

Political Socialization With Its Agents

Cenkay UYAN¹

Abstract

This article provides an overview of political socialization, which is the process of internalizing and acquiring certain knowledge, patterns, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors toward politics. The article discusses the importance of political socialization for modern democracies and explores the influential agents of political socialization, including the family, peer groups, schools, mass media, and religious institutions. The article also discusses primary and secondary political socialization and highlights the role of education in political socialization. Additionally, the article emphasizes the impact of parental education on children's political upbringing and discusses how peer groups can influence adolescents' political views. Overall, the text provides a comprehensive understanding of political socialization and its role in shaping individuals' political identities and behaviors.

Keywords: *Political Socialization, Political Identity, Political Behaviors, Democracy, Peer Groups, Mass Media, Religious Institutions*

¹ Ibn Haldun University, Bachelor Degree in Political Science and International Relations, cenkayoyan@gmail.com

Political Socialization

Political socialization can be defined as internalizing and acquiring political culture. Iovan (2015) defined culture:

Culture is a socio-historical product that is the gauge of human beings, culture is what differentiates humans from all the other species of the biosphere, culture comprises all acquisitions of the agents of social action resulting from creation, culture is all that is to be learnt throughout one's social life and transmitted from generation to generation, it is a learned and socially transmitted inheritance, etc., reunite the agreement of anthropologists, sociologists, humanists. (p. 27)

Specifically, political culture is knowledge, worldviews, certain behaviors, and beliefs about the political world. Therefore, political socialization can be defined as a process of internalizing and acquiring certain knowledge, patterns, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors toward politics. Munroe (2002) has defined it as “Political socialization, in other words, is political upbringing.” (p. 25). Political socialization has a significant role in modern societies because democracy aims for each individual to participate actively and effectively in politics. They are expected to be informed and knowledgeable about political events, individuals, and conflicts so that they can take sides in conflicts and logically have an opinion about them. If society does not have active political culture and sufficient knowledge, democracy will fail. Therefore, governments give huge importance to political socialization in education curricula. Also, there are other influential agents of political socialization. Firstly, each person comes into a family and environment where he learns basic principles and beliefs about politics. Then, he encounters new ideas and views with mass media, education, peer groups, religious institutions, and so forth. So, it can be said that political socialization starts in a family and continues throughout each individual's life.

Agents of Political Socialization

Munroe (2002) has divided political socialization into 2 main groups: primary and secondary. Primary political socialization is formed in a more spontaneous, informal, and unstructured way. On the other hand, secondary political socialization is more formal, more structured, and more organized (p. 25-26).

Primary Political Socialization

1-Family

It is the first and fundamental agent of political socialization because children learn basic terms, habits,

and beliefs about politics from their families. Individuals' first political identities are shaped in the family by observing and imitating their parents. They first hear political parties, political leaders, and ideologies that their parents have and support. Moreover, they encountered authority and hierarchy in the family for the first time. For example, children's fundamental needs, such as food and shelter are fulfilled by their family. Consequently, it creates a hierarchy in the family. Parents' education level influences children's political upbringing. More educated parents can transmit more effectively and easily their political views to their children. "Parents' education may provide both skills and knowledge necessary for them to be psychologically engaged in politics and to create a home environment in which there is a democratic political discussion, thereby enabling them to act as citizenship role models for their offspring." (Kim & Lim, 2019: 94) According to Kim and Lim's (2019) research that was conducted in 30 countries, parental education affects home-based political socialization and adolescents' educational expectations, and home-based political socialization and adolescents' educational expectations affect adolescents' intention to vote (p. 84). It indicates that parents' education level is directly related to children's political identities and behaviors.

2-Peer Group

Peer means "one that is of equal standing with another especially one belonging to the same societal group especially based on age, grade, or status" (Merriam-Webster, 2020: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/peer>). Peer groups can be influential in political socialization as well. Peer groups have a different nature of relationship from family. Family is structured hierarchically and has more organized knowledge than peer groups, whereas adolescents can feel more relaxed in peer groups that they belong to, and they take unstructured and unorganized knowledge from their peers (Walker et al., 2000).

Also, adolescents consider their peers as role models, and they try to fit them so that they can be accepted by their peers. According to research that was conducted in Pakistan, peer groups is the highest and most influential agent of political socialization and political participation (Memon et al., 2017). Hence, peer groups may have a very dominant role in the political socialization process, even peer groups can change completely adolescents' political views that they have adopted from their parents.

Secondary Political Socialization

1-School

It is the first organized and sophisticated agent of political socialization. Each nation desires new generations to know their national values, such as national heroes, national anthem, and national flag. Also, they are expected to adapt and acknowledge formal rules, symbols of nationhood, and governmental authority (Munroe, 2002). Moreover, political socialization is taught under the name of civic education, which is the

basic knowledge that each citizen has to know. This is crucial especially for the modern democratic countries because democracy is based on citizens' participation. Students who learn this basic knowledge can feel proficient to participate and be active in politics. Furthermore, ideologic states realized the importance of education in political socialization; thus, they prepared certain patterns of the education system to instill their ideologies into new generations. In addition, schools are the places where children are exposed to authority for the second time after the family. There is a hierarchy that starts from students to teachers and from teachers to administrators. That impacts the development of children's attitudes toward authority (Munroe, 2002).

2-Media

It is one of the most influential agents of political socialization in recent years. People have been learning about news and political events through the media since the invention of newspapers. Then, it continues with radio, television, and finally the internet. In recent years, the internet, in other words, social media is the most popular tool for communication and following the news. Children are exposed to political news and views by especially social media from early childhood. They can have access to learn about politics and be more knowledgeable in politics. Even though they cannot directly participate in politics via voting, they can share their political ideas on social media platforms with other people, so they start participating and being active in politics earlier than the people who lived in the past times when the internet did not exist. On the other hand, it can be the other way around because social media can be used for entertainment rather than political purposes. People who use social media for entertainment become less knowledgeable about politics and less likely to participate. Hence, people's media content preferences determine their political socialization (Prior, 2005).

3-Religion

Religion is one of the agents of political socialization that have a key role in societies, even though it is losing its importance because of secularism in modern societies. Religions have certain rules that shape our minds and determine what is wrong and what is true (Munroe, 2002). It widely affects the political socialization process and determines people's political beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. It creates a huge difference between religious societies and secular societies. This phenomenon can be observed when Iran and Switzerland are compared. In Iran, religion is the dominant factor that shapes people's views and perspectives about political events, while religion is considered only a lifestyle or tradition by people, and it does not have an impact on the society of Switzerland. Another example of that phenomenon is the madrassas in Pakistan. Madrassas are both educational institutions and religious institutions that have an important role in political socialization in Pakistan. Madrassas shape Pakistan society's political beliefs and behaviors according to Islam (Kataria & Javaid, 2017).

Therefore, religions do not only determine morality but also determine political socialization.

4-Political Parties

Political parties are one of the agents of political socialization. Political parties try to develop popularity in society and to socialize people according to their own ideas and ideologies to gain an advantage over other rival parties (Munroe, 2002). For example, Democratic Party and Republican Party in the United States try to socialize people according to their own ideas and ideologies through political campaigns and advertisements. For instance, the Democratic Party may focus on social issues, such as healthcare and equal rights, to appeal to liberal voters, while the Republican Party may emphasize migration issue and national security to appeal to conservative voters. By doing so, each party is attempting to socialize voters to align with their political values and beliefs. On the other hand, political parties are losing their importance in political socialization because social media is becoming more dominant in political socialization day by day.

Conclusion

Political socialization is a process of internalizing and adopting political culture which consists of political knowledge, political beliefs, political worldviews, and political behaviors. This process begins in early childhood in the family in an unorganized and spontaneous way. Then, it continues with the environment that we encounter. We start to interact with different people from family members, and these people are the same age or the same range as us. This is called peer group interaction. Then, we encountered the first organized political socialization in school. Also, religious institutions and political parties are involved in political socialization. Political socialization is significant in especially democratic countries because successful democracies can be achieved only through active and conscious political participations.

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