Digitization and political participation in the MENA region: Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia

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Abstract
The article highlights the link between digitization and political participation in three Middle Eastern countries: Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia. The role of the Internet and social media in political engagement is thoroughly discussed from a historical-comparative perspective. Using micro and macro level data, the study analyzes the usage of new online technologies and online political participation. The findings provide valuable insights for understanding the intricate nature of online political participation and the paradox between digital engagement and traditional political involvement. Despite the expansion of digital media, traditional political interest and participation has decreased. Egypt and Kuwait demonstrate advanced stages of digitization with widespread Internet access, while Tunisia's progress is varied.

Keywords
Internet, social media, political participation, online political engagement, election participation.

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Introduction

The Internet has played a significant role in shaping political participation globally. With the rise of digital technologies and social media platforms, people are now more connected than ever before, and they are using these tools to communicate, get information, and engage in civic activities (Loucif, 2022). In contrast to traditional media, which often require significant resources and competencies (the ability to write well, access to publishing or broadcasting platforms, and legal expertise), the Internet is much more accessible and user-friendly. It provides for virtualization of the mass media space (Baychik, 2023), and enables people with little to no technical skills to engage in political discourses (Koc-Michalska, Lilleker, & Vedel, 2016). The use of the Internet in campaigning has become increasingly important, with political candidates and parties using social media platforms to reach out to voters and mobilize their supporters (Solo, 2014; Stromer-Galley, 2019). This was particularly evident during the Arab Spring, a significant period of political upheaval that swept across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The surge in political discussions and involvement within Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia propelled by the advent of new media, is a phenomenon that has garnered significant attention in recent times. While the digital age has undeniably amplified the speed and reach of these conversations, it is essential to recognize that political engagement has a long-standing tradition in the cultural fabric of these nations. Long before the Internet and social media platforms emerged, people in these countries would gather in caf s, homes, and salons to passionately discuss political matters, share opinions, and voice their concerns (Abu-Lughod, 2015). These physical spaces served as incubators for political discourse, fostering a deep-rooted connection between the citizens and their political landscapes (Markman, 2008). The advent of new media has undoubtedly accelerated this discourse, offering a virtual arena where opinions can be exchanged in real time, transcending geographical boundaries. This also goes hand in hand with some other studies, pointing out that the political and economic dimensions of press freedom are significant predictors of human development in the Eastern African region (Ejigu, & Gebru, 2020).

The specific study of Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia can help trace the evolution of online political participation under the global digitization of daily life since the Arab Spring. Over the past decade, the role of digital platforms in these countries has played a diverse and evolving role in facilitating political dialogue and dissent. In Egypt, the government has progressively tightened control over online spaces, resulting in citizens adapting their strategies and shifting to

different platforms for political participation (Caren, Andrews, & Lu, 2020). On the other hand, in Kuwait, digital spaces remain essential platforms for political discourse, showcasing the relatively more open political atmosphere in the country (Aljazzaf, Al-Ali, & Sarfraz, 2020). In Tunisia, the fact that youth are becoming less interested in political activism; consequently, unless some proper efforts are undertaken to empower young people to impact social change, democracy could be at risk (Mansouri, 2022).

Investigating these diverse contexts offers valuable lessons for understanding the interplay of sociopolitical dynamics and online spaces, and the potential of digital democracy in non-Western societies. Such studies could reveal innovative ways of using digital platforms for political participation while unearthing challenges unique to these contexts, informing future policy, and enhancing the theoretical understanding of e-politics. Thus, this study aims to describe the change in political participation if any, in the context of increasing the Internet and social media usage. Are people more interested in politics since they can easily follow the news and obtain information on political events? Do people participate more in politics with massive access to social media and the Internet? These are the questions to be answered for the three country cases discussed in this article.

The impact of the Internet on political participation: literature review

Scholars discuss the Internet's influence on political participation, presenting both utopian and dystopian views. The discourse often centers on the digital divide, emphasizing disparities between rich and poor nations. New media technologies have bolstered political participation, empowering activists to reach both local and global audiences. This media interactivity crafts alternative public spaces, broadening networks and support globally. Social media promotes political dialogue, particularly among global youth. Contrasting traditional media, which often restricts political engagement, new media champions diverse voices. Platforms such as Facebook[2] and X (formerly Twitter) offer real-time news dissemination. They connect and mobilize activists worldwide, as evidenced by movements such as the Arab Spring and Black Lives Matter. Notably, in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia, social media amplified citizen's voices and drove participation.

The 2011 Arab Spring redefined online political participation, with the Internet pivotal in driving civic activism, toppling autocratic MENA regimes. The

[2] Belongs to Meta company, banned at the territory of the Russian Federation.

region's digitally savvy youth significantly shaped online engagement. Yet, post-Arab Spring, dynamics shifted due to state surveillance, digital inequalities, and evolving politics. Such changes underline the importance of studying how digital platforms influence political participation. During the Arab Spring, viral social network content triggered major protests in Tunisia and other MENA countries. Platforms such as Facebook[3] informed locals and international audiences about unfolding events. The rise of new media and social platforms has reshaped political landscapes, especially among youth. The Arab Spring exemplifies social media's role in civic activism and change. But post-Arab Spring, online dynamics in the MENA region evolved due to surveillance, censorship, and digital divides, calling for in-depth analysis.

Media effects theory deciphers how communication technologies impact individual and societal interactions. It scrutinizes how such technologies mediate information flow, affecting societal attitudes. Specifically, MET evaluates how new media enhances traditional political dialogues, projecting them into online spaces, and influencing regional politics. Within this framework, MET analyzes the depths and types of political engagement through new media, showing how platforms empower citizens to voice concerns and mobilize support. Rooted in MET, this study examines how digital engagement amplifies traditional political activities. Finally, we spotlight the evolution of digital media and political participation in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia.

Internet usage, digital media and political participation in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia

The three selected countries offer distinct examples that illustrate the contrasting dynamics of the population. Egypt has witnessed continuous population growth, reaching 112 million by 2023. Kuwait, in contrast, has maintained a relatively stable population size of approximately 4.3 million. Tunisia has experienced a slight increase over the past two decades, peaking at 12.3 million in 2022 (The World Bank, 2023). Consequently, Egypt is the most populous nation in the Arab world and has emerged as a pioneering force in using digital media for political participation.

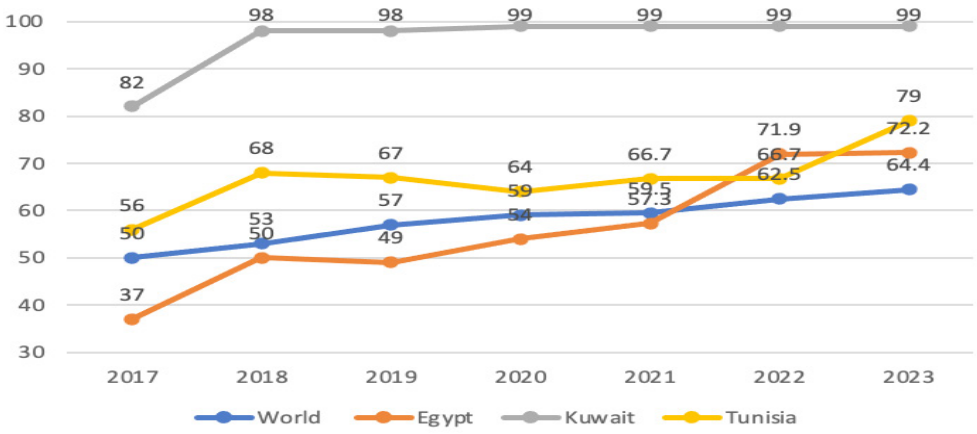
Kuwait stands out with consistently high rates of active Internet users, reaching 99% (*Figure 1*). This indicates near-universal access to the Internet within the Kuwaiti population, showcasing the country's strong digital infrastructure and high connectivity. Egypt and Tunisia demonstrated substantial growth from 2017 to 2023 in the use of the Internet, with a remarkable increase from 37%

[3] Ibid.

to 72.2% and from 56% to 79%, respectively. This suggests a rapid adoption of Internet services in these countries, reflecting the expanding digital landscape and increased connectivity among its population, contributing to developing a more digitally connected society. Despite the overall growth in Internet usage, it is important to note that there are still significant portions of the population in Egypt and Tunisia without Internet access. Lack of access to the Internet can directly impact access to information, educational opportunities, economic prospects, and political participation for those without Internet connectivity (Büchi et al., 2022; Schradie, 2020; Hjort & Sacchetto, 2022).

Figure 1

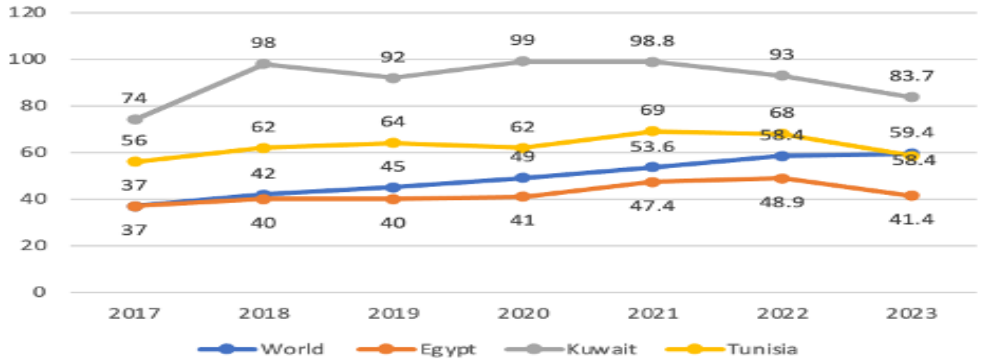
Percentage of active Internet users in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia in comparison with the rest of the world 2017–2023 (Data Reportal, 2023)



Over the years, there has been consistent growth in the number of active social media users in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia (*Figure 2*). Kuwait witnessed a remarkable increase in its percentage, reaching 83.7% in 2023, surpassing the rest of the world (59.4%). Conversely, Egypt maintains a relatively stable percentage of around 41.4%, while Tunisia shows moderate fluctuations, reaching 58.4% in 2023. Moreover, all three countries experienced growth in mobile social media usage (Data Reportal, 2023). Understanding the dominance of mobile devices in social media access is crucial for understanding the political and civic participation in these countries.

Figure 2

Total percentage of active social media users in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia in comparison with the rest of the world 2017–2023 (Data Reportal, 2023)

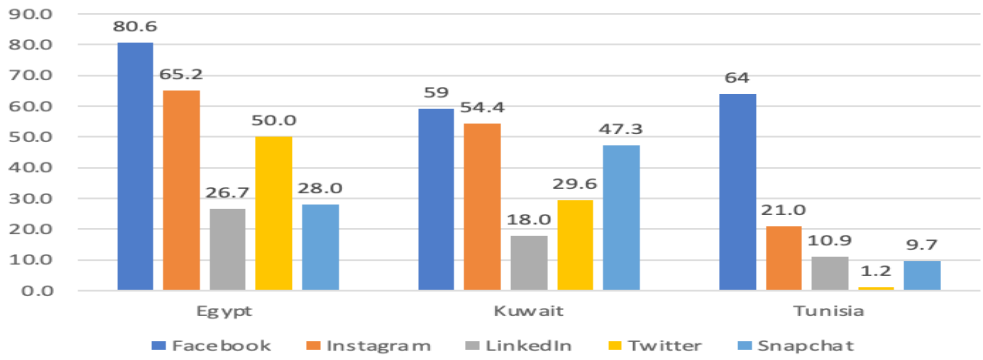


In all three countries, Facebook[4] has a high percentage of users: Egypt is the highest (80.6%), followed by Tunisia (65%), and Kuwait (59%) (*Figure 3*). Facebook is considered as a main tool for civic participation and sharing information about government (El-Nawawy, & Khamis, 2013; Breuer et al., 2015). Instagram[5] is the second most popular social media site in Egypt (65.2%), Kuwait (54.4%), and Tunisia (21%) (*Figure 3*), that is used primarily by young people between 18 and 35 years for social networking and sharing information on popular culture, such as music, movies, and sports. Interestingly, the third-most used social media site is different across the three countries. In Egypt, 50% use Twitter, a critical tool for political activism (Karolak, 2020), while in Kuwait, 47% prefer using Snapchat, and only 30% use Twitter, which has been used for political discussions, debates, and organizing protests (Al Nashmi et al., 2010). Tunisia has a lower share of social media users in comparison to Egypt and Kuwait; only 11% of people use LinkedIn for professional networking and Twitter (10%), which is commonly used for political activism (Breuer et al., 2015).

[4] Belongs to Meta company, banned at the territory of the Russian Federation.
[5] Ibid.

Figure 3

Total percentage of users accessing social media sites such as Facebook[6], Instagram[7], LinkedIn, Twitter, and Snapchat in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia in 2021 (Data Reportal, 2023)



The utilization of new media for political participation in Tunisia, Egypt, and Kuwait has exhibited varying patterns, influenced by a multitude of factors that shape each country's unique sociopolitical landscape. These factors include historical context, technological access, government policies, and societal norms. It is important to recognize that while new media might amplify political discussions, these discussions are deeply rooted in the historical and cultural context of each country (Ayish, 2020; Fadi, 2017).

In Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab Spring, the use of new media was instrumental in mobilizing mass protests and ultimately leading to significant political change. The country's history of authoritarian rule and limited freedom of expression prompted citizens to turn to platforms such as Facebook[8] and Twitter to organize and voice their grievances (Breuer et al., 2015).

In Egypt, where political discussions have long been a part of coffeehouse culture, the advent of new media took on a different trajectory. While platforms such as Facebook[9] played a role in organizing the 2011 uprising, the subsequent years saw a complex interplay between online activism and state control. However, following the revolution, restrictions on freedom of expression have

[6] Belongs to Meta company, banned at the territory of the Russian Federation.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

escalated, leading to a narrowing of online activism in Egypt to focus on specific issues and crowdfunding causes (Karolak, 2020).

On the other hand, Kuwait, with its unique political system characterized by a parliamentary monarchy, has seen a blend of traditional and digital political participation. The country's well-established political discourse in diwaniyas (traditional meeting places) has seamlessly merged with online spaces. In Kuwait, approximately 78% of the population is actively engaging with social media platforms (Al-Kandari, & Hasanen, 2012; Buscemi, 2021). Notably, platforms such as Twitter have served as important arenas for political discussions, debates, and the organization of protests (Al Nashmi et al., 2010). However, Kuwait's conservative societal norms have at times clashed with the open nature of social media platforms. This interaction between cultural values and technological platforms highlights how societal norms can influence the dynamics of political engagement in the digital age with the accessibility of online platforms (Al-Sumait et al., 2020).

Despite the similarities in their usage of digital media for civic participation, these countries' ecosystems differ significantly. Egypt has a relatively high level of censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression, while Kuwait has a more open environment with fewer restrictions. Tunisia falls somewhere in between, with relatively open access to digital media, but also occasional government restrictions.

The digital media across these countries has amplified citizen's voices and played a crucial role in promoting social and political change. As these nations continue to navigate their political landscapes, the digital medium is likely to remain a critical tool for activism, advocacy, and fostering greater civic participation in the future.

Following the previous literature and discussions on social media usage and political participation, this research is testing the hypotheses of the connection of Internet access and social media usage, on the one hand, and more active political participation on the other hand, in the last ten years with the help of the empirical national survey data of Arab Barometer 2013–2022.

Analytical strategy and data description

The hypotheses were tested with the help of Arab Barometer Survey data collected in 2013 and 2022 for the three discussed countries in a comparative perspective. A ten-year period allows us to understand the dynamics and overall changes in the analyzed countries on political participation and the role of the media in this from a population perspective.

The Arab Barometer Surveys have been collected in the MENA region since 2006; the sample size for each country comprises about 1100–1300 people (Arab Barometer, 2022). These high-quality public opinion surveys are collected every two years across the MENA region. The samples are nationally representative by gender, age, and education. We use this secondary data of Arab Barometer Surveys to test the correlation between Internet/social media (SM) usage and political participation in the societies.

Measurements and indicators used in the study

The outcome variable, political participation, was captured with the help of two following indicators/survey questions:

a) In general, to what extent are you interested in politics?

b) Did you vote in the last parliamentary elections?

In order to see the dynamics of digitization among the population, we identified a list of indicators from the Arab Barometer Survey that describe Internet and SM usage. Internet and social media usage were captured by such variables (survey questions) as:

- On average, how often do you use the Internet?
- How many hours on a typical day do you spend on social media platforms?
- Which social media and text messaging services do you actively use?
- How often do you use social media for the following activities: finding information on political events?
- How often do you use social media for the following activities: expressing your opinion on political events?
- What is your primary source of information to follow breaking news as events unfold?

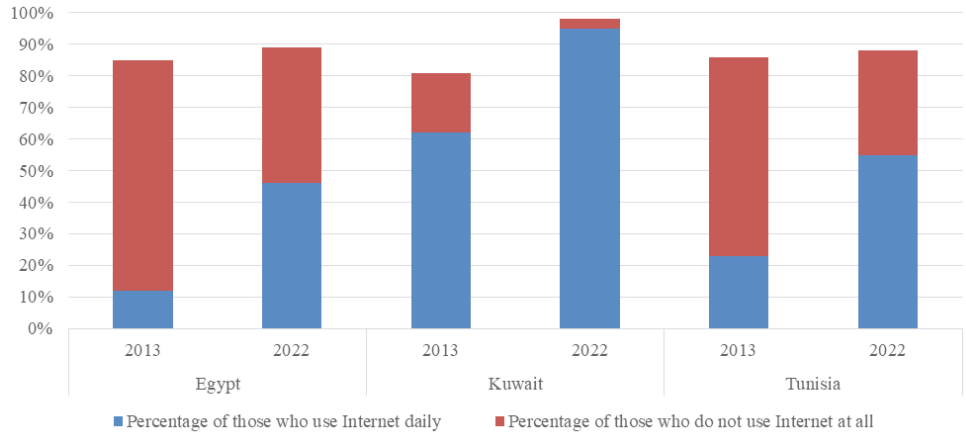
The link between Internet/SM usage and political participation was further tested via a correlation analysis between the indicators listed above.

Results and discussion

According to the Arab Barometer data, the share of daily Internet users grew tremendously over the last ten years in all three country cases, reaching 95% in Kuwait (*Figure 4*). The dynamics reflect the national country-level statistics discussed in the previous section. It is important to underline that despite global trends of digitization, the digital divide is quite significant in Egypt and Tunisia, where 43% and 33% of the population still did not use the Internet by 2022.

Figure 4

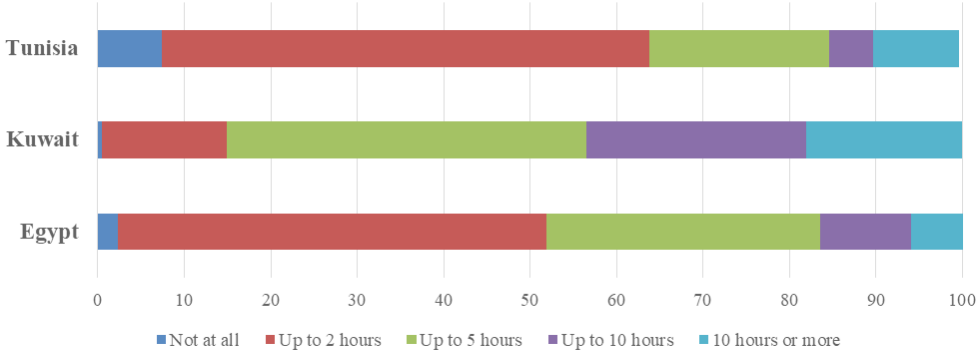
Percentage of Internet users, 2013 and 2022 (Arab Barometer data)



Empirical analysis of Arab Barometer Survey data is in line with the Digital Report national data and previous studies on the essential role of the current social media. The social media users spend minimum of two hours per day browsing SM platforms (*Figure 5*). In Kuwait, almost half of the population spends more than five hours a day on social media platforms. At the same time, Tunisia has about 8% of the population who do not spend time on social media at all and this represents the highest number among the three countries.

Figure 5

How many hours on a typical day do you spend on social media platforms? (Arab Barometer, 2022)



Interestingly, the landscape of social media packages has changed enormously within the last ten years (*Table 1*). By 2022, Facebook[10] became stronger in Egypt (from 21% to 33%) and in Tunisia (from 26% to 43%); however, in Kuwait, it lost its power completely as it dropped from 57% to only 3%. The usage of social media platforms in Kuwait has much more variety and spread toward Instagram[11], Snapchat, and Twitter, which are highly unpopular in Egypt and Tunisia.

Table 1

Which social media and text messaging services do you actively use?

2013			
	Egypt	**Kuwait**	**Tunisia**
Facebook[1]	21.3%	57.4%	25.7%
Twitter	4.2%	61.9%	5.1%
Private blog	1.8%	28.2%	2.1%
Dialogue forum on the Internet	7.0%	43.2%	6.4%
Interactive or dialogue-based groups or pages on social networking websites	9.7%	41.8%	8.6%
2022			
	Egypt	**Kuwait**	**Tunisia**
Facebook[2]	32.7%	2.3%	43.2%
Twitter	3.7%	14.5%	1.6%
Instagram[3]	7.1%	18.5%	13.2%
YouTube	15.8%	12.2%	12.3%
WhatsApp	27.2%	21.4%	11.2%
Telegram	4.5%	4.8%	0.5%
Snapchat	1.6%	16.2%	1.7%
Viber	1.0%	0.3%	0.6%
Clubhouse	0.1%	1.2%	0.0%
Signal	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%
TikTok	5.5%	8.1%	6.4%
Other	0.5%	0.3%	7.4%

Source: Arab Barometer, 2013 and 2022

Interestingly, in 2022 social media was more often used for obtaining the news, information on political events, and activities as well as to express an opinion on political issues than back in 2013. A significant spread of social

[10] Belongs to Meta company, banned at the territory of the Russian Federation.
[11] Ibid.

media's importance for political activism could be witnessed in Tunisia (*Table*). Thus, society started using the Internet more for expressing opinions (from 16% in 2013 to 51% in 2022) and for obtaining the information on political events (from 21% in 2013 to 78% in 2022). In both Egypt and Kuwait, people started using social media less actively to express their views, but more often to search for information on activities.

Table 2

Internet and social media use for information and opinions

2013			
	Egypt	**Kuwait**	**Tunisia**
Internet use: Express your opinion about political issues	15%	41%	16%
Internet use: Find out about political activities taking place in your country	16%	50%	21%
2022			
Use social media for the following activities: Express your opinion about political issues	12%	35%	51%
Use social media for the following activities: Finding out about political events taking place in your country	42%	85%	78%

Source: Arab Barometer, 2013 and 2022

By 2022, social media had become the primary source for information to follow breaking news (60%) in Kuwait. In Egypt and Tunisia, it is still television that plays a crucial role for the population to follow the news. Da Silva (2020) emphasizes that excess in television consumption is not merely a stylistic or narrative choice, but it is also central to understanding television as a medium and its impact on audiences. In all three countries, most people had stopped reading newspapers (at less than 3% of the population) and had almost stopped listening to the radio for the news, except Tunisia (8.5%) (see *Table 3*).

Table 3

What is your primary source of information to follow breaking news as events unfold?

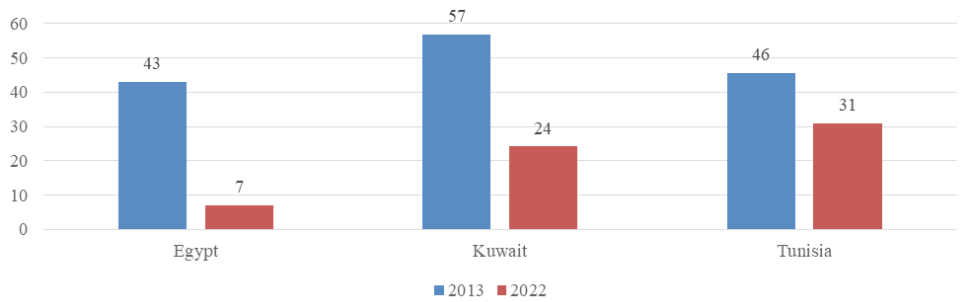
	Egypt	Kuwait	Tunisia
In-person conversations	11.1%	2.9%	8.8%
Telephone conversations	0.6%	10.0%	2.8%
Newspapers	0.6%	2.9%	1.2%
Radio	1.5%	1.5%	8.5%
Television	54.8%	21.0%	46.3%
Social media	26.1%	60.3%	29.9%
Other	2.2%	1.2%	0.9%
Don't know	3.1%	0.2%	1.6%

Source: Arab Barometer, 2022

Such a prevalence of new technology in our life would be expected to increase people's interest and participation in politics. However, we did not observe that for the three country cases; quite the opposite, the interest in politics visibly reduced in comparison with 2013 (*Figure 6*) with very few interested in politics now in Egypt (only 7%). The percentage of the population interested in politics dropped by more than half in Kuwait and in Tunisia, it remains relatively high at 31% despite a considerable drop too (of 15 percentage points).

Figure 6

Percentage of those who are very interested or interested in politics in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia (Arab Barometer, 2013 and 2022)

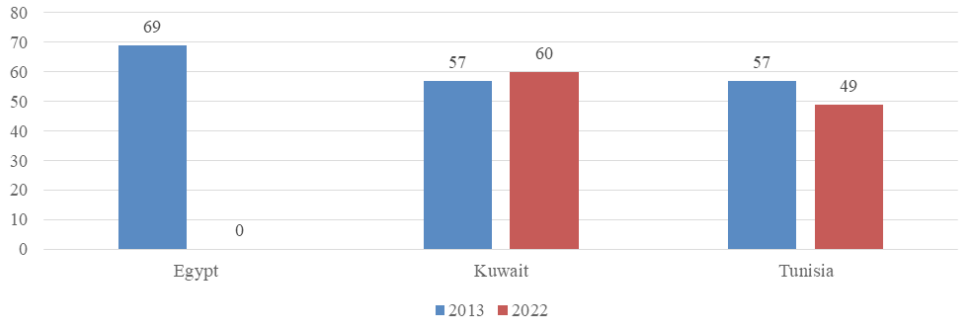


At the same time, active voting has slightly increased in Kuwait from 57% to 60% (*Figure 7*). In Tunisia, it dropped from 57% to 49%. In Egypt, this question was not asked in 2022, thus, there is no available data. But according to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the average voting turnout

reached around 34% in 2019 in the country (IFES, 2019). One can assume a similar decreasing trend in physical voting behavior for all three countries.

Figure 7

Percentage of those who voted in the last parliamentary elections in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia (Arab Barometer, 2013 and 2022)



This paradox of increased online political participation over the decrease in physical political participation needs further investigation and testing. All three country cases of the MENA region faced the increase in online political interest through social media while traditional forms of political engagement, such as participating in elections and showing interest in politics, have decreased in these countries. This discrepancy could be attributed to factors such as the convenience and accessibility of online engagement, generational differences in tech-savviness, government censorship and restrictions, distrust in traditional politics, social media echo chambers, the digital divide, and different motivations for online participation. Further correlation and regression analysis are needed to identify the relationship between online and offline political participation. Can they complement each other and foster meaningful civic participation in these contexts?

The correlation analysis results (*Table 4*) enriched the outcomes and allowed us to test the assumptions on the relationship between the individual Internet and social media usage, and political participation. Thus, despite the general decrease in political interest among the population of the three country cases over the last ten years, the link with Internet usage remained positive and significant in Egypt and Kuwait. It means that access to the Internet does have a positive impact on political participation (despite it decreasing). For Tunisia, this interrelationship is insignificant. An interesting outcome could be noticed for social media usage correlations – no significant links with political interest in Egypt and Tunisia; however, there is a negative correlation for Kuwait. It

might be explained by the fact that social media usage is associated mainly with females in Kuwait and women tend to be less interested in politics.

Voting in parliamentary elections is also negatively associated with social media for Kuwait and Tunisia. Another important outcome to declare is the positive significant correlation between Internet usage and in-person participation in protests in Tunisia. At the same time, the correlation analysis reveals consistent significant positive associations between Internet usage and online political participation. This includes more frequent usage of social media for information search on political events, more frequent expression of opinions on political issues, and engagement in online activities to solve a problem.

It is an interesting paradox for further detailed investigation: active political participation seems to be decreasing with the expansion of the Internet and social media. Participation in elections and interest in politics went down, but online political participation seems to be on the rise. This is something to research more thoroughly in the future studies with panel data to detect the causality effects. Currently available data do not allow us to do that.

Table 4

Bivariate correlation coefficients for Internet/social media usage and political participation indicators in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia, 2022 (Arab Barometer data)

	Internet usage			Social media usage		
	Egypt	**Kuwait**	**Tunisia**	**Egypt**	**Kuwait**	**Tunisia**
Age	-.351**	-.357**	-.471**	-.284**	-.408**	-.365**
Male	.207**	0.003	.062**	0.004	-.161**	0.044
Interest in politics	**.155****	**.077****	0.038	0.045	**-.080****	-0.046
Participation in the last parliamentary elections	-	-0.020	-0.035	-	**-.166****	**-.128****
In-person participation in protests	0.033	-	**.150****	-0.015	-	0.051
Using social media to find information on political events	**.196****	**.092****	**.128****	**.125****	-0.018	-0.025
Expressing opinions via social media platforms on political issues	**.125****	**.071***	**.061***	**.163****	0.022	-0.004
Online activity to solve a problem	**.098****	**.070***	**.172****	0.031	0.010	**.060***

Note: Correlation coefficient is measured as a bivariate Pearson correlation ranging from −1 to +1

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

To sum up, the examination of online political participation in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia reveals the complex interplay between digital media, political engagement, and evolving sociopolitical contexts. Aligned with media effects theory, which underscores communication technology's transformative role, this study illuminates how new media reshape traditional political involvement into virtual realms. Media effects theory's framework offers insights into the interplay between citizens, institutions, and governments via new media, comprehending shifts in power dynamics. As Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia navigate political landscapes, new media's role in bridging traditional and digital spheres underscores media effects theory's significance in contemporary political communication.

Conclusion

The national data analysis indicates a substantial growth in Internet and social media usage in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia. Kuwait demonstrates an exceptional performance with consistently high rates of active Internet users, while Egypt and Tunisia have experienced significant increases in Internet adoption. Mobile phones have become increasingly popular for web access in all three countries. Moreover, social media usage has steadily grown with Kuwait leading the way, followed by Egypt and Tunisia. Facebook[12] remains the most widely used platform in Tunisia, while Instagram[13] and Snapchat gained popularity in Kuwait. Previous literature highlights the importance of Facebook[14] and Twitter for political activism in these countries, while further research is needed to explore the civic and political engagement potential of Instagram[15] and Snapchat.

The Arab Spring in 2011 marked a critical juncture in the landscape of online political participation in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia. Digital platforms, particularly social media, were used extensively as a medium for civic activism and political mobilization. However, post-Arab Spring, these three countries have witnessed a noticeable shift in the dynamics of online political participation, shaped by an intricate interplay of state control, censorship, digital literacy, and evolving sociopolitical realities.

Egypt, for instance, has seen a decline in online political discourse owing to increased state surveillance, rigorous control over digital spaces, and a general

[12] Belongs to Meta company, banned at the territory of the Russian Federation.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.

disillusionment in the years following the Arab Spring. In contrast, countries such as Tunisia and Kuwait have seen an uptick in online political engagement. As our empirical analysis showed, the spread of Internet usage does have a significant correlation with in-person participation in protests in Tunisia. Moreover, online political participation in terms of expressing opinions in social media platforms on political issues has a stable and significant positive association with Internet and social media usage in all three countries.

These divergent paths underscore the complex interplay of sociopolitical realities, state control, and digital literacy in shaping online political participation. The analysis of these shifts is vital for devising strategies that promote digital democracy in these countries while addressing the unique challenges that they pose. Future research should continue to scrutinize these evolving dynamics and their implications for democratic practices in the region.

The analysis of online political participation in Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia reveals intriguing insights. In Egypt, digital media played a pivotal role during the 2011 revolution, mobilizing citizens and disseminating information on government abuses. Post-revolution, online platforms continue to be vital for political activism and accountability efforts. Kuwait showcases a high level of digital media use, with social media serving as an important platform for political discussions and civic education. However, social media usage correlates negatively with political interest and participation in parliamentary elections, possibly influenced by gender-specific associations. Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab Spring, leveraged digital media to disseminate information, orchestrate demonstrations, and foster political advocacy.

Notably, Internet usage correlates positively with in-person protests and various forms of online political engagement in all three countries. Despite the expansion of digital media, traditional political interest and participation decreased. Egypt and Kuwait demonstrate advanced stages of digitization with widespread Internet access, while Tunisia's progress is varied. These findings provide valuable insights for understanding the intricate nature of online PP and the paradox between digital engagement and traditional political involvement, underscore the significant impact of digital media platforms on political communication and activism in the region, and provide valuable directions for future research.

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