

# **YOUTH POLICY AND MEDIA: THE RISING GENERATION IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

Rasulov Bekzod Boymuratovich

Associate Professor of the Samarkand State University of Architecture and  
Civil Engineering, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Political Sciences.

[rasulov.bekzod@samdaqu.edu.uz](mailto:rasulov.bekzod@samdaqu.edu.uz)

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## **Abstract:**

This article is devoted to studying the role and significance of mass media in shaping the political culture and political behavior of youth within the context of an information society. The article analyzes the interaction between youth and media, the mechanisms of forming political decisions and values through information flows, as well as the impact of media tools on social and political consciousness. At the same time, the article provides recommendations for increasing the political activity of young people in an information society and guiding them toward responsible citizenship.

**Keywords:** Youth policy, political culture, political behavior, mass media, information society, media influence.

## **Introduction**

The formation of political culture and political behavior among youth in the information society constitutes a complex and multidimensional process. Globalization, the rapid advancement of information technologies, and the extensive dissemination of mass media have become decisive factors shaping political views, value orientations, and civic positions within the consciousness of young people. In contemporary conditions, television, radio, the Internet, social networks, and mobile applications function not merely as channels for information transmission, but also as effective platforms for stimulating youth political engagement, facilitating their participation in social processes, and enhancing their sense of civic responsibility.

Mass media serve as a significant instrument in shaping political perception, fostering critical thinking, and encouraging the active involvement of young people in political processes. At the same time, unreliable, manipulative, or biased information may generate adverse transformations in political decision-making and behavioral patterns among youth.

The relevance of this topic lies in the fact that within the information society, youth are regarded not only as observers of political developments but also as active agents contributing to their formation. Without meaningful youth participation in political processes, the effectiveness of democratic institutions diminishes, and the overall level of political activity within society declines. Therefore, a comprehensive examination of the influence of mass

media on youth political culture and behavior, as well as the identification of social and pedagogical factors shaping this process, is of both theoretical and practical significance.

Furthermore, the impact of media on the political consciousness of youth is analyzed from a scholarly perspective along two principal dimensions. The first dimension concerns the development of political knowledge and perspectives through exposure to social information. The second dimension addresses the effects of bias, manipulation, and misinformation within mass media, which may contribute to the formation of negative behavioral orientations in youth consciousness. In this regard, educating young people to engage effectively with information flows, fostering their critical thinking skills, and guiding them toward informed political decision-making represent pressing tasks of contemporary educational systems and social policy.

### **Research Methodology**

The study of political behavior relies on a comprehensive set of empirical methods, including large-scale surveys and experimental approaches. The methodological framework integrates quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure a multidimensional analysis of the relationship between media influence and youth political engagement within the context of the information society.

### **Research Objective**

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the mechanisms through which mass media influence the political culture and behavior of youth in the information society, as well as to determine the role of media in enhancing the political activity of the younger generation.

Research Tasks. To examine the theoretical and methodological approaches to the formation of youth political culture in the information society;

- To assess the impact of contemporary media platforms, including social networks and online publications, on the political consciousness of young people;
- To analyze the trends reflecting the transition of youth political participation from “traditional” forms to “digital” modes of engagement;
- To identify the risks of manipulation and misinformation within the media space and to determine strategies for developing an “ideological immunity” against such influences;
- To formulate practical recommendations aimed at strengthening media literacy among youth and improving their constructive participation in political processes.

### **Literature Review**

Among Uzbek scholars, the theoretical foundations of engaging youth audiences in the information society have been examined by Fayzulla Muminov, who analyzed conceptual approaches to communication with young people under conditions of digital transformation. Nargis Kasimova has investigated the development of media literacy, the evolution of youth media, protection of young people from information attacks, and youth engagement in areas such as environmental journalism. Beruniy Alimov analyzed the media image of Uzbekistan

in the global information space and examined the culture of information consumption among youth. Sherzodxon Kudrathodjaev explored the transformation of the contemporary media environment, shifts within youth audiences, and issues related to media management.

Y.Z. Ruziev and B.S. Abdullaeva have studied, both theoretically and practically, the development of media literacy skills and habits necessary for consumers to critically analyze mass media content. In particular, they emphasize the importance of cultivating media literacy competencies from early childhood, enabling individuals to access media resources, conduct critical analysis based on conceptual frameworks, evaluate information accordingly, and ultimately produce independent media content. However, despite these contributions, the issue has not yet been comprehensively examined from the standpoint of political science, particularly with regard to the formation of political culture and political behavior.

In international scholarship, significant attention has been devoted to the influence of the “digital generation” and social networks on youth psychology and sociopolitical engagement. Marc Prensky, in his work *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*, introduced the concepts of “digital natives” and “digital immigrants,” arguing that the cognitive patterns of generations born into the information society differ fundamentally from those of previous cohorts. Marshall McLuhan, one of the founders of media theory, advanced the well-known thesis in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* that “the medium is the message,” thereby providing a conceptual basis for understanding how media technologies themselves shape youth consciousness.

Henry Jenkins, in *Convergence Culture*, elaborated the theory of participatory culture, examining the role of young people not only as media consumers but also as active content creators. Sonia Livingstone is internationally recognized for her research on online safety and digital media literacy among youth. Don Tapscott, author of *Wikinomics*, analyzed the impact of generations raised in digital environments on economic and political structures.

Russian scholarship also contributes to this discourse. Malik Elina Nikolaevna notes that contemporary studies identify several challenges related to youth political culture, including political disengagement, low levels of trust in governmental institutions, and insufficiently developed political competencies. These factors hinder active participation in political life. At the same time, mass media are regarded as potentially decisive instruments in shaping the worldview and political behavior of younger generations. The issue has also been addressed by researchers such as S.S. Pyastolov and A.O. Lantsev, among others.

### **Analysis and Results**

The study identifies several structural and functional challenges in the formation of youth political culture under the conditions of the information society. Traditional institutions of political socialization—family, school, and the state—are gradually losing their dominant influence. Political views of young people are increasingly shaped by networked media, particularly social networks operating beyond direct state regulation. This shift weakens the ideological and communicative functions of the state and alters established mechanisms of value transmission.

Youth political participation is undergoing a transformation from “traditional” forms, such as electoral participation and party membership, to “digital” engagement. This transition creates the risk that political activity may be reduced to symbolic actions—such as “likes,” reposts, or online comments—without translating into substantive participation in political processes, including voting behavior.

At the same time, media technologies have enabled rapid mobilization of youth for political purposes. Unregulated digital platforms may serve as instruments of spontaneous protest movements or externally influenced political campaigns, thereby posing challenges to political stability and contributing to a communicative “technological gap” between state institutions and younger generations.

The 2024 United States presidential election demonstrated a direct correlation between youth political engagement and media platform usage. Empirical data indicate that politically active voters more frequently relied on professional news websites, X (formerly Twitter), and podcasts, whereas less active segments predominantly used Facebook. Supporters of Kamala Harris were more inclined to use Instagram and Reddit, while voters aligned with Donald Trump tended to prefer YouTube and Facebook. Party affiliation and gender significantly influenced media consumption patterns. For example, 37% of Republican men identified YouTube as their primary source of political information, while 43% of Republican women relied on Facebook. Among Democrats, 38% of women cited TikTok as a key source, compared to 19% of Republican men; Democratic men more frequently accessed professional news outlets (46%) and Reddit (25%). These findings confirm the fragmentation and platform-specific differentiation of youth political information channels.

Data from the Public Opinion Foundation indicate that 65% of respondents attempt to watch news programs daily, while approximately 20% openly declare a lack of interest in political news. According to the Russian Center for Political Culture Studies, between 15% and 25% of respondents characterize television presenters as unreliable. Furthermore, surveys conducted by VCIOM show that only 24–25% of the population express full trust in mass media; 43–47% report partial distrust, and 15–20% express complete distrust. These indicators reflect a broader crisis of media credibility, which directly affects youth political orientation.

The impact of mass media on youth political culture is therefore ambivalent. On the one hand, media platforms expand opportunities for participation and civic expression. On the other hand, they intensify risks of apathy, manipulation, polarization, and “information fatigue,” resulting from excessive and often contradictory information flows.

The 2023 Nigerian presidential election illustrates the transformative potential of digital participation. University students actively used social networks as primary tools for accessing and disseminating political information, which contributed to more informed electoral decision-making. Despite the growing popularity of podcasts, only about 11% of youth obtain election-related information directly through this format, although many consume podcast content via YouTube video versions.

Empirical research conducted in Uzbekistan further clarifies national dynamics. According to the Republican Center for the Study of Public Opinion Ijtimoiy Fikr, within the framework of

the “Uzbekistan: Elections–2021” survey, state television was identified as the most востребованный source of information about the electoral campaign (66.8%). At the same time, 48.1% of respondents reported using the Internet—including social networks, messaging applications such as Telegram, and cross-platform communication tools—for political information. Additionally, 32.8% cited non-state television channels as their primary source. The author’s survey conducted in 2025 (352 respondents, 73.9% aged 18–35) produced the following results: 37.8% expressed full trust in state television, while 21% reported partial trust; 24.7% trusted private television channels; 19.6% trusted internet portals; and 13.6% trusted social networks, including Telegram, Facebook, and X. Official government websites were identified as the most reliable source, with 42% expressing full trust.

These findings confirm that youth political culture in the information society is shaped within a hybrid communicative environment characterized by competition between traditional and digital media, differentiated trust levels, and evolving patterns of political participation.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

A generalization of the role of mass media in shaping youth political culture allows the identification of several priority directions in their activity. In the context of the information society, media institutions function not only as channels of information dissemination but also as structural elements influencing civic consciousness, value orientations, and patterns of political participation among young people. Their contribution to the formation of a conscious and responsible political culture depends on adherence to a number of fundamental principles. First, the principle of reliability and objectivity of information is decisive. Mass media should provide accurate, verified, and analytically balanced coverage of the activities of public authorities. This requirement applies equally to central, regional, and local levels of governance. Comprehensive and impartial information strengthens institutional trust and reduces the risk of political alienation among youth. Where media narratives are transparent and evidence-based, young citizens are more likely to develop informed political judgments and constructive attitudes toward public institutions.

Second, the establishment of open dialogue and feedback mechanisms is essential. Media outlets should maintain sustained communication with their audiences, particularly with young people, by reflecting their opinions, initiatives, and social concerns. Regional and local media structures are especially important in this regard, as they operate in closer proximity to everyday social realities. The development of interactive communication channels—electronic platforms, social networks, and other digital tools—creates conditions for participatory engagement and reinforces mutual trust between media institutions and youth audiences.

Third, the principle of equal informational opportunities must be ensured. Access to official sources of information should be equally available to diverse political actors and civil society institutions, including youth organizations. Such inclusivity forms the basis for pluralistic discourse and guarantees that representatives of different ideological positions can articulate their perspectives openly. In turn, this enables young people to compare alternative viewpoints, critically assess political narratives, and arrive at independent and balanced conclusions.

In sum, the constructive influence of mass media on youth political culture requires a combination of professional standards, institutional transparency, dialogical engagement, and informational pluralism. Only under these conditions can media serve as an effective mediator between the state and the younger generation, contributing to the development of democratic participation and political responsibility.

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