New Media and Civic Participation in Morocco

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Abstract. *The modern democratic systems are facing a long-term crisis of participation and civic apathy. However, the emergence of the new media and cyberspace has created significant opportunities, especially for youth, for civic engagement. New media has provided increased opportunities for users to generate their own content, share multimedia information, and discuss about issues. Situated within the framework of the democratic-participation and the uses and gratifications theories of the media, the paper acknowledges that the new media possesses the potential to engender online civic engagement among the Moroccan young population. This study uses data from nationwide surveys of 18 to 40-year-old Moroccan citizens to examine the elements of Moroccan youth online motivations, uses, and experiences, focusing on the different aspects of their civic engagement. The results of the quantitative questionnaire reveal that the online platforms today seem to increase Moroccan citizens' community and nonprofit participation.*

Keywords: New media; Public affairs; Civic engagement; Democracy; Freedom.

Introduction

The new media has drastically transformed the ways that individuals interact with each other. The emerging cyberspace has changed how people perceive themselves, the other, and the world surrounding them. Researchers have lately emphasized on investigating the relationship between new media usage and civic participation. While research in past demonstrated a consistent decline regarding youth participation in the civic life, recent studies have given evidence that the so-called “political apathy” is no longer sustainable in the age of the internet.

Citizens, especially youth, show great interest in the different media uses and are increasingly taking the new online platforms as a powerful tool for civic communication, mobilization, and support. The very nature of the new media, with all its core features, such as anonymity and interactivity has promoted a radically different pattern of communication and engagement.

Taking these trends into consideration, it is of utmost importance to assess the extent to which the new media use affects youth civic participation. Thus, this paper is an attempt to examine this relationship in the Moroccan community, shedding light on users’ civic motivation and online preferences and their attitudes towards existing modes of participation in public affairs. For this purpose, this research uses a quantitative survey with a sample of 65 young Moroccan.

The literature given in this paper highlights the main and recent trends in civic participation research and related theories, namely the democratic-participation and the uses and gratifications theories of the media. After summarizing the existing literature, the paper presents the findings of the survey examining the relationship between new media usage and civic participation among Moroccan youth. Empirical findings show that many young people are politicized and they continue to be interested in and informed about politics, but they are less active in the civic affairs surrounding them. The majority has a preference for activism through informal means of participation, mainly in cyberspace. Hence, we find evidence that new media influences civic and political participation because it provides citizens with access to news and information, which may raise awareness about issues they are concerned about, and provide them with more opportunities to get involved.

Review of the literature

1. Defining civic participation

The literature confirms that defining civic participation is complex and challenging. Researchers and practitioners use a multiplicity of terms to name it, such as political participation, community engagement, social capital, public work, among others (Jacoby 2009).

Scholars such as Park and Perry (2008) defined the concept of civic participation as citizens' individual and collective involvement in public affairs, including various forms of political (voting, signing a petition) and non-political activities (volunteering in non-governmental organizations (NGO)) (pp. 238-239). Besides, Norris (2001) defined civic participation emphasizing on the political engagement. He argued that civic participation is a process that is made up of three main components: political knowledge (what citizens know about public affairs), political trust (citizens' support for the political system), and political participation (citizens' engagement in actions that support and impact the governance and policy making). Some authors considered Norris definition narrow because of its focus on the political aspects of participation only. For instance, Danier and Luong (2012) asserted that civic participation, in addition to the political orientation, is concerned with all quality-life aspects and non-political actions.

Both political and non-political practices of civic participation are some of the pillars and foundations of a successful democracy (McManimon 2014). Some scholars define civic participation in relation to democracy. Adler and Goggin (2011) pointed out that civic participation includes the basic principles of democratic governance as it stands for cooperation, equality, freedom, among other values. When citizens get involved in the governing process of their community affairs and address issues of public concern, they participate in improving life conditions and making a difference in the civic life of their communities and nations.

2. Civic engagement or disengagement?

Despite the importance of civic engagement in enriching the lives of citizens and developing the state welfare, research has confirmed that it appears to be declining especially amongst the younger generations (Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins 2002; Stoker 2006). This decline is perceived in a number of established indicators and practices, such as electoral turnout, political interest, political knowledge, institutional trust, to cite but a few. Therefore, scholars have been interested in investigating the reasons behind this phenomenon of civic disengagement among youth in particular. Blais and Loewen (2009) stated that the main factor that leads to youth civic non-participation is mistrust in politicians and representative institutions. Similarly, a survey conducted to examine Moroccan youth political participation found that 39% of youth do not trust political candidates, parties, and institutions (Zerhouni 2017). The author explains that non-participation is a strong tendency among Moroccan youth because of political mistrust. The latter, according to the author, creates a kind of exclusion and marginalization that impedes youth from practicing their civic rights and duties. Other descriptions of this situation of youth civic disengagement argued that young people are apathetic towards politics and community affairs because they lack knowledge and

motivation. Heath and Park (1997, p. 6) stated that young people “don’t know, don’t care, and don’t vote” (as cited in Dehanas 2016). Youth are not stimulated by the political climate and therefore feel reluctant to voice themselves and take part in issues that positively influence their community. This proliferating disconnection from civic life has critical implications on the present and future of many democracies in both developed and developing countries. Youth participation, especially, is vital and constitutes a power for a healthy democracy and strong society. Stoneman (2002, p. 226) confirmed that “we desperately need the energy and intelligence of youth plugged into action that will improve society now”.

3. *New media and youth civic re-engagement*

As aforementioned, the traditional civic practices do not seem to empower the young generation interest. On the other hand, new forms of participation have emerged. The new media has transformed the nature of interaction and engagement among users, youth most notably. The latter are increasingly motivated to get involved with issues they care about and issues that are close to their daily life experiences. Many recent studies have focused on studying this causal relationship between new media use and civic participation expansion. For instance, Smith *et al.* (2009) found in his study that nearly one in five internet users post content about social and political matters on social media. Smith and colleagues further explained that those people who are actively engaged online are in real life more active in forms of political and non-political actions. The new media platforms, such as social networking sites (SNSs), blogs, online newspapers, chatting rooms, you name it, allow users to learn more about social or political issues and to take action around those issues. The new media is described as a rich and dynamic information space. Silverstone (1999) named the new media as a “knowledge space” characterized by its openness, fluidity, and creativity. The World Wide Web is in fact offering new opportunities for people to access as well as disseminate information (Lee and Ma 2012). They easily get news and information that is important to them, share it with other users, and encourage them to get engaged. Accordingly, scholars such as Cohen *et al.* (2012) asserted that the online collective sharing of news and information regarding social and political issues cultivates citizens’ traditional civic activities.

The new media facilitates new public spaces for maintaining discussion and communication links between users, as well as sharing knowledge, and mobilizing for civic activities. In this regards, Downing and Brooten (2007) pointed out that several political movements and organizations use the internet and ICT, such as mobile phones, to support their actions. The online platforms afford users, mainly youth, access to each other in order to improve their collective civic efforts in an atmosphere of enhanced freedom of speech. As mentioned earlier,

the young generation today does not seem attracted by their community public affairs and the news and information disseminated through the traditional media, namely television, radio, and the print. However, especially with the development of social media like *Facebook*, a new wave of political interest and engagement has been witnessed among youth. Researchers have examined some of those online civic actions where young people can have a say and get actively involved. Jung, Kind and Zúñiga (2011) stated that young users can use *Facebook* to keep in touch with politicians by sending them messages and posting on their pages or “wall”; they added that these acts were not possible in the past. A matter of fact, interactivity is one of the most important aspects of the new media as it provides the public with a space where they can easily and freely learn, establish relationships, solve problems, and voice themselves, which may likely stimulate their interest to take part in public affairs. In this context, Sessen (2013) pointed out that citizens seem to be more empowered for civic engagement when they act in groups than individually.

With the new media and technological advance, new opportunities for strengthening civic engagement have been initiated. In addition to equipping the citizens with relevant information for efficient and meaningful participation, the new media allows them to create their own contents using sound, music, moving images, among other aspects. The multimedia feature has, in recent years, rapidly supported the nature of civic participation (Greene, Burke, & McKenna 2016). On-line platforms enable users to get engaged not only as receivers and consumers of news and information but also as active producers. Citizens, especially youth, create their own online communities by sharing images, uploading videos, and making mashup as a way to express and share their opinion and push policy reform. The Arab Spring is probably the best example when talking about new media and its ability to impact and shape political discourse. The Egyptian revolution, for instance, demonstrates the extent to which the internet was a powerful means in the democratization process of their government. Egyptian citizens, during that time, bombarded social media, especially, with pictures and videos, showing to the world what was taking place. A matter of fact, the new media driving trends have been proven to play an impressive role in the democratization of an entire nation (Sessen 2013).

Eventually, the nature and structure of the new media fundamentally promotes the various modes of interaction. As it integrates text, image, and sound in a digital space potentially beyond any types of temporal or spatial boundaries, the internet had the potential to facilitate deeper, intrinsic motivation for civic engagement as individual users choose to cultivate their interest in a political or social issue, as opposed to being forced to participate.

4. Approaches to civic engagement:

Democratic-participant and uses and gratifications

The theories of democratic-participant and uses and gratifications are chosen to form the theoretical framework for this paper. The former theory acknowledges the use of media, both old and new, to support cultural pluralism and active engagement, while the latter emphasizes the role of the public in shaping new civic participatory modes.

As previously mentioned, the new media and communication systems are progressively influencing democracy. Therefore, the democratic-participant theory, as one of the normative theories, has been developed to democratize access to media and empower pluralistic groups in reaction against the bureaucratic and monopolistic controlled mass media (Fourie 2007). This theory has aimed to support a horizontal participation of the popular citizenry at large including political parties, students, labors, religious and/or ethnic groups, you name but a few (Daramola 2003). Democratic-participant theory connects between sender and receiver regardless any physical or cultural differences that might impede their communication.

As far as this paper is concerned, the democratic-participant theory has been selected to set its framework as it helps contextualize the new media as an outlet for civic democratic participation as opposed to the traditional media monopoly and gate-keeping. Proponents of this theory argued that the new media revolution has remarkably accelerated the importance of civic and political engagement in developing powerful democracies (Jaffe 1995). Therefore, this study attempts to examine the extent to which young citizens in Morocco use the new media to make their contribution to governance and democracy.

On the other hand, in the history of mass communication theory, an approach was developed to explore the main gratifications that attract the public attention to specific media contents based on their social and psychological needs (Cantril 1942 cited in Ruggiero 2000). The uses and gratifications theory came to discard the behaviorist paradigm and the other strands of effects research, such as the hypothermic needle and agenda-setting, which consider the public passive masses to heavy media influence. The media in its various forms offers countless opportunities to people where they can independently make choices and decision about the contents they receive. According to the media uses and gratifications theory, media is shifting from a "message-driven effect" into an "audience-driven perspective" (Piette and Giroux 1998). In other words, with the uses and gratification theory, the media does not do things to the public; rather, the public does things with media to satisfy their needs.

Thanks to the new media dynamics and its "pull" nature, users can learn more about what motivates and interested them within their community. Thus, the uses

and gratifications approach helps the audience, especially young generations, perceive themselves as active agents in the extent that their media use cultivates their civic engagement. That is to say, being aware of their needs as an individual and group, young citizens would better profit from the new media opportunities in order to positively respond to the civic actions and experiences.

Methodological framework

1. Research design

This paper reports the findings of a survey completed by 64 young Moroccans (ages 18-40). The study seeks to examine the impact of new media usage on youth civic engagement. The survey was internet-based. It was sent out via *Facebook* and email to 100 Moroccan internet users. The questions asked were related to respondents' demographics, attitudes towards existing civic materials, civic motivations and internet preferences, and their offline and online civic behaviors. The survey was statistically analyzed using the Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Socio-demographic information on gender, age, study level, and professional status were collected. As reported in table 1, out of 65 respondents 60% were males and 40% females. As for the age group, respondents aged between 26 and 32 represented the most dominant category with a percentage of 43%. The majority of respondents (97%) have a university level. Besides, regarding the professional status, 38.6% were students, 36.9% were employed in the public sector and 12.3% in the private sector, 10.5% were self-employed, and 1.5% were unemployed.

Table 1. Distribution of percentages and demographics

Demographics	Percentage
Gender	
• Male	60
• Female	40
Age	
• 18 to 25	35.4
• 26 to 32	43.1
• 33 to 40	21.5
Study level	
• Primary School	0
• Secondary School	3
• University	97
Professional status	
• Student	38.5
• Employed in the public sector	36.9
• Employed in the private sector	12.3
• Self-employed	10.8
• Unemployed	1.5

2. Results

This section addresses the main objective of this study, which is the exploration of Moroccan youth online civic participation with particular emphasis on their attitudes towards the existing public affairs, their civic motivators, and their online and offline civic actions.

2.1. Moroccan youth attitudes towards democracy and engagement

to start with, the paper examines the sample's perceptions of their national public affairs and democracy practices. The totality of respondents was eligible to vote; however, as represented in figure 1, 65% (N = 42) confirmed that they did not participate in the last elections on October 6, 2016.

Figure 1. Respondents who voted in the last elections on October 6, 2016

Subsequently, a cross tabulation analysis was run in order to examine respondents' voting in the last elections in relation to their demographics, namely gender, age, and professional status. As for gender, table 2 demonstrates that there is a strong gender imbalance in terms of voting. According to the findings, 58.97% of male respondents voted in the last elections, while no female did (0%). However, the gender gap is an issue that will be tackled in further research. Similarly, age variable, as presented in table 3, seems to have an impact on respondents' attitudes towards voting. Young Moroccans aged between 33 and 40 years old (85.71%) are more interested in electoral participation compared to the other age groups. On the other hand, the cross tabulation analysis highlights that there is no significant difference between respondents voting rates in terms of their professional status. However, students represent the largest group of non-voters with a percentage of 96%.

Afterwards, voters were asked to determine the reasons behind their voting attitudes. A percentage of 39.13 said that they thought their voice could make a difference, 21.73% considered voting as their right, and it strongly matters for the development of their country, and finally 17.39% stated that they voted because it is their duty as citizens (see figure 2).

Table 2. Crosstabs analysis: Relations between gender and voting

		VotingInTheLastElection		Total
		yes	no	
gender	male	23 58.97%	16 41.02%	39 100%
	female	0 0%	26 100%	26 100%
Total		23 35.38%	42 64.61%	65 100%

Table 3. Crosstabs analysis: Relations between age and voting

		VotingInTheLastElection		Total
		yes	no	
age	18 to 25	3 13.04%	20 86.95%	23 100%
	26 to 32	8 28.57%	20 71.42%	28 100%
	33 to 40	12 85.71%	2 14.28%	14 100%
Total		23 35.38%	42 64.61%	65 100%

Table 4. Crosstabs analysis: Relations between professional status and voting.

		VotingInTheLastElection		Total
		yes	no	
Professional Status	student	1 4%	24 96%	25 100%
	employed in the public sector	13 62.5%	11 37.5%	24 100%
	employed in the private sector	5 75%	3 25%	8 100%
	self-employed	4 71.42%	3 28.57%	7 100%
	unemployed	0 0%	1 100%	1 100%
	Total	23 35.38%	42 64.61%	65 100%

Figure 2. Voters attitudes towards voting

On the other hand, as shown in figure 3, almost half of the non-voters (42.85%) who participated in this survey asserted that they boycott elections because of mistrust of officials. Others (23.8%) were not interested in voting, 21.42% believed that their voice is not important, and finally 11.9% said that they were busy the day of elections.

Figure 3. Non-voters attitudes towards voting

Besides, the survey inquired respondents' overall attitudes towards civic engagement, about whether they think that participation in public affairs is important and everyone's duty; whether only citizens who have a direct issue or interest who should participate, or whether participating does make no difference anyhow. Figure 4 presents that almost two thirds of the sample (72.3%) considered civic participation an important act that any citizen should believe in, while only 6.2% found that civic engagement is related to individual interest and need. On the other hand, 21.5% stated that their civic participation is not important and does not make any positive change.

Figure 4. Respondents' perceptions of civic engagement

2.2. Patterns of youth internet use and challenges to online civic engagement

as aforementioned, this paper seeks to examine the influence of youth new media use on their civic engagement. Therefore, the second part of the survey targets respondents' media use patterns and their relationship with their citizenship and social and political participation.

Figure 5. Respondents' sources of news and information

The first question within this section underscores respondents' sources of news and information. Figure 5 demonstrates that the internet was chosen by 97% of the sample as the main source they mostly use to get news and information about their community. TV comes next with a percentage of 48%, followed by word to mouth (37%), print media (26%), and finally radio (18%).

Table 5. Respondents' percentage of use of the news and information sources

	Always	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
TV	13.8	21.5	26.2	27.7	10.8
Radio	1.5	16.9	21.5	26.2	33.8
Print media	11	20	20	23.1	26.2
Word to mouth (Friends, family, ...)	15.4	35.4	13.8	24.6	10.6
Internet	79	15.38	4.61	1.5	0

Furthermore, respondents were inquired to determine how often they frequently use the above mentioned information sources. Table 4 shows that 79% of the sample claimed that they always use the internet as a source of news and information. The old media such as TV, radio, and the print were less consumed by respondents. For instance, 13.8% stated that they always use TV, 11% for print media, and only 1.5% for radio.

Figure 6. Respondents' internet consumption on average per day

Subsequently, in order to further study the influence new media, internet in particular, respondents' daily life, question 13 asked them about how often they get online on average per day. Figure 6 illustrates that more than half of the sample (51%, N = 33) are light users (0 to 4 hours), while 15% (N = 10) claimed that they are heavy internet users (above 11 hours), and 35% (N = 22) are average users (5 to 10 hours).

Figure 7. Online platforms used by respondents as a source of news and information

In addition to their daily consumption of online contents, respondents were asked to select among a list of online platforms the ones they usually use to get news and information related to their community issues. As shown in figure 7, social networking sites (SNS) are the most commonly online source of news and information used by respondents (97%). Online newspapers come second with a percentage of 50%, followed by search engines (44%), blogs (13%), and finally chatting rooms (5%).

Figure 8. Respondents' attitudes towards the impact of the new media on increasing their civic engagement

After investigating respondents' perceptions of their national democracy and existing public affairs, as well as their online use patterns, the survey attempted to find a statistically significant relation between online usage and civic participation. The data represented in figure 8 confirm that 74% (N = 48) of the same believe in the role of the new media, internet in particular, in empowering their civic actions, and only 23% (N = 15) stated that it has no impact.

The majority of respondents who found that the new media has a positive influence on their civic experience argued that the new media has become an in-

dispensable part of their lives both as an individual and as a citizen. Moroccan youth who took part in this study confirmed that their participation in the online platforms enables them to up to date of what is happening on a local, national, and international scale. Moreover, as stated by a respondent, new media is the best outlet for youth who are considered as “digital natives” to become aware and more willing to interfere, share, and advocate change. Another respondent argued that the new media allows users to be both consumers and producers of content that are relevant to their civic life. On the other hand, some respondents stated that not all Moroccans are allowed to use the new media; therefore, we cannot consider it as a means to develop civic interest and engagement.

Accordingly, respondents were inquired to identify their online civic actions. Table 5 reveals that 75.4% of the sample uses the “like” and “comment” options to promote materials related to community issues that others have posted. Fifty-two percent said that they express their civic interest through posting and sharing their own thoughts by uploading a video or a picture and/or writing a status. Other respondents (26.2%) claimed that belong to online groups that are involved in political and/or social actions, while 18.5% chose to follow elected official and politicians. Some other (15.4%) write articles on political and social issues and share them on online newspapers and/or magazines. Only 4% of the sample who have no online civic acts.

Table 6. Respondents' online civic actions

Online civic actions	Percentage
Like/ “comment” to promote materials related to community issues that others have posted	75.4
Post and share your own thoughts by adding a comment, uploading a video and/or writing a status	52.3
Belong to a group that is involved in political or social actions	26.2
Follow elected officials and other public figures	18.5
Write articles and share them on online newspapers/magazines	15.4
None	4

Finally, the survey intended to examine whether or not respondents are willing to transfer their online civic engagement into the offline space. Figure 9 demonstrates that more than half of the sample (54%) assumed that they do not translate their civic actions in the new media into real ones.

Figure 9. Respondents' attitudes towards translating their online civic participation into offline

Besides, a crosstabs analysis was conducted in order to investigate the relationship between respondents' demographic variables and the impact of their internet use on their offline civic engagement. To start with age variable, table 6 shows that male and female respondents are almost equally transferring their online civic acts into the offline world.

Table 7. Crosstabs analysis: Relations between gender and offline civic engagement

			HaveYourTranslatedYourOnlineActionsIntoOfflineOnes		Total
			Yes	No	
gender	male	Count	16	23	39
		% in gender	41.02%	58.97%	100,0%
	female	Count	14	12	26
		% in gender	53.84%	46.15%	100,0%
Total		Count	30	35	65
		% in gender	46,2%	53,8%	100,0%

As for the age variable, table 7 demonstrates that there is a significant difference between participants' age groups in terms of online civic engagement transfer. Younger respondents aged between 18 and 25 years old were ranked higher (74%) than the other age groups (39.28%, 14.28%, respectively).

Table 7. Crosstabs analysis: Relations between age and offline civic engagement

			HaveYourTranslatedYourOnlineActionsIntoOfflineOnes		Total
			Yes	No	
age	18 to 25	Count	17	6	23
		% in age	74%	26%	100,0%
	26 to 32	Count	11	17	28
		% in age	39.28%	60.71%	100,0%
	33 to 40	Count	2	12	14
		% in age	14.28%	85.71%	100,0%
Total	Count	30	35	65	
	% in age	46,2%	53,8%	100,0%	

Finally, table 8 represents the correlation between professional status variable and online civic engagement transfer. The crosstabs analysis shows that students are the most to be engaged in translating their online civic actions into the real of-line space compared to employees.

After examining whether or not young respondents aim to transfer their online civic engagement into the offline world, a following question was addressed to highlight the main civic activities they get involved in. According to figure 10, 29% respondents work with other citizens in their community to solve a problem or improve a condition, and 26% others are involved in volunteer actions and/or

Table 8. Crosstabs analysis: Relations between professional status and offline civic engagement

			HaveYourTranslatedYour OnlineActionsIntoOffline Ones		Total
			Yes	No	
professional Status	student	Count % in professional Status	25 100,0%	0 0,0%	25 100,0%
	employed in the public	Count sector % in professional Status	5 20,8%	19 79,2%	24 100,0%
	employed in the private	Count sector % in professional Status	0 0,0%	8 100,0%	8 100,0%
	self-employed	Count % in professional Status	0 0,0%	7 100,0%	7 100,0%
	unemployed	Count % in professional Status	0 0,0%	1 100,0%	1 100,0%
Total		Count % in professional Status	30 46,2%	35 53,8%	65 100,0%

Figure 10. Respondents' offline civic actions

members in civic organizations and clubs. Another group of 21% respondents said that they attend public meetings and 20% choose protesting as an act of civic engagement.

After examining whether or not young respondents aim to transfer their on-line civic engagement into the offline world, a following question was addressed to highlight the main civic activities they get involved in. According to figure 10, 29% respondents work with other citizens in their community to solve a problem or improve a condition, and 26% others are involved in volunteer actions and/or members in civic organizations and clubs. Another group of 21% respondents said that they attend public meetings and 20% choose protesting as an act of civic engagement.

Table 9. Pearson correlation between Moroccan youth internet use and civic engagement

		Internet Use	Online Civic Engagement
Internet Use	Pearson Correlation	1	,885**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	65	65
Civic Engagement	Pearson Correlation	,885**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	65	65

** Correlation is significant at 0,01 level.

Ultimately, in order to provide evidence on whether new media use, internet in particular, increases Moroccan youth's civic participation, a Pearson correlation analysis was performed using SPSS. According to the results presented in table 4, there is a positive correlation between Moroccan youth internet use and their online civic engagement ($r = .885$, $p < .01$). As a result of this analysis, it can be said that there is a strong direct relationship between the independent variable (civic engagement) and the dependent variable (internet use). That is to say, young citizens who use the online platforms tend to be more involved in civic issues.

3. Discussion

The aim of this thesis has been to explore the extent to which new media enhances Moroccan youth's civic participation. The quantitative results presented earlier in this paper imply that, in fact, youth's new media experiences continue to extend their interest in national public affairs and empowers their ability to take part in the political and social life.

Moroccan youth, as represented by the sample used in this paper, suffer from a "political apathy". In accordance with that, this research confirms a low voter turnout. The majority of youth who participated in this study did not vote in the last national elections. They feel disengaged from the mainstream politics because of their distrust in how government institutions are formed and how they function. Another reason of this civic-disengagement, according to the survey findings, is young Moroccans' doubt in politicians' ability to result in real and significant change. They clearly stated that their voice is not going to be "heard". In a similar study by Zerhouni (2017) 39% of Moroccan citizens do not go to the polling booths because they have no trust in the political parties and their candidates. In this regard, Soule (2001) pointed out that the young generations live in an age of frustration with the political process, which subsequently affects their social trust.

Besides, Moroccan youth might feel uninterested and unmotivated because of their lack of understanding, knowledge, and awareness regarding what is hap-

pening in their community. According to the crosstabs analysis, the students' category whose age varies between 18 and 25 years old do not care about elections and are uninterested in politics. These results can be explained because young students feel ignored and excluded from the political debate. An abundance of political messages is daily delivered through different channels. However, they rarely reach young people because of ineffective communication strategies or because their irrelevant and repulsive content. Millennials are more attracted by the new communication and information patterns. They are more interested in contents that are targeting their needs and preferences. In accordance with the results obtained from the survey, Moroccan youth mostly use the internet as their first source of news and information. The new media, most notably the internet, is more powerful than traditional media as it offers an advanced feature in terms of exposure to information, in addition to a global reach and better interactivity. A matter of fact, respondents agreed on the power of new media in raising their social and political knowledge; they further explained that their online engagement enables them to keep updated, and freely share their opinions about different issues without thinking of any restrictions. Dahlgren (2009) advocates that the online platforms provide users with countless opportunities regardless of any physical or cultural obstacles. It is an environment that stresses pluralism and commitment to feedback and interaction.

Besides, the survey data implies that social media sites are mostly consumed by Moroccan youth to get involved in the civic life. The accessibility, flexibility, and interactivity nature of social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter can effectively facilitate political activism and increase civic engagement. Youth are increasing using social media for information-seeking, entertainment, business, social interaction, among others. Not only that, research has proven that young citizens seem to take social media as communication outlets for democracy and social capital. Respondents claimed that their online participation allows them to express their civic attitudes in a myriad of forms. They interact with officials and politicians on their official pages, they share their thoughts through comments and posts, create networks for mobilization, engage in voluntary actions, among other acts. These interactive and creative motivations advocate the gratifications that users receive while being online. Besides, the new media is known as a user-generated content space where users have the total freedom to create their own content based on their needs, desires, and interests. In this vein, Mouza and Lavigne (2013) confirmed that the most "innovative forms of civic participation are driven personal passion and user-generated content" (p. 135).

On the other hand, despite being highly engaged in online civic participation, Moroccan youth, as represented by survey sample, still feel reluctant to translate these civic actions into the real life. Contrary to voting rate, cross tabulation

analysis confirmed that students and young people aged between 18 and 25 years old are the most likely to use the online space as a platform to get engaged in the real civic life, compared to the other age groups whose civic participation is mainly internet based. In this regard, researchers raised a question about whether the new media exposure empowers already engaged citizens or it attracts people who would not normally participate offline. Some scholars stated that this relationship between internet use and civic engagement is strongly related to type of use (for information, communication, and/or entertainment) (Shah, Kwak and Holbert 2001). That is to say, some citizens might go online seeking information about a certain social or political matter without having any intention to react. Other scholars found that new media supplements users' civic acts but does not involve them (Quan-Haase *et al.* 2002).

Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis has been to examine the relationship between Moroccan youth's new media use and their civic participation. From the foregoing, it is understood that the young generations are living in a state of apathy and inertia when it comes to politics and civic activism. Lack of knowledge, mistrust, disconnect between citizens' interest and government system, are the main reasons behind the existing civic disengagement. The media has always played a central role in the empowering democracy and public sphere. In recent years, the new media revolution has given rise to new civic tendencies. Not only a mere source of information, the new media is a powerful means of interaction between citizens, and between citizens and the government, as well as means of active participation. Youth, in particular, are increasing getting attracted by the new media outlets such as social networking sites, blogs, chatting rooms, where they have the total freedom to choose their best way of information as well as interaction. The online world offers infinite, and less costly and demanding avenues to civic participation. Users can be engaged as both consumers and producers of their own content; they can share their knowledge, expose their viewpoints, mobilize, and foster and advocate change. Therefore, the quantitative results of this study have statistically proven that the new media use is one of the main factors which help increase interest in politics and create a strong sense of civic agency. This finding advocates more work from officials, politicians, and all stakeholders to find real and relevant connection with young citizens based on the latter's goals and preferences, by creating online and offline forums where youth can willingly get involved in social and political actions. Moreover, the integration of civic education in the school system is essential to raise the coming generations' understanding of and interest in public affairs. Students need to learn about their role as active citizens and how their participation in the civic life is important for the process of democratization and state welfare.

Like all research projects, this study has some limitations. First of all, the sample size was limited. Despite using the internet-based, the number of respondents did not exceed 65. In fact, the online option was adopted in this study aiming to attract more participants, but it did not. The sample seems small to be considered for representativeness which raised the issue about generalizability of findings. Furthermore, this research was mainly quantitative. Future studies should also build on qualitative research, such as interviews. Despite these limitations, the overall findings remain grounded in a solid research platform and raise several stimulating guidelines for future orientations. More research is recommended so as to carefully and systematically consider what evidence there is to support youth's participation in new media in enhancing civic engagement and under what conditions such efforts may succeed or fail. It is important to examine the reasons why mainstream (traditional) media is struggling to maintain its civic and democratic role in the 21st century. On the other hand, to what extent can the new media provide legitimate and credible framework for civic engagement. Besides, as mentioned earlier, civic education is one of the fundamental elements to be considered in order to build a democratic nation. Therefore, research should go further to survey the students' use of new media and the extent to which it can improve their interest in civic engagement.

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