

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

HOW DOES MEDIA COVERAGE AFFECT THE OUTCOMES OF THE ELECTIONS?

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ABSTRACT

During elections, the media plays an important role in shaping public opinion and educating voters because it gives candidates a forum to share their platforms and gives the public access to information about the candidates platforms and policies. This research paper looks at the role of the media in the outcomes of the elections, and tries to understand how much influence it has. Main focus of this research and the research question is how does media coverage affect the outcomes of the elections? Main assumption or hypothesis is that there is a significant media influence on the outcomes of elections. This paper explored various media channels, including social media, TV, newspapers, and radio, revealing their multifaceted role in shaping public decisions. Non-experimental quantitative research is conducted to address the research question. Data collection method that is used is a survey. Collected data is then analysed and discussed. As nearly everyone engages with some form of media, this research highlights the media's potential to shape individual beliefs and, ultimately, election outcomes. Meaning that through survey and collected data the hypothesis is proven to be correct.

Keywords: media, elections, public opinion, media influence, politics



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INTRODUCTION

In our globalised society, the media is essential for influencing public opinion, distributing information, and promoting cross-cultural dialogue (Bećirović, 2012). Media is a potent force that shapes societal narratives and perceptions, whether it is accessed through contemporary digital platforms or more conventional channels like television and newspapers. Media is the plural form of medium, which (broadly speaking) describes any channel of communication. This can include anything from printed paper to digital data, and encompasses art, news, educational content, and numerous other forms of information. Anything that can reach or influence people, including phones, television, and the Internet can be considered a form of media. Whether it comes from TV, iPad or phone, media is there all around us.

Bruns et al. (2015) and others argue that the media and politics have always been closely connected. The emergence of democratic structures in Ancient Greece is closely associated with the steady advancement of efficient mechanisms for mediating ideas between public officials and the general public. They state that early examples of the interdependency between politics and the media include the formalisation of rhetorical strategies, the construction of public speech environments, and the accountable systems for expressing the will of the masses, even though at the time that term only applied to free, male members of the local cities (Burns et al., 2015, p.1).

In order to help satisfy their desire for knowledge, billions of people use the media, which can be a powerful resource and a tool. Through the use of print, the web, and electronic media, people can communicate through media. The word is broad enough to cover media other than newspapers and magazines, such as movies. We wouldn't be aware of global events without the media since there wouldn't be any news. Without media, we wouldn't be able to interact with others, watch our favorite TV shows, or listen to our favorite music. We wouldn't be able to do our homework projects or conduct research as students. The media has permeated every aspect of our life (Yaman & Bećirović, 2016). As we know, the media has a lot of power in everyday life and it can affect societies, politics, globalisation and individuals as well. Media is the main source of information in today's world. And through the media people can get informed about a certain topic, but they cannot always know whether that piece of information is correct.

The quantity of media we consume has the ability to affect our choices, whether or not we are conscious of it. Example of this is that the media can market some information a lot on all available platforms, and people without proper background knowledge could believe that information not knowing if they are true or biased. And make decisions on the basis of this information. Media can provide some information that can persuade an individual to support some standards or values. And this thing can be manipulated in many ways. The media exerts social influence and has the power to alter people's attitudes, lifestyles, and moral beliefs. Most people usually only listen to what they want to hear instead of looking for sources that are unbiased. We all want people to agree with us, so we seek them out. This is something to be mindful of when consuming mass media, especially social media. As said that the media impacts the whole society, it impacts politics as well.

The media, from radio to TV, are currently on the rise. By contributing to the distribution of information that is favourable to one side or another, the media can have a significant impact on politics and even history. They impart knowledge about what is occurring, how things operate, and how we should approach them in order to comprehend them better. The media has a significant impact on how we see our leaders, governments, and other influential people in today's society. This ever-expanding supply of knowledge on discoveries and events happening around the world has had a significant impact on the dissemination of information. By examining the mass media, it is now possible to develop a clearer picture of what is happening on a national or international level and this includes books and newspaper articles.

Politics is a decision-making process, whereas the media only reports. We can consider politics and media as two sides of the same coin. Election processes are heavily influenced by the media since candidates and political parties rely on it for media access. Political leaders' campaigns are significantly impacted by the media since they are so important in obtaining information and influencing public opinion. Election results can be significantly impacted by the media. Voters can be persuaded to support a particular political position by having information presented in print, radio, and television media in a particular way. And the voters do not know if this information is fake and are biased.

Aririguzoh (2021) states that the media is involved in politics, acting as an interface between the public and politicians through a variety of media outlets. It is evident that the public may view as significant things that the media highlights. As a result, it's possible that the media will influence voters' choices both before and during elections (Aririguzoh, 2021, p.21). So, the main focus of our research and our research question is how does media coverage affect the outcomes of the elections? The main aim of this study is to try and understand what kind of impact media has on the elections outcomes, and as well to prove that media has significant influence on the outcomes of elections, despite some arguments that it does not have that impact.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When it comes to newspapers as media, newspapers are free to report the news and politics however they see fit within the bounds of the law. Most people have a political opinion or stance. Newspaper endorsement is essential for winning an election. Political parties contend that a newspaper's editorial position and the articles it publishes have the potential to gradually sway less committed voters. However, the majority of voters get their political news primarily from television. One significant tool for mass communication is television. One of its purposes is to educate the audience members about politics. The voting habits of individuals who watch television may be influenced by its content. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that politicians have tried to use it to simultaneously contact millions of voters in an effort to increase their chances of getting more votes. The electorate can obtain helpful information on political parties, candidates, and voting procedures by watching television. However, in the contemporary world the amount of television usage is decreasing with the emergence of social media. Since all needed information can be found on social media, it is very easy to use and to access all information that we need. It is known that younger generations do not watch that much television compared to the elderly population. All younger people use social media as their primary source of information. And it will only increase in years to come. Social media has the capacity to alter not just the message but also the dynamics of political corruption, values, and conflict dynamics. The internet has established communications channels that are crucial for spreading news. Global conflict, extremist politics, and the use of social media in electoral processes have made

diplomacy less private and more sensitive to public opinion. Experts claim that social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and others were never meant to be used for political reasons. However, as IT technologies advanced, many observed that they could be used to mobilise politics.

According to the scientific research done by Fujiwara (2023) and others, Twitter had a minimal impact on Congressional elections and prior presidential elections, but it reduced the Republican vote share in the presidential contests of 2016 and 2020. Survey results, primary results, and text analysis of millions of tweets provide evidence that voters with moderate viewpoints may have been swayed to vote against Donald Trump by Twitter's comparatively liberal content (Fujiwara et al., 2023, p.1).

According to scientific research of Ekaterina Zhuravskaya, et al. (2020) numerous scholarly articles examine how the Internet affects voting behavior and political engagement in developed democracies. This piece paints the following broad picture: Voters with access to the Internet become disinterested in elections and politics overall as a result of the new communications technology's initial lack of use for political objectives. But as time has gone on, new populist political figures have surfaced who successfully rally voters by establishing direct online connections with them. Social media came into being at the same time as this shift (Zhuravskaya et al., 2020, p.418).

Arugay (2022) believes that large social media companies have exploited user information sharing, including political beliefs, ideas, and policy viewpoints, because they are profit-driven. It's already quite well established that misinformation has spread widely due to its ability to evoke strong emotions in users of social media, increasing user engagement. Technology-integrated social media algorithms appear to be ideally suited to the nature of political campaigns (Arugay, 2022, p.3).

In other words, social media and election campaigns seem to be a great combination; one serves the desire of politicians and parties to win votes, while the other serves the business motivation of internet companies. According to Erdogan et al. (2020) and others the global internet user base has increased to 4.54 billion people. The use of social media rose by 40% in the last few months. People use social media for communication, relationship and community building, news, entertainment, and both financial and non-fi-

nancial transactions (Erdogdu et al., 2020, p. 98). However, which social media platforms have the highest percentage of users who read news there? Facebook, although very used, is getting less and less popular among younger generations. They mostly tend to use newer forms of social media like: Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, etc. Companies create social media platforms, whether it is Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Snapchat, or Instagram, they are programmed to filter information for users based on particular criteria: information on demographics (age, gender, and location), interests (for example, football, music, or photography), engagement, such as "likes," "clicks," or "time on page." When a user interacts with the social platform by clicking, liking, checking, posting, or navigating, more comparable material is displayed to them. Platforms use the same procedure to select political material. For instance, a user who selects Sarajevo as their area can see freshly suggested Bosnia and Herzegovina political forums on their social network page.

According to Aindrila et al. (2014) and their research about the influence of social media on voting behaviour in India, people follow political developments on social media platforms; technology is essential for providing first-hand information quickly. Research indicates that females are more influenced by forum conversations than males, which may have an indirect impact on their voting decisions. Individuals actively participate in political discourse by voicing their opinions and viewpoints, as well as by following the political candidate on Facebook and Twitter. Research indicates that individuals who are more engaged with a political party on social media are more inclined to vote for and support that party (Biswas et al., 2014, p.153-154).

The media effect on politics and elections has different points of view. One point of view is that media coverage does not significantly influence or has limited influence on election results. And the other side is that the media plays a huge role when it comes to influencing election results. Firstly, we looked at the ones that think that the media plays a huge role when it comes to influencing election results. Television and newspapers are the main sources from which citizens learn about politics and government; these media outlets have the power to influence voters not only by the editorial slant of individual reports but also simply by selecting which stories to cover. As said, primary sources of information collection for ordinary citizens are television and newspapers, and these media types can be easily influenced and can shape the opinion of ordinary citizens.

Ho (2012) argues that the political election schedule consists primarily of televised debates and talk shows with a chat show format, or daily news broadcasts. Professional news management, spin control, camera-ready scripted event marketing, stringent message discipline, and impression management are the cornerstones of this type of television presence. Candidates frequently focus on a few points rather than having adequate time to express everything they would like to. In a debate, candidates are given only five to eight minutes to speak, and over one-third of that time is devoted to introductions, questions, and commercial interruptions. Furthermore Ho (2012) states that the aforementioned events are referred to as "pseudo-events" because they are deliberately faked to leave audience members with particular impressions. Pseudo-events are typically held prior to elections and are used for publicity, attention-grabbing, and generating commotion from the people. Politicians consistently portrayed themselves in front of the camera as charming and intelligent as possible throughout these types of presentations. Ho (2012) mentions that voter targeting involves dressing up, establishing a tone, and presenting a personal goal in order to get support. Even though the above mention's significance is questioned, there are influences said to exist, and they occasionally have the ability to alter the outcome of election day. Consequently, it is important to never undervalue the impact of mass media, as it might be crucial in certain situations. A substantial amount of money is spent on advertising, indicating that the benefits of mass media are real and deserving of investment. Every politician aspires to maximize the impact of the media (Ho, 2012, pp. 1-2).

According to UNDP the way elections are conducted and how they turn out is greatly influenced by the media. In addition to giving voters the knowledge they need to make an informed decision and giving candidates a forum to address the public, the media has the power to influence the process via the subjects it covers, the questions it poses, and the tone in which it presents its coverage. Furthermore, the way a candidate or subject is portrayed in the media and the quantity of progressively more costly political commercials have a major role in the success or failure of many electoral campaigns. The media is supposed to serve an educated, watchdog role and keep the public informed about electoral issues, candidate viewpoints, and the hows and whys of voting due to its potential to enlighten and influence (UNDP, 2014, p.11).

Media is there to inform the citizens about the election process and about the candidates. But what is important is how the media portrays a certain candidate to the public. This can determine the choice of an ordinary citizen and decide on his vote. With the use of more complex theoretical frameworks and methodological techniques, researchers have been able to determine how voter preferences and election outcomes are shaped by campaign tactics, events, and media coverage, especially in close elections.

Yavuz (2012) states that however, there is still much to learn about the persuasive effects of mediated electoral campaigns on voting behaviour. Biased message flows have an impact on political assessments, according to research by certain academics who have examined the direct persuasive effects of media on political preferences. However, some contend that because elections in developed democracies are typically well-informed and impartial, it is difficult to quantify these persuasive effects (Yavuz, 2012, p.3).

Bias is a huge issue as well for the media and for people as well. There are a lot of biased media that send biased messages and that favour one particular candidate. And they will do anything in order to make that candidate "shine" and to present his opponents as weak options. Bias affects political evaluation a lot. Both the ways that voters communicate about politics and how they consume political information have changed as a result of a concurrent media transformation process. Political messaging on television has changed dramatically, adapted to the quickly gaining traction of new media. TV, as one of the main media, contributed hugely towards the elections. Most people watch TV, and what is broadcasted on TV can influence the opinion of the public and shape it in the way that someone wants. TV plays a crucial role, because most of the elderly population don't use technology and they only rely on TV as a source of information.

Kaplan and Dellavigna (2006) estimate that exposure to Fox News caused 3 to 8 percent of non-Republican viewers to vote for the Republican party, based on evidence and micro-level audience data. This estimate is in line with experimental and field data regarding the impact of media on political opinions and voting behavior. This implies that the media can have a significant political influence, particularly when a politician, like Berlusconi does in Italy, owns a big portion of the media (Kaplan & Dellavigna, 2006, p.32).

Authors above mentioned the Berlusconi example, and it is a great example to show that, when a politician controls most of the media, it will help him win elections. Because if a politician controls it, he will make sure that the media broadcasts all the best about him. Good example is also Milošević from Serbia. It has been stated that any intentional manipulation of public opinion or political procedures through the media would be extremely problematic for any contemporary democracy. Social media is somewhat a "new media" that has a huge impact on the public. Almost everyone today has a social media platform and can follow news with TV, radio, or newspaper. Social media is very dangerous, and people cannot know if the information on social media is true or false. And because of that it is easy to manipulate the masses through social media by simply spreading false information. Second point of view is that the media does not significantly influence or has limited influence on the outcomes of the elections.

McCombs (2013) argues that the body of evidence is mounting, and it is becoming increasingly evident that the mass media has an agenda-setting influence on elections anywhere in the world where there is a reasonably open and free political system and mass media (McCombs, 2013, p.73)

Bode et al. (2020) and others argue that voters who are prone to persuasion but are not well-versed in political matters might be more aware of media coverage during election campaigns. At the very least, media content has the power to change voters' opinions about candidates. The mass media has undergone continuous change (Bode et al., 2020, p.7)

Banducci and Karp (2003) argue that the growing tendency of the media to present matters in terms of political strategy could potentially be a factor in the system's collapse. The medium itself could have an additional effect. Particularly, television has been identified as the offender. Brehm and Rahn discover that watching TV alone has a negative impact on civic involvement. The detrimental impact could have something to do with watching television and shifting times. People have less time to participate in civic-minded activities the more time they spend watching television. (Banducci & Karp, 2003, p.445).

Authors here mention a research that was conducted which showed that people who watch TV, are less engaged in civic-minded activities. So

that means that people who watch more TV, will not participate in voting in elections.

Evidence indicating the absence of media influence over election results: Hodder and Stoughton (2022) say that newspapers are becoming less relevant due to their declining readership, which makes them less likely to have an impact on elections. Voting is unlikely to be influenced by broadcast media because these outlets are required by law to be impartial. Compared to younger generations, older people are significantly more likely to vote, so social media has less of an impact on them (Hodder & Stoughton, 2022, p.2).

Alotaibi believes that the role of the media in influencing election results is generally quite small. But this lack of significance is not innate; neither can it be explained by “resurgent” economic factors nor by outmoded class rationalization. Instead, it is the outcome of other opposing factors, such as the counteracting factor—a reference to the ongoing conflicts between rival candidates—among them. Positive, image-conscious campaigning by candidates is, of course, reflected by all parties; on an impartial person, no overall influence would be discernible. Another factor is the lack of obvious superiority, which is the infrequent occurrence when one candidate manifestly outperforms its rivals in the media while the latter fail to make effective use of the medium (Alotaibi, 2013, p.1).

Author above mentions that the media’s role in influencing election results is very small. Simply because all candidates will do the same and place themselves in the media. There will always be at least two equal candidates that will have the same media coverage. Rarely there is an event where one candidate excels, and controls all the media.

HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis of this research is that there is a significant media influence on the outcomes of elections. In this research hypothesis, the independent variable is media that is exerting influence on the dependent variable, and in this case that is the outcome of the elections. In this research we will single out several pieces of information that indicate that the media, in fact, does influence the outcomes of the elections. This information will be drawn out from several sources: newspapers, articles, books, and various internet sites. As we mentioned in our literature review, there are also various sources that contradict our previous statement,

and claim that the media does not have significant influence on the outcomes of the elections. With this research we expect to prove that the first statement is the correct one, and that there is a significant media influence on the outcomes of the elections. According to Lawrence (2016) and his research, some candidates may even be rendered completely invisible if the media doesn’t show enough interest in them (Lawrence, 2016, p.1). What we can conclude from this is that without proper media coverage, candidates won’t even be recognized as appropriate people who are capable of getting the job done. This example alone shows how big of an influence the media can have on the profiles of the candidates and the election results alone.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

We did non-experimental quantitative research to address the research question: “How does media coverage affect the outcomes of the elections?” For the purposes of this research, we collected data through survey. We collected the mentioned data from students, family members, friends, and acquaintances. The participants were both males and females, different age groups and different educational levels. We posed 15 different questions to the participants in the survey that we gave them. Elections and media in general are discussed in the questions. What is the participant’s source of information when it comes to the election process? Do they believe that the media has a positive or a negative impact on the election process and outcomes? Could the media shape public opinion when it comes to the elections? Did the media affect the participants’ decisions when it comes to voting? How often do participants see posts about politics on their social media, etc.

PARTICIPANTS AND INSTRUMENTS

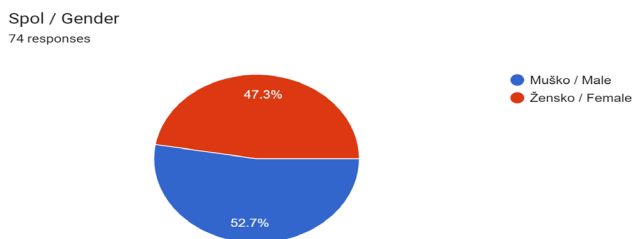
Because the responses were completely personal and from each person’s point of view, it formed an excellent study sample from which to draw conclusions and understand how individuals think and interpret their viewpoints on the connection between media and outcome of the elections. All the answers were noted down and later analysed by the researchers. Researchers may acquire a lot of data from huge populations of people by conducting surveys. And every one of those individuals is free to express their views on the matter. Since the same questions are asked of every participant, survey research is also a trustworthy means of gathering data. The data we gathered for the purpose of

this research is numerical discrete data, meaning that it can be easily visualised and demonstrated using simple statistical methods such as bar charts, line charts, or pie charts that we will demonstrate further in this research paper.

RESULTS

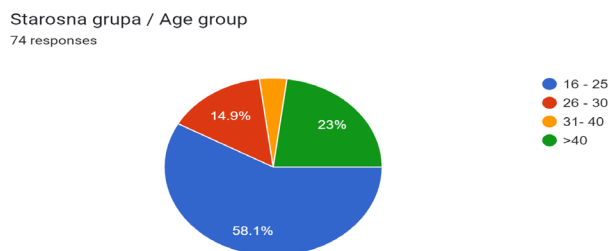
In this part of the research paper, we will analyse the data we have acquired from the participants. The survey that we conducted had 74 respondents.

Figure 1:
Gender of the participants



Out of those 74 respondents, 52.7% were male, and 47.3% were female.

Figure 2:
Age group of the participants



We asked the participants about their age group as well. 58.1% were from 16–25 years old, 14.9% were from 26–30 years old, 4.1% were from 31–40 years old and 23% were from 40 years old and above. This demonstrates the age differences among our participants and the fact that we were able to collect data from a range of ages.

We also collected data about participants' educational level and we found out that 44% of participants are undergraduate students, 32.4% are Master students, 21.6% high school students, and 1.4% are PhD's.

Figure 3:
Education level of the participants

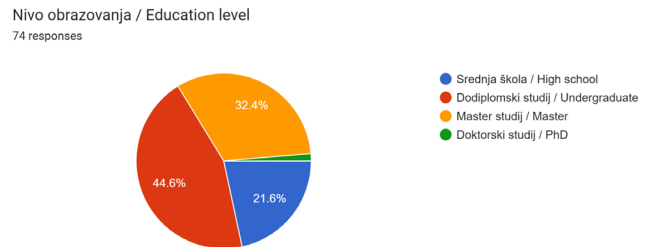
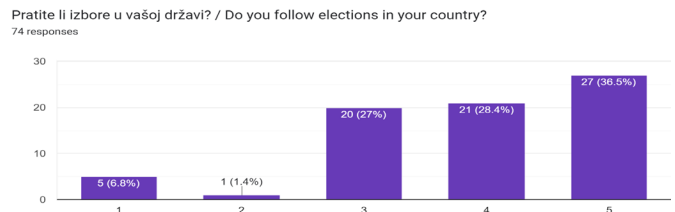


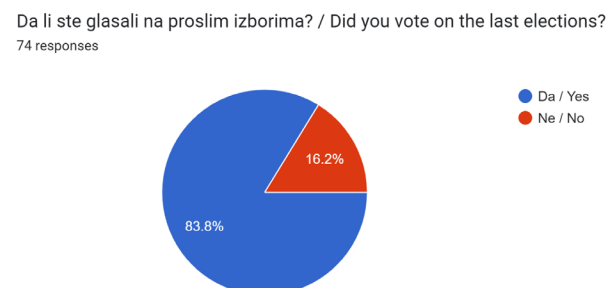
Figure 4:
Percentage of participants following elections in their country



First question related directly to the topic was "Do you follow elections in your country"? With 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree". All linear scale questions were done by

this principle. As we can see, most of the people that took the questionnaire follow the elections. Only 6.8% of participants answered that they do not follow elections at all.

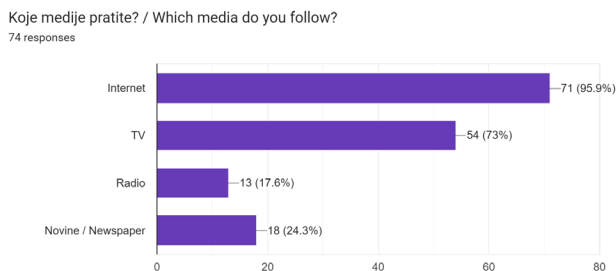
Figure 5:
Percentage of participants that voted on last elections



As we can see on the graph above, most of the people that took the questionnaire, in fact, voted in the last elections. As seen in the graphs above, 21.6% of participants attend high school, therefore, some of them do not have a right to vote in the

elections. So, a small percentage of these participants voted no simply because they are still not allowed to vote in the elections.

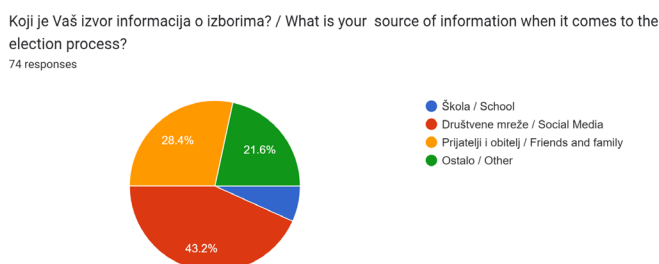
Figure 6:
Which media do participants follow



As presented in graph that shows the age group, 58.1% of the participants belong to 16–25 age

group. Also, we could see in the literature review, most of the young people nowadays use the internet and TV as their main source of getting political information. However, we have also presented in our literature review that older generations don't use the internet as much as the younger generations. Furthermore, older generations mostly rely on TV, newspaper, and radio as their media source of information.

Figure 7:
Source of information when it comes to election process

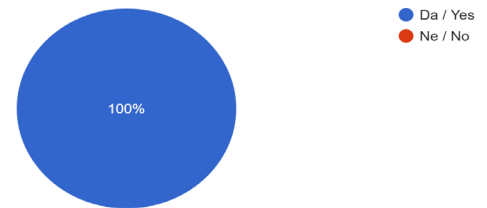


When we talk about sources of information concerning the election process, we can see that 5.8% participants acquire their information from school. This represents the 16–25 age group, since they are the ones attending school or college. Social media is the most used source of information when it comes to the election process, 43.2%. As concluded previously, social media is the most common way of getting political information. 28.4% of participants acquire their information from friends and

family. And the last 21.6% acquire them from various other sources.

Figure 8:
Percentage of participants that use social media

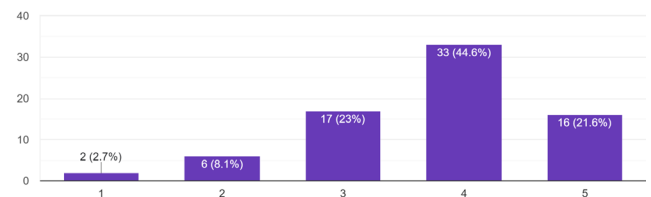
Da li koristite društvene mreže? / Do You use social media?
74 responses



This graph is rather interesting, because it contradicts some of our previous statements. It actually proves that all participants, no matter the age group, do use social media nowadays. It was seen on the previous graph that not all of the participants use social media as their main source of information when it comes to elections. On which we assume that older people are relying on TV and high schoolers on school.

Figure 9:
Frequency of participants exposure to posts about elections and politics on social media

Koliko često vidite informacije o izborima i generalno o politici na društvenim mrežama? / How often do you see posts about elections and politics in general on social media?
74 responses



As we have seen, all of our participants use social media no matter the age group. From this graph, we can conclude that there is a significant amount of political and election information on social media.

If we look at the responses to this question, we can conclude that, based on our participants' responses, our hypothesis is correct. Not one of our participants believes that the media has no significant influence on outcomes of the elections. It is shown that our participants agree with our hypothesis.

Figure 10:

Does media play a crucial role in outcomes of elections

Mislite li da mediji igraju ključnu ulogu u ishodima izborima? / Do You think media plays a crucial role in the outcomes of the elections?

74 responses

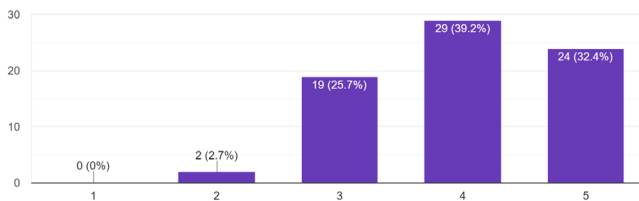
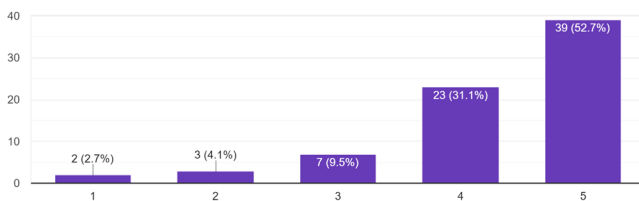


Figure 11:

The percentage of media shaping public opinion when it comes to elections, perceived influence according to participants

Mislite li da mediji mogu oblikovati mišljenje javnosti kada su u pitanju izbori? / Do you think that media can shape public opinion when it comes to elections?

74 responses



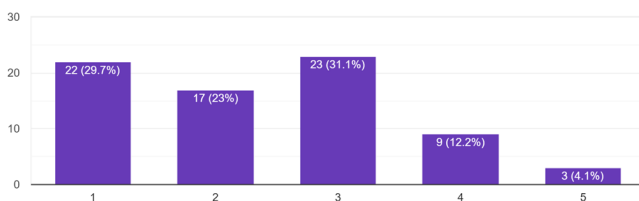
This graph is, also, pretty self explanatory. It shows us that participants of the questionnaire believe that the media can shape public opinion when it comes to elections. Only 2.7% participants strongly disagree.

Figure 12:

Percentage of media impact on participants decisions when it comes to voting

Mislite li da su mediji utjecali na Vaše odluke o glasanju? / Would you say that media impacted your decisions when it comes to voting?

74 responses



We were very surprised to find out through this graph that most of the participants are actually not completely influenced by the media. When it comes to their voting decisions, 31.1% of the par-

ticipants are unsure whether their decisions are influenced by the media. We also have to take into consideration that these are the answers based on our participants' personal experiences. 29.7% of the participants strongly disagree that the media has impacted their decisions when it comes to voting.

Figure 13:

Basis on which the participants assess the political candidate

Na osnovu čega procenjujete političkog kandidata? / On what basis do you assess a political candidate?

74 responses



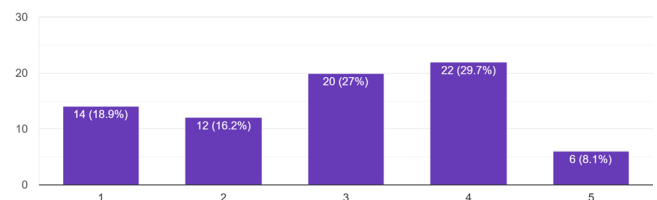
This graph presents the personal opinion of participants on what basis they assess a political candidate. We can see that 21.6% of participants assess their candidate on the basis of what is presented to them on social media. 35.1% of the participants assess their political candidate on different bases that are not presented in the graph. We can only speculate on what basis they assess a candidate. For example discussion with family members for who they are going to vote for, or based on promises politicians give prior to elections.

Figure 14:

Likelihood of participants to promote their candidate

Koliko je vjerovatno da ćete promovirati i/ili preporučiti svog kandidata? / How likely are you to promote and/or recommend your candidate of choice?

74 responses

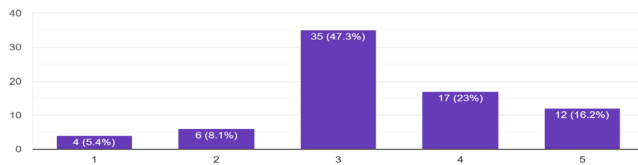


18.9% of the participants would never promote or recommend their own personal candidate choice. 29.7% of the participants would feel free to promote or recommend their own personal candidate of choice. 27% are unsure whether to promote/recommend or not. This shows that people who are likely to promote their candidate are just more politically engaged.

Figure 15:

Does promotion of elections on social media lead to positive outcomes politically according to participants

Mislite li da promocija izbora i politike na društvenim mrežama u konačnici vodi k pozitivnim političkim ishodima? / Do you think promotion of el... ultimately leads to positive outcomes politically?
74 responses



As we can see on the last graph of our questionnaire, 47.3% of our participants are not sure whether the promotion of elections and politics on social media ultimately leads to positive outcomes. However, more participants, 16.2%, believe that this is the case. With only 5.4% strongly disagreeing with the mentioned statement. Minority of participants classify it as an unimportant act.

Besides analysing the graphs and providing the basic information about the opinion of the participants of this research, we have conducted a research analysis through the SPSS system in order to get quantitative data that will confirm our hypothesis. Through this part of analysis focus is put on the mean, standard deviation and correlation. Correlation of independent variables which are gender, education level and age groups of participants with dependent variables which are all linear questions provided in the questionnaire. All linear scale questions (7 of them) are included in this analysis. Other questions were not included.

Table 1:

Linear scale questions and answers

QUESTION	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Do you follow elections in your country?	74	27	21	20	1	5
How often do you see posts about elections and politics in general on social media?	74	16	33	17	6	2

Do you think media plays a crucial role in the outcomes of the elections?

74 24 29 19 2 0

Do you think that media can shape public opinion when it comes to elections?

74 39 23 7 3 2

Would you say that media impacted your decision when it comes to voting?

74 3 9 23 17 22

How likely are you to promote and/or recommend your candidate of choice?

74 6 22 20 12 14

Do you think promotion of elections and politics on social media ultimately leads to positive outcomes politically?

74 12 17 35 6 4

Note. First table represents all linear scale questions, and what kind of answers participants of the questionnaire provided.

Table 2:

Mean and standard deviation value

	How often do you see posts about elections and politics in general on social media?	Do you follow elections in your country?	Do you think media plays a crucial role in outcomes of the elections?	Do you think media can shape public opinion when it comes to elections?	Would you say that media impacted your decision when it comes to voting?	How likely are you to promote and/or recommend your candidate of choice?	Do you think promotion of elections and politics on social media ultimately leads to positive outcomes politically?
N Valid	74	74	74	74	74	74	74
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.743	3.865	4.014	4.270	2.378	2.919	3.365
Std. Deviation	,9801	1,1387	,8357	,9834	1,1551	1,2470	1,0280

Note. Mean value shows us the average opinion when it comes to these 7 questions. Remember that “1” value is strongly disagree and “5” value is strongly agree. For example, the mean value for the first linear question is 3.743. This shows us that participants agree and the value is far away from neutral position (3 value). Mean value for the third and fourth question is the highest. Values are 4.014 and 4.270. This shows that participants mostly agree with these two questions and these two questions are directly related to our hypothesis. This proves that participants agree with our hypothesis. When it comes to standard deviation, it tells us how the data deviates from the mean. On average answers deviate 0.98 from the mean in the first question. This shows that the deviation occurs mostly by just one value.

Table 3:
Correlation between gender and 7 linear scale questions

Question	N	Pearson Correlation	Significance
Do you follow elections in your country?	74	.065	.580
How often do you see posts about elections and politics in general on social media?	74	.027	.817
Do you think media plays a crucial role in outcomes of the elections?	74	-.015	.896
Do you think media can shape public opinion when it comes to elections?	74	-.068	.564
Would you say that media impacted your decision when it comes to voting?	74	-.194	.097
How likely are you to promote and/or recommend your candidate of choice?	74	.040	.734
Do you think promotion of elections and politics on social media ultimately leads to positive outcomes politically?	74	0.33	.783

Note. For example correlation between gender and “Do you follow elections In your country” is positive, but no statistically significant. Correlation between gender and these questions is not statistically significant. Gender does not play a significant role.

Table 4:
Correlation between age group and 7 linear scale questions

Question	N	Pearson Correlation	Significance
Do you follow elections in your country?	74	-.095	.422
How often do you see posts about elections and politics in general on social media?	74	-.017	.884
Do you think media plays a crucial role in outcomes of the elections?	74	-.459**	.000
Do you think the media can shape public opinion when it comes to elections?	74	-.429**	.000
Would you say that media impacted your decision when it comes to voting?	74	-.159	.176
How likely are you to promote and/or recommend your candidate of choice?	74	.119	.312
Do you think promotion of elections and politics on social media ultimately leads to positive outcomes politically?	74	-.180	.126

Note. Correlation between age group and “Do you think media plays a crucial role in the outcomes of elections” is negative, but it is also statistically significant. Age group of participants affects the opinion on whether the media plays a crucial role in outcomes of elections. Also, correlation between age group and “Do you think that media can shape public opinion when it comes to elections” is negative, but like the previous one, statistically significant. This shows that the age group of participants affects the opinion that the media can shape public opinion when it comes to elections. Other correlations between age group and the questions are not statistically significant.

Table 5:
Correlation between education level and 7 linear questions

Question	N	Pearson Correlation	Significance
Do you follow elections in your country?	74	.273 [*]	.019
How often do you see posts about elections and politics in general on social media?	74	.010	.930
Do you think media plays a crucial role in outcomes of the elections?	74	-.067	.569
Do you think the media can shape public opinion when it comes to elections?	74	-.104	.378
Would you say that media impacted your decision when it comes to voting?	74	.034	.771
How likely are you to promote and/or recommend your candidate of choice?	74	-.003	.982
Do you think promotion of elections and politics on social media ultimately leads to positive outcomes politically?	74	.337 ^{**}	.003

Note. Correlation between education level and “Do you think promotion of elections and politics on social media ultimately leads to positive outcomes politically?” is positive, and it is statistically significant. This shows that the education level impacts the opinion on whether or not promotion of elections and politics on social media lead to positive outcomes.

DISCUSSION

As we could see, most of the people that took this survey followed the election process in our country, which makes them eligible for giving answers to the presented questions in the questionnaire. We concluded that they are interested in the political situation and that they have basic knowledge needed in order to take this questionnaire. When it comes to the rest of the participants that do not follow the elections as much, they are obviously less informed about the situation and therefore less capable of providing trustworthy answers. Analysing the next question “Did you vote on the last elections”, we saw that 83.8% of our respondents actually voted in the elections, while 16.2% did not. Here we have to take into account several factors. First of all, a small percentage of participants voted not simply because they are still not allowed to vote

in the elections due to their age. Second factor that we have to take into consideration is that a small percentage of participants voted no because they do not follow elections at all, therefore, they are not interested enough to actually vote. According to the age-grouping graph, 51.1% of the participants are between the ages of 16 and 25. Additionally, the majority of today’s youth obtain their political information through the internet and television. The literature review we conducted also showed that older generations don’t use the internet as frequently as younger generations do. Additionally, older generations mostly rely on TV, newspapers, and radio as their informational media. Keep in mind that this does not mean that older generations do not use the internet at all. We live in a time when everyone has access to and uses some form of internet, no matter the age. Answers of our participants showed that they get information about the election process mostly through social media, 43.2%. In today’s world, we can acquire all of the needed information about politics and the election process. It is simply the fastest way to acquire information you want. 28.4% of participants get their information from friends and family. They simply prefer communicating with other people around them about these types of topics and make their decisions based on information they acquired (Rizvić & Bećirović, 2017). What we concluded here is that if you truly want to acquire information about politics, politicians or elections you can easily get informed any way you want, where you get the information you want is your personal choice. The next question “Do you use social media?” is very simple, so is the answer. It proves that all participants, no matter the age group, use social media. However, this does not mean that social media is their main source of information. Since everyone uses social media, the graph related to “How often do you see posts about elections and politics in general on social media?” tells us that there is a significant amount of information about elections on social media platforms. Politicians nowadays use social media to promote themselves and their beliefs. Even if you are not particularly interested in politics and elections, information about these things and certain politicians can still appear on your feed simply because social media gets paid to promote some politicians. The next question “Do you think media plays a crucial role in outcomes of the elections?” proves our hypothesis. It is obvious that our participants agree with the hypothesis we are trying to prove. Not one of our participants believes that the media has no significant influence on the outcomes

of the elections. Our participants believe that the media can shape public opinion when it comes to the election process. Only 2.7% participants strongly disagree with this statement. This further proves that media coverage can affect individual opinion and, in that way, shape the overall outcome of the elections. The answer to the next question "Would you say that the media impacted your decisions when it comes to voting" is complicated. 31.1% of the participants are unsure whether their decisions are impacted by the media, 29.7% strongly disagree that the media has impacted their decisions when it comes to voting, and lastly, 4.1% strongly agree that the media impacted their decisions. Looking at the graph we can clearly see that over 50% of our participants do not think that the media can shape their decisions when it comes to voting. Keep in mind that the question before this one showed that almost all of our participants believe that the media can, in fact, shape public opinion when it comes to elections. This tells us that the answers to current question are in some way biased. This is due to human nature and a person's belief that he or she personally cannot be influenced by outside forces, because they are too strongly minded. We deliberately asked these two questions one after another in our questionnaire. The first question refers to participants' views on media shaping the general public opinion, while the second question is much more personal since it refers to the participants' view on whether the media can influence their personal decisions related to the elections. This proves that the answers to the second question are, in fact, biased. These two questions are the most important questions of our questionnaire. We asked this next question "On what basis do you assess a political candidate?" just to get the general idea on where our participants get their information from, however, since most of our participants, 35.1%, answered "other" we can only speculate on what basis they assess a candidate. When it comes to the last question 47.3% of our participants are not sure whether the promotion of elections and politics on social media ultimately leads to positive outcomes. Good portion of our participants believe that it leads to positive outcomes.

Through the SPSS analysis we discovered mean value and standard deviation value. Mean showed us the average opinion when it comes to 7 linear questions. Most important are values for the third and fourth linear question. Since their values are the highest (4.0 and 4.2), it proves that participants agree with our hypothesis. When it comes to standard deviation, it tells us how data deviates

from the mean. Deviation occurs mostly by just one value. SPSS analysis also showed us that gender does not play a significant role, when it comes to correlation with the questions. We also discovered that the correlation between age group and "Do you think media plays a crucial role in the outcomes of the elections?" is statistically significant. This clearly shows that the age group of participants affects the opinion on this question. We also discovered that the correlation between age group and "Do you think that the media can shape public opinion when it comes to elections?" is statistically significant. This shows that the age group of participants affects the opinion that the media can shape public opinion when it comes to elections. Lastly, correlation between education level and "Do you think promotion of elections and politics on social media ultimately leads to positive outcomes politically?" is statistically significant. This shows that education level impacts the opinion on whether or not promotion of elections and politics on social media lead to positive outcomes.

ANSWER TO RESEARCH QUESTION

Through data analysis we showed that our hypothesis is correct. The answers of our participants prove that they agree with our hypothesis. So, we conclude that there is a significant media influence on the outcomes of the elections. Our research question was "How does media coverage influence the outcomes of the elections". We proved that the media influences the outcomes of the elections and now we are going to state how exactly it influences the mentioned outcomes. This research paper proves that the media has many ways of affecting the outcomes of elections. We have mentioned a few of them: social media, TV, newspapers, radio, etc. This research shows that no matter what age you are some form of media can and mostly likely will influence your decisions. We also concluded that, since everyone uses social media, it has the greatest power to influence individuals and their opinions. The best example of the importance of media when it comes to affecting outcomes of the elections is the fact that the politicians who have less media coverage are less significant than the ones that do have. By appearing on different media platforms politicians shape public opinion. The role of the media is to inform the public about the candidates and the election process. But what matters is how a particular candidate is portrayed to the public by the media. An average citizen's choice and vote may be influenced by this. Most people use at least one media platform, and politicians promote

themselves on these platforms. That simply means that media coverage affects opinions and beliefs of individuals and in the long run affects the outcomes of the elections.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this research was to try and understand the connection between the media and outcomes of the elections, and to see if outcomes of the elections actually depend on the media coverage. The main hypothesis was that there is a significant media influence on the outcomes of the elections, and the questionnaire was set up according to this assumption. According to the given answers from the survey, our hypothesis turned out to be correct. The media does, in fact, have a significant influence on the election results and on politics in general. This study demonstrates that media, in one form or another, can and almost certainly will affect people's decisions at any age. This demonstrates how important media coverage is in influencing elections and how important it is in forming the political narrative. The results not only support the initial theory but also provide important new light on the complex interactions between the media and democratic processes, highlighting the various ways in which the media forms and affects election results.

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