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## REVIEWING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON THE MODERNIST POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF YASUJ UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*The increasing development of media and social networks plays a great role in the development of human life and societies. The faster performance and low costs of transmitting messages has contributed to the influence and tendency of people towards the media. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to explore the impact of social networks on the modernist political attitudes of students. This paper was conducted by the survey method using standard and established questionnaire between 361 individuals from Yasuj university students as the statistical sample, and data analysis was carried out by SPSS software. The modernist political attitudes of students were investigated in three aspects, namely a democratic political attitude, liberal political attitudes and critical political attitudes. The findings indicated a significant relationship between social networks and the modernist political attitudes of students. Thus, social networks could be referred as one of the factors influencing the modernist political attitudes.*

**Keywords:** Social Networks, Political Attitudes, Yasuj

### INTRODUCTION

The emergence of modernity and a series of factors linked to it led to a greater number of issues with more speed in the public eye, bringing people's attitudes closer to each other in relation to different topics. Hence, this era is sometimes referred to as "global village" or "globalization". In this context, a lot of people around the world have been affected by these networks and social media. Virtual social networks are among the newest technologies that help users to maintain existing social relations, find new friends and share experiences and provide their membership, activity, and targeted participation.

Englehart believed that modernity along with communication technologies breaks the traditional world, forcing people to accept subjective and competitive relationships. Moreover, the development of communication and educational technologies and universal access to them has changed the strict framework of the tradition. This modern communication technology has played a great role in the development of the international civil society in the 1990s by shaping public opinion and increasing the new social movements (Sardarnia, 2009).

In 1977, Ronald Englehart raised the term "silent revolution"; that is, the new generation of young people tend towards the post-materialist values and culture, including civil liberties, democratization and life quality under the influence of communication and media technology

(Sardarnia, 2016: 3). Due to their ability to build synchronous and a synchronous fast-paced communication, providing high volume of information, influencing the ecosystem on attractions, diversity and entertainment, virtual social networks have created a new interactive framework for interpersonal communication, which creates new opportunities to the users for the representation of their personality (Zokayi, 2007: 286). Rheingold believed that the Internet in the modern era can actively engage citizens into the political process, and consequently brings a modern era of participatory democracy into the political sphere (Minavand, 2006: 128). McLuhan has introduced the emergence of modern networks as an important factor in the formation and development of democratic culture (Rahbar Qazi et al., 2006: 128). Therefore, the higher the level of literacy, the access to mass media, the welfare and urbanization, the higher the awareness of people, which helps them enjoy modern and democratic values and attitudes (Huntington, 1996, quoted from Sardarnia, 2016: 7).

In recent years, one of the factors affecting the political culture of people is social networks. This particular effect is greater in societies where political parties do not succeed because social networks increase the capacity and power of the public domain, which have created a kind of virtual civil institution (Rahbar Qazi et al., 2017: 218). Recognition of the political attitudes of individuals can contribute to the rehabilitation and development of the society, especially political development, which makes the rulers and officials of the political system better understand the current realities in the political and social life in the society (Afshani et al., 2010). In this context, the present study has tried to examine the impact of social networks on political attitudes.

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Studies have shown that social media have created new opportunities for users. In their study, Jahangiri and Boustani came to the conclusion that the higher the level of education, the lower the attitudes of individuals over political issues; furthermore, individuals living in high-level economic and social status have a higher recognition of political issues, they also have high political participation in the society (Jahangiri and Boustani, 2001).

In his study about the political attitudes of the students of the University of Shiraz, Mujahid indicated that there is a significant relationship between the income of parents, marital status, educational level and political participation and political modernism. In another study of the same type, entitled "the impact of social networks on the lifestyle of youths in Shahr-e-Kurd", Shahnoushi and Taji concluded that there is no relationship between the type of network, location of residence, value coherence and relational lifestyle; however, they showed that there is a significant relationship between gender, educational level, relational coherence, social aggregation and lifestyle.

In a research entitled "Objectives and motivations of users in virtual social networks; a study about the youth of Tehran", Shahabi and Bayat tried to explain the causes of the presence of young Tehrani users in virtual networks. This study was based on the theoretical framework of "use and satisfaction" and the findings indicated that the majority of users are using these networks in order to facilitate present relationships, restore old relationships, build and maintain friendly relations and they do not consider the space of virtual social networks as political (Shahabi & Bayat, 2012). In his research entitled "collective identity and attitudes



towards democracy in Iran”, Abdullahi showed that both foreign radios and the Internet have a great influence on the democratic attitudes of men (Abdullahi, 2006).

In line with the present study, other studies also indicated that the cyberspace and communication networks have had a great impact on political participation (Harsij et al., 2013), Habermasian communication interaction (Abdullahian and Ansari, 2016), rational values and meta-materialism (Ahmadzadeh and Qasemi, 2015), as well as digital democracy (Shifteh, 2015).

## THEORETICAL BASES

### *Social networks*

The emergence of technologies and mass media outlets has caused the Third World countries face new opportunities and challenges (Aqili and Iraqi Qasemzadeh, 2015: 34), causing the proliferation of network relationships, which have facilitated the interaction between the unknown people (Abdullahian and Sheikh Ansari, 2016: 154]. Jean Baudrillard believed that computer simulations and information processing have resulted in a new social order, which is based on signs that there are more unrealistic cases than reality. This means that it is made artificially and is considered as a real cloud (Moshirzadeh, 2006), the global era, which Baudrillard calls it "meta-reality" (Baudrillard, 2004: 19). In this context, which marks an increase in the interplay of local and global factors, it allows humans to choose their way of life out of different options (Gibbons, 2002: 21). Modern world has a major difference with previous periods, namely its dynamism and mobility (Ibid, 35). Hold and MacGraw viewed the transformation in social relationships and exchanges as globalization.

Modern media space and social networks have opened up a new status of engagement to users with different social contributions (Zokayi, 2004: 2-3). Smith and Vinking Diaz believed that in the last decade, an influential factor in the political, social and social arena that encourages youth and women to establish free communication and speed up exchange of ideas is the internet (Sardarnia, 2016: 17). Since the 1970s, new media outlets, on top of all, have fueled the renewal of social processes and have overshadowed all aspects of the lives of the people. These communication technologies determine the shape and conditions of social interaction and human experience throughout the world (Castells, 2006: 13). Therefore, the global community is in an era where the World Wide Web is a dominant paradigm (Tajik, 2009: 18). The use of information technologies has had a great impact on governments. According to the reports, the use of public and social networks has compromised the lives of countries. Global intelligence community has created a threatening cyberspace for countries, thus changing the concept of security. As a result, the emergence of the virtual world has led to an expansion of the role of social movements and the total number of non-governmental actors (Poulsen, 2006). Habermas believed that it is one of totalitarian regimes that transforms people into manageable herds. Therefore, Anderson and Jansen believed that the use of social media is one of the characteristics of totalitarian regimes that make people change their society and transform its structure (Fazeli, 2003: 167). The use and acceptance of communication technologies is influenced by different environments because trust is one of the factors influencing the use of social media in different environments and countries (Schmidt and Air, 2015: 432). Information security and confidentiality are also one of the major challenges when using social media (Patino et al., 2012).



***Modernist attitudes***

A collection of perceptions and emotions and readiness to respond to a phenomenon is called a person's attitude (Sotoudeh, 2007: 164). As such, the political attitudes is defined as the readiness and internal motivation to act against the political phenomena. Inkeles and Smit stated factors such as education, income, urbanization, and use of social media as the most important influencing factors and attitudes of individuals (Inkeles and Smith, 1974). Smelser utilized the term for the realization of modernization on structural distinctions. These distinctions are achieved in all spheres of society, including economic, family, value, and stratification. In modern societies structural distinctions and functional differentiation of the elements have been made. In developed societies, they lack the same distinction. In family activities, the process of development distinctions will monitor the family's liberation from some of its former functions and transforms it into a more specialized agency. Also in value systems, the process of construction distinctions must be directed towards the conventional values and breaking the old patterns.

It can be divided into four economic, political, cultural and social dimensions (Bashiriyeh, 2001: 69). It encompasses the social dimension of modernism, individualism and liberalism. Liberalism means that people tend to have freedom from individual, social, economic, political, civil and legal aspects. Simmel considered individual freedom as the essential element of modernity (Craib, 2003: 286). The economic dimension of modernization encompasses instrumental rationality, i.e., in modern times, instead of myth and tradition, wisdom and science (Bashiriyeh, 2001: 69). In rationality, people's relationships are formed according to the financial calculations (Ahmadi, 2000: 12-11). The political dimension of modernization is based on the democratic attitudes and civil society in which the role of individuals in society is greater (Farahmand et al., 2014).

***Political modernism***

According to Powell and Paul, political modernity is a process by which individuals are seeking to achieve these goals through a rational and analytical approach and having political goals. The modernist person becomes independent in political activities and evaluates the results of political decisions in their lives. The political attitudes of individuals, which includes internal desires, is under the influence of factors such as traditions, historical memories, motivations, emotions and factors of political socialization. There are many ups and downs of people's attitudes toward the political development of the society. Today, it is referred to as a fundamental issue in relation to political development. The final element of the political behavior is the attitudes toward it; i.e., the individual's response to a particular realm of politics is governed by his attitudes (Hermann, 2008). He believed that the cyberspace of a new area on democracy is open to a council in the public domain.

The traditional political attitudes are the essence of conservatism; conservatism is the preferred phenomenon of passive and untried phenomena (Oakesshott, 1962: 168). Opinions related to political reform are divided into three categories: a democratic attitude, liberalist attitudes and critical attitudes. A democratic attitude believes that people are the source of legitimacy and authority of governments; hence, people are able to change or dismiss governments as compared to governments (Bashiriyeh, 2007: 270). The aim of the democratic attitudes is affecting the power of people on the government, which John Locke, Rousseau, Lasswell, Zodhi, Lindsay and James Bryce are from the main pundits of such a view (Afshani et al.,



2010). Another aspect of political modernization is liberalism, which can be described as an attitude to issues that emphasis on individual freedom, freedom of expression, and supporting civil institutions. Another element of political novelty is the critical spirit that people regard the government with a critical view (Ahmadi, 2000: 73). According to J. Schubert, one of the factors influencing the political attitudes is gender, which may be the time because, the right side of their brain is stronger, therefore, they are more than men for political matters (Hermann, 2006: 58). As for Bashiriyeh, women are more educated than men because they have less knowledge of political matters (Bashiriyeh, 2001: 292). One of the factors influencing the political attitudes of individuals is the communication technology; the resulting Almond and Powell claimed that their vehicles have a great influence on the modernization of communities. Lerner believed that the use of social media means has a great effect on the attitudes of modernist.

The political awareness of people in the popular rule is of higher importance because people need to be aware of the policy in order to be effective in this type of government (Afshani, 2010). Lerner has defined political awareness as one of the factors of social dynamics, public awareness of the rights and duties, as well as the consequences of the fundamental causes of social and political issues. As in some scholars, the demand for citizens is one way to achieve democratic political culture (Norrise, 2011). For example, media pluralism promotes political awareness and demand for political participation (Newton, 1999). Giddens believed that the global expansion of democracy is not possible without the role of media awareness (Rahbar Qazi et al., 2017: 219). Lohan viewed the emergence of new ways of communication as an important factor in the expansion of democratic culture. On the other hand, the virtual capacity of media is strengthening democratic culture due to the spread of pluralism. On the other hand, new social networks have a great influence on encouraging individuals to reject their rules (Ibid, 220).



## METHODOLOGY

The current research was applied and survey in terms of its purpose. In order to collect data, the field method has been used. Data collection tool was a questionnaire. Questionnaire's questions were distributed among the respondents. In this study, in order to obtain the validity of the questionnaire, the use of a standard questionnaire was provided to experts in order to obtain the formal validity of the questionnaire. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. Due to the fact that the reliability of all variables was above 0.7, the questionnaire had high and acceptable validity. The statistical population of this study included Yasuj university students, which were 6, 000 students. In order to determine the sample size, the Cochran formula was used for limited communities with the sample size of 361 people using the formula of Cochran. In this study, sampling method was simple random.

### *Research hypotheses*

First hypothesis: The use of social networks seems to have an impact on students' modernist political attitude.

Second hypothesis: The type of using social networks seems to have an impact on modernist political attitudes of the students in Yasuj University.

Third hypothesis: The membership record in social networks seems to have an impact on modernist political attitudes of the students in Yasuj University.

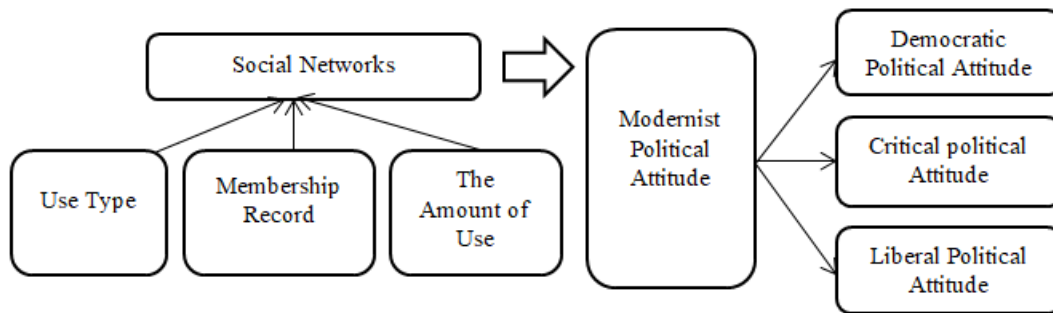
Fourth hypothesis: The use of social networks seems to have an impact on modernist political attitudes of the students in Yasuj University.

Fifth hypothesis: The use of social networks seems to have an impact on democratic political attitudes of the students in Yasuj University.

Sixth hypothesis: The use of social networks seems to have an impact on critical political attitudes of the students in Yasuj University.

Seventh hypothesis: The use of social networks seems to have an impact on students' liberal political attitude.

### *Research Model*



## FINDINGS

### *Descriptive statistics*

In Table 1, the frequency distribution of the student age variable have been indicated. As it turns out, 64% of the population were women.

**Table 1. The frequency distribution of the studied sample in terms of the respondents' gender**

Variable	Frequency	Frequency Percentage
Women	231	64%
Men	130	36%
Total	361	100%

Figure 2 displays the bar diagram of gender subjects. The highest column of the graph shows the abundance of females with the highest frequency.

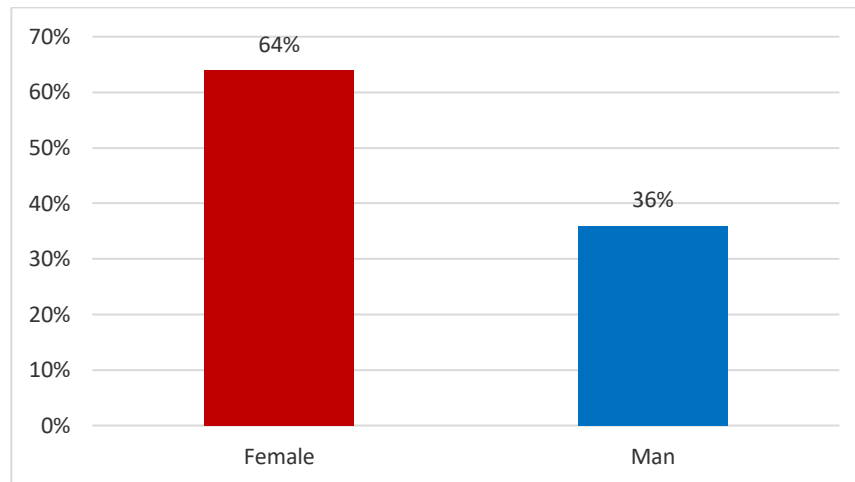


Figure 2. The frequency distribution of the studied sample in terms of gender

### *Subjects' age*

According to Table 2, the frequency distribution of the respondents varies. As it is clear, the highest number of age groups was between 41 and 50 years.

Table 2. Distribution of the frequency of the studied sample in terms of the respondents' age.

variable	Frequency	Percentage
20-30 ys	224	62%
31-40 ys	104	30%
+41 ys	33	8%
Total	361	100%



Figure 3 shows the bar diagram of the subjects' stage. The highest column of the graph is representative of the frequency of the 20-30 years of age, which had the highest frequency.

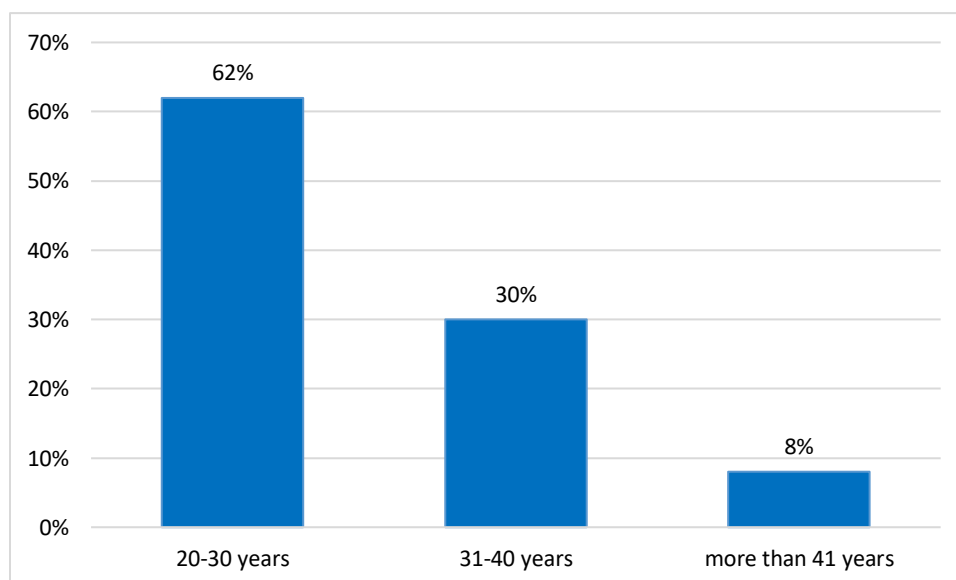


Figure 3. The frequency distribution of the studied sample in terms of the respondents' age.  
To test the hypotheses, linear regression was used.

**Table 3. Results from a significant test of the regression model for research hypotheses.**

N	Regression model	SOS*	DOF**	F	Sig***
1	Modernist political attitudes of students _ use of social networks	350.377	360	69.736	0.000
2	Use type of social networks _ Modernist political attitudes of students	429.690	360	413.289	0.000
3	Membership record in social networks _ Modernist political attitudes of students	429.690	360	229.946	0.000
4	Amount of using social networks _ Modernist political attitudes of students	384.654	360	96.517	0.000
5	Use of social networks _ Democratic political attitudes of students	334.576	360	58.380	0.000
6	Use of social networks _ students' critical political attitudes	406249	360	55.394	0.000
7	Use of social networks _ Students' liberal political attitudes	364.355	360	25.142	0.000

\* Sum of Squares/ \*\* Degree of Freedom/ \*\*\* Level of Significance

It can be concluded with respect to Table 3 that the degree of F was significant. The sig value for all models was less than 5%, so the regression model for them was confirmed.

According to Table 4, the significance level was less than 0.05 for all hypotheses, so the fit of the regression model for them was confirmed. Therefore, the accuracy of the use of the regression model for all hypotheses was confirmed, given that the degree of F was significant.

**Table 4. Summary Results from the linear regression test to test hypotheses**

No	Hypothesis	Beta Factor	Coefficient of Determination	Significant Level	Conclusion
1	Impact of social networks on students' political attitudes	0.403	0.163	0.000	Confirmed
2	Impact of use type of social networks on students' modernist political attitudes	0.732	0.535	0.000	Confirmed
3	Impact of the membership record in social networks on the students' modernist political attitudes	0.625	0.390	0.000	Confirmed
4	Impact of the extent of using social networks on students' modernist political attitudes	0.460	0.212	0.000	Confirmed
5	Impact of social networks on students' democratic political attitudes	0.374	0.140	0.000	Confirmed
6	Impact of social networks on students' critical political attitudes	0.366	0.134	0.000	Confirmed
7	Impact of social networks on students' liberal political attitudes	0.134	0.065	0.000	Confirmed

According to table 4, the significance level for all hypotheses was lower than 0.01. Thus, it was assumed that H<sub>0</sub> was rejected and all hypotheses of the research were confirmed with 99% confidence level. Therefore, according to the results of this study, the attitudes of students on the use of social networks had a positive and significant effect on the use of social networks.

The kind of use and using social networks had a positive and significant effect on the attitudes of students and the use of social networks on democratic political attitudes, critical political attitudes and students' liberal political attitudes. The coefficient of determination of the students' modernist political attitudes on the use of social networks was 0.163, meaning that the modernist political attitudes of students expressed at 16.3% of the use of social networks by students. Thus, the use of social networks 53.5% and the history of social networks was 39% of the modernist political attitudes of students. Using social networks had influenced 14% of students' democratic political attitudes, 13.4% of the students' critical political attitudes and 6.5% of the students' liberal political attitudes.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present age is known as the communication technology era and one of the most important manifestations of the public is the widespread use of communication tools and the virtual media. Public use of these virtual networks affects a big part of human life as well as their way of thinking.

The present study tried to investigate the effect of virtual social networks on the political modernist attitude of Yasuj university students using the survey method and questionnaire. The research hypotheses showed that the extent, type and history of use of social networks had an impact on the different dimensions of political modernist attitude, namely liberal political attitude, democratic political attitude and critical political attitude.

In investigating the study hypotheses, the effect of social networks on students' political attitude was confirmed. The results of this study indicated the significant impact of virtual networks on students' political modernist attitude, it can be said that the research results supported the findings of the Rahbar Qazi *et al.* (2017).

For the second, third and fourth hypotheses, the mediating variables of use type, membership record and use of social networks' impact on students' political attitudes were investigated. The results showed that these variables influenced the political attitudes of students, because these networks have caused people to be in a pluralistic intellectual environment, and the more their membership record, the more they were likely to be exposed to different intellectual exchanges.

Regarding the fifth hypothesis, because the communication and intellectual exchanges increased the sense of solidarity and the strength of people in all regions of the country and the various people think that other people would further seek to control their political life with unity, using social networks affected their democratic political attitude. In the study of the sixth hypothesis, the influence of social networks on the critical political attitude of students was confirmed. Because in the face of critical literature and freedom of expression, people can challenge political issues, as a result their critical attitude would improve. According to the results, we can say that as individuals devote more time on social networks, their political attitude would be influenced by these networks. The seventh hypothesis confirmed that individuals on these networks spread their thoughts and ideas freely and were subject to get the attention of a large number of people in society, so that their liberal political attitude would be influenced; thus, the findings of research supported the idea of Almond and Powell (1966) and Rheingold (1994).



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