

Role of the Media in Shaping Political and Electoral Behavior of the Albanian University Students

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Abstract: *It is commonly accepted that media plays a central role in the functioning of modern democracies. As part of democratic system, media also plays a crucial role in shaping people's political opinion and behavior. No one can deny its predominant influence in voting behavior. In order to understand its direct effect in voting choice the paper is going to look at Albanian media and its deep involvement and attention to politics. The main objective of this empirical research is to reveal the role of media in changing political behavior among university students in Albania. The study critically analyses the direct impact of mainstream media of this target group during June 2013 General Elections in Albania. The research is performed in survey format. This is still an ongoing project; however a sample of 494 respondents was generated from the contribution of both private and public university students belonging to different departments. To make it clearer and at the same time to extend the analysis, among others, three points will be taken into consideration.*

Firstly, the study identifies the most popular and accessible mediums for political information among Albanian university students. Secondly, it sheds a light on the influence of specific mediums such as television, internet and radio in shaping political beliefs and preferences. Thirdly, this quantitative research elaborates the credibility of mass media as one of the most powerful transmitter of political events in Albania. The observation of voting behavior allows us to realize whether citizens are influenced by family affiliation, personal predispositions or are they guided by the impact of media. Overall, as expected, results explore that media plays a significant role in voting choices among Albanian students. Similarly, in this age of technology, internet and television are being found as the two predominant sources for obtaining political information in Albania. However, it is quite evident that the persistent challenge for Albanian media is the improvement of its image and reputation as a reliable and impartial medium for providing political information.

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