



The Role of the e-Media in Promoting National Affiliation among the Kuwaiti Youth

Musaed Fahad Alshammari

Mass communication, Journalism, Arkansas State University, USA

E-mail: musaed.f.al@gmail.com

Abstract

The spread of e-media on a large scale and the emergence of new and more sophisticated means of communication in Kuwait have raised many questions about the actual role played by the social media especially in the promotion of the National Affiliation of youth. The current study aimed at answer the question "what is the role of the social media in promoting national affiliation among the Kuwaiti youth?" .In order to answer this question, the researcher applied a qualitative research by using semi-structured interviews. The study population focuses on Kuwaiti population, and those aged between 18-24 years of age. Convenience sampling was applied and the total sample number was 6. The analysis of the qualitative data was mainly through thematic analysis. In this method the various similarities and difference in the data collected are examined to allow themes to come up from the data. The results showed that social media did not affect national affiliation among the study sample. The researcher suggests conducting more research to investigate the impact of social media in various aspects of political and social life in Kuwait and other Arab countries.

Keywords: E-media, National Affiliation, youth, social media.



I. Introduction

The spread of e-media on a large scale and the emergence of new and more sophisticated means of communication in Kuwait have raised many questions about the actual role played by the social media in its loyalty to the countries and its ruling policy on the first hand and in the promotion of the National Affiliation of youth on the other hand. This is what the current study seeks to answer by examining the impact of the Kuwaiti social media in enhancing the national affiliation of Kuwaiti youth. This study will also explore the positive and negative effects of social media on young people's national affiliation as well as its ability to influence their perspective about political life and political culture in Kuwait.

Introduction statement

The media, audio and visual are an important source of guidance and education in the society. They affect all the different audiences of diverse ages and social levels, which differ in their intellectual, political and social interests (Volgy and Schwarz, 1980). The developing countries have witnessed a huge increase in the emergence of international and local news agencies. A huge technological and media development in the speed of receiving, storing and sending the huge amount of news and audio news at unprecedented speed, which has attracted the masses and increased their dependence on the media (Al-Anzi, 2014). The social media and its recent role is such as a mirror that reflects the education and communication system of the nation and its position on the planet. The media characterizes the basic conditions of wastefulness and calls attention to the one who isn't right, regardless of whether policy or



politician(Baker, 2009). Kuwait, like other countries, has been alerted to the importance of this media sector at the grassroots and governmental level, especially in view of the world's ongoing revolutions and developments in the modern media of radio, press, television, internet and others (Al-Anzi, 2014). Therefore, the impact of the e-media, such as twitter, varies according to the target age group, which requires research into the ability of these means in enhancing National Affiliation of Kuwaiti youth.

Background

- **Social media:** This type of media takes place through electronic means, especially the Internet. It has a growing share in the media market due to its ease of access, speed of production, development and modernization, as well as its superior intellectual freedom. Audio and video recordings, multimedia, CDs and the Internet are among the most important forms of modern electronic media (Seth, 2008). The social media which is a main part in electronic media is observing two fascinating patterns in this decade: first pattern shows that the dependency of individuals is twice more on Internet entrances and news sites to get their everyday news, than on conventional sources, for example, TV and daily papers, also this proportion is anticipated to increment further. The second pattern indicates that more than 1.4 million blog entries are composed every day, and the most number of these posts are on political subjects or different components of political news (Sifry, 2007). The quantity of individuals perusing web journals all the time has additionally been ceaselessly expanding throughout the years (Blog Readership, 2007). These patterns demonstrate



a huge move from conventional news media accessibility and how individuals examine news. We are occupied with the ramifications of these patterns on the adequacy of social media in drawing and making political cultures through Kuwaiti youth.

- **Media and Politics:** The media, of course, have a close relationship with the kinds of governments under which they operate. They actually reflect and support the philosophy of government, as this is a common belief among nations. If it is not in a state, it will lead to a national revolution on political governance and accelerate it. From this perspective, we can say that all press and media systems operate under state control and supervision. It plays the role of loyal servant in times of crisis such as national crises and wars, where the media rely exclusively on official sources of information and usually have cooperation with government officials (Zaller, 1999). Unlike social media, which offer greater freedom of expression and lack of national controls and trends, they have a major impact on the minds of young people who prefer them to other traditional means (Stieglitz et al., 2012).

- **Weblogs:**

There are diverse strands of writing concentrating on blogosphere in political setting. The first manages the utilizations and advantages of political online journals. In an overview of 3,747 blog users, who were generally youthful in age and very taught, Kaye (2005) finds the pattern that online journals were essentially a medium for political data chasing and interest. McKenna and Pole (2007) report that the substance of political online journals are made out of data about news articles from the broad



communications, acquaintances with other sites' postings, and feedback about broad communications scope on political undertakings. In another paper, McKenna (2007) additionally reports that political bloggers build their online journals from the inspiration of voluntarism and not for business purposes.

Significance of the study

The evolution of social media sites represent an important change in how people communicate with each other. In fact, social media has contributed to what called "global village". Mobile communication devices and the user-friendly interface of social media sites both together have allowed people in divergent parts of the world to share their common interests as they in the same place. An important example of the influence of social media is the Arab spring in 2010 in Tunisia, where the social media plays an important role in spreading the story of Mohamed Bouazizi (Thorne, 2011).

Another example is the 2008 presidential campaign of Barack Obama which proved the advantages of using social media for political campaigns, this campaign used social media to enhance its message and to support advertising (Learmont, 2009). Examples such as these emphasize the importance of social media in the formation of public opinion and the realization of political awareness among public in general and especially youth, which means the possibility of using social media to improve national affiliation.

The importance of the current study lies in the lack of studies that have dealt with the role of social media in promoting national belonging and affiliation among young



people, which considered an important subject that requires research as national affiliation is a social and national necessity. The researcher also expects that this study will contribute to encouraging other researchers to investigate the possibility of benefiting positively from social media in improving countries.

II. Literature review

Over the last few years, Arab countries have encountered the highest rates of technology adoption amongst all developing countries (Howard, 2011). As mentioned by Lewis (2011), modern communications are the most important development in Arab countries. Over the last years, internet penetration has expanded dramatically, which resulted in huge progress in the technological capabilities of modern life, this progress have not been embraced by the governments that dominate the Middle East (Abbassi, 2011). As internet access has multiplied over the Arab region, a complex relationship between governments and media has developed. For economic development purposes, Arab autocracies have encourages internet penetration, in the same time they struggle to keep up control over the spread of information and media sources (Khamis, Vaughn, 2011).

Scholars have studied the influence of the internet on the way people interact with each other and particularly with political issues since the 1980s when communication technologies emerged, these studies varied between positives and negatives of the internet (Calder, 2013). In a study conducted by Yang and Dehart (2016) a total of 4,556 US college students were surveyed after election 2012 in order to investigate factors affecting their online political participation. The study showed that political



self-efficacy, online social capital, and Facebook group participation were positive predictors of online political participation.

Political participation refers to the citizens participation in activities that can impact the selection of officials, policies, and the structure of government (Himmelboim et al., 2012). Online political participation has the same meaning of political participation, but all activities are occurring in online context (Verba et al., 1995). Online activities include: making a campaign contribution online, writing to a politician online, subscribing to a political listserv, sending a political message via email and signing up to volunteer for campaign online (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2012; Zukin et al., 2006; Shah et al., 2005). The popularity of social media has given different chances to citizens online political participation. Users of internet can share their perspectives on social networks with friends, forward political videos, join interest groups, follow political characters on Twitter, publish blogs about important social and economic issues, and share political images and videos. Many communication and political scholars applauded the tremendous democratic potentials of social media for political and civic participation (Kushin, Yamamoto, 2010; Holt et al., 2013). Democratic countries such as US have also started the initiatives to engage young citizens with social media (Macnamara et al., 2012; Bridges et al., 2012).

Many studies investigate the dynamics of social media use and political participation via social networks but the results are mixed and conflict. For example, in a study conducted by Carlisle and Patton (2013) political interest has been identified as the only important predictor of political participation on Facebook. On the other hand, a



study by Mihailidis (2014) showed that social media were rarely use for political issues. Gil de Zuniga et al. (2014) found that social media political expression was a strong predictor of online political participation. However, researchers are still wondering how young people use social media and networks in politics.

Recently, the number of young people has increased significantly, especially in the Middle East. Youth are a considerable asset to their nations, they have a critical role in social, political, cultural and economic landscape. But, their contribution to their countries still not fully realized and their potential is still untapped. Young people are less likely to be active citizens for many reasons: young people lack information and they do not understand how exactly political institutions work, in addition to the lack of effective communication between them and decision-makers. In the past, a young person could only access information by traditional media such as TV and newspapers. But, with the emergence of social media such as Facebook and Twitter allow young people to create their personality, develop new contacts, keep in touch in real time and discuss different issues with others. They allow young people to read, analyse, discuss, and share content without any prerequisites. Thanks to social media, young people have become better and more active citizens. They now can view information about their region, decision-makers and influencers. In addition to participate in online petitions, join groups and talk to other people and contribute to debates on Facebook, Twitter and other social networks. In this way, young people can engage directly as part of a community not just as individuals (Benlafqih, 2015).



Research method

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the qualitative descriptive approach will be used as the most suitable method for this study, considering the role of the Kuwaiti social media in shaping and enhancing the national affiliation of Kuwaiti youth. An interview will be designed under the supervision of the advisor for the purpose of collecting study data, then analyze those collected data through content analysis method. Also the researcher will refer to literature and previous studies in order to obtain some secondary information that helps in achieving the objectives of the research and answer its questions.

Sample characteristics

The study population focuses on Kuwaiti population, especially those aged between 18-24 years of age. Convenience sampling was applied because its inexpensive, fast and easy. The participants were selected from social networks, the first six who met the criteria were selected to be the sample of the study. Contact was made through online videos The sample was entirely made of adults who were all above the age of 18. The total sample size was 6, comprised of 4 male and 2 female respondents. Two of the participants were journalists, the rest of the participants held various positions in the fields of teaching and management.

All 6 respondents were informed of the purpose of the questionnaire being solely for this study and no respondent was forced to fill the questionnaire. Confidentiality of the respondents was highly observed.



Procedure

A semi-structured interviews was the data collection method in this study. The use of this method in collecting data enables the researcher to gain an in-depth data in a more conversational atmosphere. In semi-structured interview, the researcher can ask a set of open-ended questions to obtain more detailed data.

The answers of the participants provide rich information to assist the researcher in terms of deep understanding of the research topic. The researcher designed the interview questions in a way that cover all important points that related to the research topic, collect answers from participants, then read all transcripts carefully to make a comparison among them all in order to build a clear understanding.

To analyse the gained results, the researcher develops his observations into preliminary descriptive and interpretive categories according to the evidence presented in the transcripts. However, the analysis technique that used to analyse interviews is to compare all answers regarding every point of view.

Data analysis

The analysis of the qualitative data was mainly through thematic analysis. In this method the various similarities and difference in the data collected are examined to allow themes to come up from the data (Creswell 2007) using Owen, (1984) 3 criteria for identifying themes, by observing factors such as repetition, recurrence and forcefulness. Some component of grounded analysis was used by allowing the themes



to develop from the data and not from what the principal investigator knows about the research topic (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

In order to ensure that no data was omitted, the researcher did direct transcription for the interview sessions through listening to the recording made during the 6 interviews and typing them out in Microsoft Word.

III. Results

12 questions were asked to the participants regarding the role of social media in Promoting National Affiliation among the Kuwaiti population. As the following:

With regard to the respondents' responses to the first question about social media most commonly used participants, most of them answered Twitter and Facebook, two participants answered Whatsapp. Regarding the second question about the last time the participants used social media all participants (except one) mentioned that they use social media daily. The third question was about the time spent in social media, the answers ranged between half an hour to most of the day.

Regarding the motives behind using the social media (Q4), the answers were as the following:

1. Entertainment, news.
2. Communicating with friends.
3. Influence the public opinion and monitor social transformations.



4. University news, celebrities latest news.

Regarding the question "Have you ever seen political comments and information through social media means? (yes/no) if yes please specify what was it type" , most of the participants mentioned that they have seen many political and social comments in social media, one participant said that "most of what we read includes comments on different political issues, some of them are local, regional, and international political issues", however, another participant mentioned that these comments are exist but in small degree, and the last participant mentioned that there is no political comments in social media.

The answers of the participants regarding if they trust political information that exists in social media one participant only said that he trust these information, the other participants answered wither they do not trust political information in social media at all, or trust only few of them. Regarding the question "Have you ever add political comments through social media? If (yes) please specify its kind and what is its influence on others National Affiliation in your thought?" four participants mentioned that they never add political comments through social media, while the remaining two participants mentioned that they usually add comments and express their opinions in social and political issues.

Regaring the question "Have you ever re-tweeted political thoughts through social media? If (yes) please specify why?" four participants answered no, while two participants said that they re-tweeted some thoughts and opinions when they matching their opinions or have any benefit to the society.



When the researcher asked about the meaning of national affiliation, the answers were: "loving the homeland and defending its property", "inclination to the land to which you belong", "the duties that the individual must undertake to preserve the property of the homeland and protect it from dangers and work for its prosperity.

The next question is about the influence of social media on the national affiliation, most of the participants mentioned that their national affiliation does not affected by social media, while one participant mentioned that sometimes when a political issue raise on social media you find yourself defending your country, which promotes a sense of belonging.

Regarding the positive effects of social media on Kuwaiti national affiliation level and their political culture, most of the participants mentioned that sometimes the impact of the social media is positive when it is an honest source in transfer political news that promote the national affiliation, and that these means is the only means available for Kuwaiti after the atrophy of political currents. While, one participant Saied that there is no effect of social media on national affiliation.

Regarding the question "What are the negative effects of Social media on young people's national affiliation level and their political culture?" most participants pointed out that dissemination of unfounded rumors is one of the most negative effects of social media. One participant pointed out that the problem is not the false news but the lack of awareness among a large group of citizens because of the lack of educational curricula or the ineffective of national campaigns.



IV. Discussion

Social media are the most prominent media phenomenon in our world today, as they attract a large segment of society, especially young people, as the most influential in any society, with the energy and changeability they represent. There is no doubt that the contemporary world is undergoing a major transformation, through which the factor of time has been reduced and social media have become the alternative to traditional past activities.

Social media such as Facebook and Twitter have created many changes not only in communication between individuals and groups, but also in the results and impacts of communication, this communication has significant results in the humanitarian, social, political and cultural fields. It also has become one of the most important factors that led to social change locally and globally, due to the available means and possibilities for communication and speed in the delivery of information, as that traditional media cannot longer effect change effectively.

Young people particularly used social media to communicate with others but it seems that with the maturity wave, young people are exchanging views on various aspects of life, including political events. As we have pointed out in the literature review, many studies have shown that the means of social media have a significant impact on political participation and political awareness such as the study of Yang and Dehart (2016) which showed that political self-efficacy, online social capital, and Facebook group participation were positive predictors of online political participation.



The current study agreed with the previous studies in terms of the impact of social media sites on the political awareness of citizens. As for the main study question about the impact of social media on national affiliation, the results of the current study showed no effect through the answers of most of the participants in the study. This result may be because all the participants in the study are intellectuals and two of them are journalists. Most of the participants stated that they do not believe all the political news published on these websites where it is possible that the news is false and irrelevant.

Limitation of the study

The results of this study were based on a small number of participants. The study sample consisted of only 6 participants. The study also decided to select participants in a non-random manner, which means that there is no equal opportunity between the study population .

Suggestion for future studies

The researcher suggest conducting more research studies to investigate the impact of social media in various aspects of political and social life in Kuwait. The researcher suggest the following research topics:

1. Ways and means of developing political and social awareness of Kuwaiti youth through social media.
2. Studying the opinions and attitudes of the Kuwaiti university youth regarding the political issues they read on social media.



Conclusion

To conclude, following the analysis of the results of the interviews, the study showed that the most used social media by the participants were Facebook and Twitter. And that the respondents use these sites for the purposes of communicating with friends and reading the latest news. But they do not trust all the political news they read because they can be incorrect. Finally, the results of the study showed that national affiliation did not affect by the social media.

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