Investigating the Relationship between Using Internet and Type of Political Culture among Citizens of Isfahan

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ABSTRACT
One of the means of understanding human communities and predicting their political behavior and culture is focusing on information resources of media through which labeling is done. Media are intermediaries between human and his environment and often convey meanings through multilateral actions and interactions in form of intention-making phenomena by manipulating individual and collective power games. In order to understand the citizens of a political unit, the most scientific research is related to understanding media and the way they convey the citizen’s meanings. Media initially present themselves as technological instruments and dominate architecture to music, theatre, calligraphy, communications and all areas and after a while, they take a comprehensive form. By the expansion of the media and their becoming part of daily life, intermediate meaning-creating techniques no longer function merely as instruments and become part of the biological world and are able to shape people’s lifestyles. The media shape both the instruments and lifestyles of people and they are so important that understanding such an important phenomenon as the political culture of any society is possible by simply analyzing the media of that society and find out on what parameters are the legitimacy, political philosophy, preferred governance, political protests, political efficiency and other political structures of the society based. In this regard, the present study attempts to investigate the relationship between internet usage and type of political culture.

INTRODUCTION

Once the importance of value-intellectual ideas of the society and their role in political and social development in general and political behavior of players in particular are known, the role of communication and mass media as the most important factors in the formation of public opinion and people’s sociopolitical beliefs is highlighted. In fact, information societies have become more developed and complicated and this has increased the importance of communications in political dimension. By taking control of public opinion and leading as well as exciting and making use of public opinion, mass media plays a crucial role in politics. In the present age which is known as information age and information and communications society, a great part of political socialization is carried out by media and the influence and effect of media is such that some theorists believe that the media determine the mental, behavioral, and even lifestyle of individuals.

Society’s culture and norms are some of the aspects that are influenced by media; political culture as one of the political dimensions under the influence of mass media is subject to change and transformation. Although participatory political culture is a vital element in moving towards democracy in nondemocratic countries and important for strengthening democracy in democratic countries, there is no doubt that political culture itself stems from different roots and origins and is supported or weakened by them. Economic development, religious approaches, social and economic class, etc. are factors that are mentioned by various thinkers as bases for change in political culture. Considering the importance of mass media that play an integral role in the development of modern communication society, identifying the effects of mass media on the political culture and theories about media influence might help in using instruments whose positive and negative effects depends on how much and how users are trained and informed. Therefore, understanding media is one the most...
important steps to be taken in making maximum use of this instrument’s potentials in favor of society’s interest. Thus, in this paper, it is attempted to analyze the elements of political culture and media influence.

**Hypodermic Needle Theory:**

One of the first theories introduced about the scope of media’s general effect is the “hypodermic needle approach” or “magic bullet.” According to this theory, “mass media messages have more or less equal effects on all audience under exposure.”. Mass media audiences were considered passive beings before needles containing media advertisements and it seemed that any bullet fired at the audience would certainly hit. Needle theory maintains that mass media have a direct, immediate and powerful influence over the audience. Individuals are extremely fragile before mass communication messages and if a message reaches him, it will have the desired effect. The pivotal matter in this approach is emphasis on “distant leading, ” “puppetry” and “conditioning.” This approach assumed that messages penetrate the audience’s mind-the place where feelings and ideas are stored- word by word; it is as if feelings and ideas are “injected” and finally these feelings and ideas shape the behavior that the message source had intended. In this view, the media is considered a powerful and dangerous source as the receiver or audience is helpless regarding any message influence and there is no escape from this influence.

The magic bullet theory was disproved by researchers such as Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet in their studies. Their research project during Franklin Roosevelt’s candidacy in 1940 revealed that there is little relationship between the media and people’s political behaviors [5]. In the immediate period after the theory of magical bullet, huge number of significant scientific achievements about the process of communications in media was gradually accumulated. Later studies proved that human being is a selecting creature possessing common sense that processes information. Individuals choose the kind of information they want to be exposed to based on their past experiences and belief systems. Hence, he chooses a media whose messages and information it broadcasts are more compatible with his belief system and causes less cognitive discrepancies.

**Sample Volume:**

The population includes the entire citizens of Isfahan City in 2014 who are about 1796967 people. Sample volume is 384 people using Cochran formulation and formula. However, due to some spoiled questionnaires, only 379 questionnaires are analyzed.

**Research Findings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural * internet Cross Tabulation</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>I use</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 don’t use</td>
<td>1 use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within internet</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequential</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within internet</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within internet</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within internet</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table and chart is the cross-tabulation of comparison between the level of limited, consequential, and participatory political culture among internet users and non-users. According to the frequency percentage attributed to either of the two columns, distribution of the percentage of individuals who use the internet and individuals who do not can be compared in different political culture classes including limited, consequential and participatory. Based on the findings above, 48 percent of the individuals who do not use the internet have limited political culture, whereas the level of the same among individuals who use the internet is 30 percent. In addition, 38 percent of the individuals who do not use the internet have consequential political culture, whereas the level of the same among the individuals who use the internet is 48 percent. Finally, 13 percent of the individuals who do not use the internet have participatory culture, while the same is 21 percent for the individuals who use the internet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>8.264*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>8.052</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>7.285</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13.52.

The table above shows the results related to chi-squared test that determines existence of relationship or lack of relationship between the two variables of having or not having internet and type of political culture. In this table, several chi-squared tests including Pearson, likelihood etc. are observed. The value of chi-squared test is significant with 0.95 reliability and with error level of less than 0.05. Therefore, there is a relationship between the two variable of having or not having internet and type of political culture. Therefore, hypothesis H_0 is rejected and hypothesis H_1 is confirmed. In other words, it means that frequencies have significant difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symmetric Measures</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Approx. Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominal by Nominal</td>
<td>Phi</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cramer's V</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>347</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicates the significance of relationship between the two variables of having or not having internet and type of political culture. As it can be seen in the table, values for Phi and Cramer coefficients are given. Since table cells are more than 2*2 in this research, we use Cramer’s V coefficient. As correlation significance obtained is 0.15 and meaningful in the level smaller than 0.05, it can be said that the degree of relationship between having or not having internet and political culture is meaningful though weak. Accordingly, it can be said that the level of participatory political culture among individuals who use the internet is more than those who do not, whereas individuals who do not use the internet are more inclined to limited political culture than individuals who use such media.

**Conclusion:**

Results indicate that the level of participatory political culture among individuals who use the internet is more than those who do not. However, individuals who do not use internet media are more inclined to limited political culture than individuals who use such media. This fact agrees with Basić theories and hypotheses. Basić hypothesis argues that despite the attempts made by elites, modern communication technologies reduce communications cost and information understanding and create more interesting conditions for participation. Thus, internet gives strength to new groups and increases democratic participation culture and opens up political networks that would otherwise be impenetrable.

**REFERENCES**


