The impact of social media on youth political behavior

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effects that the use of social networks has on shaping or changing young people's behaviors regarding political issues. The method used to carry out this work is a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. Primary and secondary data were used. Information and secondary data have been collected through research on various studies, books, websites, and articles, which have been accessed from reliable and serious sources. Primary data were collected using a questionnaire, which aimed to collect information about the use of social networks by young people and the impact of these networks in shaping or changing the attitudes of young people towards political issues. From the literature research and from the analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire it resulted that social network have a significant impact on the political behaviors and attitudes of young people.

Keywords: Behavior; attitudes; politics; social media; political persuasion

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1. Introduction

The advent of the internet and digital communication technologies has made a major contribution mainly to the youth-oriented media revolution. Internet technology has provided a new way of disseminating information and reusing old content. "Social networks have changed the concept of old media. Now our societies are using Facebook, Twitter and blogs as a source of information" (Hamilton, 2011). Social media also serves as an "information store" that facilitates and enables its users to access a variety of content. Social networking sites also offer the opportunity to expand their contacts with whom they can get information and exchange opinions. They also offer the easiest way to communicate with a large circle of people without having to move physically and in the comfort of their own homes. For young people, social networks are even more important because on these platforms they can exchange ideas, share photos and videos. "Social networking sites are playing a vital role in the well-being of societies because they provide platforms for members of society to raise money for charity and humanitarian events" (Keeffe & Pearson, 2011, fv. 800-804).

According to Richey (2008) social networking sites have a great impact on young voters because the behavior and attitude of a member of a network depends a lot on the attitudes of the rest of the members. It also has an impact on turnout" (Richey, 2008, fv. 527-542)

The Internet in general and social networks in particular have changed not only the way young people communicate, but also influenced the political interests and attitudes of young people.

Purpose of the paper: The advent of social networking has changed the landscape of communication and information. The rapidly growing social media has attracted the attention of millions of people around the world.

Objectives of the paper: Determine how young people use social networks; Research the level of trust in this information that is accessed on social networks; To discover the connection between social networks and the political behavior and attitudes of young people.

Hypothesis: Social networks raise political awareness and influence the political behaviors and attitudes of young people.

Research questions

- How are social networks used by young people?
- How much political information do young people get from social networks?

- How much do they believe in this information?
- How do social networks influence the political behaviors and attitudes of young people?

Importance of the study

This study is an added contribution to the existing literature regarding the impact of social networks on young people in the political aspect. The information and conclusions reached in this study can serve future researchers who will be engaged to conduct studies in the same field.

2. Literature review

Political communication on social networks

Although different definitions have been given by many scholars about political communication, however, almost all definitions describe it as communication that conveys information between politicians, journalists, and the public. In the new Oxford Handbook, the definition of political communication emphasizes the power of politics. "Political communication means the symbolic exchange about the joint exercise of power" and "the presentation and interpretation of information with possible consequences for the exercise of joint power" (Jamieson & Kenski, 2016, f. 2).

Social networks have fundamentally influenced and changed political communication. Political communication, propaganda, political marketing can be realized even more easily thanks to social media, in which there is a possibility that different messages have different target groups of society. Social media has also changed political communication by enabling politicians to send their message to the audience, without using any traditional media as a transmitter of that message. There are times when political actors choose social networks to communicate with the public, bypassing traditional media, or the traditional way of sending a message to the public, through press conferences.

Barack Obama: The first president of social media

Involvement through Empowerment that was the mission of Barack Obama's campaign. The first political campaign in history which really used the power of social media to spread the word, gather support and engage people. The Obama campaign reached 5 million supporters on 15 different social networks during the campaign season; "As of November 2008, Obama had approximately 2.5

million (some sources say up to 3.2 million) followers on Facebook, 115,000 followers on Twitter, and 50 million viewers of his YouTube channel" (Jauriqui, 2018). His campaign used Facebook as well as many other social media platforms, including Digg, Flikr, LinkedIn and MiGente. He innovated by SMS, using text messages to stay in touch with supporters in a way that offered instant and sometimes even emotion, as in announcing his candidate.

Political propaganda on social media

"Computer propaganda is a term that neatly sums up this recent phenomenon - and an evolving field of study - of digital misinformation and manipulation" public" (WOOLLEY & HOWARD, 2019, p. 6). As part of the process, coders, and their automated software products (including robots) will learn and imitate legitimate social media users in order to manipulate public opinion across a diverse range of platforms and device networks. These robots are built to behave like real people (for example, by automatically generating and responding to online conversations) and then posting them on social media sites in order to reinforce or print specific political messages. "These 'automated social actors' can be used to strengthen particular politicians and political positions - supporting them actively and enthusiastically, while simultaneously stifling any dissenting voices" (Abokhodair, Yoo, & McDonalds, 2015). Anonymous political actors have spread false news and coordinated disinformation campaigns and mobs of trolls to attack human rights defenders, civil society groups and journalists.

Political culture in the age of social media

The political culture before the development of the Internet and the widespread use of social networks was limited to the national borders of states. Nowadays, the Internet has made this more global and interconnected, where everyone can follow and give opinions on the situation of other countries, so in a sense, national policies and policies became part of the globalization process and on a completely different level. "According to Nowak, the 21st century internet is very different from the internet from the end of the 20th century. It is more participatory and oriented towards social networks" (Nowak, 2013).

A great example of the impact of social media was Brexit in 2016. The battle for Brexit took place and was also won on social media. Post-Brexit analysis suggests the EU Exit team won the battle long before Election Day. The departure support team worked hard for their online presence, and they also worked in the field pushing people to vote for leaving the EU. Their presence on social media was consistent, yet many people who were in favor of England's stance on the EU

ignored this as something that has nothing to do with real politics in the world. "They believed that Britain would never vote to leave the EU and ignored media society as a haven for trolls and teenagers" (Polonski, 2016). From these examples we see clearly that social networks influence the political culture of the population, and no one is immune to this influence.

The influence of social media on political attitudes and perceptions

A meta-analysis of early studies of the relationship between Internet use and offline political participation found that although most of these studies identified a positive link between the two, this link was usually not very strong. "Boulianne (2015) meta-analysis of this research found that most of the studies examined reported a positive relationship between social media use and political engagement" (Boulianne, 2015, fv. 524-538). Research by Kim & Khang (2014) adds more evidence of the relationship between social media use and youth political attitudes. In their research, they particularly proposed SNS political participation, that is, the use of social media for political activities (such as campaigning, contacting officials, and signing a petition), as a mediating variable between predictors of volunteerism. Citizen (resources, psychological engagement, recruitment) and offline political participation. "Using a web-based survey of 348 students from several major US universities in 2012, they found that predictors of civic volunteerism affect both offline political participation and the SNS" (Kim & Khang, 2014, pp. 114-121). Another study worth mentioning is that of Copeland and Bimber (2015). They investigated the link between the use of digital media and each of the six forms of political participation (voting, message delivery, event participation, campaigning, money donation, and persuasion), adding the role of context in influencing this. Relationship by using data from various US presidential elections (1996-2012). "They found that respondents who used digital media (accessing political information online) were more likely to vote in the 1996, 2000 and 2004 elections, but not in the 1998, 2008 and 2012 elections2008" (Copeland & Bimber, 2015, f. 84). "They also found that people who read political information online were more likely to: display political messages in 2012; work in the 2008 campaign; and donate money in 1996 and 2008" (Copeland & Bimber, 2015, f. 84). These findings led researchers to conclude that the relationship between social media use and political attitudes is unique to each election event.

"Social media has been particularly important in understanding citizen participation in protests around the world" (Anduiza, Cristancho, & Sabucedo, 2014). Given the importance and impact that new technologies and social media have on the lives of young people, it is expected and understandable that the impact of using social media on political participation will be more significant

among young people than in older groups. "Indeed, there is a growing interest in how social media influences and shapes political behavior for younger members of society" (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020, fv. 111-127).

3. Methodology

This paper is realized using primary and secondary information. Primary information is obtained from reliable sources consisting of various books and studies. Primary information was collected using a questionnaire that was designed specifically for this study. The questionnaire was completed by 128 young people who reached this questionnaire online. The questionnaire consists of 18 questions, which have reached the required audience in the form of Google form. The questionnaire aims to gather general information on the use of social media by young people in Albania, further on how these platforms affect the political behaviors and attitudes of young people. The interviewees are aged 18 to 30 years. The only criteria for selecting the sample in this study was the age of the individuals interviewed.

Limits of the study

Firstly, there is a limited number of statistical data related to the influence of social media on the political attitudes and behaviors of young people. Second, empirical research is limited to a reduced number of respondents and the conclusions are limited and incomplete. The research is also limited to the district of Tirana to draw conclusions for the entire territory of our country.

4. Results

The questionnaires were completed online by 75 females and 53 males. Respectively 58.6% female and 41.4% male. From this result we conclude that there has been a greater interest on the part of women regarding this study than men. The most used social network is Instagram. It is a platform that is increasingly gaining ground and is used to inform and disseminate information of public interest. 62.5% of respondents use Instagram more than any other network, 21.9% use Facebook, respectively 28 people. It was found out that respondents use another social network not specified in the questionnaire, 44.9% of them use another social network. 40.9% of respondents use Instagram to communicate with friends and relatives. 12.6% use Facebook and only 1.6% use twitter.

The respondents were asked which of the social networks they used to share their opinions on political issues. From this question it resulted that 41.3% or 52 people use Instagram to share their opinions on various political issues; 32.5% or 41 people use the social network Facebook to share their opinions on various political issues; 24 persons respectively 18% of respondents use another social network that is not specified in the questionnaire; you tube is used by 2.4% of respondents or 4 people; twitter is also used to a minimum of 4.8% or 8 people by respondents.

The questionnaire conducted in the framework of the study of the impact that social media has on the political behaviors and attitudes of young people, contained 18 questions, and aimed to collect information on the use of social networks by young people aged 18 to 30 years and information others that prove or not the impact of social media on the political behaviors and attitudes of young people. Generally, the young people who completed the questionnaire were women and most of the young people were in the 25-30 age range. This shows us a greater interest of women in this study and greater interest is shown by young people in the above age.

Youth participation in politics represents the most significant indicator of civic education, of participatory democracy. civic responsibility, of the future of democracy as evidenced by the literature review, in this case there is a large use of social networks, whether for communication or information or the sharing and publication of various information related to political issues of public interest Social network that is used more from young people is Instagram. Instagram has come a long way since its inception as a simple photo sharing app. Many of the app changes in the last decade make it easier for brands to create conversations with their audience and stay connected with them. The same applies to political parties and politicians, some features make engagement easier. Politicians should use these opportunities properly to have an impact on the target audience. The results of the questionnaire revealed that young people in the Republic of Albania show an interest at very low levels to be part of politics and decision-making, although many of them being inspired by social media and information circulating within them have locals engaging in various protests with causes which obviously affect them. We mentioned here the protests that took place in the context of rising prices, where a very large amount of information was found online on social media, whether written, with various photos and videos.

It was noticed a high engagement of young people in these protests, and it can be said with full conviction that the organism and the gathering together of so many people was achieved by social media, The impact that social media has on retinas in terms of the political behaviors and attitudes of young people is clearly shown by the fact that most of them use social networks to be informed about political issues every day. They also discuss this information with friends and relatives several times a month and several times a week, relatively often social media has increasingly become a method of informing and especially for young people,

thus most of them responded that they were informed about political parties or relevant candidates on social media before voting. The questionnaire revealed that social media is a space for information and influence on young people speaking in the terms of the political behaviors and attitudes of young people. But a very low interest of young people in political issues was also revealed. Since they are regular users of social media and they have a significant impact on them, more attention should be paid to the proper dissemination & information of politicians but also of civil society for young people to be more involved in political issues.

5. Conclusion

Social media constitutes the actuality of every individual nowadays. Young people in particular use the internet and social media extensively, not only to communicate but also to stay informed about the latest news and to engage in discussions about public issues. Knowing the power of social media, politicians and political parties have developed their political communication in this direction the most. This way they are closer to their audience and more likely to extend their impact to them at a lower cost and faster. The younger people use social media, the more they influence the perceptions and political behaviors of young people. The study aimed to examine the use of social media among young people / students and then the impact on the level of their political participation.

From the literature research and from the survey of 128 young people it was confirmed that there is a positive relationship between perceptions and political behavior and the duration spent on the use of social media. In other words, young people who spend more time on social media are more involved in using it for political purposes. Similarly, young people who frequently use social media for political purposes, whether informing themselves, communicating on political issues, or participating in political debates, are more active participants in online and offline political activities. It can therefore be assumed that those young people who spend less time in political use of social media are less politically active, both online and offline, which further leads to the conclusion that online political participation is more likely to shape the political participation of the individual offline. Thus, the more time young people spend being politically active on social networks, the more active they will be in pursuing traditional political activities.

Recommendations

First it is recommended to do more extensive research regarding the impact that social media has on the perceptions and political behaviors of young people.

Including a more expanded and extended population throughout the territory of Albania. It is also recommended the development of policies to verify the authenticity of information disseminated online. As well as manipulating influence through fake followers. It is recommended that policies and laws get developed to protect the data of individuals online.

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The Effects of New Communication Technologies on Teenagers: The Case Study of Computer Games

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Abstract

This study investigates the effects of computer games on teenagers in Famagusta, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Most games are inspired from other media as books, TV, films, etc. For this kind of media entertainment, the term 'passive entertainment' is used. However, computer games and video games are considered as 'interactive entertainment'. Computer games are interactive because they make people to feel that they are inside the story. 400 teenagers, 200 boys and 200 girls participated in this research from four different schools in Famagusta. Two of the

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