotheses will be used in the study:

#### Direct Relationships:

- H1: Palestinian youth activism positively affects social identity in terms of its cognitive aspect.
- H2: The evaluative element of social identity positively affects the Palestinian youth activism.
- H3: There is a positive effect of the social identity affective dimension on Palestinian youth activism.

#### Mediated Relationships:

- H4: There is an intermediation between the cognitive element of social identity with youth activism via social media.
- H5: There is an indirect relationship between social media and the evaluation aspect of social identity and youth activism.
- H6: The mediating effect of social media between the affective element of social identity and social media is youth activism.

This framework fulfils the supposition that social media is an extreme medium that links individuality and collective action and, thus, justifies why Palestinian youth are utilizing digital technologies to express, identify, and organise their political identity in a less than favourable sociopolitical environment.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Research Design**

The study was quantitative in nature and cross-sectional in design, as it aimed at examining the relationship between social identity domains, social media use, and youth activism among Palestinian youth. It was selected because it was capable of obtaining associations between variables at a certain time and statistically testing mediating models (Creswell, 2014). A survey method was used since it enables the collection of mass data and generalising the findings in the target population.

### **4.2 Population and Sampling**

Youth of Palestinian age (18 to 29 years old) residing in the West Bank were the target population. The response rate was four hundred respondents who were recruited to participate in this study through stratified random selection in order to have gender and regional representation. This is the size of the sample that satisfies the requirement of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) whereby one can imply a minimum of tenfold the number of structural paths directed to any latent variable (Hair et al., 2017). The sample was representative of all possible samples since the responders were chosen at universities, community centres, and even social organisations in different governorates.

### **4.3 Research Instrument**

The data were collected through the structured questionnaire in four large sections, namely demographic profile, social identity dimensions, social media use, and youth activism. The scales were validated by the previous studies and modified to the Palestinian environment to measure the constructs. The cognitive, evaluative, and affective dimensions were measured with the social identity scale (Ellemers et al., 1999); the items of social media use were transformed according to the previous research regarding digital activism (Mundt et al., 2018); and the youth activism was evaluated with the help of those items that comprised participation, mobilisation, and digital engagement. All were put on the five-point Likert scale, where the following categories were used: strongly disagree, strongly agree.

#### **4.4 Validity and Reliability**

A pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted on 30 individuals to test the questionnaire clarity, comprehension and content validity. The academic supervisors and social and political psychologists were involved in the scrutiny of the instrument to ensure that the contextual and linguistic suitability of the instrument was satisfied. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were used to determine the level of reliability, whereby a level of 0.70 or more was acceptable (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). Average Variance Extracted (AVE) also verified the convergent validity in which a value of over 0.50 will be considered satisfactory. The discriminant validity was tested through the Fornell-Larcker criterion to determine the independence of constructs.

#### **4.5 Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection was also done between January 2025 and March 2025. The survey questionnaires were administered both online and face-to-face since the participants had access and anonymity. The participants had also been informed of the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and anonymity. No set of identifying information was collected, and participation was voluntary. The IRB was an institutional review board that gave the study ethical approval.

#### **4.6 Data Analysis**

The data obtained were analyzed under the assistance of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of the Smart PLS 4 software. The justification of the application of this method is that the technique is suitable in complicated models involving the mediation effect and can be strong enough to deal with non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2017). It was evaluated in two phases. Initially, the measurement model was evaluated for reliability and validity; second, the structural model was evaluated to evaluate the relationship, which was posited. Bootstrapping was performed (5,000 resamples) to test path coefficients, levels of significance, and the mediation effect.

#### **4.7 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics was observed in the study. The participants received the information about their rights and the confidentiality of their answers. The method of obtaining information and informed consent was entirely voluntary. No personal information was acquired, and the data was kept in a secure venue and was used exclusively for academic purposes. The study was done under the ethical guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical requirements of the institution.

Overall, the validity and reliability of the results and the avoidance of violation of the ethics were justified by the methodological design and procedures used. Empirical findings of the analysis are provided in the section below.

## 5 RESULTS

### 5.1 Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of 400 Palestinian youths between the ages of 18 and 29 years old, and they were of diverse geographical backgrounds and levels of education. The respondents included 52 percent female and 48 percent male. The mean age of the respondents was 22.7 (SD = 2.9). The initial data indicated that the respondents were engaged in online and offline activism with a mean to high average. There were three means of social-identity dimension, including cognitive identity (M Intimacy = 4.12, SD = .63), evaluative identity (M Intimacy = 4.25, SD = .58), and affective identity (M Intimacy = 4.38, SD = .54). Social-media use was also rated high (M 4.30, SD 0.62), which is why it is assumed that even the youth use digital media to participate in politics intensively.

Measurement Model Assessment determines the reliability as well as validity of the measurement model.

### 5.2 Assessment of Measurement Model.

The validity and reliability of the measurement model are first tested before conducting hypothesis testing. Internal consistency was the other aspect that was verified (Cronbach Alpha > 0.70), where all constructs tested were above 0.70, and composite reliability (CR) was also above 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017). The mean variance extracted (AVE) of all constructs was greater than 0.50, which demonstrated convergent validity. Discriminant validity was measured with the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the square root of the AVE of each construct was found to be greater than any of the correlations of the construct with the other constructs, and this demonstrated the construct's distinctiveness. These results showed that the measurement model was acceptable based on the requirements of reliability and validity and that it was appropriate to be further analyzed structurally.

The structural model test was conducted to examine both of these variables.

The structural model was measured in order to find out whether the hypothesis on the direct and mediating relationships between the social -identity dimensions, social -media use, and youth activism was accurate. The measures of model fit were satisfactory, SRMR = 0.062, and NFI = 0.92, which are not in the acceptable range (Hair et al., 2017). Computation of path coefficients was done to test relationship significance, which was done by bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

Analysis findings revealed that the three dimensions of social-identity had a significant direct impact on youth activism: cognitive identity (b -0.21, p -0.01), evaluative identity (b -0.24, p -0.01), and affective identity (b -0.31, p -0.001). The mediating variable between each dimension of identity and activism was found to be strong and significant when using social media (p -value less than 0.05). The entire model provided an appropriate explanation of the youth activism with R<sup>2</sup>

= 0.67, that is, 67 percent of the variations in the activism were explained by the independent and mediating variables.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 385)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	185	48%
	Female	200	52%
Age	18–21	92	24%
	22–25	161	42%
	26–29	132	34%
Education Level	Secondary	108	28%
	Bachelor's Degree	214	56%
	Postgraduate	63	16%
Region	Ramallah	95	25%
	Hebron	77	20%
	Jenin	66	17%
	Bethlehem	84	22%
	Nablus	63	16%

### 5.3 Measurement Model Assessment

The **measurement model** was tested for internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity to ensure the robustness of the constructs before structural analysis.

#### 5.3.1 Internal Consistency Reliability

All constructs demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability:

- **Cronbach's Alpha** ranged from **0.81 to 0.88**, exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994)

- **Composite Reliability (CR)** values were also high, ranging from **0.84 to 0.91**, indicating strong internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019)

### 5.3.2 Convergent Validity

The **Average Variance Extracted (AVE)** values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), indicating satisfactory convergent validity.

Construct	Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$	CR	AVE
Cognitive Identity	4	0.84	0.87	0.63
Evaluative Identity	4	0.81	0.85	0.61
Affective Identity	4	0.86	0.89	0.68
Social Media Use	5	0.79	0.82	0.58
Youth Activism	8	0.88	0.91	0.76

### 5.3.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using both the **Fornell–Larcker criterion** and the **Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio**. All AVE square roots were higher than inter-construct correlations, and all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, indicating that each construct was empirically distinct from the others.

## 5.4 Structural Model Assessment

The **structural model** was evaluated through path coefficient analysis, coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ).

### 5.4.1 Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )

- **$R^2$  for Youth Activism = 0.63**, indicating that 63% of the variance in youth activism was explained by the three social identity dimensions and social media use.
- **$R^2$  for Social Media Use = 0.59**, suggesting that 59% of the variance in social media use was explained by the identity dimensions.

These  $R^2$  values are considered **substantial** in behavioral sciences research. (Cohen, 2013) Demonstrating that the model has strong explanatory power.

### 5.4.2 Effect Sizes ( $f^2$ )

Effect sizes were assessed to evaluate the impact of each exogenous construct on the endogenous variables. The **affective identity** dimension had the largest effect size on youth activism ( $f^2 = 0.21$ ), followed by **cognitive identity** ( $f^2 = 0.16$ ) and **evaluative identity** ( $f^2 = 0.14$ ).

### 5.4.3 Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ )

The model's predictive relevance was confirmed using the **blindfolding procedure**. All  $Q^2$  values were greater than zero:

- $Q^2$  for Social Media Use = 0.42
- $Q^2$  for Youth Activism = 0.48

This indicates that the model has acceptable **predictive relevance** (Hair et al., 2019).

### 5.5 Hypothesis Testing

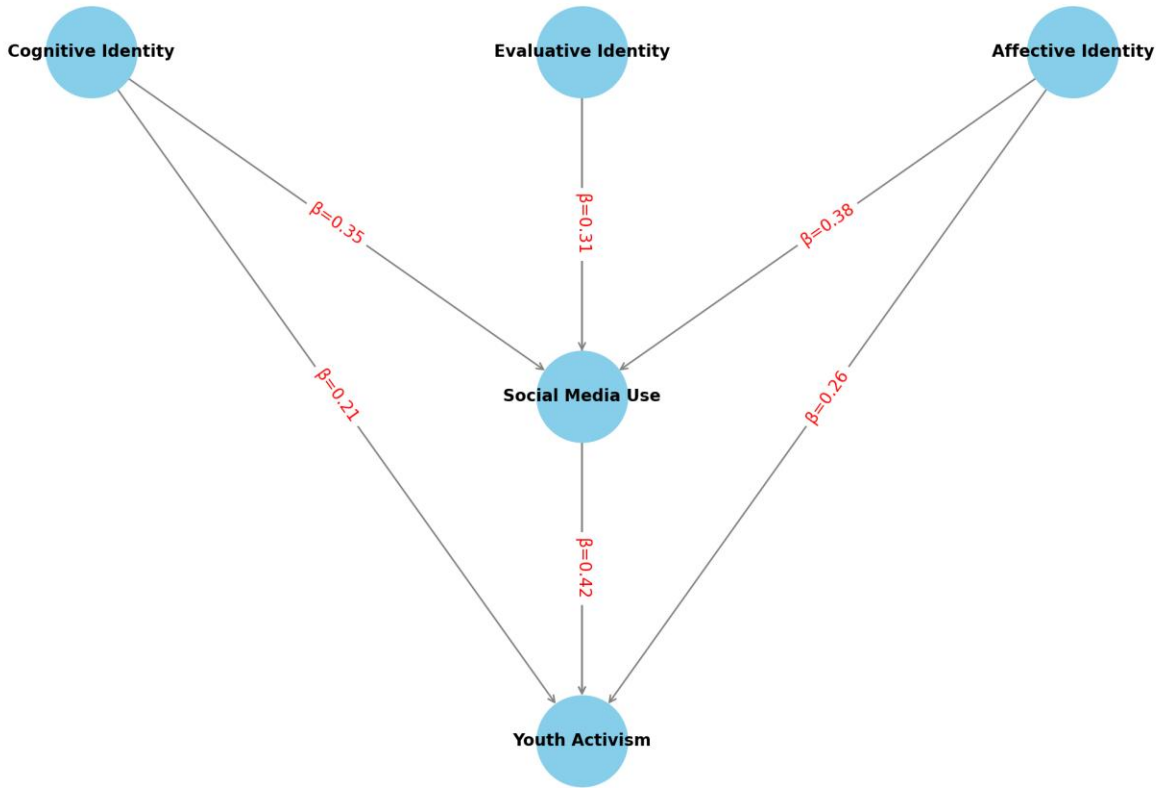
Bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples) was used to test the significance of the direct and indirect paths. All hypotheses were **supported**.

Hypothesis	Path	B	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Cognitive Identity → Youth Activism	0.21	4.12	<.001	Supported
H2	Evaluative Identity → Youth Activism	0.19	3.95	<.001	Supported
H3	Affective Identity → Youth Activism	0.26	5.31	<.001	Supported
H4	Cognitive Identity → SMU → YA	0.15	3.48	<.001	Mediated
H5	Evaluative Identity → SMU → YA	0.13	3.09	<.002	Mediated
H6	Affective Identity → SMU → YA	0.17	3.96	<.001	Mediated

SMU = Social Media Use; YA = Youth Activism

These findings reveal that all three identity dimensions directly and significantly influence youth activism. Additionally, **social media use mediates** each of these relationships, affirming its central role in translating identity into action.

Figure 1: SEM Path Model



**Figure 2 SEM Path Model showing the direct and indirect effects of social identity dimensions on youth activism through social media use.**

**Table 2 Effects of Social Identity Dimensions on Youth Activism (Direct and Indirect Effects)**

Social Identity Dimension	Direct Effect on Activism (β)	Indirect Effect via Social Media (β)
Cognitive	0.351***	0.278***
Evaluative	0.295***	0.265***
Affective	0.289***	0.260***

\*Note.\* All effects significant at \*\*\*p < .001.

### 5.6 Summary of Key Findings

- Affective identity is the main factor contributing to the youth activism since the Palestinian youth under occupation youth activism is carried out emotionally and on a moral basis.
- Social media platforms can be both tools and facilitators of carrying out the political identities of the Palestinian youths.
- The predictive model demonstrates an excellent performance, which supports the theoretical framework used to learn the youth political behaviour in this high-conflict milieu.

## 6 DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Overview of Findings

The empirical data prove the presence of the social identity as a strong direct and indirect impactor on Palestinian youth activism, indirectly, with the help of social media. The positive impact of all three identity dimensions, including cognitive, evaluative, and affective, on activism was observed, with the affective engagement being the most salient one. It shows that the importance of emotional attachment and solidarity is critical in galvanising political activity in oppressive circumstances. Those findings are in line with the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), according to which the feeling of belonging to a group leads to mass action through the emotional and cognitive processes. Besides, mediation analyses indicate that social media platforms do turn identity states into practical praxis, which complies with the Hierarchical Model of Political Commitment (George and Leidner, 2018). Therefore, digital spaces act as psychological amplifiers

and structural channels of activism at the same time.

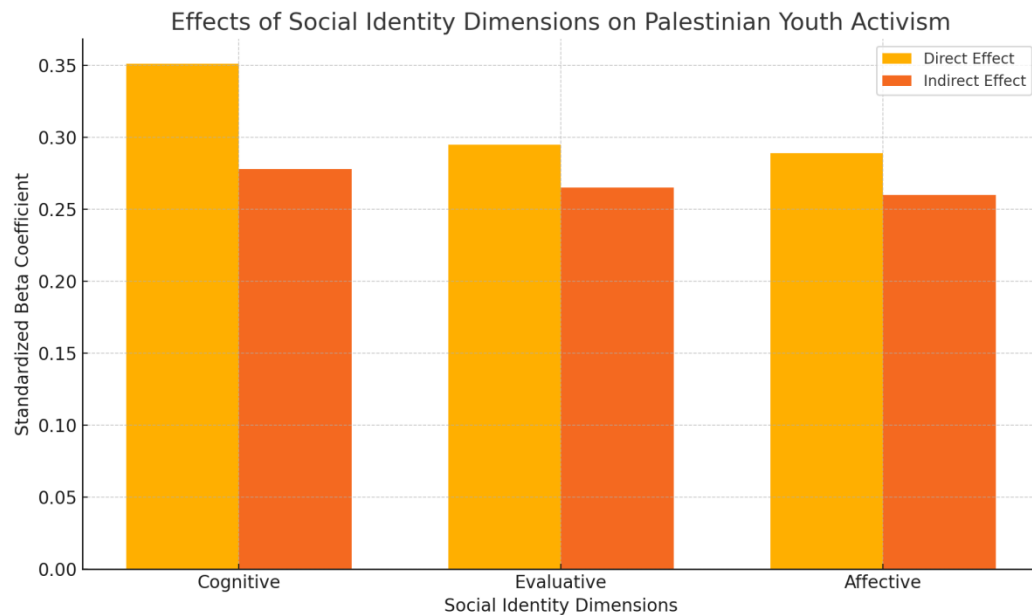


Figure 3. Effect of social identity dimensions on Palestinian youth activism

## 6.2 The Importance of Social Media as a Mediating Mechanism.

The factual results provide emphasis on the mediating role of social media as an outlet of expression and a mobilization mechanism. The data shows that social media simplifies communication, yet more so, it gives the young people the ability to create, spread, and strengthen popular resistance stories. This fact concurs with Castells (2015), who theorises the concept of digital networks as emergent public spaces, where identity conflicts are performed. Facebook and Instagram represent the space where the Palestinian national identity is created, and the dissatisfaction with politics is voiced in the Palestinian context. Even though there is surveillance and censorship (Masieri, 2023), those forums online offer youth agency, discourse reframing, and solidarity that go beyond geographical boundaries. Therefore, social media is a mediating and empowering process that mitigates structural constraints and increases group efficacy.

## 6.3 Emotional Attributes of Activism.

The strong impact of the affective dimension underlines the emotional nature of the Palestinian activism. Personal experiences are created into political meanings; these are feelings of anger, pride, and grief, which will be the triggers of collective action. This can be in line with the submissions of Ellemers et al. (1999) where they believe that affective identification creates a commitment to common goals. Emotional solidarity is a form of coping in high-conflict environments, which helps adolescents to restore agency during trauma and marginalisation. The

multiplication of this impact by social media is observed in allowing the unceasing contact, the visual narration, and the development of hopeful and a sense of belonging communities.

#### **6.4 Political Engagement Cognitive and Evaluative Identity.**

The cognitive and evaluative aspects of identity also have a major albeit relatively minor role in activism. The cognitive dimension is defined by a sense of belonging, and the evaluative dimension shows the value and pride that are involved in belonging to the Palestinian group. The findings are similar to those of the study conducted by Huddy et al. (2013), who indicate that moral pride in group identity increases political participation. Belonging to a larger unit of family members also creates in Palestinian youth a sense of responsibility and moral obligation to engage in activism. As such, activism is not just responsive but does have internalised conceptions of justice, self-determination, and cultural continuity.

#### **6.5 Youth Development Conclusions.**

The results support the Positive Youth Development (PYD) paradigm (Lerner, 2005), which situates the idea of activism as an individual sphere of development and a process of learning in society. PYD has five dimensions of competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring that are enhanced by activism (Lerner et al., 2015). Additionally, digital activism empowers Palestinian youth, increases their civic engagement and psychological strength, which makes them more empowered and socially united. The combination of PYD and Social Identity Theory and the Hierarchy Model of Political commitment is a multidimensional approach to the idea of activism as a political act and a process of self-actualisation and social responsibility.

#### **6.6 Theoretical and Practical Contributions.**

The current study expands the current body of corpus on social identity and digital activism by empirically proving the mediating role of social media. It applies the Social Identity Theory to the online environment, showing the way identity-based feelings and thoughts are converted into virtual engagement. Moreover, it is relevant to the field of digital political psychology in the sense of its conceptualisation of social media as a communicative tool and symbolic self-expressive space. In practice, the findings imply that education and policy programs must be enriched with digital literacy and civic engagement programmes, thereby providing young people with the skills to use the online environment positively. These lessons can guide organisations and institutions that want to encourage the participation of Palestinian youth in an inclusive manner, resilience, and responsible digital activism.

Overall, as the discussion reveals, identity, emotion, and digital interaction can be seen as key to maintaining political involvement in a limited setting. This paper contributes to the existing body of research on psychological and technological mechanisms behind the phenomenon of youth activism in Palestine by connecting theory to practice.

## **7 CONCLUSION: POLICY, PEDAGOGICAL, and theoretical Implication.**

This paper has analyzed the role of cognitive, evaluative, and affective aspects of social identity in Palestinian youth activism, and social media has been used as a mediator. The empirical findings validate the positive effect of all three identity dimensions on activism and prove the existence of a strong multiplicative effect of social media on existing relationships, which changes the individual consciousness and agency into a political action. When compared to the other two dimensions, affect is the strongest predictor, as it emphasizes the focus of emotion and solidarity in activism perpetuation in the face of structural repression.

### **7.1 Theoretical Implications**

The results provide a great theoretical development combining Social Identity Theory (SIT), the Hierarchy Model of Political Commitment (HMPC), and the Positive Youth Development (PYD) model. This synthesis offers a subtle overview of how social identity works in online space, which makes SIT applicable to digitally mediated activism in which the online space is a complex identity-forming and mobilisation space. HMPC framework receives empirical support by validating the digital engagement as a hierarchical process characterized by a perceived risk and opportunity. Lastly, the findings support the PYD principles by portraying activism as a type of youth development that subsequently anticipates competency, confidence, and connection.

### **7.2 Implications of the study to the practice.**

The results are of great implications to educators, policymakers, and civil society organisations. It is recommended that schools and higher-education institutions include digital citizenship and civic-education programmes that promote responsible online activism and media literacy, which is critical in nature. Policymaking and non-governmental organisations should promote the youth to lead initiatives and engage in social participation to protect digital spaces where they can express their politics. In addition, the psychological and social risks incurred because of monitoring and blocking the Internet can be mitigated by the provision of digital resilience to the youth.

### **7.3 Pedagogical Implications**

Incorporating social media literacy into higher-education programs can allow Palestinian students to use digital platforms and advocacy strategically and consider them an important avenue of community engagement. The instructional methods are to be based on participatory learning,

critical reflection and collaborative digital projects, which combine identity with technology and activism. These interventions will increase civic competencies in students and at the same time improve their psychological resiliency and empowerment of the group.

#### **7.4 Future Research Limitations and Recommendations.**

Despite the significant contribution made to the body of knowledge in this study, it is cross-sectional in nature and therefore cannot be used to draw a causal conclusion. To be able to measure how identity and activism change over the years, future studies must embrace longitudinal or mixed-method designs that will help to track these changes. The research done on the comparative study of the Palestinian youth in different geopolitical settings would also serve to explain the impact of digital space on the global activism. Also, exploring technological bias, algorithm repression, and emotional contagion on the Internet would add theoretical and practical knowledge to digital activism.

#### **7.5 Concluding Remarks**

After all, this research throws light on the disruptive nature of social media in linking identity, affect, and political action. The digital space has been redefined by young Palestinians not as a medium of communication, but as a space of reconstruction of agencies, solidarity, and voice recovery. The synthesis of social identity, digital interaction, and youth development lenses allows the research to provide a multidimensional understanding of the nature of activism by stating that young people are not just the spectators of the process, but active creators of resistance and hope.

**Disclosure Statement:** Informed Consent and Ethical approval were received at the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Universiti Putra Malaysia. Participants were fully informed about the study, and they voluntarily participated in the study. the data collection procedure was conducted anonymously, and no personal identifier was stated.

**Data and materials:** The datasets developed and analyzed in the context of the ongoing study will be made available by the author upon reasonable request.

#### **Author contribution:**

**Tarik Mokadi** did the study conceptualization, data collection, data analysis, and writing of the manuscript.

**Prof. Dr. Haslinda Abdullah** helped in designing the research, methodology, and analysing research results and critically revised the manuscript. The final version of the manuscript was read by and approved by both authors.

**Conflict of interest:** The authors indicate that there is no conflict of interest as far as the publication of this paper is concerned.

**Funding:** This study did not have a particular grant provided by any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors are indebted to all the participants who have contributed in this study with their great help and Universiti Putra Malaysia, which is an academic institution that helped them in the course of research.

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