

Social Networking Sites and Political Knowledge: Factors that Affect Individual's Knowledge Acquisition from Facebook and Twitter

Sara Basyouni, Middlesex University

This paper seeks to investigate the impact of social network sites (SNS) specifically Facebook and Twitter on the acquisition of the political knowledge. Further, it attempts to identify the extent to which both political interest and level of users' education affect this process. Results indicate that only Twitter's usage is positively correlated with political knowledge acquisition, in the sense that Facebook is ineffective in political learning education; a result that bears many important implications for election campaigns, political socialization and diffusion of political knowledge. This paper also shows that individual's political interest and level of education determine type and amount of knowledge people gain from SNS. An interesting result of this paper states that SNS effect on learning domain specific knowledge is more powerful than on the general one. Data of this paper was obtained from Egyptian youth where 311 respondents were randomly selected via online survey.

Key words: *Social networking sites, Facebook, Twitter, political knowledge, political interest, education level, domain specific knowledge, general knowledge, knowledge gap.*

Introduction

The new media environment, and in specific the Internet has the advantage of offering more content selection choices than the traditional media. It allows individuals to choose from a wider range of content including information or entertainment available in digital media. Some factors are expected to have an influence "when it comes to predicting exposure and attention to political information online" like political motivations. Not only, but also individual's education level plays an important role "in coping with the overwhelming flow of information available online", and in recognizing political events in a complex world. It is predictable that the Internet increases the availability of political information and accordingly the level of knowledge (Anduiza, Gallego and Jobra, 2012). A growing literature proved the

relationship between the use of social media and a variety of online and offline political behaviors (Bode, 2015).

This study investigates the impact of Facebook and Twitter on individual's political knowledge acquisition. It is assumed that the individual's political interest and education level contribute in creating users' desire to search for and pay attention to the political information. However, the incidental exposure might help in reducing the political gap between the different segments of the society regarding the initial knowledge. As we can assure that most of the people worldwide are using SNSs due to many elements like easy access, variety of content, control over content, two way communication ...etc, the idea of this study is to examine if this media environment amplifying or narrowing the knowledge gap between the individuals of low and high political interest, and also those who have low and high education level.

Theoretical Background

Definition and dimensions of Political knowledge

The presence of citizens who are actively participating and have sufficient understanding of public issues is the baseline for a well-functioning democracy (Park, 2017). Citizens with high political knowledge show behaviors that are significant to a well-functioning democracy, like "holding stable attitudes about a broad spectrum of political topics, ideological constraint, high levels of political participation, and informed, value-maximizing voting decisions" (Kleinberg and Lau, 2019). Many researchers agree that being politically well-informed and participating in political decision-making is crucial to democracy (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006). Pastarmadzhieva (2015), claimed that the lack of such knowledge do compromises the democracy. Delli Carpini and keteer (1996), defined political knowledge as "the range of factual information about politics that is stored in long-term memory". Another common explanation of political knowledge was offered by Boudreau and Lupia in Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science, they defined it as "a measure of citizen's ability to provide correct answers to a specific set of fact-based questions" (Pastarmadzhieva, 2015). Sometimes, it is referred to political sophistication or political expertise (Hoffman, 2019).

Media Consumption, incidental and selective exposure and political interest

Mass media plays a significant role in democratic societies that is not only restricted on conveying factual information to citizens, but also in providing "mobilizing information". Mobilizing information is "content that goes beyond information about the political system or political actors to enable citizens to understand problems related to their communities and to engage in various forms of participatory activities" (Eveland and Scheufele, 2000). It has been proven that there is a significant relationship between news media and political

knowledge (kim, 2008). Since so much of learning political information depends on one's will and desire to obtain knowledge, consumption of mass media plays an important role. Those with high political interest will tend to seek more political information from different types of mass media including television, newspapers and internet resulting in gaining more political knowledge and the opposite will happen to those who have low political interest. This situation will trigger the knowledge gap between the two segments (Bode, 2015).

The rise of Web 2.0 and SNS specifically led to the “widespread diffusion of political information” across different categories of individuals (Theocharis and Lowe, 2016), with relatively little effort, yet, this doesn't mean it will contribute to greater use or understanding. Researchers pointed out that the internet is a complementary medium through which traditional news organizations redistribute their information (Kim, 2008). The internet is many-sided media; scholars argue that the internet environment has two different effects on political learning and participation; whereas one tends to restrain political engagement, and the other increases it. This depends on the selectivity behavior of the individuals (Woo Yoo and Gil de Zúñiga, 2014). Prior (2007), claimed that in a higher choice media, users are more likely to be driven by their own motivations and preferences. When the nature of the higher choice medium is more entertaining and less informative oriented, this decreases the knowledge levels and voting intentions of individuals. The prior author also pointed out to the “decreasing likelihood of incidental exposure” in high choice media due to the “greater horizontal diversity” that will lead to reinforce the opportunity that individuals will get similar content to their preferences. On the other hand, some scholars argue that even individuals with less or no political interest are incidentally exposed to political information and messages shared by friends on their list (Heiss and Matthes, 2019). Bode (2015), claimed that social media reaches those with low political interest and who don't seek much political information allowing them to hypothetically “catch up in terms of political knowledge”. Individuals with low political interest and low or no intentions to seek political information via SNS can also be reached incidentally resulting in knowing a brief or initial knowledge of what is happening at the time being (could also be events that happened in the past) politically and current public affairs but yet, it doesn't mean that they can show understanding and interpretation. Also remembering the information they have been exposed to is not guaranteed. Thus this paper suggests that

(H1) Individuals using SNS with high political interest will be more knowledgeable about politics than those with low political interest.

(H1.1) Individuals using Facebook with high political interest will be more knowledgeable about politics than those with low political interest.

(H1.2) Individuals using Twitter with high political interest will be more knowledgeable about politics than those with low political interest.

Knowledge gap theory and education

Education is considered as an important factor that “contributes to the formation” of political knowledge. It affects it in both ways directly and indirectly. Directly; by leading the individuals to gain specific political knowledge and indirectly; by creating political interest for a long term (Pastarmadzhieva, 2015). Prior studies have proved that individual’s education level affects “how much one can get from reading a newspaper”. Citizens who have high education level seem to gain more knowledge from news articles, resulting in widening the gap between high and low socioeconomic classes. Seeking online information requires assessing source credibility, “purposeful searching, construction of interpretative frames and certain level of literacy”. These elements are also fundamentals for reading a newspaper, therefore expecting that people with higher education will gain more knowledge from the internet than people with low level of education, resulting in increasing the gap between the two segments (kim 2008). Eveland and Scheufele (2000), explained that the gap being produced by the media is caused by the differences between the segments of the society and their ability to interpret information. Education “provides cognitive skills” that helps the individuals who possess higher level of it to interpret and understand even the complicated information. Severin and Tankard (2010), mentioned in their book that Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien introduced the knowledge gap hypothesis in 1970 in an article titled “Mass Media Flow and Differential Growth in Knowledge”

“As the infusion of mass media information into a social system increases, segments of the population with higher socioeconomic statuses tend to acquire this information at a faster rate than the lower-status segments, so that the gap in knowledge between these segments tends to increase rather than decrease.”(pp.159-160).

Talking about the selective exposure; differences in selectivity occurs due to differences in education. The use of news media and the attention being paid to different types of information differ from low socioeconomic status segments to high socioeconomic status. “For instance, those of low SES are more likely to focus on the sports section of the paper, while those of high SES are more likely to focus on the hard news sections or the opinion and analysis pages of the paper” (Eveland and Scheufele, 2000).

Based on the previous literature, we can conclude that education increases the political interest of the individuals and gives them the prior knowledge and skills that help them in interpreting the information, not only but also affecting their selectivity behavior; they are more likely to be exposed to political content and to use news media in an informative way. Therefore the gap between the high SES and low SES segments tends to increase. Therefore, this paper suggests that



(H2) Individuals who use SNS with higher level of education are more knowledgeable about politics than those with low level of education.

(H2.1) Individuals who use Facebook with higher level of education are more knowledgeable about politics than those with low level of education.

(H2.2) Individuals who use Twitter with higher level of education are more knowledgeable about politics than those with low level of education.

Facebook and Twitter's Mobilizing Potential

Since the emergence of social media in 1997, citizens of many countries used it as coordinating tools for their political movements. "Facebook and other SNS have been used to mobilize individuals to participate in protests around the globe such as the impeachment trial of Philippine President Joseph Estrada on 17 January 2001, and the London youth riots in summer 2011. Furthermore, Iranian protest against the reelection of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009 and most especially a series of anti-government uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, starting from Tunisia in December 2010" (Astuti, 2016, p.75).

The purpose of using Facebook and Twitter differs from each other. For instance, people usually use Facebook for entertainment purposes, interact with friends and maintain social relationships. It was proved that most of them do not prefer to see any news on their news feed and also they barely share any, and if they do so, most probably it is going to be soft news. On the other hand, Twitter is used mostly by individuals for information purposes rather than entertainment or socializing (Boukes, 2019). Twitter is considered as a good source for individuals to get substantial political information. Users view this social media platform as information-rich, since many news sources like journalists, politicians, civic activists, media organizations and normal users post news on Twitter (Park, 2017). The main focus of twitter is opinion and information sharing rather than reciprocal social interaction (Hughes, Rowe, Batey and Lee, 2012). Twitter, unlike Facebook, allows users to be anonymous. Because of this feature, the purpose of using twitter and Facebook may be different. Users view information on twitter as less trustworthy. It was found that college students view news and information from the official New York Times Twitter feed as less credible than the New York Times website (Woo Yoo and Gil de Zúñiga, 2014).

Facebook is mostly aimed at fulfilling social and entertainment purposes. Facebook users are allowed to join groups and events that match their interests and hobbies, upload photos and videos, chat with their friends and comment on satisfying their entertainment needs. Also, the platform can contribute in political attitudes and knowledge development. News Feed timeline trait can help Facebook in the formation of political attitude. This characteristic enables users to be exposed to different types of information like sports, music, gossip,...etc. (Theochairs and Lowe, 2015). Most of the individuals pay more attention to nonpolitical

information. However, some scholars argued that due to “by-product learning”, citizens were able to get sufficient information from the press, radio and television. The “by-product learning” concept states that if given a choice, most individuals will seek out entertainment rather than being exposed to political information. “In the context of a media environment in which choice is limited”, individuals are often exposed to political information by accident; “their daily diet of sports, music, movies, and celebrity gossip is interspersed with television and radio news bulletins that are hard to avoid”. The advantage of the “by-product learning” concept is that it reduces the informational differences between different social groups and raise individuals’ awareness of important political events (Chadwick, 2010). Theochairs and Lowe (2015), claimed that Facebook News Feed timeline act as the “by-product learning” mechanism, where individuals get exposed to different types of information on the News Feed mixed with political information. Facebook is considered to be an important source of news. In 2016 the Pew Research Center stated that 62% of adults in USA get news from social media. Most of these 62% who consume news from the social media, have reported that they get the news mostly from one SNS which is Facebook. Also, it was reported in the same study that 66% of Facebook users get news from the mentioned source (David, San Pascual and Torres, 2019). Thus, this paper suggests that

(H3) Heavy usage of Twitter leads to the increase of political knowledge

(H4) Heavy usage of Facebook leads to decline in political knowledge

Studies have distinguished between “factual” and “background” political knowledge. The factual one is holding information about events, institutions or personalities, while the second one helps individuals to interpret political affairs. Self-determination survey is a better option to measure factual political knowledge to avoid any embarrassment for the respondents (Gibson and McAllister, 2011). Political knowledge was measured in some studies by asking respondents to name party leaders, foreign events, personal information about the presidents, newly passed laws and policies, foreign countries’ leaders and percentages of women in Congress and the Supreme Court as well as identification of senators (Park, 2017). “Just as general knowledge cannot be directly measured—rather, it is assessed via test scores or grades—political knowledge is directly immeasurable. In other words, the content of political knowledge, generally, cannot be fully captured in a series of test questions” (Hoffman, 2019). Sometimes it is different when it comes to identifying the names of the political personalities than understanding the whole political process. Understanding political process is more influenced by citizens’ education and political efficacy (Park, 2017).

(H5) SNS affect domain political knowledge acquisition more than general political knowledge.



Method

Data Collection

The data for this study is cross-sectional. It came from an online survey using Google forms targeting Egyptian people who have account on Facebook, Twitter or both. It took from 23rd of December 2021 to 24th of February 2021 to collect the data. A total of 311 respondents have completed the survey. The small sample size make it hard to be able to generalize the findings of the survey, that's why results should be interpreted with carefulness as it is not the purpose of the study to make claims and assertions about the whole country, Egypt. IBM-SPSS program was used to carry out the results of the study. Results were presented in the forms of tables along with detailed description. This study used simple random sampling. The online survey was sent randomly to people on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp. At the beginning, it was given to ten respondents who have accounts on SNS before launching it to the larger sample to make sure of the efficiency of the questions. The length of time it took them to complete the survey was noted; 10 to 15 minutes. "Then they were asked about their feedback concerning the validity and reliability of the questions. Based on their comments and feedback, a number of questions were modified" (Basyouni, 2019).

Measurements

Political knowledge is classified into general and domain specific knowledge. "General and chronic knowledge consists of civics-style information, while domain-specific knowledge represents facts about particular issues and policies" (kim, 2008). Eight questions were included in this study to evaluate respondents' knowledge about politics. Four close-ended questions measured the general knowledge; "if the members of the Egyptian parliament are elected, appointed by the president or both", "the term of an elected president", "the responsible party for recording and following up on Egypt's public and private external debt", and "the controversy over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam". Each of those questions was provided with an "I don't know/I'm not sure" option. These questions were then combined into a single measure representing the general/civic knowledge (Mean = 1.846, SD = 1.111). Another four close-ended questions tapped domain specific (issue) knowledge; "Egypt's external debt at the end of June 2020", "countries that signed normalization agreement with Israel 2020", "the reason behind the popular hashtag on social media of #boycott French products and #boycott France", and "the vice president of 2020 United States presidential elections". These questions also were given the choice of "I don't know" as to make respondents more comfortable and to avoid false answers. The domain specific questions were concerned about issues that took significant attention on social media just before the time the survey was launched. Then, they were combined into single measure (Mean = 2.212, SD = 1.041). Acquiring political knowledge in this study was the dependent variable.

Facebook was measured by asking respondents “Do you have Facebook account” and “how often do you make use of it”. They could respond on a scale from multiple times per day to never. 96.8% of the respondents have Facebook account. Twitter was measured exactly like Facebook with 54% of the respondents having account on Twitter. From this results we can say that Facebook is much popular than Twitter in Egypt. If the respondent does not have account on both Facebook and Twitter, he/she was asked politely to not complete the survey. The author considered respondents who use Facebook or Twitter multiple times per day or once a day as heavy users, while who use them two to three times a week or once a week as medium user, however who use them monthly or rarely as the light users. The SNS in this study played the role of the independent variable.

Political interest was measured by asking the respondents to rate their interest in politics on a scale from extremely interested to not at all ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.06$).

Education was measured by asking the respondents the highest degree they have completed ranging from less than high school diploma to doctorate degree and an option of “other” was provided. “Less than high school diploma, high school graduate, some college but no degree” were considered as low education level”, “college student, bachelor’s degree” represented the intermediate level of education while “Master’s, professional, and Doctorate degree” characterized high education level.

Respondents were asked how often they watch TV news programs/political talk shows, read newspapers and visit newspapers’ websites. Answers had a six-point response scale ranging from “never” to “daily”. The traditional media were the control variables of the study. A number of demographic questions were included also for control purposes like the age and gender (Female = 71.4%, Male = 28.6%).

In order to be able to understand more and monitor the behavior and activity of the respondents on SNS, the survey included a question asking about if the respondents follow any journalists, politicians, news or political organizations on Facebook and Twitter.

Results

By using Spearman correlation, the first hypothesis (H1.1) is confirmed ($r = 0.434$, $p\text{-value} = 0.00 < 0.05$), meaning that there is a significant positive correlation between political interest and political knowledge for people who are using Facebook (see Table 1).By applying Spearman correlation again to test hypothesis (H1.2), ($r = 0.366$, $p\text{-value} = 0.00 < 0.05$) which indicates that the hypothesis is confirmed meaning that there is a significant positive correlation between political interest and political knowledge for people who are using Twitter as shown in Table 2. From the previous results, we can say that high political interest leads to high political knowledge for individuals using Facebook and Twitter and that political interest has positive effect on political knowledge.

Table (1): Relationship between Political Interest and Political knowledge

Variables	N	Correlation	Sig.
Political Interest * Political knowledge	301	.434**	0.000

Table (2): Relationship between Political Interest and Political knowledge

Variables	N	Correlation	Sig.
Political Interest * Political knowledge	168	.366**	0.000

The second hypothesis (H2.1) examines whether there is a gap in political knowledge between highly educated and less-educated individuals who use Facebook. By applying Spearman correlation, the hypothesis is confirmed where ($r = 0.240$, $p\text{-value} = 0.00 < 0.05$) meaning that there is a significant positive correlation between political knowledge and education level for people who are using Facebook as shown in Table 3. Same method has been applied to test (H2.2) to find out that the hypothesis is confirmed where ($r = 0.254$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001 < 0.05$) meaning that there is a significant positive correlation between political knowledge and education level for people who are using Twitter as shown in Table 4. Therefore, we conclude that people with higher level of education demonstrate higher level of political knowledge.

Table (3): Relationship between Political knowledge and Educational level

Variables	N	Correlation	Sig.
Political knowledge * Education Level	301	0.240**	0.000

Table (4): Relationship between Political knowledge and Educational level

Variables	N	Correlation	Sig.
Political knowledge * Educational Level	168	.254**	0.001

ANOVA was used to test the third hypothesis (H3) that assumes “heavy usage of Twitter leads to the increase of political knowledge”. The hypothesis is confirmed where ($F = 3.70$, $p\text{-value} = 0.03 < 0.05$) meaning that there is a significant difference between political knowledge across Twitter usage level. So, in other words we can say that heavy users of Twitter demonstrate higher level of political knowledge than the other two groups. Light

users of Twitter come after the heavy ones and at last the medium users. However, this contradicts with the previous result that the more you use Twitter, the more chance you get to gain more political knowledge. This might need more research to examine accurately the relationship between political knowledge acquisition and the usage of Twitter.

Table (5): Relationship between Political knowledge and Twitter Usage (ANOVA)

Political knowledge	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	21	2	10.64	3.70	0.03
Within Groups	475	165	2.88		
Total	496	167			

Table (6): Descriptive statistics of Political knowledge across Twitter Usage

Twitter Usage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Light user	94	4.31	1.71
Medium user	36	4.22	1.51
Heavy user	38	5.13	1.82
Total	168	4.48	1.72

Examining the effect of Facebook usage on acquiring the political knowledge (H4) was tested by using ANOVA. However, the hypothesis is not confirmed where ($F = 1.91$, $p\text{-value} = 0.15 > 0.05$) meaning that there is no significant difference between political knowledge across Facebook usage level. Therefore using Facebook does not affect political knowledge level. In other words we can say that heavy usage of Facebook does not increase or decrease the political knowledge, the same thing of medium and light Facebook usage, as shown in Table 7 and 8.

Table (7): Relationship between Political knowledge and Facebook Usage (ANOVA)

Political knowledge	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12	2	6.19	1.91	0.15
Within Groups	958	295	3.25		
Total	971	297			

Table (8): Descriptive statistics of Political knowledge across Facebook Usage

Facebook Usage	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Light user	4	2.50	1.29
Medium user	10	3.70	1.06
Heavy user	284	4.14	1.83
Total	298	4.11	1.81

By applying Paired samples T-test, hypothesis (5) is confirmed ($t = 6.102$, $p\text{-value} = 0.00 < 0.05$) meaning that there is a significant difference between domain specific knowledge and general knowledge for people who use SNS. Where, results proved that SNS affect the acquisition of the domain knowledge more than the general one as shown in Table (9). The results support the conclusion of Beam, Hutchens and Hmielowski, (2016) who proved that there is significant positive relationship between online news exposure and factual knowledge, although the exposure to the online news had nothing to do with the knowledge structure density.

Table (9): Paired Samples Statistics

Types of Knowledge	Mean	N	Sd	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Domain Knowledge	2.509	161	0.962	6.102	160	0.000
General Knowledge	1.969	161	1.098			

Discussion

This study investigated the impact of using Facebook and Twitter on individuals' political knowledge acquisition from both platforms, and whether this effect is conditional upon one's political interest and education level. Analyzing data from a survey of Egyptian respondents, I could shed light on the positive relationship between political interest, education level and political knowledge acquisition. Findings indicate that whenever the individual who is using a SNS either Facebook or Twitter has higher political interest, he/she is more politically aware. This could go back to the respondents' activity and behavior on social media where it was found that the majority of the extremely politically interested respondents use social media mainly to obtain political information by 35.7% while the greatest percentage of the respondents who do not have any political interest use SNS mainly for entertainment by 65.5% and only 3.4% of them search for political information and try to seek it from SNS. Thus, we can say that acquiring political information depends on the level of interest a person has in politics, where this interest will drive him/her to search, read and acquire the political information from the pre mentioned sites. This study comes along with the findings Boukes



(2019), made where he stated that “political interest has been found to be an important factor predicting how SNS usage affects knowledge acquisition on the individual level”. Al-Kandari and Hasanen, (2011) said that individuals who use the Internet, Facebook, Twitter and other blogs to gather information, are more likely to engage in politics. This could go back to one of two reasons; either the internet affects people to become more active and engaged in politics or it “allows those who engage in politics to engage more”.

Evidence was found to support that the education level of the respondents affect the acquisition of political information from the SNS. The higher the respondents are educated, the higher political information they acquire from Facebook and Twitter. This is due to, education helps individuals to interpret political information and create the desire to gain more knowledge and to be politically literate. Kim (2008), found that there is a gap in political knowledge between highly educated and less educated respondents.

As mentioned before in the literature review that the main aim of Facebook differs from the one Twitter has, where Facebook is mainly for entertainment purposes while Twitter is mainly used for information purposes. If we look at the results, we can see that out of 311 respondents, 96.8% have Facebook account while 54% have account on Twitter. This indicates that Facebook is much more popular than Twitter in Egypt. According to the global stats (2021), 49.02% of the Egyptian people have Facebook account while 8.17% have accounts on Twitter. This could be due to the main usage of both of them and that most of the people go more towards the entertainment and social interaction rather than seeking political information and news. Moving to how often people make use of the two platforms, results showed that there is great difference between the users of Facebook and Twitter where most of Facebook users are heavy ones while the opposite for the other medium. 94.7% of Facebook users are heavy users, 3.3% medium users, and 1.6% light users. However, 20.9% are heavy Twitter users, 19.3% medium users and 59.8% light users.

The content of which people are exposed to on Twitter contains more of political and current affairs news (kwak, Lee, Park and Moon, 2010). This explains why Twitter has positive relationship with political knowledge. The current study stated that the more the individual uses Twitter, the more political information he/she will obtain. Also, it depends on the individual’s characteristics and motivations. On the other hand, Facebook was found to not be having any effect on individuals’ political knowledge acquisition. According to Woo Yoo & Gil de Zúñiga (2014), Facebook is dominated by personal communication and is mostly used for social purposes (Theochairs and Lowe, 2015). Boukes (2019), suggested that the “the more time is spent on Facebook, the less time citizens have to inform themselves about current affairs via other platforms”. This explains why Facebook has no effect on political knowledge acquisition. However, examining the exact content to which individuals are exposed on Facebook and Twitter is needed for further research. A research question have been raised in a previous study wondering if the use of SNSs during the 2012 presidential



election in the United States increased individuals' knowledge of campaign facts and issues more than other sources of news media. Surprisingly, the results stated that those who used SNSs during the presidential elections period were "significantly more knowledgeable than non-users" about the election (Gottfried et al., 2016). On the other hand, Dimitrova, Shehata, Strömbäck and Nord (2011) proved that social media as a part of digital media has the greatest effect on political participation and the weakest on political knowledge.

As mentioned before, researchers have classified political knowledge into general and domain specific knowledge. Findings indicate that SNS affect domain knowledge acquisition more than general political knowledge. Since SNS include current events in the form of posts, news, comics....etc, it is assumed that users get exposed to this information either intentionally or unintentionally. Users might get to know about current political events, policies and personalities even if they are not seeking it. The Facebook news feed timeline plays a great role in this part as it conveys the information in different forms.

Facebook took the greatest percentage 27% as the primary source that people get their political information from, followed by Television 19.8%, then online newspapers 19.5%, friends and family 16.4%, then Twitter 7.6% and the least goes to newspapers 3.4%. This is compatible with the popularity that Facebook has in Egypt, although it contradicts the main usage of the mentioned medium as fulfilling social and entertainment purposes. However, Twitter is used mainly for information purposes, only minor percentage of people depend on it as the main source for obtaining the information. And this corresponds with the small percentage of individuals who have accounts on Twitter and that most of them are light and medium users as mentioned before. It is recommended for the news organizations, politicians, journalists and public figures to put Facebook in consideration more as it is the main medium Egyptian people use. They might consider making the announcements, publishing news, news related to parliamentary and presidential campaigns....etc through Facebook more than any other medium in a simple way to be able to reach the greatest number of people. Newspapers were found to be the least source people use, however, online newspapers were found to be in a good situation. Long time ago, Chaffee and Frank (1996), proved that newspapers acted as the primary source of political information and had the most significant relationship with political learning. The difference between now and then proves that traditional newspapers no longer act as a strong source of political information and almost no longer exist and that we live in the age of Internet and technology.

From the eight questions that were included in the survey and acted as the measurement for the political knowledge, we noticed that some questions got really high percentage of correct answers. The question asking about the countries that recently signed the normalization agreement with Israel got the highest rate in correct answers by 84.2%. It was noticed that this event caught significant attention on social media just before the time the survey was launched. As Egyptian people consider Israel as their first enemy, we can say that this could

be the reason why such event might have reached a lot of people and caught their attention. However, it is still vague if those respondents who knew the right answer of this question know what this agreement is about or what the objectives of it are in details or they have just heard about those countries. Also, the characteristics of these respondents remain unclear (their interest in politics and education level). That's why it is recommended for further research to study the effect of SNS on the initial political knowledge versus in depth knowledge in relation to political interest and education level.

The limitation of this study is that the sample size is relatively small that won't enable us to generalize the results although the researcher has done an exhaustive effort trying to reach the most generalizability. Most of the previous studies that discussed similar topic have collected their data using two or three wave panel survey. However the current study collected the data from one wave using cross-sectional design. The cross-sectional data has limitations in making causal inferences. According to Kim (2008), due to the fact that the direction of causality is often unclear in cross-sectional research, "findings in this study do not establish that" SNS use leads to political learning.

Appendix: Question wording of political knowledge measures

General knowledge

- 1- Are the members of the Egyptian parliament appointed by the president, or, elected by the people, or, both?
- 2- According to the constitution, how long is the term of the elected president? Is it 5, 6, or 8?
- 3- Who is responsible for recording and following up on Egypt's public and private external debt? Is it Ministry of foreign affairs, or, central bank of Egypt, or, senate?
- 4- Is the controversy over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam between; Egypt, Qatar and Turkey, or, Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, or, Egypt and Libya, or, Egypt, Somalia and Ethiopia?

Domain Specific knowledge

- 1- Egypt's fiscal year starts in July and ends in June. Can you tell Egypt's external debt at the end of June 2020? Is it US\$ 20.56 billion, or, EGY 74.23 billion, or, US\$123.49 billion?
- 2- What are the two countries who recently signed normalization agreement with Israel? Are they Egypt and Jordan, or, Tunisia and Algeria, or UAE and Bahrain?
- 3- #boycott French products, #boycott France; these hashtags have been used widely in the last months on social media. Is this due to: sanctions imposed on Egypt by France, or, assassination of Egyptian scientist in Paris, or, cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammed?



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- 4- The 2020 United States presidential elections took place last November. For the first time in US history, the vice president is female. Is she; Nancy Pelosi, or, Kamal Harris, or, Hillary Clinton?.

All the questions were provided with “I don’t know” choice in the answers.

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