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EFFECTS OF ONLINE NEWS MEDIA USES ON POLITICAL EFFICACY AND ON AND OFFLINE POLITICAL DISCUSSION: MEDIATING EFFECTS OF POLITICAL EFFICACY AND ONLINE POLITICAL DISCUSSION

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Abstract

This study examined the extent to which uses of current affairs and political content on portal sites (Naver, Google) and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, KakaoStory) influences users' political efficacy and participation in political discussions both online and offline. The findings indicate that such media use enhances internal political efficacy, which subsequently promotes online political discussion and, ultimately, offline political discussion. Internal political efficacy and online discussion were shown to exert significant mediating effects within this sequential process. These results provide empirical evidence that exposure to political and current affairs content through online media reinforces individuals' internal political efficacy. In line with previous researches, the findings suggest that media use extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge to foster political confidence, which in turn encourages more active political participation. Portals and social media platforms thus play a critical role in shaping the attitudinal foundations upon which democratic participation depends. Another notable implication of this study is the mediating role of online political discussion in the relationship between online media use and offline political discussion. Online political discussion does not merely constitute passive or superficial engagement but serves as an arena in which political confidence can be translated into tangible action. In this sense, online political discussion functions as both a training ground for democratic communication and a catalyst for cultivating a culture of deliberation.

Keywords: Portals, Social media, Political efficacy, Online political discussion, Offline political discussion



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1. Introduction

The present study examines whether the uses of current affairs and political content through portals (e.g., Naver, Google) and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Kakao Story) significantly influence internal political efficacy. Furthermore, it investigates whether such content use indirectly affects both online and offline political discussion through the mediation of internal political efficacy. The study also explores whether such uses of current affairs and political content influence internal political efficacy, which in turn shapes online political discussion, which eventually influences offline political discussion. In so doing, the mediating effects of internal political efficacy and online political discussion are empirically tested. Finally, the study discusses the theoretical implications of the interrelationships among such uses of current affairs and political content of portal and social media, internal political efficacy, and political discussion across online and offline contexts.

2. Literature Review

1) Media News and Political Efficacy

Political efficacy is central to understanding political participation. News delivered via portals, by fostering debate and interaction, has been shown to reduce cynicism, enhance trust, and subsequently elevate political efficacy (Park, 2009). According to Park, a stronger motivation to engage in opinion exchange and deliberation through the use of portal news is associated with higher levels of internet self-efficacy and political trust, while simultaneously being linked to lower levels of political cynicism. In the Korean context, the Internet has been reported to be more effective than traditional media in increasing political efficacy (Kim, 2010). Also, researchers found that social media influenced a positive effect on first-time voters' political efficacy (Ha et al., 2014). More recently, engagement with diverse YouTube channels—including mainstream outlets, influencers, and independent news creators—has likewise been positively associated with political efficacy (Choi, 2024).

Hypothesis 1. The use of current affairs and political content through portals (e.g., Naver, Google) and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook-Instagram, KakaoStory) will respectively influence positive effects on internal political efficacy.

2) Media News, Political Efficacy, and Political Participation

Political efficacy functions as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between media use and political participation (Gans, 1967; Jung et al., 2011). Prior research demonstrates that political use of social media enhances efficacy, which subsequently increases individuals' intentions to participate in elections (Lee & Kim, 2012). Similarly, informationally motivated news use has been shown to predict higher levels of political knowledge, efficacy, and participation (Lee & Lee, 2009). Studies of



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blogs and portal news report that such forms of media not only amplify willingness to participate in elections but do so primarily through the mediation of efficacy (Lim, 2005; Park & Han, 2008).

Compared to traditional media, social media exert stronger participatory effects and reinforces democratic processes by diffusing political information to otherwise disengaged groups (Castells, 2011; Valenzuela et al., 2009). Additionally, it has been shown to strengthen electoral efficacy, thereby increasing individuals' intention to vote (Lee & Lee, 2009). These findings suggest that political efficacy not only acts as a crucial outcome of media effects but also as a mediator linking media use to political participation (Song & Park, 2005). Political efficacy is also positively associated with offline and online participation (Theocharis et al., 2022). For example, the use of blogs and Facebook has been found to enhance efficacy (Park & Han, 2008), which in turn affects campaign participation, contacting politicians, and voting (Cohen et al., 2001; Kenski & Stroud, 2006). In line with this, social media has been consistently associated with significant increases in both efficacy and participatory behaviors (Kim, 2016; Postelnicu & Cozma, 2008) as well as higher levels of political information acquisition, information sharing, and political participation (Lee & Kim, 2012; Hayes, 2009). By facilitating information dissemination, opinion exchange, and interaction with politicians, platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have been found to enhance efficacy and expand opportunities for political activity (Kim, 2016). Notably, users reporting greater exposure to dissenting views within these platforms developed higher levels of political efficacy and social capital than those who did not report greater exposure.

Hypothesis 2. The use of current affairs and political content through portals and social media platforms will positively influence internal political efficacy, which in turn will positively affect online political discussion. Internal political efficacy will have a significant mediating effect in this pathway.

Hypothesis 3. The use of current affairs and political content through portals and social media platforms will positively influence internal political efficacy, which in turn will positively affect offline political discussion. Internal political efficacy will have a significant mediating effect in this pathway.

3) Online and Offline Political Discussion

The participatory, interactive, and open nature of online media enables individuals to freely engage in cyber public spheres, thereby fostering the publicization of political issues and extending opportunities for expansion of the scope of roles. Social media provides an avenue for interaction between candidates and voters during election periods (Hayes, 2008; Wells & Dudash, 2007). For younger cohorts, these platforms function not only as preferred sources of information but also as arenas for expressing political perspectives and engaging in participation (Hayes, 2009; Vitak et al., 2011).

In line with previous research, the use of news and political content has been



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found to stimulate interpersonal communication and political discussions that reinforce public participation (Hardy & Scheufele, 2005; Kim, 2016; McLeod et al., 1999). Political discussions, whether online or offline, serve as critical mechanisms linking media use with political participation (Lee, 2024; Nisbet & Scheufele, 2004; Shah et al., 2005). According to Lee, it was found that the use of news and current affairs contents on portal sites positively affected off-line political debate, which in turn positively affected vote intention and political involvement. Importantly, individuals who acquire political information online are more likely to complement their knowledge through face-to-face discussion and, consequently, become more politically active participators (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2004). Research on Korean presidential election has further shown that increased exposure to ideologically diverse news sources was positively linked to both online reading behaviors and face-to-face discussions (Rhee et al., 2019). Similarly, online activities such as liking, sharing, and commenting on Facebook have been found to enhance political knowledge and attitudes, which translate into increased participation (Yang & Lee, 2016). These findings highlight the reinforcing dynamic between political expression in digital environments and civic behavior offline.

Nevertheless, some critics argue that activities such as commenting or sharing online represent forms of "slacktivism"—low-cost, low-effort behaviors unlikely to produce substantial political outcomes (Schulman, 2009). However, other researchers contend that even minimal online engagements constitute meaningful forms of participation and participatory media use (Jang & Kim, 2020; Kim & Choi, 2015; Yang & Shin, 2018). Therefore, the use of online news and current affairs content is expected to influence political discussions on portals and social media, which in turn is considered to have significant effects on offline political discussion.

Hypothesis 4. The use of current affairs and political content through portals and social media will positively influence internal political efficacy, which will in turn positively influence online political discussion, and ultimately foster offline political discussion. In this pathway, online political discussion will exert a significant mediating effect.

3. Methods

1) Survey

A face-to-face survey was conducted with undergraduate students enrolled at a four-year comprehensive university. Using a convenience sampling method, data collection took place over a 17-day period from March 8 to March 24, 2023. After excluding 11 questionnaires deemed insincere or incomplete, a total of 365 valid responses were employed for analysis.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 3-1.



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Table 3-1
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Categories		N	%
Sex (M=.41, SD=.50)	Male	148	40.5
	Female	216	59.5
	Total	364	100.0
Age (Mean=21.09, SD=1.92)	Under 20	80	22.3
	20~21	135	37.7
	22~23	102	28.5
	24~25	36	10.1
	Over 26	5	1.4
	Total	358	100.0
School Year (Mean=2.75, SD=1.12)	Year 1	75	20.6
	2	59	16.2
	3	111	30.5
	4	119	32.7
	Total	364	100.0
Income (Mean=6.24, SD=2.25)	Under 1 mil KRW	1	0.3
	1~2 mil	9	2.6
	2~3 mil	33	9.6
	3~4 mil	52	15.1
	4~5 mil	52	15.1
	5~6 mil	43	12.5
	6~7 mil	42	12.2
	7~8 mil	45	13.0
	8~9 mil	25	7.2
	Over 9 mil	43	12.5



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Categories		N	%
Total		345	100.0
Political Orientation (Mean=3.04, SD=0.87)	Conservative	94	25.8
	Moderate	156	42.9
	Progressive	114	31.3
	Total	364	100.0

2) Factor Analysis

A factor analysis was conducted on all 21 items. As presented in Table 3-2, the items were grouped into seven factors. Factor 1 was labeled Online political discussion, Factor 2 Internal political efficacy, Factor 3 Facebook·Instagram current affairs & political content, Factor 4 Offline political discussion, Factor 5 Google current affairs & political content, Factor 6 KakaoStory current affairs & political content, and Factor 7 Naver current affairs & political content. The cumulative initial eigenvalues of the seven factors accounted for 77.973% of the total variance.

Table 3-2

Factor Analysis

Categories	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7
Using Current Affairs News on Facebook			.798				
Using Political News on Facebook			.723				
Using Current Affairs News on Instagram			.755				
Using Political News on Instagram			.754				
Using Current Affairs News on Naver							.875
Using Political News							.820



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Categories	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor7
on Naver							
Using Current Affairs News on Google					.921		
Using Political News on Goole					.887		
Using Current Affairs News on KakaoStory						.840	
Using Political News on KakaoStory						.899	
I possess the qualities necessary for political participation		.806					
I have a good understanding of political issues in Korea		.882					
I am as knowledgeable about politics and government as most people		.862					
I am capable of understanding political issues		.837					
Posting comments on political posts or news stories online	.809						
Posting supportive or opposing messages about political parties or politicians online	.908						
Participating in online political discussions or debates	.895						



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Categories	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor7
Engaging in conversations or debates with politicians online	.867						
Engaging in political discussions or debates with friends or acquaintances offline				.818			
Engaging in political discussions or debates with classmates or colleagues offline				.743			
Engaging in political discussions or debates with family members or relatives offline				.813			
total initial eigenvalues	5.492	3.092	2.551	1.689	1.462	1.074	1.014
Variance of Initial Eigenvalues (%)	26.152	14.723	12.150	8.042	6.963	5.113	4.831
Cumulative Initial Eigenvalues(%)	26.152	40.875	53.025	61.067	68.030	73.142	77.973

Note: 1-Online political discussion, 2-Internal political efficacy, 3-Facebook-Instagram current affairs-political content, 4-Offline political discussion, 5-Google Current affairs-political content, 6-KakaoStory current affairs-political Content, 7-Naver current affairs-political content

2) Operational Definitions of Main Variables

The primary independent variables include the use of current affairs and political content on Naver, Google, Facebook-Instagram, and KakaoStory. The mediating variables are internal political efficacy and online political discussion. The dependent variables are online and offline political discussion. Online political discussion variable was modeled both as a mediator and as a dependent variable according to the research purposes. Respondents answered all item statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (very much true).

(1) Use of Current Affairs and Political Content on Naver

This variable comprises two items assessing the frequency of “using current



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affairs content and news on the Naver portal” and “using political news on the Naver portal” during the past week($\alpha=.796$).

(2) Use of Current Affairs and Political Content on Google

This variable comprises two items measuring the frequency of “using current affairs content and news on the Google portal” and “using political news on the Google portal” during the past week($\alpha=.856$).

(3) Use of Current Affairs and Political Content on Facebook-Instagram

This variable comprises four items measuring the frequency during the past week of: “using current affairs content or news on Facebook,” “using political news on Facebook,” “using current affairs content or news on Instagram,” and “using political news on Instagram” ($\alpha=.783$).

(4) Use of Current Affairs and Political Content on KakaoStory

This variable comprises two items measuring the frequency during the past week of: “using current affairs content or news on KakaoStory” and “using political news on KakaoStory”($\alpha=.771$).

(5) Internal Political Efficacy

Following the study by Keum & Cho(2015), the following items were adopted to measure internal political efficacy: “I possess the qualities necessary for political participation,” “I have a good understanding of major political issues in Korea,” “I am as knowledgeable about politics and government as most people,” and “I am capable of understanding political issues.” The Cronbach’s α for these items was .893.

(6) Online Political Discussion

Drawing from Lee’s study (2020) on the effects of online voter interaction on voting, which included items for expressing support, posting comments, and participating in discussions related to politics and elections on social media and portal sites, the following items were adopted for this study’s measurement of online political discussion. Over the past week, respondents indicated the frequency of: “posting comments on political posts or news stories online,” “posting supportive or opposing messages about political parties or politicians online,” “participating in online political discussions or debates,” and “engaging in conversations or debates with politicians online” ($\alpha=.916$).

(7) Offline Political Discussion

Based on the measurement of offline conversational frequency by Keum & Cho (2015) who assessed how often respondents discussed politics and current affairs issues with family or relatives, friends or acquaintances, colleagues, classmates, and seniors/juniors using a 10-point scale—the items for offline political discussion were suitably adapted for this study. This variable comprises three items regarding the



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frequency during the past week of: “engaging in political discussions or debates with friends or acquaintances offline,” “having political discussions or debates with classmates or colleagues in-person,” and “engaging in political discussions or debates with family members or relatives offline” ($\alpha=.843$).

(8) Statistical Analysis

To examine the significant effects among the variables of portal and social media use for current affairs and political content, internal political efficacy, online political discussion, and offline political discussion, hierarchical regression analysis was first conducted. In addition, to test the mediating effects of internal political efficacy and online political discussion, PROCESS Macro version 4.2 (Model 4) was employed. Bootstrapping was performed with 5,000 resamples at a 95% confidence interval.

4. Results

1) Effect of Portals and Social Media on Internal Political Efficacy

Research Hypothesis 1 posited that the use of current affairs and political content on portals and social media would each have a positive effect on internal political efficacy. First, in Model 1, control variables were entered to test their effect on internal political efficacy. As indicated in Table 4-1, year in school variable exerted a significant effect in Model 1 ($\beta=.120, p \leq .05$). In Model 2, four variables of portals and social media were each entered as additional predictors. The use of current affairs and political content via Naver ($\beta=.333, p \leq .001$), Google ($\beta=.153, p \leq .01$), and Facebook·Instagram ($\beta=.170, p \leq .001$) was found to have a significant positive effect on internal political efficacy. In other words, higher usage of current affairs and political content on portals such as Naver and Google, as well as on social media platforms Facebook and Instagram, was associated with higher internal political efficacy among users. However, the use of current affairs and political content on KakaoStory did not exert a significant effect on internal political efficacy ($\beta=.006, p \leq .914$). Accordingly, the hypothesis was supported for Naver, Google, and Facebook·Instagram use.



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Table 4-1

Hierarchical Regression Analysis of the Effects of Portals and Social Media on Internal Political Efficacy

V	Model 1			Model 2			Model 2		
	B	T	P	B	T	p	β	T	p
1	.074	1.417	.157	.110*	2.223	.027	.068	1.317	.189
2	.120*	2.304	.022	.090	1.815	.070	.115*	2.225	.027
3	.062	1.193	.233	.039	.792	.429	.071	1.373	.171
4				.333***	6.686	.001			
5							.153**	2.967	.003
6									
7									
R ²		.024*			.132***			.047**	
F		2.920			13.637			4.445	
P		.034			.001			.002	

Note: * $\leq .05$, ** $\leq .01$, *** $\leq .001$, 1-Sex(M), 2-School year, 3-Income, 4-Naver current affairs-political content, 5-Google current affairs-political content, 6-Facebook-Instagram current affairs-political content, 7-KakaoStory current affairs-political content

V	Model 2			Model 2		
	B	T	P	B	T	p
1	.100*	1.931	.054	.074	1.414	.158
2	.121*	2.352	.019	.120*	2.304	.022
3	.046	.792	.900	.062	1.188	.236
4						
5						
6	.170***	3.257	.001			
7				.006	.108	.914
R ²		.052***			.024	
F		4.907			2.193	
P		.001			.069	

Note: * $\leq .05$, ** $\leq .01$, *** $\leq .001$, 1-Sex(M), 2-School year, 3-Income, 4-Naver current affairs-political content, 5-Google current affairs-political content, 6-Facebook-Instagram current affairs-political content, 7-KakaoStory current affairs-political content



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2) Effects of Portals, Social Media, and Internal Political Efficacy on Online Political Discussion

Research Hypothesis 2 posited that the use of current affairs and political content on portals and social media would each have a positive effect on internal political efficacy, which would in turn positively influence online political discussion, with internal political efficacy serving as a significant mediator in this pathway.

In Model 1, control variables were entered to assess their effect on online political discussion. As shown in Table 4-2, male respondents were more likely to participate in online political discussion ($\beta=.153, p\leq.01$). In Model 2, variables for the use of current affairs and political content on portals and social media were added to evaluate their direct effects. The use of such content via Google ($\beta=.176, p\leq.001$), Facebook·Instagram($\beta=.108, p\leq.05$), and KakaoStory($\beta=.177, p\leq.001$) was found to positively predict participation in online political discussion. However, the use of Naver did not exert a significant effect ($\beta=.050, p\leq.338$).

In Model 3, internal political efficacy was entered alongside the four portal/social media variables to test its effect on online political discussion. Internal political efficacy was found to exert a significant positive effect on online political discussion ($\beta=.158, p\leq.01$). Mediation analysis revealed that internal political efficacy had a significant mediating effect in the pathways from Naver (Effect=.0306, LLCI=.0067, ULCI=.0612), Google (Effect=.0118, LLCI=.0002, ULCI=.0289), and Facebook·Instagram(Effect=.0164, LLCI=.0010, ULCI=.0392) use to online political discussion (Table 4-3). As shown previously in Table 4-1, use of Naver, Google, and Facebook·Instagram for current affairs and political content significantly affected internal political efficacy.

Accordingly, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported. The use of current affairs and political content on Naver, Google, and Facebook·Instagram positively influenced internal political efficacy, which in turn positively affected participation in online political discussion.



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Table 4-2

Hierarchical Regression Analysis of the Effects of Portals, Social Media, and Internal Political Efficacy on Online Political Discussion

V	Model 1			Model 2			Model 2		
	B	T	P	B	T	p	B	t	p
1	.153**	2.958	.003	.159**	3.045	.002	.147**	2.868	.004
2	-.071	-1.369	.172	-.076	-1.451	.148	-.077	-1.508	.132
3	.032	.622	.534	.029	.553	.580	.042	.825	.410
4				.050	.958	.338			
5							.176***	3.443	.001
6									
7									
R ²		.029*			.032*			.060**	
F		3.643			2.961			5.778	
P		.013			.020			.001	

Note: * $\leq .05$, ** $\leq .01$, *** $\leq .001$, 1-Sex(M), 2-School year, 3-Income, 4-Naver current affairs-political content, 5-Google current affairs-political content, 6-Facebook-Instagram current affairs-political content, 7-Kakao current affairs-political content

V	Model 2			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	T	P	B	T	P	β	t	p
1	.170***	3.259	.001	.152**	2.968	.003	.132*	2.558	.011
2	-.070	-1.364	.173	-.060	-1.181	.238	-.079	-1.567	.118
3	.022	.430	.668	.027	.525	.600	.028	.555	.579
4							-.072	-1.241	.215
5							.142**	2.595	.010
6	.108*	2.058	.040				.031	.572	.568
7				.177***	3.452	.001	.145**	2.756	.006
8							.158**	2.918	.004
R ²		.041**			.060***			.105***	
F		3.815			5.793			5.207	
P		.005			.001			.001	

Note: * $\leq .05$, ** $\leq .01$, *** $\leq .001$, 1-Sex(M), 2-School year, 3-Income, 4-Naver current affairs-political content, 5-Google current affairs-political content, 6-Facebook-Instagram current affairs-political content, 7-KakaoStory current affairs-political content, 8-Internal political efficacy



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Table 4-3

Mediating Effect of Internal Political Efficacy in the Path from Portals and Social Media Use to Online Political Discussion

Independent variables.	Categories	Internal political efficacy		95% Sig.	
		Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Naver	Direct effect	-.0138	.0317	-.0761	.0485
	Indirect effect	<u>.0306</u>	.0139	.0067	.0612
	Total effect	.0168	.0303	-.0427	.0763
Google	Direct effect	.0828	.0299	.0240	.1417
	Indirect effect	<u>.0118</u>	.0076	.0002	.0289
	Total effect	.0946	.0298	.0360	.1532
Facebook·Instagram	Direct effect	.0474	.0364	-.0243	.1191
	Indirect effect	<u>.0164</u>	.0099	.0010	.0392
	Total effect	.0638	.0363	-.0076	.1351
KakaoStory	Direct effect	.1978	.0591	.0815	.3142
	Indirect effect	.0013	.0079	-.0139	.0191
	Total effect	.1992	.0598	.0816	.3168

3) Effects of Portals, Social Media, and Internal Political Efficacy on Offline Political Discussion

Research Hypothesis 3 posited that the use of current affairs and political content on portals and social media would each have a positive effect on internal political efficacy, which in turn would positively influence offline political discussion, with internal political efficacy serving as a significant mediator in this pathway.

In Model 1, control variables were entered to assess their effect on offline political discussion. As shown in Table 4-4, none of the control variables exerted a significant influence on offline political discussion. In Model 2, usage variables for current affairs and political content on portals and social media were each included as additional predictors. Use of content via Naver ($\beta=.204$, $p\leq.001$), Google ($\beta=.197$, $p<.001$), Facebook·Instagram($\beta=.235$, $p\leq.001$), and KakaoStory ($\beta=.145$, $p\leq.01$) was found to have a positive effect on offline political discussion.

In Model 3, internal political efficacy was added to the model, alongside the control and media use variables, to test its effect on offline political discussion. Internal political efficacy exerted a significant positive effect ($\beta=.353$, $p\leq.001$). As previously



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established in Table 4-1, the use of Naver, Google, and Facebook·Instagram for current affairs and political content significantly predicted internal political efficacy. Mediation analysis revealed significant indirect effects of internal political efficacy in the pathways from Naver (Effect=.0991, LLCI=.0581, ULCI=.1502), Google (Effect=.0474, LLCI=.0138, ULCI=.0852), and Facebook·Instagram (Effect=.0597, LLCI=.0159, ULCI=.1128) use to offline political discussion (Table 4-5).

Consequently, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported. The use of current affairs and political content on Naver, Google, and Facebook·Instagram positively influenced internal political efficacy, which in turn significantly affected participation in offline political discussion.

Table 4-4

Hierarchical Regression Analysis of the Effects of Portals, Social Media, and Internal Political Efficacy on Offline Political Discussion

		Model 1		Model 2			Model 2		
V	B	T	P	B	T	p	β	T	p
1	.035	.664	.507	.057	1.100	.272	.027	.529	.597
2	.058	1.107	.269	-.025	-.493	.623	-.014	-.266	.790
3	-.007	-.132	.895	.044	.853	.394	.069	1.342	.180
4				.204***	3.903	.001			
5							.197***	3.809	.001
6									
7									
R ²		.005			.045**			.043**	
F		.551			4.238			4.055	
P		.648			.002			.003	

Notes: * $\leq .05$, ** $\leq .01$, *** $\leq .001$, 1-Sex(M), 2-School year, 3-Income, 4-Naver current affairs·political content, 5-Google current affairs·political content, 6-Facebook·Instagram current affairs·political content, 7-KakaoStory current affairs·political content



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Model 2				Model 2			Model 3		
V	B	T	P	B	T	P	β	T	p
1	.072	1.386	.167	.033	.642	.521	.026	.528	.598
2	-.006	-.111	.912	.002	.033	.974	-.048	-.993	.321
3	.036	.709	.479	.054	1.032	.303	.026	.546	.586
4							.012	.225	.822
5							.094	1.815	.070
6	.235***	4.525	.001				.128*	2.461	.014
7				.145**	2.779	.006	.091	1.837	.067
8							.353***	6.921	.001
R ²		.058***			.025*			.204***	
F		5.555			2.351			11.375	
P		.001			.054			.001	

Notes: * $\leq .05$, ** $\leq .01$, *** $\leq .001$, 1-Sex(M), 2-School year, 3-Income, 4-Naver current affairs-political content, 5-Google current affairs-political content, 6-Facebook-Instagram current affairs-political content, 7-KakaoStory current affairs-political content, 8-Internal political efficacy

Table 4-5

Mediating Effects of Internal Political Efficacy in the Path from Portals and Social Media Uses to Offline Political Discussion

		Internal political efficacy			
Independent variables	Categories	Effect	SE	95% Sig. LLCI	ULCI
Naver	Direct effect	.0675	.0432	-.0175	.1525
	Indirect effect	<u>.0991</u>	.0234	.0581	.1502
	Total effect	.1666	.0435	.0811	.2522
Google	Direct effect	.1163	.0409	.0358	.1968
	Indirect effect	<u>.0474</u>	.0180	.0138	.0852
	Total effect	.1638	.0434	.0783	.2492
Facebook-Instagram	Direct effect	.1722	.0492	.0755	.2689
	Indirect effect	<u>.0597</u>	.0243	.0159	.1128
	Total effect	.2319	.0520	.1297	.3342
KakaoStory	Direct effect	.2372	.0812	.0774	.3970
	Indirect effect	.0049	.0269	-.0473	.0606
	Total effect	.2421	.0881	.0688	.4153



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4) Effects of Portals, Social Media, Internal Political Efficacy, and Online Political Discussion on Offline Political Discussion

Research Hypothesis 4 posited that the use of current affairs and political content via portals (Naver, Google) and social media (Facebook·Instagram, KakaoStory) would each have a positive effect on internal political efficacy, which would in turn positively influence online political discussion, and ultimately, offline political discussion. Furthermore, Hypothesis 4 specified that online political discussion would have a significant mediating effect in this pathway.

As shown in the final model in Table 4-6, online political discussion exerted a positive effect on offline political discussion ($\beta=.464$, $p\leq.001$). Previously, the tests for Hypothesis 1 confirmed that the use of current affairs and political content on Naver, Google, and Facebook·Instagram had positive effects on internal political efficacy (see Table 4-1). Additionally, the testing of Hypothesis 2 found internal political efficacy to be a significant positive predictor of online political discussion ($\beta=.158$, $p\leq.01$) (see Table 4-2).

Accordingly, the validation of Hypothesis 4 shows that the use of current affairs and political content on portals Naver and Google, along with social media Facebook·Instagram, positively affected internal political efficacy, which, in turn, positively influenced online political discussion, and ultimately, offline political discussion. The mediation analysis confirmed that online political discussion exhibited a significant mediating effect in the pathway from internal political efficacy to offline political discussion (Effect=.0842, LLCI=.0170, ULCI=.1583) (Table 4-7).

Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported. Respondents' the use of current affairs and political content on Naver, Google, and Facebook·Instagram had significant positive effects on internal political efficacy, which in turn significantly influenced offline political discussion through the mediation of online political discussion.



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Table 4-6

Hierarchical Regression Analysis of the Effects of Portals, Social Media, Internal Political Efficacy, and Online Political Discussion on Offline Political Discussion

Final model			
V	B	T	P
1	-.036	-.829	.407
2	-.011	-.254	.799
3	.013	.313	.755
4	.046	.956	.340
5	.028	.616	.541
6	.113*	2.500	.013
7	.024	.546	.586
8	.280***	6.218	.001
9	.464***	10.644	.001
R ²		.396***	
F		25.890	
P		.001	

Notes: * $\leq .05$, ** $\leq .01$, *** $\leq .001$, 1-Sex(M), 2-School year, 3-Income, 4-Naver current affairs-political content, 5-Google current affairs-political content, 6-Facebook·Instagram current affairs-political content, 7-KakaoStory current affairs-political content, 8-Internal political efficacy, 9-Online political discussion

Table 4-7

Mediating Effect of Online Political Discussion in the Path from Internal Political Efficacy to Offline Political Discussion

		Online political discussion			
Independent variable	Categories	Effect	SE	95% Sig. LLCI	ULCI
Internal political efficacy	Direct effect	.3657	.0497	.2679	.4634
	Indirect effect	<u>.0842</u>	.0355	.0170	.1583
	Total effect	.4498	.0566	.3386	.5611



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5. Conclusion

This study examined the extent to which uses of current affairs and political content on portal sites (Naver, Google) and social media platforms (Facebook-Instagram, KakaoStory) influences users' political efficacy and participation in political discussions both online and offline. The findings indicate that such media use enhances internal political efficacy, which subsequently promotes online political discussion and, ultimately, offline political discussion. Internal political efficacy and online discussion were shown to exert significant mediating effects within this sequential process.

These results provide empirical evidence that exposure to political and current affairs content through online media reinforces individuals' internal political efficacy. In line with previous researches, the findings suggest that media use extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge to foster political confidence, which in turn encourages more active political participation. Portals and social media platforms thus play a critical role in shaping the attitudinal foundations upon which democratic participation depends.

Another notable implication of this study is the mediating role of online political discussion in the relationship between online media use and offline political discussion. Online political discussion does not merely constitute passive or superficial engagement but serves as an arena in which political confidence can be translated into tangible action. In this sense, online political discussion functions as both a training ground for democratic communication and a catalyst for cultivating a culture of deliberation. Rather than being dismissed as "slacktivism" or lazy participation, online political participation emerges here as a substantive mechanism that bridges online activity and offline political action. The findings therefore suggest that online and offline political activities are not disconnected realms but rather mutually reinforcing. Political knowledge and confidence accumulated in cyber spaces may translate into greater willingness to articulate opinions in cyber interactions and face-to-face discussions, underscoring the integrative nature of contemporary political participation.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that media use exerts its influence not through a simple, direct effect but through a multidimensional and sequential pathway: online media use → internal political efficacy → online political discussion → offline political discussion. This highlights the centrality of mediation effects in understanding the mechanisms of political participation. Future study should refine this model by examining potential moderating effects of individual predispositions—including gender, generation, political interest, and ideological orientation—on the identified pathways.

Several limitations warrant careful consideration. First, the study relied on a non-random, student-based sample. University students typically exhibit higher levels of political interest and greater familiarity with portals and social media platforms, which may limit the generalization of the findings to the broader population. Subsequent research should incorporate more representative samples across diverse age groups, including middle-aged and older cohorts, to strengthen external validity. Second, the



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study did not sufficiently address platform-specific differences. Distinctive features of platforms—such as news recommendation algorithms, modes of interaction, and network structures—may shape not only users' modes of information consumption but also the dynamics of political discussion and participation. Future work should therefore investigate the differential effects of various media platforms, enabling more nuanced insights into how media environments affect political efficacy, on and offline participation.

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