

Investigating media consumption and its relationship with the political participation of young people in Tehran

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Article type: Research Article Article history: Received: 26 January 2025 Received in revised form: 24 May 2025 Accepted: 13 November 2025 Published online: 18 September 2026 Keywords: <i>Youth, Media, Media consumption</i> <i>Participation, Political participation.</i>	Objective: Political participation is a conscious matter; that is, it requires information and awareness, and it is also based on socialization. Individuals' participation in political affairs, as a behavior, first requires obtaining information, developing awareness, and learning about its importance and how it is carried out. However, not everyone who acquires a basic understanding of political participation will necessarily engage in it, because the chain of occurrence of a particular behavior, such as political participation, fundamentally requires consideration of the individual's skills and available resources. A review of the level of public participation in some political arenas indicates that the issue of political participation is today raised as a serious problem for the Islamic Republic system. For example, the results of the twelfth term of the Islamic Consultative Assembly elections and the fourteenth presidential election in the first round, in terms of public participation, were among the lowest-turnout election periods in the history of the Islamic Republic, such that only about 40 percent of eligible voters participated in these elections. Of course, this decline in participation can also be influenced by other factors, such as economic problems, generational gaps, and so on; however, the role of media affiliated with the opposing front cannot be ignored. Given the high percentage of youth in the population of the country and the city of Tehran, and their importance in social and political structures, examining their views and political orientations is very necessary, because their decisions can have broad effects on the country's political future. Therefore, in the course of this research, it has been decided to examine individuals' participation in political affairs and its relationship with the use of various media, both domestic and foreign. Thus, the main research questions can be considered as follows: What is the relationship between media consumption and political participation among the youth of Tehran? What is the level of media consumption among the youth of Tehran? What is the level of political participation among the youth of Tehran? Methodology: This research, in terms of approach, is among descriptive (correlational) studies; in terms of data collection method, it is among survey studies; in terms of purpose, it is among applied research; and in terms of measurement and analysis method, it is among quantitative studies. To conduct the research, first, a hypothesis was proposed using theoretical foundations and the results of previous



studies. Then, using the survey method and a questionnaire, data were collected, and subsequently, the available data were analyzed using statistical methods. The statistical population of this research consists of all youth aged 18 to 35 in the city of Tehran who reside in the 22 districts of this city. According to the 2016 census of the Statistical Center of Iran and taking into account annual growth up to 2023, the population of these individuals is approximately 3,592,535 people. The Cochran formula was used to determine the sample size. Based on this, the sample size was calculated as 384 people. For sampling, the non-probability quota method was used. For this purpose, first, the city of Tehran was divided, according to municipal divisions, into five main zones: North (districts 1, 3, and 4), East (districts 8, 13, 14, 15, and 16), South (districts 17, 18, 19, and 20), West (districts 2, 5, 9, 21, and 22), and Center (districts 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12). Then, the population was divided into 60 sub-units based on three variables: gender, age group, and zone of residence, and the sample size of each was calculated by multiplying the sample proportion by the number of that unit. Data analysis in this research was carried out using statistical methods and SPSS software version 26. For this purpose, after extracting and coding the data, statistical operations were performed in two parts: in the first part, findings were described using frequency distribution tables, mean index, and kurtosis and skewness coefficients. In the second part, given the normality and level of measurement of the data, the relationship between independent and dependent variables was examined using parametric tests such as the Pearson correlation coefficient and the F-test.

Findings: Individuals' participation in political affairs can be influenced by various factors, each of which in turn affects its extent. Among these factors, one can mention the role of the media, which by influencing their audiences can determine their attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, in the present research, it was initially decided to examine the relationship between total media consumption (both domestic and foreign) and political participation. The results of the research in this regard indicated that, contrary to expectation, no correlation was observed between these two variables. In other words, the mere duration of using different media cannot have an effect on individuals' political participation. This finding was not consistent with the results of the studies by Shakeri (2022) and Ghazi (2016), because in the aforementioned cases, the existence of a direct relationship in this regard had been emphasized. However, in this research, the existence of this relationship was not confirmed. On the other hand, this finding was not consistent with what was presented regarding Daniel Lerner's theory. According to this theory, an increase in media consumption leads to an increase in awareness and, consequently, political participation. However, this research showed that the existence of this relationship was not confirmed. This point, which indicates the complexity of the process of media influence on individuals' political behaviors, confirms that not every type of media



consumption can necessarily be associated with an increase in political participation. Following this result, the media under study were divided into two categories—domestic and foreign media—based on their affiliation with the political structure, and subsequently, the correlation between the use of each of these two categories of media and political participation was examined. The results of the tests of the aforementioned relationships indicate that there is a direct correlation between the extent of use of total domestic media and political participation. However, this relationship for the use of total foreign media with political participation is of an inverse correlation type. On this basis, it can be understood that what affects the level of individuals' political participation is not merely the extent of use, but rather the type of media in terms of their affiliation with political structures and, consequently, the content published by them.

Conclusion: indicate that although there is no correlation between total media consumption and political participation, this relationship is observed separately for the use of domestic and foreign media. The use of domestic media has a positive correlation with political participation, while the use of foreign media has a negative correlation. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that what affects the level of political participation of individuals is the media's dependence on the political structure and, consequently, the content provided by different media. Simply the amount of time spent using the media cannot be considered a determining factor in this regard.

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