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Türkiye'de Gençlerin Siyasal Katılımı: Motivasyon Olarak Sosyal
Medya

**Political Participation of Youth in Turkey: Social Media as a
Motivation**

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Türkiye'de Gençlerin Siyasal Katılımı: Motivasyon Olarak Sosyal Medya *

Öz

Literatür temelde gençlerin siyasete karşı ilgisiz olduklarının; siyasetle ilgilenmediklerinin ve sadece yaşam tarzlarını doğrudan etkileyen konulara dikkat ettiklerinin altını çizmektedir. Ancak bu varsayımlar, siyasal katılımın değişen örüntülerini/ şekillerini ve gençlerin bu süre zarfında ulaşabilecekleri kanalların karmaşıklığını yanlış değerlendirmektedir. İnternet, maliyeti düşürerek ve dünyanın her yerinden bilgiye erişim olanağı sağlayarak siyasi katılım yelpazesini genişletmiş ve yeni siyasi katılım yolları açmaktadır. Gençler, siyasi partilere üye olmayabilirler, ancak sivil toplum gruplarında aktiftirler; genel seçimlere gitmeyebilirler ancak belirli konular hakkında görüş bildirmektedirler. Bu durum, gençlerin siyasi olarak aktif olmaları ve harekete geçmeleri için yeni fırsatlar sunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı internetin ve sosyal medyanın Türkiye'deki gençlerin siyasal katılımı üzerindeki etkisini görmek ve sosyal medyayı siyasi partilerin ve sivil toplum örgütlerinin genç üyeleri arasında siyasal katılım için bir motivasyon olarak analiz etmektir. Çalışmanın argümanı sosyal medyanın, gençleri, siyasi partilerin faaliyetlerini görerek ve okuyarak siyasi partilere katılmaya motive ederken; sivil/ kamusal görevleri teşvik ederek gençleri sivil topluma katılmaya motive ettiği yönündedir. Bu çalışma bu varsayımı değerlendirmek için AK Parti, CHP ve GoFor'dan (Gençlik Örgütleri Forumu) 30 katılımcı (her birinden 10 katılımcı) ile mülakat yapılmıştır. Argümanımızı ölçmek için 14 sorudan oluşan yarı yapılandırılmış bir görüşme formu oluşturduk ve sorularımız AK Parti ve CHP gençlik kolları yönetici üyelerine ve Türkiye'deki sivil toplumun temsilcisi olarak GoFor'un (Gençlik Örgütleri Forumu) yönetici üyelerine sorduk. Mülakatların içeriği MaxQda yazılımı ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulguları, Türkiye'de siyasi meselelere önem veren ve siyaset/ siyasi gelişmeler hakkında okuyan, araştıran ve bunlarla ilgilenen gençlerin çevrimiçi arenada da siyasi meseleleri okuyan, araştıran ve bunlara katılanlar olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Medya, Gençlerin Siyasi Katılımı, Dijital Çağ, Türkiye'de Gençlik, Sivil Toplum

Political Participation of Youth in Turkey: Social Media as a Motivation **

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Abstract

The literature mainly underlines that young people are apathetic; they are not interested in politics, and they only give attention to the matters that directly affect their lifestyles. However, these assumptions miscalculate the changing patterns of political participation and the complexity of the channels that young people can reach in this time. The Internet has opened new ways of political participation by lowering the cost and providing the opportunity to access information from all over the world, enhancing the spectrum of political participation. Young people may not be members of political parties, but they are active in civil society groups; they may not hold general elections, but they do comment on certain issues. This situation provides new opportunities for young people to become politically active and mobilized. The main aim of this study is to see the impact of internet/social media on the political participation of youth in Turkey, and to analyze the social media as a motivation of political participation among the young members of political parties and civil society. The main argument is that social media motivates young people to participate in political parties by seeing and reading about their activities while motivating young people to participate in civil society by encouraging civic duties. To investigate this, we made an interview with 30 executive members (10 from each organization), from AK Party, CHP, and GoFor (Gençlik Örgütleri Forumu) and analyze the content via MaxQda software. The finding of the study is that young people who tend to care about political issues and the ones who read, research, and become engaged in politics are also the ones reading, researching, and engaging in political issues in the online arena in Turkey.

Keywords: Social Media, Youth Political Participation, Digital Era, Youth in Turkey, Civil Society

Introduction

Brady defines political participation as “action by ordinary citizens directed towards influencing some political outcomes” (1999, p. 37). In that manner, not only offline participation channels but also online acts become important in the digital era. Political participation broadens its walls to include activities such as demonstrations and nonconventional forms of participation encouraged by and evolved through digital technologies and

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social media, where expressing themselves matters more than influencing decision-making (de Zúñiga, Jung &Valenzuela, 2012, p. 320).

As the media becomes more digitalized, communication patterns change and open new ways for young people to engage in politics. Nowadays, it is easier to connect with other people, and political knowledge circulates more and more. This situation provides new opportunities for young people to become politically active and mobilized as analyzed in the studies of Bennett, 2008 and Delli Carpini, 2000. The important point here is the fact that, even though young people do not intend to participate in politics, when they use digital media tools, they are learning participation skills and acquiring knowledge about politics (Quintelier and Vissers, 2008; Smith, Schlozman, Verba, and Brady, 2009). So, it is possible for young people to become politically active in the process, even though they do not consciously make that choice at the beginning. In that point, both the users and providers of the digital media have been transforming through time while communication infrastructures have been changing. Jenkins and Deuze underline the term “convergence culture” at that point; with that term, they emphasize that users have gained new opportunities to be heard, share information and know more about the world; and the providers of media have started to search for new techniques and opportunities to reach more and more people by using different channels (2008, p.6). Nowadays, more and more young people have been using the digital media tools to express their thoughts and Jenkins coin the terms “a participatory culture” to emphasize that these people feel connected to other people via sharing their feelings and feel important to these community via sharing (Jenkins and Ito, 2015).

The scholars underline that more than ever, with the help of blogs, social network sites, user-generated news, and specific websites, individuals become more engaged in politics to influence the government (Mossberger, Tolbert & McNeal, 2007; Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009).

This study analyzes the political of youth in digital era, and use social media as one of the main motivators of political participation among young individuals. The main aim of this study is to see the impact of internet on the political participation of youth in Turkey, and to analyze the social media as a motivation of political participation among the young members of political parties and civil society. The main argument is that social media motivates young people to participate in political parties by seeing and reading about their activities while motivating young people to participate in civil society by encouraging civic duties.

Conceptual Framework

Youth

The term “youth” should be described to draw the line of the study and to focus on the targeted group in a specific way. In general, youth is seen as the



stage in the life, it is defined and understood within the age limits; however, what is important for this study is to describe the term in terms of their sociological connotations and provide a deeper meaning. One side of literature defines the term in reference to its biological structure (Marcues 1969, cited in Kentel 2005), and sees youth as a secondary group of citizens, underlying that youth is a socially constructed category in human life. It is constructed because it divides the adult, the previous generation from itself; and has its own characteristics on the base of the aging on the basis of socioeconomic factors (as cited in Kentel, 2005, pp. 11-17).

The common characteristic of the term “youth” is that each and every generation has the desire to be different from the previous ones, they underline their differences and make their own distinct characteristics; and this is highly related to cultural and socioeconomic developments (cited in Kentel, 2005, p. 13). So, it can be suggested that youth, as a category cannot be seen the homogenous entity, but as heterogonous groups of young people.

Also, in his article, Arnett (2014) underlines the new understanding to the youth as an “emerging adulthood” which emphasizes the importance of the culture and its attributes to the adults. The young people from different societies do not share the same attributes, and expect same things for themselves. So, it is underlined that young people feel like adults when they start to feel that they have the characteristics assigned to be an adult in the society in which they live, rather than a certain age range. Cultural constructions seem to be the most important issue at that point (Fierro Arias and Moreno Hernández, 2007, p. 478). So, there cannot be one-absolute definition of the youth, because the transition period differs from one culture to another (Arnett, 2004, p. 21).

In this study, youth is studied as a generation as Kentel underlines, and it is accepted as a cultural construction (socially constructed) as Arnett underlines.

Political Participation and Youth

Verba and Nie draw a picture of what is the perhaps widespread use of the term: "Political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take" (1972, p. 2). They list four types of political participation as voting, campaign activity, cooperative activity, and citizen-initiated contacts (1972, pp. 46-48).

According to Brady, political participation contains the activities of citizens with the intention to influence the government actions and political outcomes (1999, p. 737). Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), while combining the rational choice theory (Downs, 1957), socioeconomic status modes (Verba & Nie, 1972), and the mobilization model, built a civic voluntarism model to understand political participation. This model



suggests that when citizens are asked to join political causes and have the necessary resources to do it, they participate. Resources include time, money, and cognitive abilities. In addition to these resources, internal political efficacy is an essential incentive for participation. The different sources of financial, human, and social capital ultimately reduce the cost of participation.

It is underlined by many scholars that there has been a rise in the non-institutionalized political participation (Dalton, 2008; Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002; Norris, 2002), as Internet activism has become the significant channel for political participation in contemporary democracies (Norris, 2001; Norris et al., 2005; Stolle et al., 2005 as cited in Kriesi, 2007). Some scholars suggest that these new noninstitutionalized forms of political participation grant new opportunities for the younger generations, who have been characterized as 'monitorial', 'post-materialist', and 'critical' (Inglehart, 1997; Norris, 1999). Monitorial participants are the ones who need to be part of the political process as they see fit without being part of the traditional political organizations (Hooghe & Dejaeghere, 2007, pp. 250-251). Some scholars, such as Henrik P. Bang and Eva Sørensen (2001) state that younger generations are more likely to engage in the decisions related to their everyday lifestyles, leading them to be "everyday makers" while avoiding institutionalized traditional organizations. In line with these arguments, post-materialists also claim that post-materialist citizens choose to engage in politics via individualized ways rather than institutions (Inglehart, 1997). So, as Norris underlines in her studies that young citizens still want to be part of the political decision-making process, but not in a traditional, institutionalized way (1999: 2002). As stated in their book, younger generations are assumed to be more skeptical about the traditional forms of political engagement (Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006).

Youth Political Participation in Turkey

According to Erdoğan (2003, pp. 28-29), Turkish youth suffers from not getting a chance at political participation. It is indicated in his study that, rather than voting, the participation of the youth in conventional and unconventional forms of politics is low. The reasons why youth fail to participate in politics in the literature are regarded mainly as sociological, economical, and demographical, and the author also adds education, working status, and gender as the main factors.

According to Oktar (2001, pp. 27-36), obstacles encountered by the youth in Turkey can be explained by the "iron triangle" analogy. The first edge of the triangle is a family in which young people have no habit to express themselves. The second is an educational system with a mechanical structure that does not give them any chance to express themselves. The third is a state bureaucracy that prevents participation rather than encouraging it.



Neyzi divides the public discourse of youth into three periods in the Republican era. He distinguishes the 1923-1950 period as when young people were portrayed as educated elites in the newly-emerged nation, the 1950-80 period as correlated with student movements among leftists and rightists and as threats to nations, and the post-1980 period as a time when the main discourse about the youth was shaken, and they were portrayed as apolitical consumers. With the rise of social media and the internet, youth found new ways to express their thoughts (2001, pp. 412-414) Primarily, the young people have felt excluded from institutional domains in terms of politics. They have found new alternatives and different forms of political mobilization thanks to new communication technologies.

One of the important issues here is the visibility of the youth in the political arena. This visibility is significant in parliament when it comes to youth believing in the conventional forms of political participation. As is the case in every form of political participation, presence ensures representation. In that manner, the political participation of the youth in Turkey, April 16th, 2017 stands is an important turning point when the constitutional amendment lowered the age of eligibility for running in parliament to 18. This seems to be an important attempt to inspire young people to participate in politics and enhance the democratic culture of the country.

By definition, civil society is embedded in democratization, so it cannot be limited only to the impact of the state. There is a need to create a barrier between civil society and the state to expect civil society to function properly. With the multi-party system in Turkey, the first steps towards this sovereignty of the civil society have begun. However, the functioning of the labor unions as the first attempt of sovereign civil society did not reflect the fully-independent organization, but their work domains were determined (Karaman, 1990, pp. 10-11). Thus, the state stands as the main obstacle for the development of civil society in the country. From the 1940s to the coup of 1960, there was rapid improvement in civil society. After the coup, the new constitution helped to promote the development of civil society with the legal framework. However, the very idea of the coup was itself undemocratic. Then, after the 1980 military coup, the new constitution was written, and its main issue was the survival of the regime and the state, underlying the predominance of the state over civil society. In the 1990s, the main issue became the state's reluctance to hear the different segments of society and its pursuit of the goal of maintaining the power of the state dominating the civil society (Karaman & Aras, 2000, p. 58).

As the pillars of democracy, the sample of this study is selected from the young members of political parties and civil society organizations to understand the future of democracy in the country.



Participation in the Information Age: New Opportunities for Youth

The institutional roots of participation have declined, and are less and less preferred by the youth. They are concerned with the “causes”, not the collectives. One of the important reasons behind this is the weakened role of strong identities. As Melluci states, the relationship between biography and biology/lifecycle has been weakened, diversifying consequences and possible trajectories. Until modern times, a person’s lifetime consisted of clear and determined cycles; however, now, individual biographies are primarily reflexive, individualized constructions in which identities are no longer ‘strong’ (as cited in Rossi, 2009, p. 469). As Manovich underlines, “new media” combines two different histories of media; analog and digitalized. With the new media, users have the chance to make their own preferences, and to choose with whom they will interact. New media enhances the cultural networking (2003).

The literature about youth political participation mainly accepts that young people have apathy towards formal politics, and are reluctant to participate in politics in general. They are portrayed as the ones who do not want to know and care about the politics anymore (Delli Carpini, 2000; Galston, 2001; Levine & Lopez, 2002; as cited in Kovacheva, 2005). However, in contrast to the classical view, there is a new understanding regarding youth political participation, one identified with values and active involvement (Mitev, 1982; as cited in Kovacheva, 2005). It is claimed that they are more motivated to deal with a single issue and to create an environment giving them a chance for self-representation. So, the so-called apathy can only make sense of voting in some countries, but as Kirby & Kawashima-Ginsberg state there is an undeniable interest for young people to be part of political activism (2009). Also, this discussion is related to the “digital immigrants ve digital natives” paradigm; while digital natives refer to the ones who were born into digital age, digital immigrants are the ones who met with the digital era in their adulthood. So, their perspectives regarding the political participation of the youth is naturally different although there are some continuum (Wang, Myers & Sundaram, 2013).

Today, young people tend to become active in politics when they want to encounter specific ideas and projects through specific networks that allow them to share their identity. There have been primarily three reasons behind this in the literature; first, young people usually do not own a house or stable residence, so it is difficult for them to engage in political participation. Secondly, young people prefer new social movements and activities rather than conventional political practices; they tend to care more about single-issue politics. Thirdly, young people are usually claimed to have a negative attitude towards political processes and do not trust them. They usually do not desire to engage in politics with conventional forms; they are more attracted to new forms of political participation. These new forms, as well as



and cause-oriented participation, may not always be seen as political forms of participation, but in this frame, “personal is political”. It can be stated that “although some of the newer forms are less ‘political’, they are still valuable indicators for measuring young people’s political participation.” (Quintelier, 2007, pp. 165-167). The Internet provides greater autonomy to the ones wanting to organize themselves by promoting the involvement of groups and individuals from outside the Institutional area (Castells, 1997). The Internet makes it easier for people to adapt more quickly to the events than political parties and institutions of democracy due to horizontal organization structure, the usage of symbolic resources, and decentralized modes of functioning (as cited in Anduiza et al., 2009, p. 864).*

Therefore, many scholars argue that young people choose less to become members of political parties and less to be involved in formal political debates but rather to participate in single-issue movements and networks (Della Porta & Mosca, 2005; Norris, 2002). They claim that young people are interested in politics but in a different way than previous generations. Norris (2002) in her book talks of ‘a phoenix rising from the ashes’, referring to the fact that disengagement from traditional, conventional, and ‘old’ forms of participation appears to have created new resources that feed on innovative, unconventional, and ‘new’ forms of participation. They may not become members of political parties but are active in non-governmental groups; they may not go to the general elections but will express their opinion about specific issues.

The Internet has opened new ways of political participation by lowering the cost and providing the opportunity to access information from all over the world, enhancing the spectrum of political participation. It is acknowledged by many authors that the Internet is a new public environment, which offers a wide array of opportunities for social and political behavior (Bennett 2000; Kann et al., 2007; Shah et al., 2001; as cited in Anduiza, Cantijoch & Gallego, 2009). As stated, it is easy to build a website and express opinions on a certain issue; e-mail campaigning is a fast and cheap way to spread information and gather support (Anduiza et al., 2009, p. 869).

The techno-deterministic approach suggests that the use of the Internet affects political participation. It is presumed that using the Internet and becoming familiar with its patterns pushes people to use the Internet for political participation in a specific way. The Internet reduces the cost of participation and opens a way for people to communicate with each other in the following ways: one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many. Internet provides an opportunity for people to make a change, and stand a point. This may result in harsh responses from the governments, however this is a

* For the critics of these arguments please see; Morozov, E. (2011). The net delusion: How not to liberate the world. Penguin UK.; Fuchs, C. (2021). Social media: A critical introduction. SAGE Publications Limited.



change in political arena, and it will take time to adjust like any other major changes (Shirky, 2011).

A voluntaristic perspective states that political participation steers the use of technology; online political participation is then expected to mirror offline political participation. The basic idea is that people will not change their political participation just because new opportunities have been created. This fits with the idea of reinforcement (Kraemer et al., 1989); the ones that visit political party websites will mostly be the same ones that attend political meetings and party congresses. Young people who read about politics in newspapers will read about it online; the ones that read about sports will not suddenly decide to visit websites providing political information.

The following relations between the Internet and political participation can then be proposed:

1. Technology changes political participation. From the techno-deterministic perspective, one expects that a high level of Internet use will enhance political participation online.
2. Political participation guides technology use. The voluntaristic perspective states that the offline participation of young people will be reproduced online; offline traditional political participation will lead to traditional online participation.

These assumptions can be traced via social media. With the diffusion of social network sites (SNS) such as Facebook and MySpace, social media has become one of the most popular Internet services in the world. SNS are online services that allow users to create an individual profile, connect with other users – usually, people know offline – and navigate through these networks of contacts (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). Social networking technologies had matured, and people became more comfortable using them.

The main issue here is the question of whether this social media usage leads to political outcomes or not. Based on the psychological approach, if political knowledge increases, so does political participation. Social media makes it easier for individuals to discover information about the things going on around them and around the world; therefore, they are expected to become more involved in politics. Despite this assumption, the results are complicated. Some studies have underlined positive relationships between social media use and political participation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012, p. 322), while others have found no relationship whatsoever between them (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010, p. 25).

According to Habermas (1991), information, citizenship, government, and the public sphere are interconnected through mass media. If we look at Web 2.0 and social media from Habermas' public sphere perspective, we can regard them as facilitators of a deliberation space, where people can



exchange ideas freely. In this context, the term cyberdemocracy is introduced as a technocultural goal that intends to create a “healthy public sphere” by providing people access to political advice, analysis, criticism, and representation through communication media. Though Web 2.0, social media, and the Internet have the potential to promote a Habermasian public sphere (Habermas et al., 1991), and authors such as Fernback go so far as regarding the Web as a “new arena for participation in public life” (1997, p. 37), there are issues that should be considered by any “networked nation” regarding the limitations of Web 2.0 and social media as facilitators of social communication. However, some authors underline the lack of empirical analysis and validity on Habermasian public sphere on digital area. Also, for some, Habermas’ conceptualization on public sphere is problematic and they argue that some institutional preconditions such as active civil society, free media outlets to ensure the democracy in the society. So, rather than the public sphere itself, the conditions that this sphere nourished in matter when coming to effective use of social media (Dahlberg, 2004).

Political values are changing, and so is the definition and the content of the political activity. Therefore, so is political participation. Needless to say, the definition of Verba and Nie is no longer covering the framework of political participation, especially with regard to youth participation. Now, we need to think about passive forms of political participation, participation in the social environment, and the activities not specifically aiming to influence or change the decision-making process.

Research Design

The main research subject of the study is to evaluate the importance of internet and social media on the political participation behaviours of the young members of society. The main argument is formulated as social media motivates young people to participate in political parties by seeing and reading about their activities while motivating young people to participate in civil society by encouraging civic duties.

In order to test this main argument, we formed semi-structured interviews with 14 questions. These questions were formed to understand the views of the young members of the society on the political participation and political participation channels. Ethics committee approval was obtained with the decision of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University Ethics Committee with regard to the interview. We asked these questions to the executive members of the AK Party and CHP’s youth branches and the executive members of GoFor as the representative of civil society in Turkey. We chose executive members because we wanted to explore the inner environment of the political parties and the civil society organization. Also, we wanted to hear the views of young members who were only volunteers before, and then became executive members. We thought the executive members can provide us all the information we need to know about these selected institutions.



In total, we met with 30 participants from Ankara and İstanbul because executive members of the selected political parties and civil society organization were residents in these cities. Every interview lasted about 45 minutes. In these interviews, we used an audio recorder, and all the interviews have been transcribed manually. We uploded these transcripts to MaxQda software. We searched for the words of “internet, social media, social network sites, news, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and digitalized age” in these transcripts, and the software found the sentences with searched words and we listed all these sentences. The content was scanned and analyzed with MaxQDA 2018 software. There are mainly seven motivations that we studied, but this paper only covers the results regarding the social media.

We chose AK Party, CHP, and GoFor because when we started to study in this subject at the end of 2016, the power party in the parliament was AK Party, and the main opposition party was CHP. Because we wanted to investigate the motivations for political participation, it seemed logical to study the power party and main opposition party. As a civil society, we chose to study GoFor because GoFor (Gençlik Örgütleri Forumu: Youth Organizations Forum), working with a right-based approach in addressing the youth policy in Turkey, is a common platform of youth organizations acting together. So, this platform presented us the diversity we are looking for in this study.

Analysis

Youth Branches: AK Party and CHP

The main argument regarding social media is that social media motivates young people to participate in political parties by seeing and reading about their activities while motivating young people to participate in civil society by encouraging civic duties.

In this chapter, interviewees will be named with “A” if they are the members of AK Party’s youth branches, “C” if they are the members of CHP, and “G” if they are volunteers of GoFor.

AK Party

A1 underlines the effect of the things we see in social media and how it motivates those reading or seeing them:

“I know many curious, hard-working young people who come to read rights from social media, I don't know the situation now but you are touching a section through social media that you can't influence from the TVs”

“There is something like that television and the media do not report everything. Twitter reports them all, good or bad. And you can see the reaction of the people very easily, the things they said, what they did and what they did not ... Let's say that something happened, the public's reaction



to this is necessary. We learn this kind of information from Twitter, and obviously, it motivates us because it allows us to tidy up more.” (A5)

A2 emphasizes that it is now easy to access any news through social media, and the main purpose of Twitter and Facebook, especially, evolved from sharing something to following the political agenda, while Instagram is primarily used for personal posts:

“I saw their work on social media, I was already following the AK Party. I use social media actively. I have a Twitter and Instagram account. (I don't share anything from Facebook.) I'm using Twitter purely to follow the country's agenda. ... Twitter agenda items, TTs, are helpful to follow the country's agenda. If I see an injustice, I would criticize it even if it was my own party, so I had even left the party. Usually, when I see something I feel the need to express ideas.” (A2)

“The first thing people do in order to obtain information is to go into hashtags and learn the details of the event and analyze it. One has his own view, he sees a hashtag outside his own view and looks at everyone's opinion. I use Twitter for purely political aims.” (A4)

Also, the young people we interviewed state that they mostly do not watch TV for following the country's political agenda because they do not believe in the impartiality of TV programs anymore; as A2 states in that manner that

“I'm not watching TV. Because I see television away from me, most programs are empty. There are channels focusing around a continuous view since there are no dissenting channels, it does not seem objective. Especially I am trying to follow the agenda on Twitter. I follow the agenda abroad, through newspapers on Twitter (Anadolu Agency).”

“I use social media very well, I follow Twitter, I do this often, but I can not say that I follow the whole agenda from there. I'm trying to watch all the channels on TV. No such thing as neutrality in Turkey, this also applies to the channel. Everyone has a case, but there must be neutral media, for justice. Social media sets justice in Turkey. Social media is the beginning of news, the entrance of the event. After the smartphones, the TV era was over.” (A3).

Some young members appreciate the importance of social media in encouraging people to take a stand; however, some believe that it matters more for visibility:

“I was inspired by the news, social media and the environments I was in and found myself here. We have made major supports on the spread of the hashtags on social media and opening the eyes of the citizens. Home visits, brochures were distributed, major brochures were distributed to raise public awareness in the squares. Such things are not effective enough to change people's views.” (A4).



A7 states that although the party uses social media in an active way, s/he thinks that the opposition party is better in using it:

“We have a social media unit in our commission. ... On social media, the opposition parties can make more noise. Because they have more to contend with. Ours is nothing more than sharing our activities. Because we don't see it as a battlefield. Some see it that way. Especially during this election period, we witnessed them very much. You know we're not doing anything. It caused an argument to ourselves. Let's just say we're using it to announce what we do and make our voices heard. But social media is actively used.”

Among ten interviewees in AK Party, only one (A8) thinks that social media does not have any effect on political participation. As s/he states:

“I do not believe that social media contributes (motivates). Maybe other parties benefit more from social media.” (A8).

CHP

As in the case of the AK Party, social media, Twitter, especially, seems to be the most favored source for following political agendas.

“I'm sharing especially via Twitter. I'm making political shares. Right now I'm already working on an election. After the Gezi Events of 2013, social media is more encouraging for politics, especially for those who use Twitter. I follow the Turkish and foreign agenda via Twitter.” (C5).

“I share my world view as much as I can fit 240 characters on Twitter. I used social media accounts to encourage people to register to the party. I already have access to any information I want from social media. Since I follow news sites from social media accounts, the easiest thing is to get healthy information from Twitter.” (C7).

“I use social media mostly to share on the political agenda. When I'm going to share on a political point, Twitter comes first, followed by Instagram. We discussed and acknowledged the importance of social media in an environment where social media became widespread and especially affected the elections.” (C10).

As in the case of AK Party, the young members of CHP also underline the importance of social media for motivation on political participation:

“Let me talk about membership first: Membership, in general, is through care. Our friends who like to see our activities and who want to participate in our activities are demanding from us. They are especially affected by social media.” (C4).

“We use social media to reach out to the masses and to introduce ourselves to the public better. Social media motivates participation.” (C6).

They, however, unlike the youth of AK Party, give importance to follow the news through TV or newspapers:



"I usually look on TV. In Twitter, I follow Duvar and, Sendika.org or something like a socialist workers' magazine. I gave up talking about politics in social media." (C2)

"In general, let's say to follow social media. Other than that, there are major internet news portals, mainly to look at those places. On the weekends, let me say that I mostly look at the tabloid paper. Similarly, I follow the international agenda through social media channels." (C10).

Only one of the interviewees thinks that social media does not motivate her/him to be more politically active; s/he posts political content because s/he is political and explains:

"I use Twitter, especially in the political sense, no one reads the news anymore. You can learn more easily with short tweets. Twitter is a little more than a news retrieval tool for me. In fact, if we say Facebook, it is also almost political; I take only one Instagram as my own. I try not to make much political sharing there. I use Twitter and Facebook politically. I mean, yes, but does it add extra motivation? No. On the contrary, my shares are political because I am political." (C3).

Civil Society: GoFor

G1 points out that s/he experienced undesired outcomes by posting political views on social media:

"Previously, I used social media for my work and for political reasons. Of course, this led me to an inevitable process. I came across the great reality of society. Even if your discourse and the work you do is meaningful, they make you a target for your political work. I've been labeled as a terrorist 3 times where I live. For ridiculous reasons. With all the good things I've done, I have declared as a traitor due to my political criticism."

Maybe because of the impact of such examples mentioned above, G8 points out that sharing political content is not appropriate on social media:

"I actually use social media to spend time just like this. I don't expect anything in terms of political content to chat with my friends. We are already students, we can do nothing by making political content."

Like the young members of political parties, GoFor members also show that they follow the political agenda via social media and the sources they find online:

"I have a look at the Internet newspapers of all opinions, and I also follow the world agenda from Internet newspapers." (G1).

"We use social media in the most active way possible. We carry out the activities of our association through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and advertising our association on various platforms. Today is technology age so I follow various news sites, various applications through social media, instead of newspaper magazines." (G2)



“My goal of using social media is to learn the news in the country where I live, to get the most accurate information, not from television, but from sources that offer as accurate news as possible.” (G4)

“I’m comparing the news now because every media source says something different. I love reading newspapers online. There are websites of different newspapers on the Internet, I follow them. I’m looking at the news from Facebook. Every minute of my day, I almost try to get some news.” (G5)

G3, on the one hand, underlines that social media does not motivate young people to participate; s/he sees the current political situation in Turkey as depressing, and knowing about political developments makes him/her feel less encouraged and motivated to participate in politics. S/he states that:

“I usually follow the agenda abroad on BBC News or on the Internet. I do not want to follow the current agenda of Turkey because it is not too good. I do not watch, I do not follow much to keep my morale and motivation.”

G6, on the other hand, underlines the importance of social media to motivate young people by saying: “I use social media more as a news medium. Social media positively affects political participation.”

“The youth organizations forum is also very active in using social media accounts. We constantly stream information to our members via mail, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. I use all my social media accounts and try to use them as actively as I can.” (G9).

Conclusion

As stated before, we searched for the words of “internet, social media, news, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and digitalized age” in the transcripts of the interviews, the software found the sentences with searched words and we listed all these sentences. The content was scanned and analyzed with MaxQDA 2018 software. Each sentence has been analyzed to see whether or not social media motivates young members of political parties and civil society organization for political participation. Based on this research, we can say that due to the widespread usage of smartphones and development in digital media, it seems like young people have been gaining participation skills and becoming increasingly knowledgeable in the political arena, as mentioned by Quintelier & Vissers, 2008; Smith, Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 2009. By reducing the costs of participation, social media opened the information open to all; thus, it can be suggested that young people now understand the risks and gains coming from social media and act accordingly. As in the case of GoFor, although they use social media to motivate people by sharing their work to impress them, they show some reluctance to become more political in social media. Unlike them, young people in political parties are more open to sharing their political views and using social media as a tool to recruit new members.



However, what we see here is that people already engaged in political issues are the ones visiting the political sites; as a voluntaristic perspective states, political participation guides the use of technology. Online political participation mirrors offline political participation, so people will not change their political participation just because new opportunities have been created. This idea fits the idea of reinforcement (Kraemer et al., 1989): the ones that visit political party websites will mostly be the same ones that attend political meetings and party congresses. Young people who read about politics in newspapers will read about it online; the ones that read about sports will not suddenly decide to visit websites providing political information. There are exceptions to this, of course, but seeing and reading about political issues or things that have a direct impact on their life does not guarantee the political involvement of young people.

Both in the case of AK Party and CHP, and GoFor, it is seen that seeing and reading about the political issues or the things that have a direct impact on young members' lives does not guarantee the involvement of young people. However, what we see here is that people already engaged in political issues are the ones visiting the political sites; as a voluntaristic perspective states, political participation guides the use of technology. Online political participation mirrors offline political participation.

In terms of social media, we underline that social media's influence differs regarding the young members of political parties and civil society. We initially thought that members of the political parties were mostly motivated through seeing the activities and writings of political parties on social media, while members of civil society were mainly motivated by their sense of civic duty when seeing things on social media. However, what we see is that for both the members of conventional political participation and nonconventional political participation, the visibility of the news, problems, and issues does not guarantee the involvement of young people in the political scene. It seems that young people who tend to care about political issues and the ones who read, research, and become engaged in politics are also the ones reading, researching, and engaging in political issues in the online arena. This finding reflects the voluntaristic perspective, which states that political participation guides the use of technology. Online political participation mirrors offline political participation. Consistent with this finding, the young members of GoFor also show little interest in being active in the political scene in both offline and online platforms.



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