Media Consumption Habits and the Political Knowledge Gap in Cairo, Egypt

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ABSTRACT

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Extensive face-to-face surveys were conducted in Cairo, Egypt as part of this research study in order to analyze political knowledge and participation as they relate to media use habits among Egyptian citizens. Survey questions investigated a range of key issues, including media use, socioeconomic status, political knowledge and activism with the aim of identifying the main factors that contribute to the knowledge and participation gaps. Egypt is a key country in part of a broader region – the Middle East – that has experienced major political challenges, and in some instances upheaval, stemming from what has become commonly referred to as the “Arab Spring.” The country has experienced several protest movements since 2011, and the political situation remains fluid. Amidst these dynamics, media use and production in Egypt have been described as the largest and fastest growing in the Arab World.

While western news media and a number of academic scholars initially tended towards glorifying the role of social media in the Arab Spring, the results of this study identify a host of fundamental issues that should not only be acknowledged, but further interrogated, regarding the relationships between social media use and political outcomes. Statistical analyses conducted on the survey data resulted in a number of important findings. These findings included notable differences in media use habits in relation to socioeconomic status, as well as variations in political knowledge and activism in relation
to preferred sources of media content. Furthermore, the consumption of traditional media, particularly television, remains prevalent in Cairo. Such content is not only produced and controlled by the country’s long-established, and politically influenced, media hierarchy, but much of it directly proliferates various forms of social media. Perhaps most importantly, the study’s findings suggest that amidst a tendency for scholars and the news media to focus on the democratizing influences of social media, it is more important to not simply assume that new media has particular efficacy not only in promoting democracy, but when in increasing citizens’ knowledge about political issues at the same time.
DEDICATION

To my beloved family, thank you for all the support and prayers during my personal and academic journey
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The knowledge gap hypothesis is among the theories developed to study the effect of media on audience levels of knowledge. This hypothesis contradicts the view that media availability will educate people unconditionally; instead, it suggests that media effects differ among audiences in relation to issues such as existing levels of knowledge and various socioeconomic factors. Furthermore, the theory typically suggests that people of higher socioeconomic status, when compared to people of lower socioeconomic status, are more likely to learn more and to be empowered by their media consumption habits. Along these lines, scholars have identified certain media consumption behaviors that tend to increase the amount of political knowledge of individuals or groups. These behaviors might include motivation to access political content, the total amount of time spent accessing content, and the type of media utilized and consumed, such as social media or internet content.

Communications effects research has gone through different developments, from constructing the audience as passive media users (Ruggiero, 2000), to identifying media use as active (Rubin, 1993), where users seek certain gratifications in relation to such use (Katz, 1959). This construction of audiences correlates with political science research with regards to democracy as a system of belief dissemination (Lasswell, 1951). The notion of media as a tool for democratic consolidation has evolved through work such as that of Castells (2007), where the audience’s knowledge and participation reflects the system as a whole.
Several scholars have conducted research related to the knowledge gap hypothesis, including in different contexts (Bucy & Gregson, 2001; Downey, & Fenton, 2003; Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; Lee & Yang 2014; Boulianne 2009; Hwang, Y.& Jeong, S. H. 2009; Levendusky and Jackman 2003; and Kenski & Stround, 2006). Their research expands on the notion of the knowledge gap to include other social and psychological factors. It also accounts for the differential effect of media use on audiences with regards to outcomes that consolidate democracy, such as through having more informed and engaged citizens (Dimitrova, et al., 2014). However, as noted below, much of the previous research in this area has studied the effect of media use on knowledge and participation in contexts, such as the United States, that are considered to have relatively more advanced democracies.

This thesis examines the relevance of the knowledge gap hypothesis in the context of contemporary Egypt, particularly in Cairo. Egypt is at the geographic and indeed political center of a broader region – the Middle East – that has experienced major political challenges, and in some instances upheaval, over the past few years. In the context of what has become commonly referred to as the “Arab Spring,” this research examines political knowledge and related activity in relation to the use of different types of media, while at the same time controlling for various socioeconomic factors that are understood to influence political knowledge. Thus, this research will examine issues such as the differences in political knowledge and participation in relation to different types of media use, such as content sharing through social media. Following from these types of considerations, this research will examine how variations in such use relate to political
participation. Overall, this study will attempt to identify insights on media use and political participation, while at the same time accounting for various other issues associated with the knowledge gap hypothesis, and it will endeavor to determine whether the types of media used and the amount of political content accessed can be used as factors to predict political participation in Cairo. Additionally, this study will inform our understanding of audience information seeking behavior when consuming media, and how these patterns relate to political knowledge and activity.

Overall, this study addresses the question of media use effects on democratic consolidation in the context of Egypt, a country that witnessed several protest movements since 2011. This research places media use within the social and political dynamics of Egyptian society, a society where media use and media production is described as the largest and fastest growing in the Arab World (Sakr, 2012). As a result, identifying the possible connections between media use, political knowledge, and participation could provide some answers to what type of media is used by politically active Egyptians. Similarly, the study interrogates the assumption of media as a learning tool, and the role of Internet in political engagement in the context of Egypt, where TV is by far the most dominant medium used.

More specifically, this study investigates the relative effects of media use, both traditional and digital, on political participation and knowledge. Most of the previous research in this area has studied the effect of media use on knowledge and participation in the context of the United States and similar western democratic contexts. Hence, a significant component of this research involves testing hypotheses related to media use,
knowledge, and participation in the context of Egypt, a country that is classified as undemocratic and that is currently in the midst of political turmoil.

The remainder of this Introduction is an overview of the remaining chapters in this thesis. The next chapter primarily involves a review of the scholarly literature that has examined issues of political knowledge and political participation in relation to media consumption habits. Thus, Chapter 2 will include subsections that focus on issues such as communication effects theory, relationships between media use and political participation, and related matters. Overall, the themes as identified in this chapter are considered important for informing and framing the research conducted for this thesis.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methods that were utilized in order to test the hypothesis developed for this study. Hence, Chapter 3 will include subsections that review the previous methodological approaches implemented in similar studies, the process of developing the survey instrument, the population and sampling design used, and the statistical analysis conducted. Overall, the topics discussed in this chapter will provide guidance to the results and the discussion chapters.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the data analysis of the survey conducted for this study. The chapter begins with an overview of the demographic characteristics of survey respondents, then provides the results in relation to the key research questions that have framed this study. Chapter 5 is the conclusion, which includes a discussion of the results of this study in the context of the literature cited in previous chapters.

The main focus of this research is the investigation of the effect of media use on the political knowledge and political participation of citizens living in Cairo, Egypt.
Thus, two key research questions frame this thesis. The first main question is: What is the effect of media use habits on the political knowledge of Egyptians in Cairo? Amongst other things, previous scholarly research conducted on the knowledge gap theory would suggest that, in conjunction with a range of specific demographic characteristics related to phenomena such as income and education, higher frequency of media use for political information leads to higher levels of political knowledge.

The second key research question that frames this study relates to the effect of media use on civic and political forms of participation. Again, previous research suggests that factors such as higher frequency of media use for political information leads to higher levels of civic and political engagement. Overall, the data collected through the survey and these central research questions offer a means to examine the effects of different types of media use on political knowledge and political participation. Furthermore, given the focus on social media and the Internet in much of the contemporary communications-related research, this thesis gives added consideration to the impacts of these forms of media.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review focuses on the historical as well as contemporary scholarly work conducted in relation to the question of political knowledge and political participation in the context of mass communications research. The overall organization of this review consists of three main sections: effects approaches and the knowledge gap hypothesis; the relationship between media use and political participation; and the relationship between political knowledge and political participation in the context of knowledge gap hypothesis. These three themes are considered valuable for understanding a number of important aspects associated with my research, which studies the effect of media use habits on cognitive and behavioral outcomes in post 2011 revolution Egypt.

Communication Effects Approaches and the Knowledge Gap Hypothesis

Media effects has been among the fields widely explored, hypothesized, and validated by communications scholars. The developments that took place in communications effect approaches are tracked chronologically to identify the main trends in media analysis. The main trends in media analysis were: studying the audience’s agency when exposed to media, studying the function of media, and studying media effects in a differential manner. The research conducted on the knowledge gap hypothesis in particular is reviewed to reflect the evolution in communications effects research in general and provide context for the hypotheses proposed for this study.

The developments that took place in communications effects approach have been studied in attempt to categorize the work of different scholars. Ruggiero (2000) provides a useful overview of developments in this approach over time. Communications effect
research emerged in the 1940s and was mainly concerned with why people chose to consume media as well as the effects of media consumption on people’s individual behavior. In the 1950s and 1960s, research was more focused on determining the different social factors that influence people’s media use and gratifications. Moreover, in this period the audience’s choice of media was studied in the context of audience agency (Ruggiero, 2000). For example, Wright (1960) analyzed media use in the context of audience’s use of media to serve deliberate functions such as surveillance, correlation, transmission, entertainment, and mobilization. These functions could lead to different outcomes of media use; knowledge as a result of the surveillance, correlation, and transmission functions of media and participation as a result of mobilization. These researchers were described as being functionalists in their analysis of media viewership in regards to how they accounted for an audience’s agency (Klapper, 1963). It is understood that these researchers studied the reasons behind media use, but did not engage in understanding the outcomes of media use or audience’s motivations.

Alternatively, Blumler (1979) identified the link between media use motivations and information gained from media use. One possible outcome of media use could be the information gained which is a cognitive outcome that emphasizes the learning function associated with media use (Dimitrova, et al., 2014). On the other hand, the knowledge outcome of media use could lead to catalyst effect on participation that is a behavioral outcome of media use (Cohen and Chaffee, 2013). The 1970s witnessed the development of communications effects approaches that attempted to integrate the dynamics of uses and gratifications research with outcomes associated with media use (Palmgreen, and
Rayburn, 1979). Similarly, the 1970s were characterized by the rise of theories about the divergences that result from communications in societies. The knowledge gap theory proposed that the cognitive outcome of media use which is knowledge gained depends on people’s socioeconomic status (Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, 1970). This hypothesis specified socioeconomic status of the audience as the main factor that determined their ability to acquire knowledge and learn from the information transmitted by mass media. This gap in knowledge reflects the divergence in people’s access to information as a result of their media use behavior. As a result, the use of mass media as an information source in a society fosters the existing social structure.

Other scholars, such as Shingi and Mody (1976) expanded on the knowledge gap concept through suggesting that communications effects are “limited neither to any particular mass medium nor just to knowledge effects” (p.127). According to Eveland and Scheufele (2000), the knowledge gap can exist in two forms: at the macro level when it increases over time or at the micro level when events of high media publicity are expected to mitigate the gap compared to events of low media publicity. For example, in the case of elections, since media coverage is high the knowledge gap may not exist in knowledge about the elections among groups of different socio-economic backgrounds.

**Empirical Studies on the Knowledge Gap Hypothesis**

Different scholars have attempted to test the validity of the knowledge gap hypothesis, including in various contexts. This development in theory has been reflected in the research conducted to validate, expand, and challenge the knowledge gap hypothesis when accounting for the context and the differential effect of media use. Such
research has reached varying conclusions about the factors that foster the knowledge gap and how such factors interact. For example, Shah et al. (1999) compared knowledge gap effects in relation to television news viewing when compared to reading newspapers. Their study suggested that reading the newspaper contributed to knowledge more than the educational level of the person or the amount of time spent on consuming television content.

On the other hand, Holbrook (2002) examined presidential campaigns in the United States from 1976 to 1996, and concluded that in instances where mass media coverage was widely consumed, people of lower socioeconomic status had increasing amounts of knowledge compared to those of a higher socioeconomic class. As a result this study countered the general understanding of the knowledge gap hypothesis and shed the light on the role of media publicity in the knowledge gap. More recently, in an attempt to apply the knowledge gap theory, Hindman (2012) tested the relationship between political group affiliation and people’s knowledge of the health care reform act. This study provided insights on the role of prior knowledge and political beliefs in predicting differentials in political information seeking. It concluded that political identification, rather than socioeconomic status, can be a more accurate predictor of the knowledge gap.

Elenbaas et al. (2013) conducted a two-stage panel survey and media content analysis on an event of relative high media publicity, which is the European Union Summit in Brussels in 2008. They concluded that the availability of information about these political events facilitated the respondents’ acquisition of information and this
relationship is strengthened by audience motivation. As a result, this study combined both approaches to knowledge gap hypothesis: the micro through panel surveys, and macro level through incorporating media publicity. Additionally, they expanded on the role of structural factors in knowledge acquisition through their analysis of information availability on the preferred media. However, they conducted this study using web surveys for data collection, which could impose an inherent shortcoming in their findings. This defect could be as a result of access issues where only individuals of high socio-economic status access the Internet and hence, this would lead to an invisible information acquisition bias.

As suggested, the communication effects research and specifically the research that included some elements of the knowledge gap theory, has explored different scenarios regarding the existence of a knowledge gap in relation to various communication mediums. In addition, research suggests that it is necessary to study the differential effect of a range of variables on different groups of people, including in a way to account for the multi-dimensionality of this phenomenon as suggested in the communications effects approach. Hence, a focus of this thesis is to explore these types of matters in the context of contemporary Cairo.

Relationships between Media Use and Political Participation

The topic of political participation has been widely covered and understood from a number of different angles. In short, political participation has been defined in a variety of different ways. For example, Gustafson (2012) noted that it is important to differentiate political participation from political attitudes, learning and knowledge, and
that the definition of political participation should only include active methods of
influencing a political system. Gustafson’s definition also includes political participation
in the form of participation in interest groups. Dalton (2002) developed what has become
common categorizations of participation, which consist of voting, campaign activity,
contacting officials, and protest activity. Other research has added dimensions that
include signing petitions and boycotting. Bucy and Gregson (2001) suggested that
classifications of participation should differ along the lines of electoral participation
through voting, versus other forms of participation that they identify as not having as
much engagement as voting.

Similar to the concept of political participation having a range of definitions,
relationships between media use and political participation have been identified in a
variety of different ways, with such understandings often being dependent upon the type
of media used and the nature of political participation concerned. The relationships
examined are often dependent upon the nature of a given study, and can relate to the type
of media use assessed in a given study. For example, in the context of media use and
political participation, Ostman (2012) analyzed Internet use, Jenssen (2013) studied TV
and newspaper consumption habits, and Taneja et al. (2012) examined cross platform
media use. All of these studies were somewhat different in their approaches and findings.

A brief review of only some of these types of studies offers a means to
demonstrate these types of differences. Among the main differences in the studies on the
relationship between media use and political participation is whether the scholars were
optimistic about the relationship or pessimistic about the effect of media use on
participation. The pessimists about the role of media use in channeling citizens’ participation argue that the evolution of media led to its exclusivity in empowering citizens to participate. For example, in relation to the idea of political participation, Graham (1999) argued that the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for political campaigns in the 1990s was a tool used by elites to effectively dominate politics.

In this fashion, other scholars theorize that the political influence on media to be the reason behind the incapability of media in encouraging participation. For example, Downey and Fenton (2003) examined political activities in the context of propaganda, where politics is used to interfere in media and hence create a “counter public sphere” that doesn’t reflect democratic principles. Sakr (2012) has suggested that politics can influence media in different capacities, such as when unequal offline power relations extend to inequality on the online system.

Similarly, Wolfsfeldn, Segev, and Sheafer (2013) developed the hypothesis that the political context leads to media’s effect on events, known as Politics Media Politics principle (PMP). PMP approach accounts for the political context when studying the effect of media use and specifically social media use on different political outcomes such as cognitive (knowledge) or behavioral (participation). However, their idea of “politics not only comes first but comes last” doesn’t provide input for future research, as their definition of politics is very generic and different actions in different context could fall within this category. Sakr (2012) addressed this phenomenon in the context of Egypt with regards to the political contribution of media outlets. According to his study, Al Jazeera,
compared to other Egyptian satellite channels, did not have prominent political contributions. Even if both media outlets (Al Jazeera and Egyptian Channels) covered political content, the outcome of their coverage on political events was of different significance.

This political effect contributes to the knowledge gap hypothesis where socioeconomic heterogeneity, which is a form of offline inequality, affects citizens’ media use and by extension affects their knowledge of political events. Another demonstration of how politics affects media is reflected in Sakr’s (2012) statement about Egyptian media, where “corporate power resonates with the facts of social media use in Egypt” (p. 324). In other words, given that corporate and political tycoons control satellite media in Egypt, these structures extend to the online sphere where large corporations such as Facebook and Google control social media. As suggested through all of this aforementioned work, understanding the political economy of media is essential to understanding how media affects users, and by extension contributes to the cognitive and behavioral outcomes of media use.

On the other hand, more optimistic accounts about the role of media in participation theorize the development of nature of media to include different content creators as a demonstration of participation in media that could encourage on the ground participation. Somewhat in contrast to these understandings and approaches, media use and political participation has been examined in relation to issues such as the creation of user-generated content and in relation to the practices of citizen journalism. Yet even in these regards, studies that have examined relationships between user generated content
and political engagement have resulted in different conclusions. A number of scholars (e.g., Baker and De Vreese, 2011; Pasek et al., 2006; and Kaufhold et al., 2010) have argued that citizen journalism has democratic implications due to the fact that this journalism practice diversifies the political content to which people are exposed.

Khamis (2011) in her study about the developments in the Egyptian media sphere with the introduction of satellite television in the 1990s. In her analysis she suggested that satellite media offered an uncensored alternative to government-owned and -regulated media through the birth of many small opposition newspapers.

As a result one could expect that this move towards a pluralistic media scene of different entities generating media content could reflect a pluralistic political scene. However, this sophistication of the means of information in Egypt weren’t matched by participation before the revolution of 2011. Accordingly, this margin of freedom allowed for the coexistence of independent media regardless of state repression. This independent media created the “safety valve” role as where people channel their anger at the government without actively participating in changing the situation (Khamis, 2011). In this regard, it could be concluded that the success of the revolution in toppling Mubarak regime was due to the participation in media that was matched by participation in the streets. Hence, this media development contributed to providing people with relevant information can attribute to increased citizen participation (Carpentier, 2011). These types of studies conclude that increasing news media consumption leads to increased political participation; however, these types of assessments have rarely incorporated elements of the knowledge gap hypothesis.
Contextual Arguments on Media Use and Participation

Research more directly incorporating knowledge gap considerations has been grounded in the context of concepts such as media literacy and media functions. Media literacy has discussed in the work of various scholars (e.g., Koltay, 2011; Martin and Madigan, 2006; and Webster and Phalen, 1997). In general, for the audience to be media literate, awareness of how media functions must be achieved. Hence, a prerequisite for the relationship between media use and political participation according to the media literacy scholars is the awareness of the political and commercial implications of media (Webster and Phalen, 1997). This idea of media literacy highlights media’s role in constructing the audience. On the other hand, Eveland and Scheufele’s (2000) work tangentially draws upon knowledge gap related considerations through demonstrating a connection between knowledge and participation through the "mobilizing function" (p. 220) of media use. This function enables citizens to participate as media situates the political events in a position of proximity to them, and hence, makes it easier for people to relate to the events and to eventually act.

Since participation is considered a behavioral outcome that could result from media use, then participation is determined as well by psychological and socio-structural factors. The psychological factors were highlighted by Boulianne (2009) in the meta-analysis study that summarized the scholarly work conducted on the effect of Internet use on political engagement between two sets of studies conducted before and after 2000. According to Boulianne (2009), there are two factors that could hinder finding significant conclusions on the effect of Internet on engagement: political interest, and the effect of
respondents’ political participation on Internet use, which weren’t accounted for in previous studies. Hence, people’s political interest and their political participation could influence their media use, not the other way round. Furthermore, Boulianne (2009) found that the studies conducted before 2000 lacked sufficient evidence to assume that Internet use leads to engagement.

On the other hand, the studies conducted after 2000, did find evidence on this relationship, however Boulianne (2009) noted that they exaggerated their findings. In spite of the critical insight provided by this study, Boulianne restricted the study’s findings to include the motivational aspects of Internet use without situating the “information seeking” (p.194) function of Internet and by extension political engagement. This shortcoming might have occurred due to the focus on only the published studies in the meta-analysis, which reached contradictory results with regards to the effect of political engagement (Boulianne, 2009). In the end, this meta-analysis study reflects the two camps that represent different views about the role of media use and specifically Internet on political participation (Wolfsfeldn, Segev, & Sheafer, 2013).

Similar conclusions have been reached by scholars with regards to the lens of analyzing the relationship between media use and participation in the political system. The optimists about the role of media in channeling participation and the pessimists have incorporated the different contextual arguments discussed such as media literacy and media functions. For example, the pessimists’ argument about the influence of political events on media in the approach of Wolfsfeldn, Segev, and Sheafer (2013) — known as Politics Media Politics principle (PMP) — incorporates some contextual elements. The
different ideas within the PMP principle gave credit to Boulianne’s (2009) conclusions on the political factors effect on engagement when connected to media use. Hence, the information seeking function of media when combined with political interest in a certain political context can either facilitate or challenge the role of media in mobilizing participation.

Overall, political participation can be understood to occur in a variety of different ways. Adding the concept of media to political participation, and exploring the various possible relationships between media and political participation, leads to an even greater range of ideas and possibilities to consider. The different debates on whether media use could lead to engagement and the contextual arguments that govern the plausibility of this relationship are among the possibilities to consider when studying this relationship. As a result, the contextual arguments developed on this relationship lack incorporating the knowledge gap literature. The knowledge gap theory is of relevance to the relationship between media use and participation because it incorporates the contextual factors such as media literacy in the form of socioeconomic class’s effect on knowledge and media functions in directly testing the role of media on information seeking and knowledge. Thus, among the contributions of this study is expanding the understanding of knowledge gap hypothesis to include participation as both a predictor of knowledge and could be predicted by knowledge.

*Digital Media Use and Political Participation*

An important type of media that is heavily studied in that literature is digital media with all its different types and uses. Given that this thesis is largely focused on the
relationship between new media technologies and political participation in Cairo, though also with the understanding that research has examined media use and political participation in a variety of forms, the rest of this literature review will primarily focus on political participation and relatively contemporary, digital media technologies. This section examines in more detail the scholarly work that has identified relationships between digital media and political participation. Among the main theoretical concepts discussed in relation to the effect of digital media use on political participation is the concept of efficacy and the evolution of digital media forms.

The relationship between digital media use and political participation has been theorized in the context of political self-efficacy, such that some concluded that the nature of digital media that allows for audience interaction could enhance the audience’s efficacy in the political system. Additionally, these studies utilized empirical approaches to provide validity for these ideas. Hence, this section discusses the theoretical concepts that conclude the relationship between digital media use and political participation and then discusses some of the studies conducted on this topic.

There are several approaches to theorizing the relationship between digital media use and political participation. For example, Bucy and Gregson (2001) in their work on media participation discussed the symbolic empowering role of using digital or emergent media. This idea suggests that new media use contributes to creating what Bucy and Gregson suggested —“positive citizen evaluations of public sphere” (P. 358). This positive evaluation could occur as a result of the citizens’ perception that digital media provides a venue to be heard in the public sphere. As a result, being heard in the public sphere could
increase the audience’s satisfaction of the use of digital media when compared to traditional media. Additionally, Kenski and Stround (2006) studied the role of Internet use in informing and engaging citizens who would participate in consolidating the democracy of a country. Using empirical data they concluded that Internet use enhanced citizens’ internal efficacy that once combined with external efficacy in the political system could facilitate political change.

The interrelation between perception of citizen’s media use and the ability to achieve political attainments paves the way to political efficacy as discussed by Eastin and LaRose (2006). Once citizens believe that their behavior can create change in the political system, they could feel motivated to act to change the system. This political efficacy is both internal and external because it includes the citizens’ confidence in the system and participation in politics (internal efficacy) and the government’s receptiveness to people’s demands (external efficacy) (Kenski & Stround, 2006).

Dimitrova, et al., (2014) expand on the relationship between internal and external efficacy achieved from digital media use. They concluded that digital media use contributed to the democratic process through citizens’ participation in media that may achieve direct political change in the system and achieve behavioral change. In this regard, the symbolic empowerment function of media (Bucy and Gregson, 2001) could take the form of increased consumer satisfaction of digital media use on the premises of the internal and external efficacy.

In spite of their thorough analysis of the effect of digital media on political knowledge and participation Dimitrova, et al., (2014), did not account for the role of
structural factors such as the socioeconomic status and the media system that could affect citizens’ political and self-efficacy that in return affects their perception of media. Self-efficacy could be affected by the socioeconomic status; hence citizens of high socioeconomic status could be more active on the media sphere and on the ground. While citizens of lower socioeconomic status, may not be motivated to participate politically due to their lack of efficacy in the system. Similarly, citizens of lower socioeconomic status may not have access to technology to participate in media, which could contribute to lack of citizens’ engagement in media and offline participation. The dynamics of interaction between self and political efficacy, media satisfaction, and participation in media or offline is further investigated in this study’s research questions in the context of the survey conducted in Cairo, Egypt.

*Digital Divide’s Implications on Knowledge and Participation*

Digital divide included different theorizations explaining the difference in people’s acquisition of technology and its implications on people’s knowledge and attitude. However some theorists like (Warschauer, 2003) are critical of the technological determinism associated with digital divide that would attribute social change to the possession of hardware and software. The current trend in this scholarly areas calls for accounting to the social and political factors in play in a society that govern the possession of these tools but also affect the outcome knowledge and attitude change.

As for the relationship between participation and media use and in specific Internet usage, participation divides are referred to in the context of the digital divide. The inequalities in the online content creation and specifically in the online political
participation could be explained by the socioeconomic inequalities due to differences in education and income (Lutz and Hoffmann, 2014). Reflecting on the digital divide based on a survey of the Dutch population, it was concluded that the physical access to technology may have diminished in the Danish context yet significant differences remain in terms of differential skills in the use of digital media that mostly controlled by factors such as education and income (van Deursen and Van Dijk, 2014). As a result, this divide is no longer in terms of access to technology as much as it is in terms of the use of technology, which is relevant to the knowledge gap theory in terms of the differential effect of media use on knowledge and by extension on participation.

As a result, people of high socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to use internet in capital enhancing activities such as which includes seeking political or government information, exploring career opportunities and consulting information about financial and health services (van Deursen and Van Dijk, 2014). In addition to that, the differences in online political participation as mentioned earlier are affected by other factors such as the political motivation that is attributed to the interactive nature of online media when compared to traditional media. Hence, this interactive nature of online media provides more grounds to influencing political participation compared to traditional media, yet the differentials in traditional media use extend to digital media which could lead to participation gaps based on divides in digital media use.

*The Role of Different Forms of Digital Media*

In order to reach evidence on the relationship between digital media use and political participation, this section maps some of the studies that empirically test this
relationship. Political communication studies endeavored to understand the relationship between digital media use and participation since the development of the Internet capabilities and the emergence of different forms of Internet use (Dimitrova, et al., 2014; Foot, et al.; 2003, Foot & Schneider, 2006; Foot et al., 2009). Foot and Schneider (2006) created four indices to categorize Internet activity by political actors when studying the effect of Internet electoral campaigning. These indices were informing, involving, connecting, and mobilizing.

The main difference between these practices is the level of engagement in content creation, is the availability of venues for the audience to interact with the content producer, and the expected behavioral outcome of this communication form. Dimitrova, et al., (2014) analyzed the indices created by Foot and Schneider (2006) through creating a matrix studying these digital media functions (informing, involving, connecting, and mobilizing) in relation to the different forms of digital media. As a result what distinguishes social media from online news sites, and political party sites is its low contribution to the informing function, which is high for online news sites, and medium for political party sites.

On the other hand, social media scored the highest with regards to the remaining functions that require interactivity, and mobilization. This tool that integrated the function of digital media and the different types of websites on digital media could help facilitate studies where the →web sphere is the unit of analysis” (Foot, et al., 2003). However, in the case of social media’s informative function Dimitrova, et al., (2014)
didn’t address the interaction between the online news sites, and political party sites that could take place on social media platforms when users share content from such venues. Sakr (2012) in his analysis of the media sphere in Egypt elaborated on the need to study the effect of online- offline interaction to understand the different effects of communicative spheres. Hence, the interaction between the different forms of digital media that could take place on social media is instrumental to understand the informative function of social media. Additionally, according to Dimitrova et al. party websites contribute the most to mobilizing the audience. As a result, with the development of social media use to include party websites presence, studying the interactivity between party websites and social media is required to assess the role of social media in mobilizing the audience.

Inspired by the different digital functions coined by Foot and Schneider (2006), the survey tackled different uses of social media that utilized the informing, involving, connecting, and mobilizing functions. However, for simplicity I have merged the informing and involving functions to one category labeled content sharing, which includes the user generated content (i.e. sharing one’s opinion on social media) and the mainstream content that is shared from news websites and political parties’ websites. Additionally, the connecting and mobilizing functions could be merged to represent the use of social media to call for action such as encouraging people to vote, joining a political party page on social media, signing a petition, and demonstrating.

In the end, digital media’s importance varies by societies. Howard, and Hussain (2013) in their study about the role of digital media in the events of the Arab spring noted
two different reasons behind the success of digital media in achieving political outcomes among the Arab civic activists. Civic activists in the Arab region used digital media because traditional media venues were unreachable given that they lacked proper connections or due to the fact that digital media provided ‘anonymity to those who advanced political criticism’ (Howard & Hussain, 2013).

Hence, digital media was advantageous to activists in two ways; one providing access, and the other is providing privacy and in extension protection from state censorship, even though it may not be guaranteed with the advancement in using digital media for censoring online activism (Howard & Hussain, 2013). On the other hand, this study didn’t account for the role of the type of media uses (traditional or emergent) on the self-efficacy of the media consumer, such that different scholars have found significant associations between the type of media used and the citizens’ self and political self-efficacy which in extension could affect citizens’ political knowledge and participation (Bucy & Gregson, 2001; Kenski & Stround, 2006; and, Dimitrova, et al., 2014).

Relationship between Political Knowledge and Political Participation

This part of the literature review will attempt to answer questions pertaining to the relationship between knowledge — a cognitive outcome of media use — and participation — a behavioral outcome of media use — in the context of knowledge gap research. Among the main questions tackled in the literature discussed below are how the available scholarly work links political participation and political knowledge in the context of the role of socioeconomic status in affecting the citizens’ level of knowledge and participation. Answers to this question would clarify the interrelation between
political knowledge and political participation while accounting for knowledge gap considerations. In addition, the scholarly works discussed include some academic insights developed as a result of the recent wave of protests in Egypt and other countries.

Socioeconomic status has been the underlying construct behind the knowledge gap, as outlined earlier in this chapter, and hence studying the effect of this construct on political participation is useful to gain an understanding of the differential effect of media use. As discussed earlier among the main functions of media is mediating function where media is the catalyst of information delivery. Some scholars studied the effect of socioeconomic status on knowledge and participation within the mediation effect of media. For example, Eveland and Scheufele (2000) in an empirical study predicting knowledge and participation levels in the United States.

In an attempt to provide specificity to the knowledge gap hypothesis and to integrate participation in that framework, they predicted that the gap in knowledge would be greater among the light users of television. However, their analysis of the 1996 American National Election Study (ANES) didn’t achieve conclusive findings with regards to the effect of the knowledge gap on the light and heavy newspaper users. On the other hand, the participation gap that Eveland and Scheufele (2000) were concerned with depended on one type of participation, which is voting. Voting, even though widely used in different knowledge gap related research, does not reflect the dynamics of the gap, which could be present in other forms of participation (i.e. Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; Lee & Yang, 2014; and Tran, 2013).
On the other hand, Eveland and Scheufele (2000) suggested that media use didn’t account for voting gaps unlike the other participation forms that demonstrated a behavioral gap once newspaper was accounted for as a type of media use. This study integrates the media use effect on both participation and knowledge while accounting for the effect of knowledge in a distinctive way, such that education was inputted as an interaction variable whose effect was studied at different media use levels. This use of education and income as socioeconomic status indicators showed how media use mediates the association between education and knowledge, and education and participation. In their findings, Eveland and Scheufele confirmed that voting is the type of participation that didn’t demonstrate a gap due to education, even though media use had an effect on voter turnout. This finding notes a disassociation between media and education, such that even if media had an effect on voting, this effect could have existed due to the effect of education on media use. As a result, this finding needed further evidence using different statistical tools such as the structural equation modeling that was used by Tran (2013) or providing some partial correlation measurements on the relationship between media and voter turnout.

In the nationally representative panel study on Korean citizens’ media use and political knowledge, Lee and Yang (2014) determined political knowledge to be facilitated by the educational level of the citizen. Additionally, the main contribution of their findings has been distinguishing between the “traditional news seekers” and the “emerging news seeker” such that the traditional news seekers actively seek news on traditional media, while the emergent seekers depend exclusively on new media.
According to their study, the interaction between education and traditional media use has yielded higher political knowledge compared to the emerging media users with the same educational background as the traditional media users. This study provided insights on the differences in knowledge acquisition across groups of different media use habits (Lee, & Yang, 2014). However, this study didn’t account for the differences in media ecology from one country to the next. For instance, South Korea is considered to be a free country according to Freedom House’s classification of world governments (Freedom House, 2014). As a result, it would be expected the media in South Korea to be representative and transparent as the government respects personal and civic rights.

Nevertheless, if this study took place in a different country where the media is subject to censorship or political paternalism, these results could vary considerably. Also, the categorization of the consumers of media into three groups (avoiders, traditional seekers, and emergent seekers) assuming their independence, isn’t of use for countries where both media spheres the traditional and emergent affect each other and could lead to political change. For example in Egypt, Saker (2013) highlighted the role of hybridization of media use between traditional and digital in bringing change to the political environment, and hence this hybridization is important to analyze when studying the effect of media on political knowledge and political participation.

Thus, these studies presented on the mediated effect of media use on knowledge and participation gap is an area that provides further depth to the question of knowledge gaps. In that regard, this research expands on these studies by incorporating different
types of media and participation should reach more decisive and representative inferences.

In the end, this chapter discussed the literature in the context of the research questions outlined in the first chapter. The main theoretical foundation of this research is the knowledge gap theory that has been extensively studied and expanded in a manner that provides vitality for studying it in Cairo, Egypt.

An in-depth review of the different studies conducted on the relationship between media use and knowledge, media use and knowledge, and the interrelation between knowledge and participation has been provided. From the review, different themes emerged that provide guidance to this research such as the role of traditional media in political knowledge, the emergent and evolving effect of digital media on participation, and the role of socio-economic status in predicting knowledge gaps. All these themes suggest the importance of studying the differential and multidimensional effect of media use on political knowledge and participation. In that regard, this research echoes the calls of earlier researchers in the field of communications effects research and tests the arguments developed recently on the role of media in the recent protest movements in Egypt and other countries. The next chapter will discuss the methods involved in this study and different methodological considerations that pave the way to synthesizing the results.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological considerations that informed the approach to this research. It begins with a brief introduction to the previous methodological approaches used in studies similar to this analysis. This chapter also provides a detailed description of how the survey was developed, the population included in this research and the approaches taken to sampling from that population, as well as issues such as the approach to pretesting the survey instrument. The end of this chapter includes an overview of the statistical analysis used to analyze the survey data, and that served as the basis for the results chapter of this thesis.

Previous Approaches to Related Research

As perhaps evident in the previous chapter, scholars have employed a variety of approaches to examining relationships between media use and issues such as political knowledge and political participation. Hence, this section reviews some of the methodological approached used by the scholars cited in the literature review section. The most typical methodological approach to examining such matters has been through the use of surveys (Bucy & Gregson, 2001; Downey, & Fenton, 2003, Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; and Lee & Yang, 2014). Other studies, such as the work of Boulianne (2009) and Hwang and Jeong (2009), involved meta-analyses that evaluated the findings of previous published research on the knowledge gap hypothesis and the effect of media use on political engagement. On the other hand, some studies depended on the use of mixed methods; for example surveys and interviews for evaluating the respondents’ political knowledge and hence provide implications for knowledge gap research such as
Levendusky and Jackman (2003). Studies employing qualitative approaches to examining the knowledge gap hypothesis, as well as media use and political participation, have been rare. In short, the primary means of conducting research related to this thesis has been survey research and related quantitative analysis.

Scholars have taken a variety of approaches to conducting surveys of this nature, from online surveys, to telephone surveys, to face-to-face interviews. Similar to this study, face-to-face surveys have often been utilized to collect data for knowledge gap research (e.g., Bucy & Gregson 2001; Downey & Fenton, 2003; Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; Kenski & Stround, 2006). Nonetheless, other approaches have been used as well, including online surveys (e.g., Lee and Yang, 2014) and telephone surveys (e.g., Pasek et al., 2006).

The data collection for this thesis involved distributing a paper-based survey in person. This choice was driven by the need to include respondents from different socioeconomic classes and different walks of life without infringing on their privacy by using telephone numbers. Similarly, conducting the survey online could exclude, for example, members of the population who did not have an Internet connection or who were disinclined to use the Internet. Developing the survey questions was based upon a number of factors, including the nature of the overall research and the key concepts that emerged from the literature review. Furthermore, constructing the survey instrument involved examining a range of existing instruments that had a connection to this proposed research. The next sections identify how questions, and series of questions, in the survey
were used to gather data in relation to the various key concepts that served as the basis for this research.

*Defining Political Knowledge*

As referred to in the literature review section, political knowledge has been widely studied in different context. In existing survey research, scholars have developed a variety of questions that tackle categories that include, for example, governance and current affairs knowledge. For example the PEW research center administers national surveys on political knowledge in the United States following the same categorization. As a result, for the political knowledge section for this survey three categories were adopted incorporating factual questions relevant to the Egyptian context. As a result, among the main objectives of the pilot testing on the survey instrument was to ensure the validly of the political knowledge questions and that the questions represent the categories accurately. Among the challenges faced while developing this portion of the survey was the instability of the political system in Egypt, which affected the current affairs questions.

*Defining Political Participation*

As outlined in the literature review, media use in political communication discourse is accompanied by different expected outcomes: knowledge, and participation. Hence, capturing the participation effect of knowledge gap is essential as well as provides venues for studying the hypothesis of participation gap. Among the main methodological challenges faced in the survey design was the operationalization of participation into different questions that would capture different forms of participation, and their time
interval. Different studies have used different techniques: focusing on voting behavior as proxy for participation (Eveland & Scheufele, 2000), focusing on participation intentions due to the difficulty in studying behavior (Eastin, & LaRose, 2006), distinguishing between the civic and more political forms of participation (Boulianne, 2009), and recently, categorizing engagement into online and offline activities that affect the political system (Dimitrova, et al., 2014).

After studying the different reasons behind the different categorizations and methods for studying participation that results in some form of political change, I decided to use the categorization that was adopted by PEW research center (2014) in their Internet project research that included a section on engagement of civic and political nature. They measured engagement through eight activities where half of them were political while the others were civic. The four forms of civic engagement were: working informally with social groups, volunteering, called or visited an official to express an opinion, and called a newspaper to express an opinion. On the other hand the political engagement forms where: participation in a protest, and/or demonstration, signed a petition, joined a political party, and voting frequency. Since the literature identified the significance of including some political interest measurements as well as people’s indirect participation, I included some questions about ranking the importance of following political information, and a question about the frequency of encouraging other people to vote. Additionally, due to the relevance of studying online participation in Egypt after the occurrence of the Arab spring and the mass of academic material theorizing digital forms of engagement in that context, I included a section on social media participation. This
section is one that merges media use with participation, hence some elements of that section are analyzed within the media use theme, and other elements are studies with participation forms. As result, the inclusion of this section could be viewed as a way to interrogate Boulianne, 2009’s idea about the need to include the effect of engagement on internet participation and not only the effect of internet use on engagement.

Foot and Schneider (2006) have grouped the different functions users perform on the Internet, into these: informing, involving, connecting and mobilizing functions. Consequently, I adopted this rationale to measure social media participating in my survey instrument. In order to tackle social media participation accurately, I have merged the informing and involving functions to one category labeled content sharing, which includes user generated content such as sharing one’s opinion on social media, and the mainstream content that is shared from news websites and political parties’ websites. While the connecting and mobilizing functions could be merged to represent the use of social media to call for action such as encouraging people to vote, or joining a political party page on social media.

As a result, capturing the different aspects of participation required adopting different measurement techniques developed by different theorists and policy researchers while accounting for the context where this participation is measured. For example, some form of participation such as signing petitions may not be an important feature of participation in a country where petitions were rarely effective. However given the recent events that occurred in Egypt staring 2013 and the campaign of the rebellion petitions and eventually the June 30 wave of protests, including petitions as a form of participation
became instrumental in that survey given its participatory magnitude and the effect of this participation form on the recent developments in Egypt. Unlike the US where forms such as signing petitions aren’t as widely used in political participation.

Similarly, including the time factor when asking the participation question especially for the political participation forms such as protesting, and voting. Engagement in these forms of political expression in 2013 is considered to be different from participating in 2012. Morsi was elected in June 2012, and after his presidency there were a lot of protests against the Muslim Brotherhood and the Military for committing violations against the protesters and Egyptians in general. However, protesting in 2013 especially when rebelling against Morsi’s reign, could be associated with the support to the June 30, 2013 wave of protests that were strictly against the Muslim Brotherhood rule and not against atrocities in general. As a result, providing the time factor when studying these participation forms for that it provides insights on some of the trends associated with some political participation forms while accounting for the concept that two time points aren’t sufficient for trend analysis. At the same time, it considers the different forms of participation and their differences with regardless to the timeliness, the political opinion, and the participants that engage in these forms of participation.

**Defining Media Use and Frequency of Media Use**

Similar to the procedure followed in operationalizing the study, relevant aspects of political knowledge, political participation, and social media participation. The different ways of measuring media use forms including traditional media (i.e. television, newspaper, and radio) and digital media (i.e. Internet) included frequency, satisfaction,
and perception as indicated by previous research. Building on the previous studies concerned with media use i.e. Cooper and Tang, 2009, Pasek, Kenski, Romer, and Jamieson (2006), and Taneja, Webster, Malthouse, and Ksiazek, (2012). Specifically, Pasek, Kenski, Romer, and Jamieson (2006) noted that television content, Internet use, and newspapers content contribute to knowledge and engagement attributes. As noted in the literature review, Sakr (2012) and Khamis (2012) shed the light on the recent political role played by talk show programs in Egypt, and hence television content was divided in the survey into news, and talk shows. Similarly, Internet was divided into written news and multimedia content that could include online political shows. On the other hand, newspaper and radio were measured as a whole regardless of the type of content.

As indicated in the literature review chapter, Pasek, Kenski, Romer, and Jamieson (2006) noted that the mediation role of media increases with the increase of the duration of media use. As a result, the media use attributes in this survey was estimated through measuring the time people spend consuming political content on different media venues. Thus, when measuring the frequency of media use, the average consumption in hours per week for each sub-category of media use this study was concerned with: TV news content, TV Talk show content, Newspaper, Internet content, and Radio was recorded. Additionally, Cooper, and Tang 2009 highlighted the value added from incorporating media satisfaction to provide some analysis on the psychology of media use. Furthermore, the previous research work by Pew and other policy centers used some questions to capture perceptions of people’s media use habits. Consequently, this section of the survey measured the frequency, satisfaction, and perceptions of traditional and
digital media use as informed by previous research. The next section discusses some of the challenges confronted in conducting this research.

Methodological and Design Considerations

In general there were two main challenges associated with conducting this research: the data collection planning process, and the actual data collection. The first set of challenges was faced when developing the survey instrument for this study. The second set of difficulties was faced in the field when collecting the data from the sampling frame given the current circumstances in Egypt. The different studies conducted in Egypt that depend on survey tools, have referred to the sensitivity of asking respondents about their income, which is something culturally inappropriate. However due to the importance of studying socioeconomic status in knowledge and participation research, I have adopted some of the techniques used by previous studies. Consequently, income was divided into 5 categories, which represent the socioeconomic variation and at the same time could encourage the respondents to answer this question, as it doesn’t require exact details. As a result, this question achieved acceptable reporting percentages, which insured its inclusion in the survey analysis.

In order to overcome some of the problems associated with the self-reporting, questions that seek to identify media use attributes as outlined by Chaffee, and Schleuder (1986), I have used different types of similar questions to ensure reliability. For example, in order to measure media use preference among participants the survey asked two questions: one was related to the most favorite media as a source of political information, and the second question was identifying the most recently used media for political
information. The survey results with regards to these two questions suggested that overall the percentages for the most recently used media were consistently higher than the percentages reached when asked about the favorite source of media for political information. This result was expected as we depend on different media to gather information, however this doesn’t mean that this media is our favorite source. Adding the most recent media used question provided a venue to test the scale of interpersonal information when sharing and discussing political information, which has been referred to in the literature to affect the learning achieved from media use and hence, could affect political knowledge.

A pilot test of the survey was conducted as a way to test, among other things, issues such as the clarity and consistency of the questionnaire, and in a way to assess whether or not the political knowledge questions would provide sufficient variability in their responses. Though the sample for the pilot test was small (20 respondents), this initial assessment did yield some important insights that have informed and resulted in some changes in the survey.

Some reliability tests were conducted (i.e. Cronbach's alpha) to insure the ability of the different survey questions in measuring the different concept spaces studied in this survey such as political knowledge, political participation, and social media use. The results of these reliability tests informed the amendments to the survey that was finally used for this study.
**Population and Sampling Design**

The survey designed for this study aimed at answering the questions of media use, social media participation, political knowledge and political participation by sampling primarily from the recreational club members and staff from Cairo, Egypt. Given the constraints of implementing a relatively widespread survey – especially as a graduate student where there are time, resource, and other constraints – a process have been identified that allowed the collection of data from a group that is somewhat reflective of the diverse population living in Cairo, while at the same time as manageable in terms of the data collection process.

The population of the study was the members and staff of private sporting clubs in Cairo, Egypt, which, according to government resources, totals 79 (Egyptian Ministry of State for Sports Affairs, 2013). Drawing upon both members and staff who attend, or work at, these clubs, will allow me to collect data that include variations in age, levels of income, education attainment, and from across different professions. For example, given that membership in these sporting clubs is determined by the ability to pay the yearly fees.

If the sample includes the members only it will exclude certain social and economic levels so this can be compensated by sampling from the staff of the club that has more variability in social, economic and educational levels. The estimated total number of members in all of Cairo’s sporting clubs is around 2.5 million members, so again given the time and resource constraints associated with implementing a survey of this nature, this research will employ a two-stage cluster
sampling design. The sporting clubs in Cairo can be grouped into three categories in relation to total cost of membership, such that there are 29 clubs with a total cost of 20,000 EGP (equivalent to 2,900$) or less; 30 clubs with a with a total cost of membership more than 20,000 EGP and less than 50,000 EGP; and 20 clubs with a total cost of membership of more than 50,000 EGP (Egyptian Ministry of State for Sports Affairs, 2013). Thus, the first stage in the sampling process entailed segmenting the sporting clubs into three clusters according to their membership cost. I randomly selected a club from each of the three clusters of clubs as the first sampling stage.

The sample size for each of the three selected clubs followed the simple random sampling equation that was developed by Cochran’s (1977) for the calculation of the sample size depending on the error, type of data collected and the population size. Following from this, I distributed the survey to a total of approximately 170 members and staff at each of these clubs, and the final surveys included in my analysis are 157. This sample size should hopefully yield adequate variation in issues such as gender, socioeconomic characteristics, and media consumption habits across the overall sample.

The research subjects were recruited through a multistage cluster random sampling where the primary sampling units (sporting clubs) were clustered into three clusters based on the membership cost range of the sporting clubs. Then within each of the clusters 3 clubs were randomly selected while accounting for geographic diversity to make sure that the final clubs selected represent different districts in Cairo. The final sampling units (the individuals sampled) were sampled, such that I selected around 19 respondents from every club. The respondents were either members, onetime visitors, and
staff working at the selected clubs. The respondents were selected while accounting for diversifying the sample across the different demographic and socioeconomic features. Given that it would be hard to acquire a list of the people in the club to choose them randomly, I would go to the social gathering areas for each club and approach some of the tables that have different people sitting on it and ask one or two persons to fill in the survey. Obtaining the waiver of consent from the Ohio University IRB facilitated the use of this convenience approach. As a result, the consent is achieved once the respondents fill out the survey and hand it back to me as the data collector.

**Administering the Survey**

Administering the survey for this study followed the rationale of developing the survey instrument, such that previous research cited in the literature and researcher’s experiences were of guidance in this step. The administration steps discussed here includes the timing of data collection, the non-response attained from administering the survey, language of administration, the coding scheme, and the types of survey forms that were discarded.

Following the timeline proposed for this study, the survey administration took place in July 2013, where the researcher primarily collected the paper and pencil surveys from the planned sample. The timing of administering the survey was crucial because this summer was anticipated to be one where major political events would take place. Hence, I decided to administer the survey in July, after the Supreme Council of Armed Forces assumed power over the country. That timing coincided with Ramadan the holy month
for Muslims where they fast and do other religious rituals; hence this timing should be considered when analyzing the survey results.

The setting for survey administration was the desired sampling frame of the randomly selected sporting clubs, where the researcher went to the desired clubs, asked for permission, and then distributed and collected the survey. The primary area chosen for sampling people from those clubs, were the social gathering area, where the researcher would approach people and ask them if they are willing to fill out this survey, and then wait until they return it. In general, the survey had a high response rate, due to the fact that it was administered face to face, so if the sampled individuals didn’t want to participate they would not take a questionnaire in the first place. However, a very few number of respondents didn’t return the survey, and that could be because they couldn’t find me and had to leave the club. Additionally, some respondents could not read and write, and didn’t want the researcher to read the survey for them and asked to take the questionnaire and return it later, which may not reach the researcher. However, these cases were very rare and hence didn’t yield less than 90% response rate.

Among the main considerations in administering the survey was the issue of language, hence the survey was written in colloquial Egyptian Arabic so that it would be easy for the participants to understand and relate to. Additionally, there was a statement of purpose at the beginning of the survey to inform the informants of the purpose of this survey and that this procedure is approved by research compliance entities, and how this data will be used. This statement complements the verbal explanation that the researcher provides to people when they are asked to fill in the survey. Similarly, to ensure the
consistency of the coding process and since the surveys didn’t require any identifiable information from the respondents the surveys were numbered and hence they were entered in the excel sheet using the same order.

Furthermore, once the researcher received the survey from the informant, the researcher skimed through the form to ensure that the respondent answered all the questions. In that case some respondents didn’t answer some questions, for example the political knowledge questions, some of the media use frequency, and the income question. For the political knowledge it is understandable why some respondents didn’t answer them as they didn’t know the answer and because the question format didn’t have the “Don’t Know” option, they would skip the question. Additionally, some respondents didn’t answer some of the media use frequency questions, either because they don’t use a certain type of media so they leave it blank, or because they cannot express their use in a certain number and hence, they input categorical data instead such; often, rarely…etc. As a result, before coding the survey form to be inputted to excel, the researcher went through every form and discarded the forms that had less than 90% of the survey questions answered. That resulted in discarding 13 survey forms that weren’t complete and would affect the results due to missing data.

Finally, this section reviewed some of the issues encountered when administering survey that included timing of data collection, non-response issues, language of administration, coding surveys, and discarding inconsistent survey forms. These issues were described in a narrative form where the researcher narrated the experience of survey
administration, and how every issue was dealt with. These solutions were derived from previous literature and the researcher’s experience in data collection.

**Statistical Analysis**

After collecting the responses of the sampled individuals through the self-administered questionnaire sample, the data was input to SPSS statistical software for analysis. The analysis consisted of descriptive analysis providing an understanding of the sample characteristics and some basic conceptual relationships between the different sample features and the survey questions. Another type of statistics is reported in the results, which is the inferential statistics to study the main and interaction effects of the different types of variables: the control variables such as media use, and socioeconomic class and demographic variables such as age, and gender on the criterion variables such as political knowledge, and participation. Additionally, the inferential statistics section includes the model proposed in this study to measure political knowledge.

In the descriptive statistics analysis, summary statistics were developed in relation to the variables collected through the survey. Among the operations conducted in the descriptive analysis part of the survey: frequencies; bivariate and partial correlations; and cross tabulations. While a vast range of analyses were conducted in conjunction with analyzing and presenting the results for this thesis, only the analyses directly related to the main research questions of thesis are included in the results section.

Inferential statistics, primarily in the form of logistic regression models, were utilized to examine the key research questions that formed the basis of this study. The first model included political knowledge as the dependent variable. Hence to test this
hypothesis a political knowledge index was creating grouping the 9 political knowledge questions. This measure was based on 9 questions representing three categories of knowledge: current affairs, governance, and ideology. In order to study the effect of media use on political learning, the questions chosen were of contemporary nature (i.e. issues of relevance in post 2011 revolution Egypt). Additionally, these issues were of domestic nature so that the participant could relate to the questions. Three responses were given to each question where one is the right answer, one is partially right, and the last is undoubtedly wrong. After multiple trials using subjective judgment guided by the previous literature and statistical techniques such as Principle component method of factor analysis, the final political knowledge index is an arithmetic index. This arithmetic index was calculated through assigning equal weights to the different political knowledge questions. In the proposed model the political knowledge index is treated as a dependent variable.

Given the nature of the hypothesis the logistic regression models calculated used measured the main effect of each of the variables included. For example, for the first hypothesis several logistic regression models were calculated where the dependent variable is the likelihood of high political knowledge, and multiple independent effects included the demographic features such as gender, control variables (i.e. Socioeconomic Status (SES) and media use), political interest and political participation. The final models reported are the ones that account for the largest amount of variability in the model and with highest prediction ability to the dependent variable. The second hypothesis proposed that media use would increase the likelihood of the participant
achieving political knowledge. Hence, it was tested in relation to understandings from knowledge gap theory, such as including effects of socioeconomic status, media consumption, and participation to predict the levels of knowledge. Thus, the logistic regression technique used in this aspect of the analysis tested the predicted political knowledge level for a certain individual given a set of socioeconomic, media use, political interest, and political participation variables.

In order to test the second hypothesis, a second model was developed where the dependent variable was the likelihood of high political participation, and political knowledge was inputted as one of the effects alongside with the demographic variable of age, socioeconomic status such as income, political interest, and social media use following the previous literature. Hypothesis two proposed that media use would contribute to the likelihood of increased political participation. Hence, it was tested in relation to understandings from communications effects theory, such as including effects of socioeconomic status, media use, political interest, and political knowledge to predict the likelihood of increased participation. Hence, the reported model controls for different variables that could affect the relationship between media use and political participation. Thus, the logistic regression technique used in this aspect of the analysis predicted the increased likelihood of political participation for a certain individual given a set of socioeconomic, media use and political interest, and political participation variables. Additionally, hypotheses one and two study the differential effects of media use on political knowledge and participation. Finally, in the logistic regression models, each independent variable entered into the equation was assigned 0.05 level of significance in
its ability to predict the model’s outcome to provide an estimate of how well the independent variables included in the models, taken as a whole, are able to predict the outcome of the dependent variable.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The results section of this thesis includes a number of different subsections. It begins by providing an overview of the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents. Following the overview of the demographic characteristics, this chapter includes information about the levels of political knowledge and political engagement of the survey respondents. After that, media use habits of the survey respondents are discussed in detail with regard to the political communication elements of political knowledge and engagement. Given that social media has been theorized to be an important factor in the recent political developments in Egypt, a section is devoted to social media use for political communications.

As discussed in the previous chapters of the thesis, this research includes some important concepts with regard to political communication, particularly political knowledge and levels of political engagement studied in the context of media use of Egyptians in Cairo. Through the use of different types of questions, the survey was designed to identify variations in such knowledge and levels of engagement. For example, based on the previous literature on measuring political knowledge, the nine questions developed for the survey represented the three main categories discussed in the literature: knowledge of the functions of institutions and processes in Egypt; current events knowledge; and knowledge of ideological concepts. For levels of engagement in the political process, the survey included questions related to civic engagement, political engagement, and voting behavior. Overall, these and other survey questions were
developed in conjunction with one another as a means to examine differences in political
knowledge and participation in relation to different types of media use.

Overview of Survey Respondents

Although there were limitations in some regards, the survey respondents’
demographic characteristics were in many ways reflective of the overall population of
Cairo. Nonetheless, there was enough variation in the demographic characteristics of the
survey respondents and the population of Cairo at large that the results of this analysis
cannot be considered generalizable to the overall population of Cairo. For example, the
mean age of the survey respondents and the levels of educational attainment of the
respondents were both slightly higher than average compared to the overall population of
Cairo. These differences could likely be attributed to the study’s sampling design, which
was dependent upon affiliations with sporting clubs in Cairo. As a result, it is important
to acknowledge that these limitations hinder the generalizability of the survey results to
the population of Cairo at large.

By design, there was equal representation amongst men and women survey
participants. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 74, with a mean age of 35. As
indicated in Table A1 (in the appendix), 48% of the respondents were younger than 30
years old, meaning that approximately 52% were older than 30 years of age. Education
was organized into six categories. Three of the categories captured participants without
college degrees, while the other three categories included those who had levels of
educational attainment that included at least some college. Around 60% of the
respondents had at least some college education, while 15% of the respondents held postgraduate degrees (see Table A1 in the appendix).

As for the economic status of the survey respondents, around 28% earned a monthly income of approximately $300, while 31% had an income ranging from $301 to $715. Overall, 59% of the survey respondents had incomes less than $1,000 per month. In a very general sense in terms of media access, virtually all of the survey respondents (99%) had access to television. Similarly, the majority of respondents (89%) had access to the Internet.

Levels of Political Knowledge and Political Participation

The nine questions developed to measure political knowledge represented the three main categories discussed in the literature: knowledge of the functions of government institutions and processes in Egypt; current events knowledge; and knowledge of ideological concepts. These questions were designed to have varying levels of difficulty as a means to identify variations in political knowledge amongst survey respondents, and indeed there was such variation across respondents. For example, more than half of the participants were knowledgeable about current events such as the name of the interim President and the Minister of Defense during the time of the survey (87% and 86%, respectively). Conversely, only 23% of the respondents could accurately name the current Prosecutor General at the time of the survey. As indicated in Table A2 (in the Appendix), variations in knowledge were evident in relation to questions concerning governance-related topics. For example, the majority of the respondents (76%) were

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1 These amounts were calculated based on the Egyptian pound- US dollar exchange rate in June-July 2013.
knowledgeable about the constitutionality of laws; however, only 40% were knowledgeable of the process used to appoint governors.

Like the political knowledge questions, the survey questions related to political engagement yielded a range of responses. The variations in levels of engagement are discussed here with reference to the ideas presented in the literature. The survey results demonstrated that, on average, respondents are highly politically engaged in forms such as voting, signing petitions, and protesting. As indicated in Table A3 (included in the Appendix), 71% of the respondents indicated that they always vote in elections; 59% of the survey respondents had demonstrated or protested in the past two years; and 42% signed a petition for a political or a social cause. Furthermore, 40% of the survey respondents engaged in activities where they talked with others to encourage and convince them to vote.

The survey respondents were less frequently involved in forms of civic engagement. For example, the percentage of those who volunteered for political or social causes was only 17% (Appendix Table A3). Similarly, the percentage of those who called an official to complain about social or political issues was only 7%, and the percentage of those who called a newspaper to report or to complain about some problem was only 12%.

*Media Use of Survey Respondents*

This section discusses the type of media utilized by survey respondents, as well as issues such as the amount of time spent accessing different types of media content. The survey yielded a range of findings in relation to media access, frequency of use, and
preferences. In terms of the number of hours spent using different types of media and as indicated in Table 2, TV and the Internet were the primary means of media access among survey respondents. The average number of hours per week spent watching television was 15 hours. The second most common type of media access was Internet use, with respondents spending, on average, 11 hours per week utilizing the Internet. These results largely mirror national findings of a survey conducted in Egypt in 2011, which found the average weekly time spent watching TV in Egypt was 14.4 hours, and time spent using the Internet averaged 13.9 hours.

As indicated in Table I, 62% of the respondents indicated that television was a preferred media source for political content, followed by 29.3% of the respondents indicating that the Internet was a preferred source for such content. These results indicate that one form of traditional media, particularly television, remains a more favored source of political content. However, other more traditional forms of media content – particularly radio and newspapers – were less popular than the Internet, suggesting that the Internet has now overtaken at least some of the more conventional forms of media when it comes to accessing political content in Cairo.
Table 1

*Media Use and Political Information Preferences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Use</th>
<th>Type of Media</th>
<th>Hours/Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Media Used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>15.2 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>11.1 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorite Media Used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>85.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Media Used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Social Media Use among Survey Respondents*

As discussed in the literature review chapter, social media have been theorized to have some effect on knowledge production and knowledge dissemination, especially in
the context of the Arab Spring events. Accordingly, the survey was in part designed to
examine these types of relationships, including associations between social media and
issues such as sharing political information and advocating for political action. The types
of social media use examined in the survey could be broadly categorized in two ways:
social media use with the intention of sharing political content; and social media use with
the intention of motivating other media users to act. These two categorizations were
based on previous studies referred to in the literature review section.

Content sharing through social media is understood to involve either sharing
existing, mainstream media content, or sharing user-generated content. Using social
media to share articles, to share visual content, and to promote content fall within the
category of sharing mainstream content, while following officials on social media,
joining a political group on social media, encouraging people to vote, and encouraging
people to speak-up on social media are understood to fall more within the category of
using social media to call for action. The use of social media to motivate action is
understood to more typically involve user-generated content rather than mainstream
media content.

As indicated in Table II, the most widely used form of social media for political
information among the survey respondents for sharing information was sharing one’s
opinion on current events. A total of 58% of the survey respondents used social media to
share such information. Using social media to share visual content, articles, and to
promote content were also relatively high, ranging from 52.9 to 42.9 percent. In terms of
the broader category of calling for action, using social media to encourage people to vote,
to encourage people to speak-up, and to follow political officials were all in the range of 56-63 percent, suggesting that the rates of social media use for these types of purposes were all somewhat similar.

Table 2

*Social Media Use for Sharing and Call for Action*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Social Media Use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sharing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing opinion on social media</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using social media to share visual content</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using social media to share articles</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using social media to promote content</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calling for Action</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraging people to vote on social media</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social media to encourage people to speak up</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joining a political party group on social media</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Following officials on social media</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Political Knowledge and Political Participation Gaps

A key element of the survey was to examine political knowledge and political participation in relation to differences in socioeconomic status, media use habits, and other key variables related to such matters. Table III provides an overview of the average political knowledge and political index scores in relation to levels of education and income. In terms of education, the survey respondents were grouped as follows: educational attainment no higher than a high school degree (low); some college (medium); college education and higher (high). Survey respondents were categorized along similar lines, from low to high levels of income. The analysis of variance technique was used to test for statistically significant differences between each of the groups.

As might be expected, and as seen in Table III, levels of political knowledge increased with higher levels of educational attainment. However, these differences were not nearly as dramatic when comparing educational attainment with political participation, where the differences amongst groups were not statistically significant. When comparing levels of income with the political knowledge and participation indices, the trends were somewhat similar as those found when comparing educational attainment to the index averages. However, although the differences in income levels and political knowledge were statistically significant, the amount of difference was not exceptionally substantial when comparing the three income groups. As was the case with educational attainment, the differences between income groups and levels of political participation were not statistically significant.
Table 3  

*Political Knowledge and Participation Gaps by Social Status*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment Level</th>
<th>Political Knowledge</th>
<th>Political Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low (N= 9)</td>
<td>0.3704</td>
<td>0.2743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (N=30)</td>
<td>0.5389</td>
<td>0.3222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (N=118)</td>
<td>0.6271</td>
<td>0.3468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (2,154)= 8.935**</td>
<td>F (2,154)= .784</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Political Knowledge</th>
<th>Political Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low (N= 87)</td>
<td>0.5568</td>
<td>0.3181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (N=40)</td>
<td>0.6750</td>
<td>0.3558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (N=21)</td>
<td>0.6296</td>
<td>0.4189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (2,145)= 5.531**</td>
<td>F (2,145)= 2.830</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < .05. ** P < .01.
Logistic Regression Model Predicting Political Knowledge

The overall objective of this study was to test the plausibility of the knowledge gap hypothesis in Cairo, Egypt, and to expand on its understanding in the contemporary media environment. In order to predict political knowledge, a logistic regression model was developed with political knowledge as the dependent variable. The binary values for the dependent variable were low and high political knowledge differential by a given respondent being able to accurately answer at least five of the political questions included in the survey. The independent variables included in the model were key variables associated with issues of political knowledge as previously discussed in the literature review. In relation to this research and the knowledge gap hypothesis more generally, the models also included variables reflecting media habits.

Key results related to the model are included in Table IV. The model’s \( \text{pseudo } R^2 \) statistic was .20, suggesting that the variables included in the model only moderately predicted levels of political knowledge. Nonetheless, the model offered some key insights into each of independent variables in the model contributes to variations in the dependent variable while controlling for the effects of the other variables included in the model. The independent variables that were statistically significant in the model included

The partial logistic regression coefficients \( (B) \) for each independent variable in the model were significant for the effect of gender, media use in the form of TV and Internet use, education, and interest in following political news. TV and Internet use, education, and interest in following political news were all particularly strong predictors of political knowledge, in that higher viewing of television, use of the Internet, higher
levels of education, and higher levels of interest in following political news were associated with greater levels of political knowledge. Overall, these results suggest that in conjunction with controlling for other key variables, such as education and gender, greater levels of media use in the form of television and the Internet are strong predictors of political knowledge among the population in Cairo. Finally, it is important to note that motivation to follow political news is a strong predictor of political knowledge as well.
Table 4

Effects on Political Knowledge (Logistic Regression Model)²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>D.F.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.949</td>
<td>0.396</td>
<td>5.733</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.185</td>
<td>0.391</td>
<td>0.224</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV use</td>
<td>0.976</td>
<td>0.423</td>
<td>5.318</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet use</td>
<td>1.057</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>5.072</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio use</td>
<td>1.079</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>1.616</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper use</td>
<td>0.503</td>
<td>0.674</td>
<td>0.558</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.265</td>
<td>0.484</td>
<td>6.841</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political participation</td>
<td>0.393</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>1.016</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>0.406</td>
<td>4.548</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>following news</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.091</td>
<td>0.708</td>
<td>8.723</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < .05. ** P < .01.

² The results of the logistic model conducted for political knowledge using the stepwise method indicated the main explanatory variables in predicting political knowledge to be education and the importance of following the news.
Logistic Regression Model Predicting Political Participation

In order to predict political participation, and following a similar approach as described in relation to the first logistic regression model, a model was developed to predict levels of political participation. The binary dependent variable in the model identified individual survey respondents as having either low or high levels of political participation. The independent variables in the model were again derived from an assessment of previous research. These variables included education; age; media consumption habits related to TV, radio, newspaper, and social media; and political knowledge.

The results of the model are presented in Table V. The model’s *pseudo $R^2$ statistic* was .24, only slightly higher than in the first model, and suggesting that the variables included in the model only moderately predicted levels of political participation. Nonetheless, the model offered some important insights, particularly in that social media use was one of only two independent variables that were statistically significant in predicting political participation. The other significant variable in the model was the variable of talking to people to encourage them to vote.

Overall, when controlling for key variables such as education and various forms of media use, the model suggests that social media use is a strong and significant predictor of political participation among the population of Cairo. These results suggest that we accept the hypothesis that social media use is a strong predictor of political participation. These results account for the effect of variables such as education and
demographic variables of gender and age. Additionally, political knowledge did not prove to be instrumental when predicting the likelihood of high political participation.

Table 5

*Effects on Political Participation (Logistic Regression Model)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>D.F.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>0.511</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political knowledge</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td>0.415</td>
<td>2.484</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to encourage voting</td>
<td>1.764</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td>17.482</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media use</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.433</td>
<td>5.998</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.312</td>
<td>0.416</td>
<td>0.563</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>0.398</td>
<td>0.681</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV use</td>
<td>-0.339</td>
<td>0.425</td>
<td>0.636</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio use</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td>0.802</td>
<td>0.416</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper use</td>
<td>-0.593</td>
<td>0.688</td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.198</td>
<td>0.403</td>
<td>8.841</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < .05. ** P < .01.

* The results of the logistic model conducted for political participation using the stepwise method indicated the main explanatory variables in predicting political participation to be encouraging to vote behavior and social media use.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This chapter begins with a discussion of conclusions relating to the research questions that served as the basis for this thesis, followed by a brief discussion of some of the methodological challenges and limitations related to conducting this research. This chapter then includes reflections on the findings in light of some of the literature reviewed for this analysis. I then provide some ideas for future research that could expand and elaborate on the survey and related analysis, followed by some concluding thoughts related to this analysis.

Overall, this study analyzed political knowledge and participation gaps in Cairo, Egypt, and attempted to identify explanations for these gaps. Variables incorporated into the study included media consumption (e.g. TV, Internet, and social media use), attitudinal effects (e.g. political interest, and encouraging participation), and structural effects (e.g. education and income). The effect of media consumption as it relates to political affairs knowledge and participation was examined through a range of questions. Correctly identifying Aldy Mansour’s political title, which was widely covered in the media around the time of the survey, is one example of a political knowledge type of question used in the survey.

This study investigated the factors that influence political knowledge and political participation in Cairo, Egypt. These factors included: education, media use, political interest, social media use, and encouraging people to participate politically. Among these factors and as identified in this analysis, some key issues that influenced political knowledge included education, media use, and political interest. Other factors that were
also found to influence political participation included social media use and encouraging people to act. Levels of educational attainment were found to clearly account for some of the political knowledge gap among those living in Cairo. However, media consumption habits – especially viewing TV and Internet use – relates to the gap in political knowledge as well. Furthermore, in the regression model controlling for variables that included education, age, and gender, it was found that social media use has a strong relationship to political activism. Overall, the results of this further informed the Knowledge Gap Hypothesis, particularly through its assessment of the differential effect of media use as it relates to political knowledge and activism.

The study contributes to the comparative body of work on media effects, yet there are some limitations that could hinder the generalizability of the study implications, perhaps most especially the sample size, with the survey including 157 respondents. Additionally, the survey was administered only in a sample of sporting clubs in greater Cairo, starting July 6, 2013, a few days after the political transition that resulted in an interim government. Hence, this political situation could attribute to a situational increase in media use habits, increase in Internet participation rates, and in some instances increase in political participation.

Given that the political knowledge questions addressed contemporary issues of controversial nature, so this might have led to unique results with regards to people’s political knowledge. However, compared to previous research, the study is also unique in that it occurred in the midst of a volatile political situation.
Reflections on the Findings in Light of the Literature Reviewed

Political information seeking behavior is one that is motivated by one’s education and interest. Consequently, political knowledge is understood to be affected by these types of factors, and mediated by media use. Social media opened the venue for virtual political participation, one that was scaled up after the Arab Spring movements. However, social media has also provided opportunities for traditional media forms and hierarchies to distribute content and influence issues such as political knowledge and participation. The results of this study indicated that relatively more widely practiced participation forms include protests, petitions, and voting, compared to less widely practices such as volunteering and working for social issues.

Previous research hypothesized the effect of media use on political knowledge (Bucy & Gregson, 2001; Downey, & Fenton, 2003; Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; Lee & Yang 2014; Boulianne 2009; Hwang, Y.& Jeong, S. H. 2009; Levendusky and Jackman 2003; and Kenski & Stround, 2006). This study expands on such previous work, including through analyzing these matters in the contemporary context of Cairo, Egypt. This study emphasized the role of education, media, and political interest in determining political knowledge.

Among other things, the study includes findings about the effect of political interest as it relates to high political knowledge, similar to the work of Boulianne (2009). These findings confirm with what Boulinne (2009) identified with regards to political interest being an important factor in determining the effect of media on citizens’ engagement. In addition to that, this political interest could have motivated high political
participation on social media venues when sharing content and when calling on people to act.

Media use categorization into traditional forms and digital forms emphasized a contrast between both forms with regards to their effect on knowledge. This study found that social media use to share content and call on people to participate is a predictor of relatively high levels of political participation. Sakr (2012) suggested that the power dynamics in offline media extend to online media. In addition to these motives, this research studied the effect of media use and citizen’s behavior around participation.

The overall media use habits of the study respondents further supported findings in previous work (e.g., Sakr, 2012; Khamis, 2011) on the ongoing pervasiveness of traditional media use in Egypt. At the same time, this study provided some insightful results with regards to political use of social media, either for sharing content or for encouraging people to act. These findings build on the work of scholars on the role of social media and Internet use during the Arab Spring movements (Howard & Hussain, 2013).

Results confirmed that engagement behavior combined with social media use affects political participation. As a result, this research could help inform the understanding of the ever-evolving situation in Egypt. The research concludes that knowledge about political events and facts in Egypt could be determined by the differences in education, media use, and political interest. On the other hand, participation could be determined by social media use and especially for political activism and political motivation and hence, the recent events in Egypt that witnessed a
surge in political participation especially in the forms of protesting and signing petition could be explained by the increased use of social media for political campaigning and political motivation. On the other hand, these events received a lot of coverage that was differential according to the amount of participation associated with the political events and by extension lead to differences in the outcome knowledge among Egyptians due to the gaps in education, frequency of use, and political interest.

As a result, in Egypt knowledge and participation aren’t directly linked, however they share commonalities in the effect of media use on both attributes and the role that political interest and motivation plays in encouraging participation and seeking political information. In the end, socioeconomic status and most importantly, education is the main factor that explains the knowledge gap in Egypt and affects the differences in social media use which relates to the participation gaps.

Suggestions for Future Research and Concluding Thoughts

Among the main suggestions would be to study the political knowledge and participation gaps in governorates outside Cairo to reach some generalization on Egypt as a whole. It could be interesting to conduct the same study using tool that allow more randomly generated sample such as telephone surveys or mobile surveys given that mobiles are widely used and owned by almost all Egyptians. These suggestions should be considered in the context of the limitations they present with regards to the characteristics of the desired sample.

Another unexpected result of this study is that gender was a significant effect in predicting the likelihood of high political knowledge. Unlike previous research in the
United States and other contexts that concluded that men have higher level of political knowledge than women, the survey results revealed an opposite trend where being women increases the likelihood of high political knowledge. These results invite future research to study the differential effect of gender on knowledge in the context of Egypt after the 2011 revolution.

In conclusion, and most importantly, the results of this study do not suggest that social media use alone affects political participation. Rather, its effects work in conjunction with other factors associated with socioeconomic status, such as income and education, which could imply a two-stage participation gap. The participation gap generated from social media use could be driven in large part by issues such as income and education. Income thresholds correlate to ICT access, and levels of educational attainment can influence types of social media use. At the same time, the study’s results imply that structural factors such as education are not the only determinants of political knowledge. Not all politically active citizens are necessarily knowledgeable and “well informed,” but they still may be using social media for political purposes, including through encouraging political participation.

As a researcher, I began with the assumptions that democracy depends on informed citizens’ participation, and that structural inequalities in knowledge could be mitigated by media use. At the same time, I was cautious and remain cautious in “glorifying” digital media use as an unquestioned tool when it comes to advancing citizens’ knowledge and participation. Amongst other things, this study demonstrated that consumption of traditional media continues in Cairo. This content is produced by the
country’s traditional media hierarchies. Moreover, the content of traditional media
hierarchies extends to digital media. The extent to which social media will truly
contribute to democracy in Egypt is something that remains to be seen.
REFERENCES


with civic life: Patterns of Internet use and the production of social capital.

*Political communication, 18*(2), 141- 167.
APPENDIX 1: RESPONDENTS’ DEMOGRAPHICS

Table A1

*Survey Respondents’ Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents’ Demographics</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (cut-off point is 30 years)</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (cut-off point is $1000)</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (cut-off point is at college education)</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A2

*Political Knowledge among Survey Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Political Knowledge</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
<th>Category Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Affairs</td>
<td>Adly’s position</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sisi’s position</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current prosecutor general</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Liberalism</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic system</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choice of governors</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political Knowledge index</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>59.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 3: CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Table A3

*Civic and Political Participation among Survey Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
<th>Category Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>Volunteer in civic organizations</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Call an official to complain</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Engagement</td>
<td>Call a newspaper to complain</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work informally for social issues</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participate in a demonstration</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sign a petition</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Become a political party member</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always vote in elections</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging Participation</td>
<td>Encourage people to vote</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>