**A quantitative analysis of the Effect of Gender in**

**Political Participation and Voting Attitudes**

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**Introduction**

How do different gender attitudes influence the decision making of political participation and voting? Social media influence, voting right history, and other perceptions of society are a small number of factors that relate to the attitudes of participation. This analysis aims to study the connection of gender and social media to the voting attitudes displayed in a quantitative study.

**Hypothesis**

**Fair and Free Elections**

The first hypothesis examines the perspectives of each gender and how they view if each election is fair and free. There are many historical and societal factors that contribute to the perspective each gender holds. In the earliest days of democracy women were not given the right to vote. It wasn’t until the 1920s that women were given the right to vote, but that does not equate to equality in elections. In a review of the origins of the women’s vote, Aidt stated, “Women are underrepresented in national parliaments, in local governments, on party lists, and among party leaders everywhere” (Aidt, 2022). A study completed in 1989 also founded that political interest is a factor of gender socialization and found that men have a higher interest in politics than women (Bennett & Bennett, 1989).

**Equal Opportunity**

When studying equal opportunity in voting and elections there are a multitude of factors to be studied. Equal opportunity often refers to “the distribution of some desirable outcome, such as health status, education, or income” (Hufe & Peichl, 2020). Mentioned before, voting rights for all citizens does not equate to an equal standing of political participation. In the United States voting system there are even more factors to consider (e.g., early voting, polling locations, voter registration initiatives, etc.) that contribute to just how equal the opportunity is. In a study conducted about the level of equal opportunity in elections in the United States it was found that “factors beyond individual control are strong determinants of political participation along each of these dimensions…” (Hufe & Peichl, 2020). Through the data collected it was studied how each gender perceives the statement “All citizens have an equal opportunity to vote.”

**Social Media**

For communications professionals in a digital age, it is imperative to recognize how social media can affect political participation and voting. With a large sum of personal data and information collected about the activity of internet user’s social media can largely affect overall political participation. When examining political advertising in this modern form researchers found that there “has not been much regulation of political advertising in general since the rise of digital and social media” (Nelson et. Al, 2021) contributing to the relationship of social media and political participation.

**Methods and Results**

Responses to a survey conducted about social media’s relationship to political participation was conducted. The questions in this study included nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio questions. This analysis specifically examines a small percentage of the nominal and ordinal questions.

For the first hypothesis “Females and males show different perceptions of how the fairness and freedom of elections,” the independent variable (IV), gender, represents a nominal question. The dependent variable (DV) states, “elections are free and fair,” and is an ordinal question, on a 5-point scale, 1=*Strongly disagree* and 5=*Strongly agree.* The researcher conducted an independent samples t-test.

| Independent Samples T-Test |
| --- |
|  |  | **Statistic** | **df** | **p** |
| Q4E |  | Student's t |  | 2.93 | ᵃ | 6402 |  | 0.003 |  |
|   |  | Welch's t |  | 3.00 |  | 3749 |  | 0.003 |  |
| ᵃ Levene's test is significant (p < .05), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances |
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| Group Descriptives |
| --- |
|  | **Group** | **N** | **Mean** | **Median** | **SD** | **SE** |
| Q4E |  | male |  | 3107 |  | 3.07 |  | 3.00 |  | 1.31 |  | 0.0236 |  |
|   | female |  | 3297 |  | 2.79 |  | 3.00 |  | 5.14 |  | 0.0896 |  |
|  |

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The results showed that females and males show different perspective of how fair and free elections are, t=3.00, p=.003, such that males (M=3.07, SD=1.31) attained a higher score than females (M=2.79, SD=5.14).

The second hypothesis aims to examine if “females and males show a different attitude towards all citizens having an equal opportunity to vote.” This data was also statistically tested under an independent samples t-test, using the nominal IV, gender, and ordinal DV, “all adult citizens have an equal opportunity to vote.” The DV is on a 5-point likert skill, 1=*Strongly disagree* and 5=*Strongly agree.*

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| Independent Samples T-Test |
| --- |
|  |  | **Statistic** | **df** | **p** |
| Q4F |  | Student's t |  | 3.42 |  | 6398 |  | < .001 |  |
|   |  | Welch's t |  | 3.44 |  | 6112 |  | < .001 |  |
|  |
|  |

 |
| Group Descriptives |
|  | **Group** | **N** | **Mean** | **Median** | **SD** | **SE** |
| Q4F |  | male |  | 3107 |  | 3.25 |  | 4.00 |  | 3.92 |  | 0.0703 |  |
|   | female |  | 3293 |  | 2.86 |  | 3.00 |  | 5.18 |  | 0.0903 |  |
|  |
|  |

The results reported that again females and males show different attitudes to the statement “all citizens have equal opportunity to vote,” t=3.44, p= <.001, such that males (M=3.25, SD=3.92) scored higher than females (M=2.86, SD=5.18).

The final hypothesis tested if there is a relationship between how social media affects voting and participating in politics. It tested the 5-point, 1=*much easier* and 5=*much harder*, ordinal DV, “To what extent does social media make voting easier or harder for you,” and 5-point, 1=*much easier* and 5=*much harder*, ordinal IV, “To what extent does social media make participating in politics easier or harder for you.”

| Correlation Matrix |
| --- |
|  |  | **Participating\_18E** | **Voting\_18f** |
| Participating\_18E |  | Pearson's r |  | — |  |   |  |
|   |  | p-value |  | — |  |   |  |
|   |  | N |  | — |  |   |  |
| Voting\_18f |  | Pearson's r |  | 0.477 | \*\*\* | — |  |
|   |  | p-value |  | < .001 |  | — |  |
|   |  | N |  | 5466 |  | — |  |
| Note. \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001 |
|  |

The test shows that the extent of social media affecting participation in politics and voting is positively correlated, r=.47, p<.001. The effect size was medium to large.



**Discussion**

In political communications and advertising perception and consumer attitudes are very important to election and poll results. This study concludes that statistically, there is a gender difference in perception of how fair and free elections are. Men tend to perceive elections as freer than women in this study. However, it must be noted that standard deviation of female’s response shows that there is some inconsistency in how females perceive elections. This conclusion can result from a multitude of facts, but other research shows that political interest as well as identity and representation impact this perception. It is also evident that while males scored higher than females, the mean of 3.07 signifies that most fell in the middle of the likert scale, neither agree nor disagree.

This research was conducted in 2021 following a presidential race of Joe Biden against Donald Trump, two dominant male figures in politics. These traits can contribute to the reason why females were less likely to perceive elections as fair and free. When examining how females and males perceive equal opportunity to vote, similar results were concluded. Males have a higher score than females, but are still in the middle of the scale, leaning towards neither agree nor disagree. Equal opportunity can lend discussion to many factors, the expectation of communicators is to provide resources and information to all citizens to ensure everyone has an opportunity.

The positive correlation of social media making voting and political participation easier can provide insight into how communication practitioners can use modern media to increase the positive perspective in women. By using social media in political advertising to appeal to women specifically, there can be an increase in political interest and participation. The results of this study tell us that there is a meaningful relationship in the effects social media has on voting and political participation. The gender differences in voting and political participation, specifically how social media can influence these factors, are worth studying as communications professionals are the front runners of political campaigns and advertising. Having knowledge of the audience and the proper targeting methods can lead to successful campaigns.

**References**

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