

Exploring News Consumption and Political and Civic Participation among Youth

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Abstract

The rapid proliferation of communication technologies has transformed news consumption, particularly among youth. This article explores how youth navigate a dynamic media landscape in a conflict-driven society, offering insights into the emerging generation poised to influence democracy by the study of the relationship between youth news consumption and their political and civic participation. Based on empirical research examining the news consumption habits of Israeli youth (aged fifteen–eighteen) and their implications for civic and political engagement, the study utilises a nationwide survey of 673 participants and thirty-six in-depth interviews. The findings reveal that while youth primarily consume news via social media, YouTube, and satirical TV shows, their face-to-face civic and political participation remains low. A gap between their belief in their ability to influence society and their actual involvement, suggests that digital news consumption may be perceived as a form of participation. This study provides a framework for future comparative research to explore whether these trends are universal or culturally specific, particularly in relation to the maturity of democratic regimes and their democratic cultures. Using Israel's high news consumption rates and advanced new media landscape as a compelling case study, this research contributes to a broader understanding of youth engagement in contemporary democracies.

Keywords: Youth, News consumption, Political participation, Civic participation, Israel, Digital platforms

Introduction

This study examines the relationship between youth news consumption and their political and civic participation, using Israel as a compelling case. As a country with some of the highest news consumption rates globally and a vibrant political culture, Israel provides a unique opportunity to explore how young people navigate the digital news environment and engage in democratic life (Aharoni et al., 2021). The contemporary digital media environment provides unprecedented access to a vast array of news, enabling individuals to curate their news consumption across traditional and new media. ‘Cross-media’ describes the blending of different media, a key characteristic of media consumption today, where people select platforms based on personal needs (Masip et al., 2018). Recent surveys show a rise in online news consumption (Kalogeropoulos, 2019; Newman et al., 2020) and an increase in news avoidance (Newman et al., 2019). Loyalty to specific news platforms is minimal, consuming news across various media (Schrøder, 2011).

In an environment of media abundance, youth are termed ‘newsers’—new news consumers (Dinnar and Einav, 2024). This research aims to explore the world of newsers in a mediatised environment, focusing on the intersections of news consumption and political and civic participation among young individuals.

Over the past two decades, digitalisation has significantly influenced civic and political engagement (Theocharis et al., 2023). While most researchers agree on the crucial role of news consumption in shaping political knowledge, they debate its impact on levels across different groups, whether through traditional or digital means.

In the digital age, youth have numerous ways to express participation (Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik, 2019), with news consumption thought to boost political participation (Lemish and Pick-Alony, 2014). However, some argue that new media communication contributes to low political and civic participation among youth (Buckingham, 2000).

Youth News Consumption in the Digital Age

One of the most significant societal agents among youth is the news media, which reports on various events and influences the way youth perceive these events (Huang, 2009). Studies have consistently presented survey results showing a general decline among young people in news consumption from its traditional sources (Newman et al., 2023; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2022). Studies have also shown increased youth news consumption through news websites, news apps, and social media networks (Notley et al., 2023). The Pew Research Center found that young people mainly consume news through digital platforms and social media, such as Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, and Snapchat (Shearer, 2021; Walker and Matsu, 2021). A study in Israel found that youth’s news consumption habits mainly include news videos on smartphones and T.V. video content (Lowenstein-Barkai and Lev-on, 2022). A recent Reuters digital report found that younger users are less likely to go directly to a news site or app and more likely to use social media or other intermediaries for news consumption (Newman et al., 2023).

One characteristic of young people’s news consumption in the new media age is ‘news snacking’, which means short and scattered information consumed through various media platforms (Molyneux, 2018; Diehl et al., 2019). ‘News snacking’ is intended for a basic

overview of the news information; its users consume pieces of information in a relaxed way in order to take a 'snack' from the general news – not necessarily in order to be updated, but mainly to have something to talk about (Groot Kormelink and Costera Meijer, 2014).

Transitioning from the conventional modes of news consumption, while digital platforms characterise a significant portion of young people's media diet, satirical television content has emerged as an alternative source that has captured their attention. These programs, which blend entertainment with current affairs, offer not just an alternative but an enriching supplement to the conventional news platforms they are engaging with. Young people consume news and learn about current events from satirical T.V. programs that combine entertainment with current affairs (Edgerly, 2018; Clark and Marchi, 2017). These programs draw viewers' attention to news information and may impart some political knowledge (Xenos and Becker, 2009). Satirical programs manage to inform viewers about current issues and even help shape political positions (Balmas, 2014). However, satirical programs are not an exclusive news source for young people. They combine it with 'traditional' news content, such as television and radio news, newspapers, and the Internet.

Youth News Consumption and Participation in the Creation of News Content

The new communication technologies allow the audience to be active in producing news through new media, such as social networks, which makes it possible to shape the news product through blogs and online responses (Nossek, 2010). Consuming news online allows youth to participate in participatory journalism (Huang, 2009), and activities of creating and sharing information have become central. They do this mainly on social networks by uploading video footage to the web, editing photos, or writing blogs and news content for online news organisations (Cortesi and Gasser, 2015). This practice is how the youth become '*Producers*' of news – they also use media, consume news content and co-creators, and share this news with others (Clark and Marchi, 2017).

The ability to actively participate in online news reporting allows youth to receive global peer feedback, interact directly, and develop emotionally and socially. The more youth engage by contributing to peer groups and other communities, the more significant the Internet becomes for them. Lynn Schofield Clark and Regina Marchi (2017) argued that in the age of social networks, the critical question is who shared the news with them and whether they will share it with others. An Australian study found that consistent news consumers among youth are more likely to engage with and react to news, potentially indicating future civic involvement (Notley et al., 2023).

Political and Civic Participation and its Importance in a Democratic Society

At the core of democratic thought lies participation, offering citizens avenues to influence societal decisions. As modes of participation evolve, they range from influencing government decisions to enhancing community welfare (Dahlgren and Alvares, 2013). However, drawing

clear lines between political and civic participation is an intricate process, given their intertwined nature (Norris, 2004).

Political participation encompasses activities individuals pursue primarily to shape the government's composition or its leaders' decisions. Participants can differ by the intensity and type of their involvement (Hague and Harrop, 2004). Dahlgren and Hill (2022) describe political engagement as encompassing how citizens participate in political processes, such as voting, protesting, and joining civil society organisations.

Civic participation blends political actions, such as joining demonstrations, with community-focused activities like volunteering (Youniss et al., 2002). Carpentier (2011) highlighted this blend, portraying a spectrum of participation, from basic acts like voting to more engaged daily involvements. Further, Carpentier (2015) argued that while minimal participation leans on institutional politics, maximal involvement underscores the balance between representation and proactive citizenry.

Media, News, and Political and Civic Participation

The democratic process thrives on having well-informed citizens. As journalists and news outlets provide this essential information (Gans, 2003), media consumption becomes intertwined with political and civic engagement (Lochocki, 2010). A broader spectrum of news sources, especially across diverse media platforms, can bolster civic involvement (Molyneux, 2019).

However, various researchers have expressed fears that excessive exposure to news in the media would cause public indifference. For example, Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton (1948) claimed that such exposure could lead to the 'narcotization' of the public since it would make them feel that they were already sufficiently updated and informed about news issues and would therefore not feel motivated to get up and act. In a modern context, Adoni et al. (2017) argued that the intensive use of the Internet could hinder people from taking civic and political actions offline, which may foster a false sense of political activism.

Digital media have introduced new avenues for civic engagement (Edgerly, 2015). Although the digital era offers innovative tools for political activity, traditional information sources remain integral (Wolfsfeld et al., 2016; Nossek et al., 2015). Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2012) supported the theory that social network information-seeking bolsters civic participation. While digital activism has grown, primarily via social media platforms, mainstream media endorsement still holds significant sway (Lev-On, 2019). Bennett (2008) delineates a shift from 'Dutiful Citizenship' to what he terms 'Actualizing Citizenship'. Unlike dutiful civic participation which is organized around institutional membership, voting, and obedience to authorities, actualising citizenship emphasises self-defined, personally meaningful actions, such as consumer-based activism, cause-driven volunteering, and issue-oriented protests, often facilitated through loosely connected peer networks and digital platforms. In this model, the civic act is not a duty, but an expression of individual purpose and identity.

Political and Civic Participation of Youth

Engagement in civic and political spheres, especially among the younger demographic, remains a salient subject of continuous scholarly research and debate (Grasso, 2018).

Political participation is reflected in youth's interest in political issues and their attitudes toward political participation in the future (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). It is possible to assess the degree of participation of the youth according to the scope of their knowledge about the political process, their level of understanding regarding ways of political participation, and their degree of belief that their participation is essential (Weintraub Austin, 2013). Therefore, while it is essential to impart knowledge to young people, this is not enough to motivate them to participate; they should also develop a desire to participate in democratic life, tolerance, and an understanding of rights and responsibilities (Livingstone, 2010). Bacovsky and Fitzgerald (2023) found that parental political engagement during childhood significantly influences an individual's level of political engagement at age eighteen.

The digital era has ushered in innovative avenues for political engagement. Today's youth are passive observers and active participants, advocating for change through online demonstrations, protests, and petitions (Sloam, 2016). Social media platforms serve as arenas where young people can voice their perspectives on diverse issues, including political ones, marking a new form of political participation (Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik, 2019). However, contrasting studies indicate that youth's political engagement still needs to improve across traditional and modern platforms (Pfanzelt and Spies, 2019). Lonkila and Jokivuori (2023) found that, among Finnish students, Facebook is still the leading platform for political and civic online participation by liking or sharing Facebook pages and posts. Data from twenty-eight European Union countries revealed that political participation among young people is influenced by the democratic maturity of their country, with significantly lower engagement in newly established democracies compared to advanced ones, where voting is often viewed as a habitual and socially reinforced activity (Kitanova, 2020).

Contemporary youth gravitate away from formal politics, showcasing diminished faith in political establishments. However, their participation is more pronounced at the grassroots, that is, community and public levels (Syvertsen et al., 2011). Research suggests that the current generation of youth is less enthusiastic about political subjects and less inclined to immerse themselves in politics during adulthood than their predecessors. Conversely, they exhibit keen interest and active participation in volunteer organisations, social movements, and civic groups (Attar-Schwartz and Ben-Arieh, 2012).

News Consumption and Political and Civic Participation among Youth

News plays a central role in the socialisation of young people for citizenship and public participation (Lemish and Pick-Alony, 2014). In the U.S., youth who consume news across various platforms exhibit high civic participation (Edgerly, 2015). A Portuguese study emphasised the importance of daily news conversations for youth's civic and political engagement (Brites et al., 2017). The multiplatform media landscape broadens opportunities for young people to engage with political and social issues (Wonneberger and Kim, 2017). An

Israeli study showed that young adults prefer new media and social networks for news, facilitating their involvement in political and civic initiatives (Dinnar and Nossek, 2021).

However, Buckingham (2000) argued that youth feel alienated by news presentations, leading to perceptions that media exacerbates their participation deficits. Edgerly et al. (2018) found that traditional news consumption correlated positively with political engagement before the ascension of new media due to news being a conduit for essential political information. While 52% of the participants in that study tended to avoid news on any platform, the remainder had varied consumption habits. News avoiders displayed minimal political engagement, both online and offline. In contrast, omnivorous news consumers exhibited robust political participation, signifying the consumption style's influence on participation levels.

Suppose younger individuals do not perceive staying informed as a crucial aspect of responsible citizenship. In that case, this may result in increased levels of news engagement but also an outright avoidance of news sources (Edgerly et al., 2018). A positive correlation exists between political interest and online news engagement among younger demographics, with online news consumption linked to online political expression (Boulianne and Shehata, 2022). In Israel, the importance of news in a conflict-driven society enhances its role in youth's civic engagement, potentially positioning news as a social change agent (Lemish and Pick-Aloni, 2014).

A U.S. study found that multiplatform news consumption positively correlates with diverse political involvement among youth who consume online and offline news (Diehl et al., 2019). Wonneberger and Kim (2017) noted that diversified news sources could enhance political knowledge, though they warned of potential democratic threats if entertainment outweighs news. Other studies have linked youth's digital news consumption with political knowledge and civic involvement (Hao et al., 2014). Youth engage through online communities, particularly when civic activities align with their social and cultural interests (Jenkins, 2006; Kligler-Vilenchik and Shresthova, 2014). Digital platforms enable the merging of political and civic causes, though some scholars question whether digital media truly enhances youth participation, suggesting traditional participation may have evolved (Hao et al., 2014).

Geers and Vliegthart (2021) examined the relationship between news consumption and political participation among Dutch youth aged sixteen and older. The study found that the largest segment of young people were disengaged, avoiding both news and civic or political activities. In contrast, less than 10% exhibited high engagement in both areas. Another group participated primarily in low-effort online activities, such as sharing social media updates or signing petitions, reflecting minimal but notable political involvement. Some youth engaged in community-level activities, like volunteering and political consumerism, while remaining disengaged from traditional or online political participation. The study also underscored the significance of local news, with nearly one-third of participants volunteering locally or sharing information on social media about neighbourhood issues. These findings suggest that local news and community engagement foster youth participation, whereas news avoidance correlates with broader civic and political disengagement.

The Main Conclusions from the Literature Review

The research literature generally shows a link between news consumption and political and civic participation, with most agreeing on its importance for political knowledge but differing on its impact on participation in traditional versus new media activities. Moreover, for youth, the literature shows that, in the digital age, a new news user can be defined according to four main characteristics: consumption, conversation, distribution, and creation. This study focuses on the various aspects of Israeli youth news consumption. If we do find that these criteria characterise them as new news consumers, we can term them as ‘newsers’ (Dinnar and Einav, 2024). Other studies focus on youth’s political participation, civic involvement, and social activism rather than their news consumption. The field of research on political and civic participation mediated by new media is evolving, with new ways emerging for youth to engage as media consumers, particularly with news content. Political participation is a continuum of actions potentially linked to passive media consumption but does not necessarily involve active content creation. This study explores the dynamic interaction between Israeli youth’s news consumption and political and civic participation.

Research Questions

- What are the different aspects of youth news consumption, and what characterises them?
- What types of political and civic activities are youth engaged in today?
- Are there parallel tendencies in news consumption and political and civil participation among Israeli youth?

Methodology

This study draws on a national survey of 673 Israeli Jewish adolescents (aged fifteen–eighteen) from fifteen public high schools across five regions in Israel. The sample included 52.2% boys and 47.8% girls, with 53.2% in Grade 10 and 46.8% in Grade 12. Participants lived in cities (72.5%), kibbutzim and moshavim (9%), settlements (4%), and other localities (14.5%). In terms of religiosity, 41.8% identified as secular, 28.7% as traditional, 8.5% as very traditional, 14.3% as religious, and 6.8% as ‘other’.

The sampling strategy combined stratified cluster sampling and simple random sampling. Schools were sampled based on (a) the Ministry of Education’s Educational Nurture Index, a composite measure of students’ socioeconomic background, including parental education, household income, geographic peripherality, and immigration status, and (b) affiliation with either the secular or religious state education systems. The sample included schools from three strata of the Nurture Index (low, medium, high), proportionally representing the national student population. Eleven secular and four religious schools were selected from five regions: North, Center, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and South. Within each selected school, one class from Grade 10 and one from Grade 12 participated.

Data collection took place between October 2018 and March 2019. The lead researcher personally visited each school, entered the classrooms, introduced herself to students, explained the study’s goals and procedures, and supervised the survey process. Students

completed the questionnaire independently during school hours, with assistance provided as needed.

The questionnaire included both open- and closed-ended questions assessing news consumption patterns and civic and political participation. Closed-ended items included Likert-scale statements, ordinal categories, and frequency-based questions. A pilot test was conducted with forty-nine participants from the target population under field-like conditions to evaluate the instrument's reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha values for the scales ranged from .585 to .874. The final dataset consisted of 673 valid responses, after excluding twelve incomplete questionnaires. The overall response rate was 98.2%. This exceptionally high response rate can be attributed to the researcher's direct, in-class distribution and supervision of the questionnaires, which enabled broad participation and minimised nonresponse bias.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the School of Communication at Bar-Ilan University and the Chief Scientist's Office at the Ministry of Education.

To supplement the quantitative data, thirty-six semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted. The interview explored two thematic areas: (1) the participant's news consumption habits, and (2) their civic and political behaviours, such as participation in protests, creation of activist content on social media, volunteering, community involvement, and engagement in youth movements. All interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed immediately following completion.

Findings

Frequency of News Consumption

The participants were asked to rate the frequency of their news consumption through different sources and platforms. Table 1 shows the distribution of the answers.

Table 1: Ranking of the frequency of news consumption through different sources (N=673).

News platforms	1 Not at all %	2 Rarely more than once a week %	3 Once a week %	4 Once in two days %	5 Once a day %	6 Two or three times a day %	7 All day long %
News from social networks	7.6	4.0	2.5	2.1	5.8	18.0	59.4
News from Apps	16.2	7.7	4.5	4.3	7.9	16.6	41.9
YouTube	6.7	9.1	5.9	9.1	14.3	24.4	30.0
News from search engines	5.8	10.1	9.1	7.6	13.2	27.8	25.3
Television	9.8	8.8	9.4	13.2	20.4	21.8	15.9
News websites	12.0	26.0	17.1	11.7	13.4	12.0	7.1

Email	27.3	17.8	15.0	13.8	14.7	8.2	2.7
Blogs	63.3	18.1	8.0	3.7	2.7	1.5	1.9
Radio	41.2	21.4	12.8	9.2	9.7	3.6	1.5
Podcasts	74.6	12.2	5.2	2.2	2.7	0.9	0.9
Printed newspapers	36.7	26.9	23.6	5.2	4.5	0.9	0.7

The data indicate that social networks are the most popular platform for news consumption, with high usage reported. Similarly, news consumption via mobile apps, YouTube, search engines, and television too is high. In contrast, websites have medium usage, while blogs, podcasts, print newspapers, and radio are the least used. Despite the low overall frequency of print newspaper consumption, a significant portion of youth still read them at least once a week, indicating a relevant readership among younger people.

Participating, Sharing, and Creating Content

The digital landscape has transformed how people interact with information, offering high interactivity that blurs the traditional boundaries between sender and receiver. This interactivity enables users to take on various roles in information exchange and participate in content production, particularly in news. This study surveyed participants on how they engage with news content. A distribution analysis was used to rank the different modes of participation, with the findings presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Ways of participating in news content, sharing it, and producing it (N=673).

Topic	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents who answered 'yes'
Talks with friends about a news story in a face-to-face conversation	60.0	404
Communicate with friends or colleagues about a news story (via a social network or WhatsApp)	49.7	335
Send Likes or recommend a news story	45.6	307
None of the above	17.4	117
Share a news story through a social network	17.0	115
Comments on a news story on a social network	16.9	114
Participate in an online survey through a news website or social network	16.8	113
Uploads or sends a photo or video related to a news story to a social network	15.4	104
Comments on a news story on a news site	3.4	23
Takes part in a campaign or group related to a new topic	3.2	22
Uploads or sends a photo or video you took to a news website or news organisation	2.2	16
Write a blog or post about a new topic	1.6	11
Share a news story via email	1.3	9

The findings show that a significant proportion of young people participate in the production of news content through various means. The predominant mode of participation is through discussions about news topics in online conversations (via email, social media, or messaging apps) and face-to-face conversations. Additionally, many youths engage in activities such as sending likes, recommending and sharing news stories, and commenting on news articles on social media platforms. Further, many respondents reported contributing to news content production by uploading photos or videos related to news events and participating in online polls through news websites or social networks. These findings highlight the youth's awareness of their ability to participate in producing and disseminating news content through new media platforms.

The Importance of News Topics

The survey respondents were asked to rate a variety of news topics on a scale from 1 ('not at all important') to 5 ('very important'). Table 3 shows the distribution of the answers.

Table 3: Importance of news topics (N=673).

News topics	1 Not at all important %	2 Low importance %	3 Moderately important %	4 Importan t %	5 Very importan t %
News on military and security issues in Israel	4.0	9.4	13.1	26.9	45.2
Weather news	7.0	10.7	17.8	32.5	30.3
Health news	8.6	12.2	17.8	30.5	30.0
News about education in Israel	11.3	12.8	22.4	28.1	23.8
Sports news	23.3	20.8	17.2	17.2	20.7
News about politics and government in Israel	9.8	19.6	23.3	28.1	18.7
International news	9.8	18.0	27.2	26.0	14.6
News about science and technology	16.5	18.4	24.1	26.2	14.1
News on welfare and society in Israel	18.4	19.3	26.2	21.1	13.7
Entertainment and culture news	10.7	24.5	27.0	24.8	12.2
Lifestyle and fashion news	32.5	23.3	20.1	12.9	10.1
Local news in Israel	14.6	22.4	27.6	23.8	9.8
Consumer news	20.2	23.2	24.8	20.5	8.5
News about transportation and cars	28.2	24.8	24.5	15.0	6.7
Economics and business news	23.9	27.9	22.4	18.3	5.5
Tourism news	28.2	30.5	24.1	11.1	5.3

The results indicate that a significant proportion of the youth population (72%) deem news about military and security matters in Israel as either important or very important. Similarly, education, health, and weather news garnered high ratings, followed closely by politics and governance in Israel. These topics also feature prominently in the news coverage across various media platforms in Israel, suggesting a solid alignment between public interest and the media agenda.

Participation in Political, Social, and Civic Activities

Table 4 shows the distribution of the survey respondents' participation rating (according to a scale from 5 ('regularly') to 1 ('I never/did not do it at all') in political, social, and civic activities.

Table 4: Frequency of participation in political, social, and civic activities (N=673).

Activity	1	2	3	4	5
	Never %	Once %	From time to time %	Often %	Regularly %
Participation in youth organisations	34.9	16.6	8.5	8.5	29.3
Training in youth organisations	54.4	7.3	6.4	5.9	24.4
Volunteering	18.7	21.4	33.3	12.0	13.1
Activity in civil organisations	82.3	6.2	4.0	1.8	3.7
Aid to vulnerable populations	44.0	25.4	20.4	4.8	3.6
Voting in online polls initiated by the media on political or social issues	46.4	17.1	24.1	7.4	3.4
Expressing an opinion (as a response): responses on social networks, talkback on news sites	56.9	14.7	18.1	5.3	3.3
Student council activity	72.4	14.9	4.8	3.1	3.1
Boycott products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons	81.1	7.9	4.9	1.6	2.7
Membership in an activist group	79.6	10.7	3.4	1.9	2.5
Active participation in online discussions about political, civil, or social issues	67.5	10.8	14.1	3.1	2.5
Signing an online petition	40.4	18.6	28.8	8.3	1.9
Creating content or sharing content on political or social issues	67.6	11.0	12.6	5.5	1.8
Activity in a political movement/party	88.0	4.3	3.0	1.3	1.6
Participation in an online protest on the Internet/social networks	66.7	16.9	10.5	3.3	0.9
Participation in a protest or demonstration in a public space	70.1	18.9	7.1	1.8	0.4

The study reveals that about one-quarter of the youth frequently volunteer and tutor in youth organisations and actively participate in such organisations. Around one-fifth occasionally participate in activities like signing online petitions, aiding vulnerable populations, and engaging in online political or social polls. Participation in other surveyed

activities was generally low. The three activities with high participation frequency are directly relevant to Israeli youth, as high school students are required to engage in social activities as part of the Grade 10 curriculum, and involvement in youth organisations is common among them.

The Degree of Agreement with Statements Related to Political Activities

To comprehend the attitudes of survey participants towards political activities in society, they were requested to assess their level of agreement with a range of statements presented to them. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, where the degree of agreement ranged from 5 ('strongly agree') to 1 ('no opinion'). The distribution of the answers to these questions is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Degree of agreement with statements related to political activity in society.

Statement	Average	1	2	3	4	5
		No opinion %	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
If something bothers me, I have to do something to change it	4.12	6.1	0.9	4.5	51.6	36.3
Even if I cannot change things, it is still important to try	3.80	7.1	4.9	9.4	56.5	21.0
I need more time to be politically or socially active	3.40	10.0	9.1	29.3	32.8	18.0
It is interesting to be active in political issues because you learn a lot of useful things	3.48	14.9	4.8	19.6	43.4	16.5
It is interesting to be politically involved because you meet influential people	3.31	16.3	5.1	21.0	45.5	11.6
I have no influence, so it is pointless to try to change things	2.75	7.6	29.0	46.2	12.9	3.4

The findings show that most youth strongly agreed or agreed with most statements, except 'I have no influence, and therefore, it is pointless to try to change things', which most disagreed with. This finding suggests that youth are interested in political participation and believe in their ability to influence societal issues. However, the study also found that this belief only sometimes leads to active political engagement.

Interactions between News Consumption and Political and Civic Participation

The statistical processing from the survey did not allow us to find significant clear correlations between news consumption and youth participation. At the same time, we found statements in the interviews with thirty-six Israeli youth that indicate a qualitative interaction between news consumption and political and civic participation.

Below are some quotes that demonstrate this:

I need to stay updated through the news. This is my way of feeling involved. I do not participate in demonstrations or protests, nor do I participate in a youth movement. (Interviewee 12, boy, 18y)

I do not participate in political and civic activities, but I am exposed to the news because it helps me to be a better citizen. (Interviewee 4, boy, 16y)

The news helps me to form my opinions [...] It also helps me feel like I belong to places where I feel I belong. It helps me to be involved because I am informed, but I have never participated in a demonstration. (Interviewee 34, girl, 17y)

I do not believe in demonstrations; I do not go out to the street and shout because I do not think it achieves anything. My day-to-day choices in the news I consume are a personal demonstration. I did not participate in a social protest, only in personal things. (Interviewee 19, girl, 18y)

In summary, the study on youth's political and civic participation reveals a significant disparity between their expressed interest and actual involvement in activities. While the findings suggest a heightened interest in following news on political issues and a sense of responsibility towards Israeli society and the State of Israel, it is not followed in traditional and participatory political and civic engagement. A noteworthy finding is that youth tend to participate in social and voluntary activities that align with their age group.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study is among the first to explore Israeli youth news consumption and its impact on their political and civic participation. Israel is a compelling case, as its residents in general, including youth, are among the highest news consumers globally. Despite global trends of increasing news avoidance among youth (Edgerly et al., 2018; Geers and Vliegthart, 2021; Newman et al., 2019), our findings reveal that Israeli youth actively consume news and show strong interest in global and national events.

The study participants, termed 'newsters', are new digital news consumers who favour digital platforms, primarily social media and television, for news. This preference reflects a broader trend of shifting toward digital news consumption across all age groups, with a decline in traditional media (Kalogeropoulos, 2019; Newman et al., 2019). Satirical programs also emerged as a key news source, aligning with previous research (Balmas, 2014; Edgerly et al., 2018; Clark and Marchi, 2017).

Participants valued news topics relevant to them, especially national issues like military, security, politics, and government, over personal topics such as fashion and lifestyle, aligning with Schrøder (2019). However, despite high news consumption, there is a notable disconnect between this consumption and active political participation. While news is a daily routine for youth, it does not significantly contribute to behaviours associated with political participation. This finding challenges studies that link news consumption with increased political participation among youth (Atkin and Gantz, 1978; Buckingham, 2000; Edgerly et al., 2018; Alon-Tirosh and Lemish, 2014).

The interview data suggest that this disconnect may be partly explained by widespread political disillusionment among Israeli adolescents. Many participants expressed skepticism regarding the effectiveness of traditional political channels and collective actions, such as demonstrations, often perceiving them as unlikely to bring about meaningful change. While these findings are deeply rooted in the unique Israeli sociopolitical context, marked by a prolonged political stalemate and ongoing conflict, they may also resonate with broader global patterns among youth, who increasingly favour personal and issue-based forms of engagement over institutional participation.

In Israel, the combination of a culture characterised by high news consumption and the reality of a society in an ongoing conflict elevates the importance of news in the lives of young people. Previous studies suggest that the central role of news in providing information to youth and shaping their socialisation toward public and civic engagement may position it as a potential agent of social change (Lemish and Pick-Alony, 2014). However, our findings reveal a dissonance where, despite high levels of news consumption, Israeli youth exhibit low levels of active participation in political and civic activities. This aligns with findings from other countries, where political participation among young people is influenced by the democratic maturity of their country. Kitanova (2020) demonstrated that young people in newly established democracies tend to engage less in political activities compared to those in advanced democracies, where voting is often a habitual and socially reinforced practice. This suggests that in societies where democratic norms and participatory traditions are still developing, digital news consumption may substitute for active political engagement rather than encourage it.

The research shows that Israeli youth engage in voluntary and social activities relevant to their age group, with a strong interest in political participation and confidence in their ability to influence societal issues. They care deeply about Israeli society and the IDF. While this suggests political and civic participation, it must be reflected in active engagement through traditional means or new media-based politics.

The high level of youth news consumption, mainly through social networks, may indicate that, in the age of new media, news consumption itself is seen in their eyes as political and civic participation. This perception likely relates to their focus on studies and leisure, leaving little time for active political involvement. These patterns of engagement are also shaped by algorithmic personalisation. Social media feeds and search engines curate and amplify certain narratives, influencing what young people perceive as important and actionable. This algorithmic mediation may both broaden and fragment their civic awareness.

Israeli youth are not only avid news consumers but also engage in news creation through digital technologies, aligning with the concept of 'Participatory Culture' (Jenkins, 2006), where audiences actively participate in content creation and distribution (Huang, 2009; Clark and Marchi, 2017). These practices can be seen as expressions of political and civic participation, providing a platform for youth to engage with political and civic issues. The participants see the active consumption of news as a means of expressing political and civic participation. This study revisits the concern from Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) that heavy news consumption could lead to a passive feeling of participation, or 'narcotization', resulting in disengagement. However, in the digital era, and as found in this study, Israeli youth are not passive consumers but 'Prosumers', actively participating in the media landscape.

These findings also align with Bennett's (2008) concept of 'Actualizing Citizenship', which emphasises personalised, networked, and issue-driven forms of engagement over traditional collective actions. This framework offers an interesting lens for interpreting the

patterns we observe among Israeli youth, whose engagement appears less tied to traditional forms and more oriented toward personalised, networked participation.

By viewing news consumption, content sharing, and online commentary as political acts, Israeli youth may be redefining what political and civic participation looks like in a digital, networked era. While these practices suggest a redefinition of those engagements, it is also possible to interpret them more critically. News consumption and online sharing may serve as a form of passive activism, allowing individuals to maintain a self-image as informed citizens while avoiding more demanding political actions.

While some researchers predicted increased youth participation in the public sphere with more news consumption (Alon-Tirosh and Lemish, 2014; Buckingham, 2000), this study shows a different scenario among Israeli youth. Despite high news consumption, their active participation in political and civic activities remains limited, and their involvement in online political activities via social media is relatively low (Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik, 2019). The discrepancy between their belief in their ability to effect change and their actual participation mirrors trends observed in newly established democracies, where political engagement is less ingrained in societal norms (Kitanova, 2020). This further supports the notion that news consumption alone does not necessarily translate into active civic engagement and may instead serve as a substitute for direct participation.

Nevertheless, Israeli youth remain optimistic about their ability to effect change and show strong interest in political participation. They are involved in age-relevant voluntary and social activities, demonstrate high interest in political participation, and trust in their ability to influence societal change while actively consuming and discussing political news.

It is important to note that this study focuses exclusively on Jewish Israeli youth. Arab-Israeli youth operate within different cultural, political, and media environments, often consuming a diverse mix of Palestinian, Israeli, and pan-Arab news sources. Their experiences of civic engagement and political participation may differ significantly from those of Jewish Israeli youth. Future research should address these distinctions through comparative studies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of youth participation patterns in Israel.

In conclusion, the data suggest a form of political and civic engagement among Israeli youth that is not expressed in traditional activities. Our findings highlight interrelationships between news consumption and political and civic engagement, with news consumption—primarily via new media—often perceived as a form of participation. This perception likely arises because their time is primarily occupied by school and leisure activities, leaving little room for active political or civic involvement. The in-depth interviews suggest a theoretical contribution to political participation literature: a new form of activism through media consumption, distribution, and content creation. These findings, differing from those in other countries, might represent a new model of youth engagement, particularly relevant in societies facing political conflict or in emerging democracies where digital media access is high. In this context, future research should further explore the relationship between democratic maturity, media consumption, and youth political participation, considering whether digital engagement can ultimately serve as a gateway to more active civic involvement.

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Statements and Declarations

Ethical Approval Statement

This research has been reviewed and approved by Bar-Ilan University's ethics committee and the Chief Scientist of the Ministry of Education in Israel (no. 10026).

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