Does ‘clicking’ matter? The role of online participation in adolescents’ civic development

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## Sample

Data were taken from a broader longitudinal study conducted in the Czech Republic in mid-2014 (T1) and 1.5 year later (T2). A random cluster sampling of schools was used within four (out of 14) Czech regions. The sample at T1 consisted of 1,137 high school students (53% females) aged 14 to 17 at T1 (M = 15.99; SD = 0.55), out of which 768 participated in both data collections and were included in the analyses (54% females; M = 15.99; SD = 0.55). Two-thirds of the students (67% in the original sample, 66% in the final sample) were from vocationally oriented high schools, while others were from academically oriented grammar
schools.

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Stepping up awareness and empowerment

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

This study focuses on the role of online civic participation in the civic development of adolescents. We build on the assumption that online civic participation differs from more traditional offline civic participation in several key characteristics, namely lacking proximity to other actors, possible disconnection between civic actions and their outcomes, and a reduced hierarchy within the online environment. Considering these specifics, the study examined the longitudinal effect of online participation on the development of civic identity, political self-efficacy, and attitudes toward social authorities. Concurrently, we contrasted the impact of online participation with the impact of offline civic participation. Data from a survey-based two-wave panel study conducted in Spring 2014 and Autumn 2015 in the Czech Republic were utilized. The sample comprised 768 adolescents (aged 14-17 in T1; 54% females). The results showed that online participation predicted increased challenging attitudes towards social authorities, while offline participation had the opposite effect. Furthermore, online participation had no effect on political self-efficacy or civic development, but offline participation positively predicted civic identity. The findings are discussed with regard to the specific benefits and limits of online civic participation.

# Outcome

"The development of civic identity (the sense of connection and responsibility to fellow
citizens) was not affected by online participation, but it was positively predicted by offline participation." (Machackova Šerek, 2017, Abstract) "Study found "an effect of online, but not offline, participation on a greater acceptance of non-conventional, authority-challenging activism. Similarly, a weak effect of online participation on more negative attitudes towards social authorities and conventions was found, that is lower authoritarianism. The effect of offline participation on authoritarianism was exactly the opposite, but it should be noted that both effects on authoritarianism were not significant and thus should be treated only with caution." (Machackova Šerek, 2017, Discussion, para. 4) "Findings support the presumption that the performed actions promote the development of certain characteristics connected to civic life. The effect of online participatory activities is different from offline ones: they enhance the development of attitudes challenging social authorities but have no effect on the development of civic identity (which was increased via offline participation) and political self-efficacy (which was not linked with offline participation either)." (Machackova Šerek, 2017, Discussion, para. 6)