Can Facebook Informational Use Foster Adolescent Civic Engagement?

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## Sample

Participants were 135 Italian high school students aged
between 14 and 17 years (30.4 % 9th-graders, 34.1 %
10th-graders, 35.5 % 11th-graders; mean age = 15.37,
SD = .91; 57.0 % boys) coming from the Veneto region.

# Abstract

The findings on the association between Social Networking Sites and civic engagement are mixed. The present study aims to evaluate a theoretical model linking the informational use of Internet-based social media (specifically, Facebook) with civic competencies and intentions for future civic engagement, taking into account the mediating role of civic discussions with family and friends and sharing the news online. Participants were 114 Italian high school students aged 14-17 years (57 % boys). Path analysis was used to evaluate the proposed theoretical model. Results showed that Facebook informational use was associated with higher levels of adolescent perceived competence for civic action, both directly and through the mediation of civic discussion with parents and friends (offline). Higher levels of civic competencies, then, were associated with a stronger intention to participate in the civic domain in the future. Our findings suggest that Facebook may provide adolescents with additional tools through which they can learn civic activities or develop the skills necessary to participate in the future.

# Outcome

"The main aim of the present study was to evaluate a theoretical
model linking a particular use of Facebook (reading
the news) and civic engagement, by elucidating
potential mechanisms of influence explaining this association,
in a sample of middle adolescents. Our results are
consistent with past evidence of a positive link between the
use of Facebook and civic engagement (Chan and Guo
2013; Kobayashi et al. 2006; Park et al. 2009). The theoretical
model proposed deepens our understanding of this
association by evaluating potential mechanisms of influence:
using Facebook for reading the news was found to be
associated with higher levels of civic competencies, both
directly and through the mediation of civic discussions
with parents and friends. In turn, perceived competencies
for civic actions was positively associated with adolescent
future intentions to participate in the civic domain. In
contrast, the mediation effect hypothesized for posting
news on Facebook in the association between reading news
and civic competencies was not found." (Lenzi et al., 2015, p. 6)