

***The Level of Mass Media Usage of Electors in Political Enlightenment:
A Fieldwork with University Students***

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Abstract

Electors, one of the most important actors of elections, want to have a deep knowledge about alternative parties and candidates in order to decide which party or candidate to vote for before acting voting. For this reason they head towards their families, circle of friends, social groups they belong to, opinion leaders and mass media. However, among these information sources some mass communication mediums such as newspaper, radio, television, magazine, book, internet, and social media have been the most important means of having information for electors of today's urbanized and globalized societies. It is impossible to say that these mass communication mediums are equally effective. Each of them has different effect grade, level of being followed and plausibility.

It is known that socio-demographic attributes of electors determine usage frequency of mass media, level of being followed, effectiveness degree and perception of plausibility. To what extent the university students use these tools to shape their political choices apart from any other electorate is an issue that is to be researched within this framework

Our study aims to reveal to what extent the university students as electorates use mass media as a political enlightenment tool. For this purpose, field survey method was used on the students of Selcuk University Communication Faculty in order to confirm the validity of the information achieved through detailed literature review. The scientific findings acquired through the research have been evaluated under three categories. The conclusion of the research indicates that social media and internet takes place in most commonly used mass medium category, television in the most effective mass medium category and newspapers in the most reliable mass medium category.

Keywords: Electors, Political Enlightenment, Mass Medium, Level of Usage, University Students

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Introduction

The democracy which has been defined as the sovereignty of public, the use of power or the dominance of majority (Schmidt 2001:13) is one of the regimes which has started during ancient civilizations and has continued until modern societies of present days. It is based two basic values such as “freedom” and “equality” (Dursun 2004:166). Its most important characteristics is that the individuals under administration may do whatever they desire, they are not prevented, and all the members of the society have equal rights related to the participation to the political management. Due course of laws which regulates the political life of the country, under these circumstances, the individuals who have obtained the right to vote and who can use their own political will in democratically held elections are also called voters.

The voters who approve their sovereignty rights they possess are used by the people or institutions they have elected (Bozkurt 2014:230) make into powers the administrators who will affect their future, provide services and participate the administrative levels or vote them out through elections. However, they need a great deal of information in order to make selection among the existing different alternatives. Through this information, they both obtain information about the parties and candidates and they are able to compare them according to their topic priority, their attitudes towards the agenda topics, their policies to be applied when they are elected and their differences from each other (Kalender 2005:80). The information they need is provided through the primary groups such as family, relatives, friends and neighbors or the secondary groups such as religious communities they belong to, associations, clubs and mass media.

The information needed in metropolitan cities which rapidly increases as a result of industrial revolution and where almost three quarters of the populations of the contemporary countries is majorly obtained from mass media. The mass media which function as personal identity, integration and social interaction and entertainment in addition to the information provided for individuals (McQuail 1994:78-79) are categorized as printed instruments, internet and audio-visual instruments (Baltacı and Eke 2012:116-117). While the printed instruments include newspapers, journals and books; the internet instruments are web pages, e-mail, e-bulletin, e-groups and social media; and cinema, television and radio are listed in the group of audio-visual instruments (Tüzün 2008:9). The voters of today use those mass media with various levels in accordance with their socio-economic characteristics in order to satisfy their needs for political enlightenment.

The mass media are the tools which has gradually gained importance for groups and individuals especially during the second half of the twentieth century. The governments, political parties, public institutions, private enterprises and pressure groups tend to use the mass media by their side in order to execute their objectives (Aziz 1982:48). Since mass media have the capacity to appeal and affect large masses, the proliferation of especially electronic mass media such as radio, internet, and social media lead to an increase in the significance of the scientific studies carried out related to this topic.

In this study, it was aimed to determine the levels which the voters use mass media during political enlightenment. For that purpose, a field research was carried out on the students of Selcuk University.

Methods

The Application of the Research and Sampling

In order to reveal the levels which the university student voters use the mass media in enlightenment, a field research was executed on the students of Faculty of Communication, Selcuk University. The purposeful sampling based on the voters at the age of 18 and over was chosen for the determination of the sampling group. For this purpose, the students of 2.nd, 3.rd and 4.th grades who had been enrolled to the Faculty of Communication and who had accepted the interview were interviewed. The data which forms the basis for the field research was obtained through face to face interviews with 530 people. As a result of preliminary examination, 472 questionnaires were analyzed.

Data Collecting Tools

In order to determine the levels which the university student voters use the mass media in enlightenment through the students of the Communication Faculty, Selcuk University; a questionnaire form which includes 3 sections was prepared. In the first part of the questionnaire, five point likert questions (1= I never use, 2=Once-twice a week, 3= 3-4 times a week, 4=5-6 times a week, 5=regularly, every day) were employed in order to determine the levels of frequency which the university students use mass media.

In the second part of the questionnaire, close-ended questions were employed in order to determine the mass communication instrument which the university student voters followed the political matters most; the mass communication instrument which they considered to be the most effective in formation of political preference and the mass communication instrument which they find the most reliable.

The third part of the questionnaire included questions to reveal the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants such as age, education level, the average monthly income, gender and marital status.

Before the prepared questionnaire form was executed in the field, two separate experts analyzed it from the point of face validity and necessary regulations were performed in accordance with their suggestions. Moreover, the questionnaire was pre-tested on 63 subjects in order to observe its comprehensibility and predict other problems which it may encounter in the field and made ready to be applied.

The Analysis of Data and the Applied Tests

The field research was carried out through face-to-face interviews with the students of Communication Faculty, Selcuk University who were enrolled to the 2.nd, 3.rd and 4.th grades prior to the 2014 General Local Election held between the dates of March 17-21, 2014. The obtained data was electronically processed through SPSS 15.0 statistical program.

In the analysis of data, the frequency analysis were carried out in order to reveal the percentage distributions of the answers of the participants to the questionnaire; Chi-square analysis to reveal the relationships between data groups; the Independent Samples T-test was used for two-option independent variants such as gender. In T-test, the values at the significance level equal to or over $p=0.05$ were evaluated.

Findings and Intrepretations

Some Characteristics of the Participants

Some findings expressing the demographic characteristics of the participants are as follows:

- From the point of gender, 46.2% of the participants is male (N=472) while 53.8% of them is female. The obtained percentages have enough level to make comparisons from the point of gender.
- From the point of marital status, 98.5% of the participants is singular, 1.1% of them is married and 0.4% of them is widow(er).
- In the category of age, the 11.4% of the participants is between 18 and 20, 75.4% of them is between 21 and 23, 11.4% of them is between 24 and 26, 0.8% of them is 27 and 29 and 0.8% of them is at the age of 30 and over.
- From the point of educational status, 37.5% of the participants stated that they were at the second grade; 39.0% of them expressed they were at the third grade and 23.5% of them stated they were at the fourth grade. When the existing rates were evaluated, it is seen that the participants had a balanced distribution from the point of education.
- When the statistical results which describe the average monthly income of the families of the participants in the answers to the questions in the research questions are considered, 11.0% of the participants had less than TL 846 per month, 27.8% had an income between TL 847 and TL 1500, 32.2% had an amount of TL 1501-2500, 14.6% of them had TL 2501-3500, 6.8% of them had TL3501-4500, 3.8% of them had TL 4501-5500 and 3.8% of them had TL 5501 and over. Those emerging results state that majority of the participants (85.6%) had lower or middle income levels.

The Frequency of Occurrence in Using Mass Media

In order to determine the frequency level which the university student voters use the mass media, they were asked the question of "How often do you use the following mass media?". 1.3% of the participants replied as I never use, 4.0% of them answered as I use 1-2 days a week, 6.8% of them replied as I use 3-4 days a week, 9.7% of them said I use 5-6 days a week, 78.2% of them replied as I regularly use it every day. According to the obtained answers, majority of the voters from university use the internet every day.

Table 1: The frequency of using internet by the voters.

	Frequency	Percent
I never use	6	1,3
1-2 days a week	19	4,0
3-4 days a week	32	6,8
5-6 days a week	46	9,7
Regularly every day	369	78,2
Total	472	100,0

(I never use, 1-2 days a week, 3-4 days a week, 5-6 days a week, regularly every day) Related to reading newspapers; the 7.6% of the participants said “I never use”, 32.2% of them stated “I use 1-2 days a week”, 29.4% stated “I use 3-4 days a week”, 12.7% of them stated “I use 5-6 days a week” and 18.0% of them stated “I regularly use it every day”. According to the obtained answers, the majority of the voters from university (69.3%) are seen that they don’t use the newspaper every day.

Table 2: The frequency of reading newspaper by the voters.

	Frequency	Percent
I never use	36	7,6
1-2 days a week	152	32,2
3-4 days a week	139	29,4
5-6 days a week	60	12,7
Regularly every day	85	18,0
Total	472	100,0

Related to using radio; the 26.9% of them stated “I never use”, 38.6% stated “I use 1-2 days a week”, 16.9% of them stated “I use 3-4 days a week”, 7.8% of them stated “I use 5-6 days a week”, 9.7% of them stated “I regularly use every day”. According to the obtained answers, the majority of the voters from university (82.5) are seen that they don’t listen to radio regularly.

Table 3: The frequency of using radio by the voters.

	Frequency	Percent
I never use	127	26,9
1-2 days a week	182	38,6
3-4 days a week	80	16,9
5-6 days a week	37	7,8
Regularly every day	46	9,7
Total	472	100,0

Related to watching television; the 13.3% of the participants stated “I never use”, 33.9% of them stated “I use 1-2 days a week”, 18.6% of them stated “I use 3-4 days a week”, 14.6% of them stated “I use 5-6 days a week” and 19.5% stated “I regularly use every day”. According to the obtained answers, the majority of the voters from university (65.9%) are seen that they don’t follow television regularly.

Table 4: The frequency of watching television by the voters.

	Frequency	Percent
I never use	63	13,3
1-2 days a week	160	33,9
3-4 days a week	88	18,6
5-6 days a week	69	14,6
Regularly every day	92	19,5
Total	472	100,0

Related to reading magazines; the 35.8% of them stated “I never use”, 40.7% of them stated “I use 1-2 days a week”, 14.8% of them stated “I use 3-4 days a week”, 5.5% of them stated “I use 5-6 days a week” and 3.2% of them stated “I regularly use it every day”. According to the obtained answers, the majority of the voters from university (91.3%) are seen that they don’t follow a magazine regularly.

Table 5: The frequency of reading magazines by the voters.

	Frequency	Percent
I never use	169	35,8
1-2 days a week	192	40,7
3-4 days a week	70	14,8
5-6 days a week	26	5,5
Regularly every day	15	3,2
Total	472	100,0

Related to reading books; the 10.4% of them stated “I never use”, 23.9% of them stated “I use 1-2 days a week”, 22.5% of them stated “I use 3-4 days a week”, 19.7% of them stated “I use 5-6 days a week” and 23.5% of them stated “I regularly use every day”. According to the obtained answers, the majority of the voters from university (56.8%) are seen that they don’t read books regularly.

Table 6: The frequency of reading books by the voters.

	Frequency	Percent
I never use	49	10,4
1-2 days a week	113	23,9
3-4 days a week	106	22,5
5-6 days a week	93	19,7
Regularly every day	111	23,5
Total	472	100,0

Related to the use of social media; 4.0% of the participants stated “I never use”, 4.7% of them stated “I use 1-2 days a week”, 8.5% of them “I use 3-4 days a week”, 12.9% of them “I use 5-6 days a week” and 69.9% of them stated “I regularly use every day”. According to the obtained answers, the majority of the voters from university (82.8%) are seen to use social media every day.

Table 7: The frequency of using social media by the voters.

	Frequency	Percent
I never use	19	4,0
1-2 days a week	22	4,7
3-4 days a week	40	8,5
5-6 days a week	61	12,9
Regularly every day	330	69,9
Total	472	100,0

When the answers of the university student voters for the questions in order to determine the level of frequency of using Mass media during they follow political

matters are analyzed; it is seen that 52.3 % of them replied as the Internet, 5.3% of them replied as Newspaper, 0.6% of them replied as Radio, 18.2% of them replied as Television, 0.2% of them replied as Magazines, 0.4% of them replied as Books, 22.7% of them replied as Social Media and 0.2% of them gave no answer. According to the obtained answers, the majority of the voters from university (75.1%) are seen to use the new media environments such as internet and social media most frequently.

Table 8: The Mass media Most Commonly Used in Following Political Matters

	Frequency	Percent
Internet	247	52,3
Newspaper	25	5,3
Radio	3	,6
Television	86	18,2
Magazines	1	,2
Books	2	,4
Social Media	107	22,7
Total	471	99,8
Missed	1	,2
Total	472	100,0

When the answers of the university student voters for the questions in order to determine the Mass media they considered as the most effective in the formation of their political preferences are analyzed; it is seen that 23.9% of them replied as Internet, 9.3% of them replied as Newspapers, 0.2% of them replied as Radio, 30.1% of them replied as Television, 0.2% of them replied as Magazines, 10.2% of them replied as Books, 25.0% of them replied as Social Media and 1.1% of them gave no answer. According to the obtained answers, the majority of the voters from university (30.1%) stated Television as the most effective mass communicative instrument in the formation of their political preferences; social media and internet follow it.

Table 9: The Mass media Considered being the Most Effective in the Formation of the Political Preferences

	Frequency	Percent
Internet	113	23,9
Newspaper	44	9,3
Radio	1	,2
Television	142	30,1
Magazines	1	,2
Books	48	10,2
Social Media	118	25,0
Total	467	98,9
Missed	5	1,1
Total	472	100,0

When the answers of the university student voters for the questions in order to determine the Mass media they considered as the most reliable in political matters are

analyzed; it is seen that 19.5% of them replied as Internet, 22.5% of them replied as Newspapers, 0.8% of them replied as Radio, 21.4% of them replied as Television, 2.1% of them replied as Magazines, 18.4% as Books, 12.7% of them replied as Social Media and 2.5% of them gave no answer. According to the obtained answers, the voters from university regard the Newspapers (22.5%), Television (21.4%) and Internet (19.5%) as the most reliable mass media on political matters.

Table 10: The most reliable Mass media on Political Matters

	Frequency	Percent
Internet	92	19,5
Newspaper	106	22,5
Radio	4	,8
Television	101	21,4
Magazines	10	2,1
Books	87	18,4
Social Media	60	12,7
Total	460	97,5
Missed	12	2,5
Total	472	100,0

The Education Level and Frequency of Watching Television

A significant differentiation is seen between the variant of education level and the frequency of using mass media ($X^2 = 17,645$; $df=8$; $p= ,024$). The higher the grades which participants get during their education the more decrease is seen in the rates of the participants who say “I never Use Television” and “I Use Television 1-2 Days a Week”. The obtained data shows that the higher the grade level increases the more rates of participants who never watch television and watch at moderate levels decrease.

Table 11: Education level and frequency of watching Television

Education Level	Watching Television					Total
	I never watch	1-2 days a week	3-4 days a week	5-6 days a week	Regularly every day	
Second Grade	27	53	38	28	31	177
	15,3%	29,9%	21,5%	15,8%	17,5%	100,0%
	42,9%	33,1%	43,2%	40,6%	33,7%	37,5%
Third Grade	5,7%	11,2%	8,1%	5,9%	6,6%	37,5%
	23	57	27	33	44	184
	12,5%	31,0%	14,7%	17,9%	23,9%	100,0%
Fourth Grade	36,5%	35,6%	30,7%	47,8%	47,8%	39,0%
	4,9%	12,1%	5,7%	7,0%	9,3%	39,0%
	13	50	23	8	17	111
Total	11,7%	45,0%	20,7%	7,2%	15,3%	100,0%
	20,6%	31,3%	26,1%	11,6%	18,5%	23,5%
	2,8%	10,6%	4,9%	1,7%	3,6%	23,5%
Total	63	160	88	69	92	472

	13,3%	33,9%	18,6%	14,6%	19,5%	100,0%
	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
% of Total	13,3%	33,9%	18,6%	14,6%	19,5%	100,0%

$X^2=17,645; df=8; p=,024$

Education Level and Mass Media Considered to be Effective in the Formation of Political Preferences

A significant differentiation is seen between the education variant and the mass communication instrument which is considered to be the most effective in the formation of political preferences ($X^2=23,415; df=12; p=,024$). As the participants' classes get higher, the number of the ones who accept the Internet as the most influential communicative means in forming their political views and behaviour. The obtained data shows that the higher the grades level increases the more the notion that Internet is effective in the formation of political references decreases.

Table 12: The Mass media which are thought to be the Most Effective in the Formation of Political Preferences According to Educational Level

Education Level	The Mass media which you think to be effective in the formation of political preferences							Total
	Internet	Newspaper	Radio	TV	Magazine	Books	Social Media	
Second Grade	52	15	0	44	0	19	42	172
	30,2%	8,7%	,0%	25,6%	,0%	11,0%	24,4%	100,0%
	46,0%	34,1%	,0%	31,0%	,0%	39,6%	35,6%	36,8%
Third Grade	45	11	1	61	0	21	45	184
	24,5%	6,0%	,5%	33,2%	,0%	11,4%	24,5%	100,0%
	39,8%	25,0%	100,0%	43,0%	,0%	43,8%	38,1%	39,4%
Fourth Grade	16	18	0	37	1	8	31	111
	14,4%	16,2%	,0%	33,3%	,9%	7,2%	27,9%	100,0%
	14,2%	40,9%	,0%	26,1%	100,0%	16,7%	26,3%	23,8%
Total	113	44	1	142	1	48	118	467
	24,2%	9,4%	,2%	30,4%	,2%	10,3%	25,3%	100,0%
	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
% of Total	24,2%	9,4%	,2%	30,4%	,2%	10,3%	25,3%	100,0%

$X^2=23,415; df=12; p=,024$

Gender and Level of Using Mass Communication Instruments

According to the status of the participants from the point of gender; the levels of using mass media such as Reading Newspapers ($t = -2.11$; $p < .05$), Listening to Radio ($t = 3.24$; $p < .05$), Watching Television ($t = -2.89$; $p < .05$), and Reading Books ($t = 4.26$; $p < .05$) show significant differences. When the descriptive statistical table is analyzed, women use Newspapers and Television more when compared to men and men use Radio and Books more when compared to women.

Table 13: The differences between gender and the levels of using mass media

	Gender	N	Mean	t- value	Sig.
Using Internet	Male	218	4,5138	-1,873	,062
	Female	254	4,6654		
Reading Newspapers	Male	218	2,8853	-2,117	,035
	Female	254	3,1220		
Listening to Radio	Male	218	2,5459	3,247	,001
	Female	254	2,1811		
Watching Television	Male	218	2,7385	-2,898	,004
	Female	254	3,0945		
Reading Magazines	Male	218	1,9450	-1,015	,311
	Female	254	2,0394		
Reading Books	Male	218	3,4954	4,264	,000
	Female	254	2,9843		
Using Social Media	Male	218	4,3257	-1,389	,165
	Female	254	4,4646		

Conclusions

The findings obtained from the students of Selcuk University, Faculty of Communication just before the General Local Elections in 2014 contain information about the level which the voters from university in Turkey use the mass media in political enlightenment. When data of the aforementioned research is analyzed;

- The majority of the voters from university regularly and daily use the internet and social media.
- Internet and social media is the most frequently used mass communication instrument.
- Most of them don't regularly and daily read books and they don't follow magazines, newspapers, radio and television.
- They respectively regard Television, Social Media and the Internet as the most effective mass media in the formation of the political preferences. As the level

of grades increase, the rate of those who regard the internet the most effective decreases.

- They consider Newspapers, Television and Internet, respectively, as the most reliable mass communication instrument in political matters.
- As the classes get higher among the voters from university students, the rate of the ones who say that they never watch “television” gradually decrease.
- Among the voters from university, the women use Newspapers and Television more when compared to men while men use Radio and Books more when compared to women.

When the data obtained from the research is analyzed; it is seen that Turkish voters use the Internet most in order to follow the political matters, then they use social media, television, newspapers, radio, and books, respectively. However, they consider newspapers as the most reliable and the Television as the most effective. From the point of all those findings, it is concluded that the politicians who want to give messages on political matters react knowing those aspects of the voters from university will cause direct access of the messages to their targets, minimization of the loses of time, money and effort and increase the effect power of the messages.

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