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Intra/Inter communications in Social Network and Intermediary of the Media Influencers

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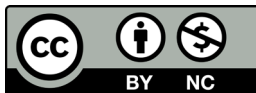
Abstract

This paper focuses on the role of influencers as an element of modern governance. As the fields of media, entertainment industry, and politics become increasingly interconnected, the phenomenon of influencer potentially affects many aspects of political life, such as campaigning and voting, policymaking, and international affairs. Using the network analysis method and applying a triple typification of influencers consists of media influencers, influencer politicians in power, and influencer opposition politicians out of power, and selecting 245 nodes on Instagram accounts, the article focuses on how do influencers interact within communication networks? Based on the triple typification, the article tries to find the pattern of networked political communications between influencers in the social network. The results prove that all three types of influencers are more interested in intra-group communication. However, both influencer politicians in power and influencer opposition politicians out of power have relatively similar tendencies to associate with media influencers.

Keywords: influencer, media, politician, social network.

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Introduction

Sociologists argue that we have entered the period of late modernity (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Lash, 1990) or the revival of modernity (Beck et al., 1984), both characterized by growing complexities and their characteristics which are reflected in the changes of economic and socio-cultural and political processes and the acute emergence of reality. This debate has been particularly influential in the literature on governance (Bell & Hindmoor, 2009; Pierre & Peters, 2000). The works of Henrik Bang (2003; 2004; 2005; 2007; 2008; 2009; Bang & Sorensen, 2001) consider that an important part of this focus is on the role of influencers' policies.

The evolving links between influencers and politics are likely to be perceived as part of a long process in which political systems and political actors are perceived with technological, social, and political developments related to what is often called late modernity. Similarly, the policy of influencers raises urgent questions about the nature of modern governance and the functioning of contemporary democracy.

The influencer is a phenomenon affecting all socio-cultural, economic, and political spheres. At the same time, political influencer is one of the phenomena that can be classified under both concepts of influencer and politician. The political influencer has different degrees in different political systems (Mukherjee, 2004; Street, 2004; West & Orman, 2003). In addition to the flood of comments about political influencers in topics, gossip magazines, blogs, affiliate sites, and sometimes business magazines or news, there are three different disciplines of political literature about political influencers: First, public books on influencers (Braudy, 1986; Cowen, 2000; Gamson, 1994; Giles, 2000; Holmes & Redmond, 2006; Monaco, 1978; Rojek, 2001; Turner, 2004). Second, books and articles on media and politics that more or less deal with the influencer (Boorstin, 1961; Hartley, 1996; Meyer, 2002; Perloff, 1998; Street, 2005) and, finally, a limited number of books and articles which has been written specifically about the influencer (Cooper, 2008; Marshall, 1997; Mukherjee, 2004; Street, 2004; Van Zoonen, 2006; Weiskel, 2005; West & Orman, 2003).

As the fields of media, entertainment industry, and politics become increasingly interconnected, the phenomenon of influencer potentially affects many aspects of political life, such as campaigning and voting (Duval, 2007), policymaking (Brockington, 2009), and International Affairs (Clarke, 2009; Cooper, 2008). Weng (2015), for example, examines a set of voting patterns to identify the most important factors in voter inclination. So far, many theories have been put forward to explain voter

behavior, but the preference for political affiliation along with the mental image of leaders is still the main predictor of voter turnout.

However, systematic approaches to investigating such relationships as well as systematic empirical research on the prevalence and possible effects of this condition are not widely observed yet. There is a significant increase in the media as well as academic research on influencers and their effects, which indicates increasing attention to this growing phenomenon.

Most studies in this field are superficial. Most of the works either categorize the different types or categories of political influencers and their role in politics or at the most answer the question of whether the growth of a political influencer weakens or strengthens the democracy. In addition to the need to address both issues in a more structured way, we need to have a more coherent understanding of the mechanisms underlying the implementation of modern governance and the functioning of contemporary democracy.

The acute issue regarding cultural policy-making in the field of cultural effects of influencers in Iranian society is that, unfortunately, despite the long history of activity and impact of influencers on society, studies and research on this issue have not kept pace with development and limited studies in this area. Today, the nature of these studies and their goal of rapidly achieving control and prevention mechanisms limit the nature of such studies and rethinking in the field of pathology alone. Although this type of study may lead to limited practical and applied results, to understand the nature of social issues and use the required background and historical knowledge about the causes of occurrence, historical milestones, and the processes followed to achieve the current situation are incapable. For this reason, major such strategies incorporate a kind of abstract view, devoid of understanding the necessary connection to the social and historical context.

To make up for this shortcoming, it is necessary to reflect as much as possible on recognizing the systematic nature of influencers, that is, to consider the mechanisms that lead to the legitimacy of influencers and consider this situation as an inevitable alternative system in society. In other words, instead of focusing solely on how influencers operate, we need to focus on the social and historical reasons that have made the emergence of influencers possible and perhaps inevitable. Hence, part of the answer can be found in the collusive approach of society to influencers, especially in its political system, and not in the approach of the society victimized by influencers.

The main question of this research focuses on how influencers

interact through communication networks. Based on a triple typification, the study tries to find the pattern of networked political communications between influencers in the social network.

Theoretical approach

Although in recent years, attention to the effects of influencers on various areas has been increasing, but mainly this attention has come from the non-systematic approaches, especially in Iran society, focused on specific activities or actions and reactions of specific cases. However, there are some approaches and studies show the influencers are the product of a new phase of politics at the end of the modernity period or the beginning of the postmodern period. These approaches, by examining the process and historical contexts, tries to show that the influencers are not an independent body affecting politics, culture or economy, but the product of specific political conditions and the inevitability of social issues and the inevitability of governments using them as a tool to persuading and directing public attitude.

From the middle of the twentieth century, the effect of influencers has spread far beyond the entertainment. Indeed, the influencer industry is under a creepy mission to expand its economic, political, and cultural goals (Choi & Berger, 2009). One of these newly defined missions is in its "verification" (Coomb's, 2007) through the expression of positive or negative emotions (Abelson et al., 1982; Chang, 2001; Glaser & Salovey, 1998; Marcus, 1988; 2000; Ottati et al., 1992; Ragsdale, 1991; Kühne et al., 2011; Weiner, 1985), emotional reaction (Ottati et al., 1992; Chang, 2001; Marcus, 1988; e.g., Abelson et al., 1982; Ragsdale, 1991) or the proposed response strategies (Kim et al., 2009). The use of influencers to validate products, services, or individuals ranges from UN committees to a particular brand of ice cream. With the advent of the Internet and the greater likelihood of influencers becoming globalized and the world becoming acquainted with them, increasing connection has emerged between the entertainment and political bodies within countries and in international relations. This situation has been considered in the United States as the removal of the border between Hollywood and Washington. For example, according to Jennifer Brubaker (2011), the geographical line between Hollywood and Washington is disappearing. Hollywood and politics need similar skills: the ability to communicate with large groups of people, the ability to strike a blow based on the stimuli of fame and power. Ronald Reagan was the one who held the key to the celebrity president in the United States. Often, an acquaintance with the actor created through the media provides the necessary publicity for the

development and success of other types of careers, including politicians.

The first use of the influencer in the concept of celebrity, meaning "to be famous because of being famous" (Jenkins, 2002: 17) dates back to the 1920s in American society, when the first effective move for the emergence of the influencer was made by a journalist named Walter Winchell who wrote the first column of the rumor in the newspaper. Following in the footsteps of what became popular American culture over the next decade, Myrna Loy became the first film studio-produced influencer in the United States in the 1930s. Levy was an American woman with highly aesthetic rules who ushered in the age of the influencer and its multiple applications in various cultural, economic, and political spheres.

Darrell West attributes the disappearance of the Hollywood-Washington border to the rise of television after World War II. Before 1960, most people obtained their general information through newspapers and believed that print sources were the most reliable source of information. However, ten years later, people turned to television as the most authoritative source of news. This was useful for influencers because they knew how to absorb their surroundings by having physical features such as a photogenic face, and they knew how to capture more media coverage. Because people praise influencer people, they make good copies in the media after entering politics and only increase their familiarity with voters. Potential candidates no longer need to hold administrative or executive positions before running for offices, such as governor or president. This is the result of citizens' pessimism towards ordinary politicians and the stereotypes of corrupt politicians. Influencer candidates can raise capital or wealth for campaigns, as well as attract the media, and since the stereotype of corruption is not relevant to them, they can enter politics that is indirectly dominated by the characteristics of influencers. Thus, not only do influencers retain votes in favor of familiarity and attractiveness when nominating (or approving a particular candidate), but the undermining of traditional parties also allows them to gain the votes of former party loyal voters.

This type of media portrayal and its use in commercial propaganda, political propaganda or otherwise, soon entered Iran. Thus, the emergence of the influencer in Iran, along with other countries governed by the economic models of liberalism, followed in parallel with its growth in the United States. This trend continued until the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979. With the formation of the Islamic Revolution, which was based on a deep rethinking of all aspects, including values, norms, and principles governing society, the function and mission of cultural

institutions and media of the society changed and was redefined in a way that these capabilities were placed in the service of social growth.

In addition to changing the mission of cultural institutions such as the renamed Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the emergence of higher cultural institutions as well as new cultural executive levels such as the Islamic Propaganda Organization promised the emergence and development of a new definition of culture that was anti-colonial and anti-capitalist. Opposition to the liberalism's anti-divine values provided new intellectual and practical patterns for a happy life. The 1980s and the first half of the 1990s in Iran can be considered an ideal period in terms of the alignment of the activities of the media and cultural institutions with revolutionary and Islamic values.

However, the changes that followed the so-called privatization of the economy in the country in the late 1990s, showed new faces and completely different from the ideals of the 1980s in the media and cultural institutions. National TV and radio broadcasting has been uncontrollably involved in commercial advertising, and in terms of the amount of revenue generated through commercial advertising to date has followed a very upward situation. In addition to the national broadcasting, this was followed in the field of other media, including the publication of books, magazines, and newspapers, motion pictures, and other more personal forms of media, such as computer games. Along with these formalist changes, new and conflicting approaches to the principles and values also appeared in various media. For example, the mass emergence of yellow magazines, whose news principles are the same as the yellow magazines of capitalist countries, are based on aesthetic appearances and aspects based on eroticism. On the other hand, other emerging and highly destructive ideas such as cosmopolitan ideology, populist positivist psychology, and other designed ideological forms and manifestations in the West, and especially in the United States, pervaded all levels of society from the bottom up. Parallel to the evolution of the intellectual and institutional pillars of the Islamic Revolution in the society, many anti-cultural and destructive forms was also institutionalized in the Iranian society so that as a serious opposition force it was able to survive against the ideals of the Islamic Revolution and most importantly achieve a high degree of supremacy and domination.

Influencer and his or her confirmation mechanism

The affirmative role of influencers in various political, economic, and socio-cultural fields is one of the most important and effective drivers

of the influencer industry development. Theoretically, the affirmative role of an influencer means the intensification of public recognition of an issue due to the mediation of an influencer in relation to that issue with public opinion. However, this relationship is simply not a linear relationship. An influencer can take a positive or negative stance on a particular issue. On the other hand, the effect of an influencer on directing public opinion towards a subject can also have the opposite effects due to his or her two reputed or stigmatic personality types.

The confirming capability of influencers is not always in line with the cultural, economic, or political goals of public as well as the subject itself, but depending on the type of confirming as well as the type of influencer herself or himself so that it may be opportunistic or harmful. In the following algorithm, various forms of these situations are provided.

Table 1. The algorithm of influencers' affirmation effect on a political subject

	Influencer	
	Reputed	Stigmatic
Positive confirmation	opportunistic	infelicitous
2016 US presidential election	Clint Eastwood in the positive confirmation of Donald Trump	Jeffrey Epstein in the positive confirmation of Donald Trump
2017 Iran presidential election	Jamshid Mashayekhi in the positive confirmation of Hassan Rouhani	Amir Hossein Maghsoudloo in the positive confirmation of Seyyed Ebrahim Ra'is sadati
Negative confirmation	infelicitous	opportunistic
2016 US presidential election	Oprah Winfrey in the negative confirmation of Donald Trump	Harvey Weinstein in the negative confirmation of Hillary Clinton
2017 Iran presidential election	Amir Jafari in the negative confirmation of Seyyed Ebrahim Ra'is sadati	Amir Hossein Maghsoudloo in the negative confirmation of Hassan Rouhani

These four situations work in all areas with the same mechanism, albeit with more or less important results. For example, the positive approval of a reputed influencer from a parliamentary or presidential candidate is an opportunistic positive confirmation. That is why in recent years, the use of influencers' approval has become a regular practice in election campaigns. There are many debatable and important examples in the 2016 US presidential election and also in the 2017 Iran presidential election. Some of the most important examples are shown in the table above. In the political sphere, and especially in the matter of elections, it has also been proven that increasing political knowledge and the intensity of individuals' political inclinations (Chang, 2012) intensify the impact of these four affirmative states.

The above algorithm not only influences the influencers' affirmation on human subjects, but also their potential effects on products, services, events, brands, cultural affairs, social issues and crises, and generally anything positive or negative as a subject of affirmation. However, the most important influencers' affirmation activity, as part of the influencer industry business, occurs in politics and economics.

Focusing on the affirmation dimension, the most obvious approaches to how influencers develop their persuasive relationships through social communication, especially in politics, attribution theory (Weiner, 1985), situational crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2007), and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) provide explanations.

The attribution theory formulates emotional reactions to overcome attitudes (Glaser & Salovey, 1998; Weiner, 1985), the situational crisis communication theory can explain the interactions and the affirmation of influencers, and the theory of planned behavior explains why people are attracted to a particular person according to their attitudes (Echabe & Garate, 1994; Hennessy et al., 2015; Singh et al., 1995).

Although our study here is limited to analyzing the network connections of influencers with each other, but by matching the results of our data analysis with these theoretical approaches, we pave the way for the development of broader studies and achieve strategic results to manage political communication at both macro and micro levels.

Methodology

Since Instagram has become one of the most important platforms for the interaction of influencers around the world, an example of nodes and links within this network has been selected as the research population. To limit the subject of the study, we focus only on the political sphere in this article as well.

In terms of classification, some researchers have made efforts to classify influencers all under two broad approaches: the first focuses on the roots of influencer and, consequently, the resources one uses in the political arena, and the second approach focuses more on the type of political activity in which the influencer gets involved.

Darrell West and John Orman (2003: 3-4) make distinguish between five groups of influencers or people related to the world of politics: Classic celebrities, nobles, political celebrities, non-political celebrities, and event celebrities. Maxwell Boykoff and Michael Goodman (2009) provide a similar classification. John Street (2004: 439-437) also distinguishes between three types of policy-related influencers. Mukherjee's classification (2004: 82-81) also completes the Street pattern by distinguishing between two types of public influencers and politicized influencers. Hart and Tindall (2009) attempt to provide a different classification by distinguishing four categories of policy-related influencers (patron, admirer, politician, and celebrity politician).

For this study, a sample of 245 nodes on Instagram is included in the analysis, in different types of influencers, divided into the following groups:

1. Influencer opposition politicians outside the power: consisting of opposition political figures inside or outside the country
2. Influencer politicians in power: composed of figures in political power
3. Media influencers: consisting of figures in the field of cinema actors, pop singers, and well-known journalists inside or outside the country

The entire sample population is selected from among Iranian influencers. According to the purpose of the research, we started sampling the accounts in all three types that had the most number of followers and then followed their affiliate connections. This type of sampling, similar to the snowball method, led us to other nodes or accounts. In this way, we first got a very large network of nodes or accounts. Then, in the second step, to limit the sample size, we removed the accounts that had less connection with the sample and more connections with the outside of the sample. In addition, during the sampling, the influencer athletes were deliberately excluded from the analysis because they did not have similar relations with other accounts within their type, i.e. media influencers. In this way, 245 accounts remained, in which their communications were convergent.

Obviously, due to the different extent of the communication network of accounts in each of the three types, this sampling method does not distribute an equal number of samples among the three types of accounts.

As a result, a large part of the sample consists of media influencers in various fields of cinema, music, and press.

The comprehensive approach to this segmentation has been to avoid micro-classification, through which relationships within the network can be better analyzed. In other words, in each group, there is practically a wide variety of influencers. For example, all the foreign journalists, domestic journalists, cinema actors in Iran, singers abroad, and foreign cinema actors are included in the media influencers. This approach also applies to influencer politicians in power and the influencer opposition politicians outside the power.

Since the main purpose of the analysis was to identify the relationships between these three types of influencers, we used a coding system to separate the communications in which all three nodes were influencers. Therefore, we were able to examine communications in which 245 influencers and 6824 connections were analyzed.

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Network analysis was performed by entering data in Cytoscape software version 3.8.1 on Mac OS X. Cytoscape is an open-source software platform for visualizing complex networks. Because this software is open-source and has a large number of plugins designed by the third part, it creates fewer restrictions on use and therefore the analysis in it can be adjusted according to any purpose or need. Besides, the core of Cytoscape provides the main feature set for data integration, analysis, and visualization.

Data analysis

The main purpose of network analysis is to examine the communication patterns between influencers based on the typology presented. In addition, this study also focuses on the capacities of networks of influential, critical, or politically oriented influencers related to the mainstream political approach in Iran.

The figure shows a general and crude representation of the 245 node connections in this study. The first and major point in considering the network pattern of influencers’ interactions is the dominance of asymmetric relationships over symmetric relationships in the network. In other words, while the network is organized by specific political actors, especially abroad, however, only 12.5% of the edges are symmetrical and the rest (87.5%) are asymmetric connections. Extensive research in communication studies has demonstrated the dual impact of symmetric communication on asymmetric communication (e.g., see de Zuñiga et al., 2017; Ferrucci et al., 2019), so it must be said that the forces of influencers in The social network Instagram has not been able to use the full capacity of this platform to organize the political network. It can also be concluded from this diagram that the sample network has a central core and nodes around it. Therefore, it should be borne in mind that the type of relationships in Instagram network of influencers is based on convergence and centrality.

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Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the sample

Number of nodes	245
Total number of communications	956328
Number of communications under analysis	6824

Network analyzer software shows that the highest connection level in the sample is related to the user account containing 43 nodes in the sample. This account has 16 two-way connections with other nodes in the sample, which makes its rank first among 245 nodes across the sample.

Table 3. Level of communication within the sample network

Connections between nodes		Highest level	Lowest level	Mean	Total
Symmetric	Intragroup	12	0	1.2	282
	Intergroup	16	0	1.8	853
Asymmetric	Intragroup	33	1	4.5	1970
	Intergroup	43	1	4.6	5971

The table above explains the power of communication, the intensity of the interaction resulting from communication within the sample nodes. However, in the case of influencers, the quantity of communication, whether symmetric or asymmetric, is unable to accurately explain the status and importance of relationships within the network. This is especially related to the number of influencers' followers outside the sample network, as well as the number of views of their posts, the number of likes and shares, which are the main aspect of attention to influencers. However, the overall intensity of communication, or in other words, the level of influencers' use of the possibility or potential of intra/inter-network communication, reflects some important points.

Aside from the intensity of network communication, the main question of this research is about the orientation of influencers towards each other. One question is whether media influencers tend mainly to follow influencer politicians in power, or conversely, influencer politicians in power tend to associate with the media influencers.

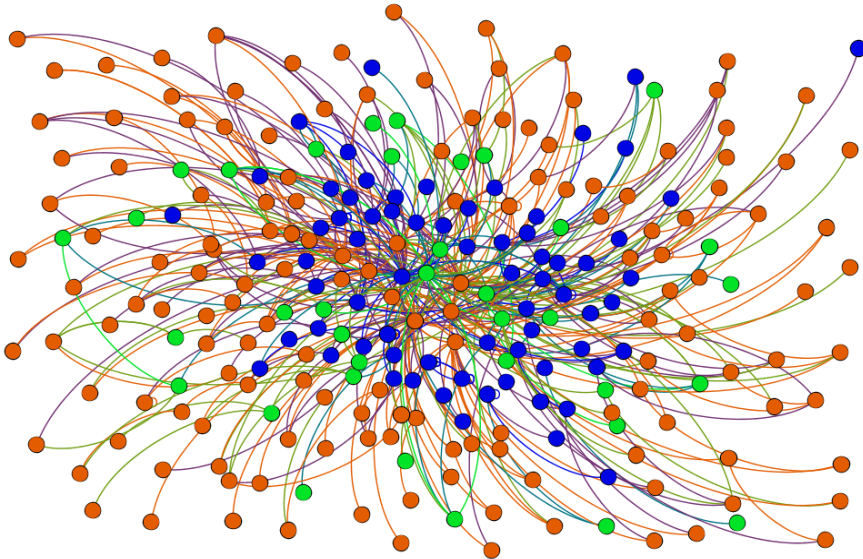


Figure 1. General pattern of media influencers' (orange circles) relationship with two groups of influencer politicians in power (blue circles) and influencer opposition politicians (green circles)

The above network figure shows two different topics. First, the intra-network relationships of influencer politicians in power are far

less intense than those of media influencers. This is also present in the overall proportion of sample influencers, as the majority of the sample consists of media influencers in various fields of cinema, music, and the press. The second and most important conclusion from the figure above is that in comparing the type of relationship between media influencers and influencer politicians in power, it is the influencer politicians in power who follow the media influencers and not the other way around. Although this is not common, statistically, most communications range from influencer politicians in power to media influencers.

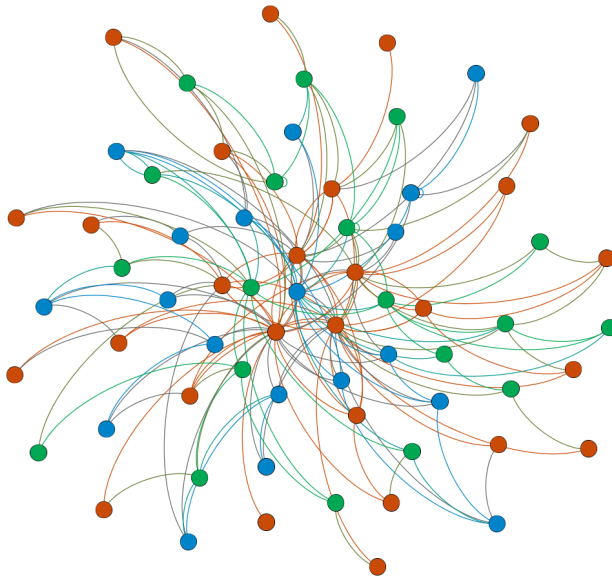


Figure 2. Communication network pattern between media influencers (orange lines), influencer politicians in power (blue lines), and influencer opposition politicians (green lines)

This time we examine the relationship of the previous pattern from another angle. It is clear that all three types of influencers, separately, have a more cohesive communication network within themselves. In addition, the influence of media influencers by influencer politicians in power is significantly higher than the opposite situation. In addition, while influencer opposition politicians have a more cohesive communication network within themselves, they are less inclined to pursue influencer politicians in power. In contrast, media influencers are increasingly following influencer opposition politicians.

Table 4. Levels of intragroup communication within the network

Connections	Type	Highest level	Lowest level	Mean	Total
Symmetric	Media influencers	8	0	1.1	82
	In Gov. influencers	3	0	0.3	18
	Anti-Gov. Pol. influencers	12	0	2.3	182
Asymmetric	Media influencers	33	1	6.3	914
	In Gov. influencers	17	1	2.8	398
	Anti-Gov. Pol. influencers	28	1	4.4	658

By removing the connections between nonspecific nodes from the analysis, we can obtain the intensity of the connections within each of the three types and thus compare the connections within the group. As the table above shows, the most symmetric connection between nodes is related to influencer opposition politicians (with an average of 2.3).

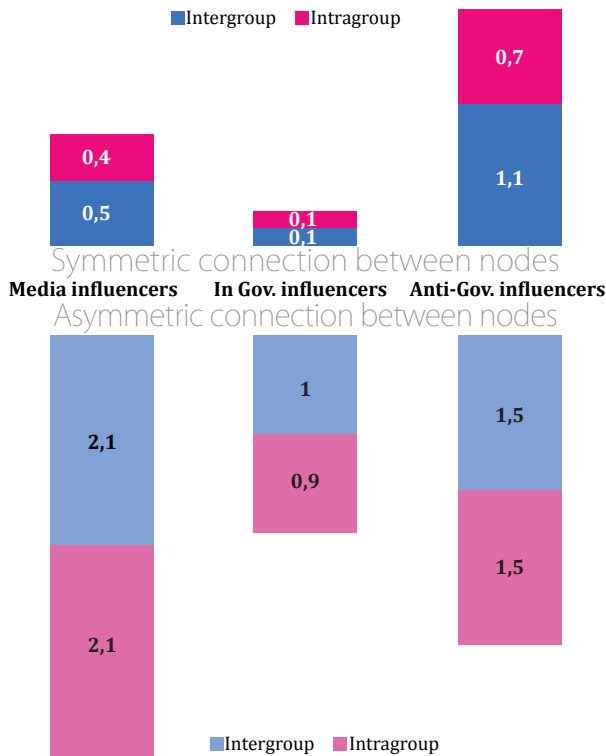


Figure 3. Intensity of inter and intragroup connections between three different types

The lowest level of this type of relationship is related to influencer politicians in power (with an average of 0.3). Also among these three groups, the highest asymmetric connection between nodes is related to media influencers (with an average of 6.3) and the lowest is again related to influencer politicians in power (with an average of 2.8).

Figure 4 visualizes the average connections of each influencer in each groups. The first point in the figure is that the asymmetric connections between nodes are generally greater than the symmetric ones. In addition, it is clear that anti-Government influencers use the symmetric feature more than the other two groups, and in contrast, in Government influencers have the lowest rate of symmetric connections.

In terms of the intensity of inter and intragroup connections, the figure shows that the ratio of these two types of connections is approximately equal for all three groups. The only narrow difference is related to anti-Government influencers, which in the symmetric connections section has a larger total volume of intergroup than intragroup connections.

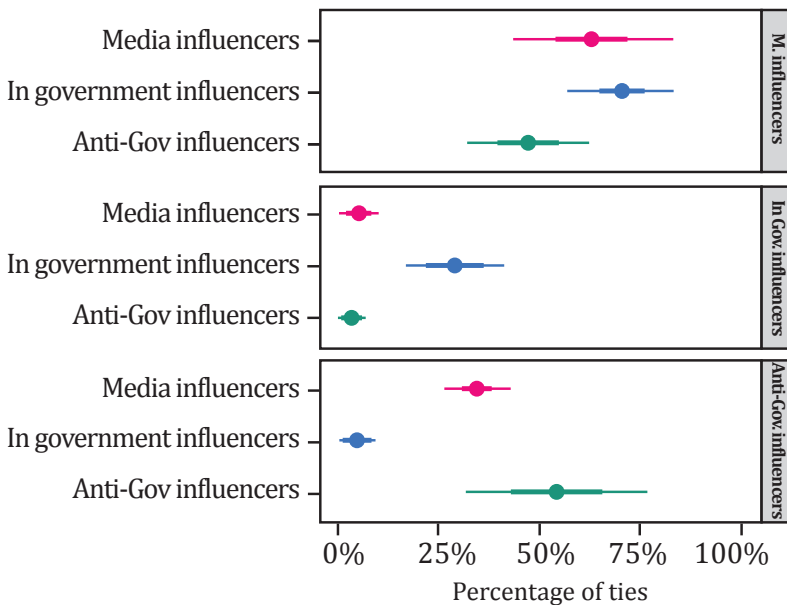


Figure 4. Relative intensity of communication between three different types of influencers

The figure above also shows what communications each group of influencers pursue in addition to their internal communication network. As can be seen, media influencers have the strongest intra-group communication with each other, while influencer politicians in power have

the weakest intra-group communication. In addition, media influencers have received the most attention from the other two groups, and influencer politicians in power have received the least attention from the other two groups. The influencer opposition politicians are mostly pursuing intra-group communications, but they are also pursuing media influencers.

This situation can be explained by citing several facts. First, and in answer to our main research question here, more than other groups, it is clear that influencer politicians in power tend to take the advantage of intergroup communication, especially with media influencers.

In contrast, influencer politicians in power are reluctant to associate with the influencer opposition politicians. This discrepancy may be the result of the critical and anti-government approach of the opposition or the refusal of politicians in power to engage in political stigma; but in any case, there is very little connection between the two bodies. At the same time, communication between influencer politicians in power and the influencer opposition politicians is mediated by media influencers, as both groups more or less follow media influencers equally.

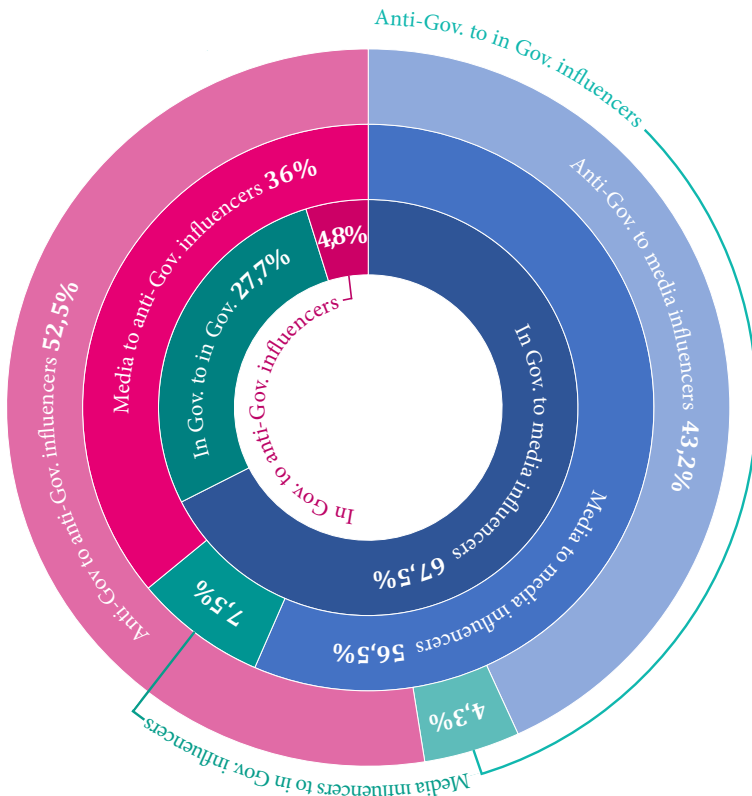


Figure 5. General intra and intergroup connections ratio

Finally, the general figure of the intragroup and intergroup connections ratio is drawn in Figure 5. In this figure, the sum of the percentages in each circle is equal to 100%, which represents the set of connections for each group. For both in-government and anti-government influencers, the most connection is to pursue media influencers, while the opposite is not true; means that most media influencers are connected to their own group members. They seem less inclined to pursue the other two groups of influencers. Also, in general, the relationship between media influencers and anti-government influencers is stronger than the relationship between both groups with in-government influencers; another finding that can strategically be considered significant.

Some limitations should be considered in this research. First, the use of Instagram social network is not the same among statesmen and politicians in power across different political spectrums. Therefore, the claim of this research does not reflect the performance of all political spectrums in power within Instagram network. The second issue concerns the diversity of media influencers. The movie, theater, and television actors, well-known journalists, singers, as well as people who have become famous simply for being active on social media, are different types of media influencers. To obtain clearer results in this study, we have not separated these cases from each other, but it should be considered the possibility that each of these subgroups may exhibit different behaviors. We also deliberately did not include athletes in this group because athletes mostly have different communication and networking patterns and therefore applied undesirable scatter to the data.

Conclusion

In addition to facilitating communication and supporting the flow of information, social networks such as Instagram also play a symbolic role in transforming broad social relationships, including political communication. The phenomenon of influencer has in the past been specific to the field of entertainment and leisure. With the connection of media, entertainment, and politics in the age of electronic communications and its intensification by new social media, function of the influencer has been removed from monopoly of entertainment and is practically an important and influential factor in political affairs like elections, political and civil movements, policy-making, as well as international communications.

We know those influencers' relationships with the world of politics, economics, culture, or social issues are far more complex than the

simplified models we focus on to increase analytical power. It is also clear that the context or host platform of network relations has a strong role in the type of interaction and its direction, which in particular requires a separate macro analysis focusing on the characteristics of the system and its political and communication values. However, limited studies also contain important clues about understanding the reality of the world around us and reflecting on the expectations that can be understood and touched through such analyzes.

Typologically, influencers can be classified in different ways. We presented a triple classification of influencers according to the purpose of research. The results of the analysis show that media influencers with all its diversity, including cinema and television actors and singers, are more inclined to communicate within the group. In contrast, influencers are relatively weak in the power of intra-group communication and are more likely to pursue media influencers. They may use these connections as a symbol of social presence and popularity. While influencer politicians are very weak in the power of intra-group communication, influencer opposition politicians are very strong in the power of intra-group communication.

Media influencers, on the other hand, have weak intergroup relations with influencer politicians in power, but on the contrary, have stronger connections with influencer opposition politicians outside power. This situation has led this group of influencers to act as an intermediary between influencer politicians in power and influencer opposition politicians outside power.

In addition, the average of asymmetric connections between nodes in the sample population is 4.6 while the average of symmetric ones is 1.8. These statistics show that all three groups use the potential of Instagram communication network to develop communication to a limited extent. However, the influencer opposition politicians outside power use the networking potential of Instagram more than the other two groups, and in contrast, influencer politicians in power experience the least use of this feature.

Ethical considerations

The authors have completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc.

Conflicts of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Data availability

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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