



An approach to the effects and characteristics of political participation through donations in political crowdfunding campaigns in Spain¹

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<https://doi.org/10.5209/tekn.87237>

Received: February 28, 2023 • Accepted: August 2, 2023 • OPR

ENG Abstract. This work is structured around two exploratory objectives. Firstly, it aims to analyse the effects of connective participation and consumption in which donations in political crowdfunding campaigns can be framed. Secondly, it will study the characteristics and socio-demographic profile of the people who donate to political crowdfunding campaigns. In order to obtain information, we have developed a questionnaire that has resulted in a non-probabilistic purposive sample of one hundred and twenty-five valid and complete responses. The paper closes with a discussion and the presentation of two hypotheses that reflect the main findings of this exploratory study. On the one hand, the characteristics and profile of the participants would be predominantly male, middle-aged (thirty-six to fifty years old), with a high level of formal education (university studies) and a medium income level. On the other hand, the participation analysed is hegemonic among activists with experience and commitment. This fact could reflect an increase in participatory inequalities between participatory and non-participatory people as a consequence of the characteristics of the forms of connective action and consumption. **Keywords:** connective participation; consumer participation; profile participants.

ES Una aproximación a los efectos y características de la participación política a través de donaciones en campañas de crowdfunding político en España

Resumen. El trabajo se estructura en torno a dos objetivos exploratorios. En primer lugar, se estudiarán las características y el perfil sociodemográfico de las personas que donan en campañas de crowdfunding político. En segundo lugar, se analizarán los efectos de la participación conectiva y de consumo en los que se pueden enmarcar las donaciones en campañas de crowdfunding político. Para obtener la información se ha elaborado un cuestionario que ha dado como resultado una muestra intencional no probabilística de ciento veinticinco respuestas válidas y completas. El trabajo se cierra con una discusión y la presentación de dos hipótesis que reflejan los principales hallazgos de este estudio exploratorio. Por un lado, las características y el perfil de los participantes serían predominantemente masculinos, de mediana edad (36-50 años), con un nivel de educación formal alto (estudios universitarios) y un nivel de renta medio. Por otra parte, la participación analizada es hegemónica entre los activistas con experiencia y compromiso político previo. Este hecho podría reflejar un aumento de las desigualdades participativas entre personas participativas y no participativas como consecuencia de las características de las formas de acción y consumo conectivo. **Palabras clave:** participación conectiva; participación de consumo; perfil participantes.

Summary. 1. Introduction. 2. Donations through political crowdfunding campaigns and political participation. 3. Methodology. 4. Results. 5. Discussion. 6. Limitations of the research. 7. Authorship contribution statement. 8. Data availability. 9. References.

How to cite: González-Cacheda, Bruno y Cancela Outeda, Celso (2024). An approach to the effects and characteristics of political participation through donations in political crowdfunding campaigns in Spain. *Teknokultura. Revista de Cultura Digital y Movimientos Sociales* 21(1), 139-148. <https://doi.org/10.5209/tekn.87237>

¹ This publication is part of the activities of the Jean Monnet Chair 'European Institutions and Citizens: Adapting the EU to the digitalisation challenges' (EICAUD).

1. Introduction

The repertoire of political participation has undergone continuous expansion in the socio-political and academic spheres throughout the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century. This increase in non-electoral participation leaves large, scarcely explored gaps in the field of social and political sciences. The classification and definition of the forms and repertoires included in studies of political participation have evolved hand in hand with the transformations that have taken place in the social, political, and technological spheres. In the first decade of the 21st century, the group of activities considered within the repertoire of political participation expanded considerably in academic circles. This increase appears to be associated with activities of a civic and social nature and the proliferation of actions developed in the digital realm and on the Internet (Norris, 2001). It is precisely at this intersection that our object of study is situated.

Although there is no agreement when it comes to dating the birth of crowdfunding campaigns, we can point to the emergence of the Indiegogo and Kickstarter web platforms in 2008 and 2009 as the moment when this financial tool progressively gained popularity (Sedlitzky and Franz, 2019). Regarding the idea of crowdfunding, although there is no consensus (Jovanovic, 2019), we can observe some common elements in the definitions presented by various authors. Firstly, we must point out the temporary and limited nature of the campaigns and the central role played by information and communications technologies (ICTs) in the configuration of this funding channel. Secondly, it is necessary to consider their composite nature, articulated on three elements that shape crowdfunding campaigns: the web platform, the campaign promoter, whether individual or collective, and the individual funders (Jovanovic, 2019; Sedlitzky and Franz, 2019). In addition to the components that structure crowdfunding campaigns, we must take into account the different typologies according to their nature and purpose. Following the classification made by Raphael Sedlitzky and Yvonne Franz (2019), we can classify crowdfunding projects into two main groups: donation-based projects and investment-based projects.

The political crowdfunding campaigns on which our research is based fall into the first group identified by Sedlitzky and Franz (2019), together with civic crowdfunding campaigns promoted by public administrations or civil society organisations and oriented towards charitable causes. In order to include funding initiatives under the political crowdfunding label, we used two criteria. On the one hand, we looked at the characteristics of the campaign promoter and its necessary orientation towards political objectives. In other words, all those actors who seek to influence conflict management and actively promote or oppose social change. This typology includes political parties, trade unions, social movements, pressure groups, associations and advocacy groups. On the other hand, we must take into account the objectives of the campaigns. In this case, fundable initiatives will pursue a strictly political objective and will be materialised

in some type of activity aimed at public institutions or at changing the culture and values of society as an intermediate step towards social and political change. Eligible activities include the organisation of protests, demonstrations, resistance groups, boycotts or the creation of alternative communication and dissemination media, among others.

In order to delimit the framework of our research, we focus our work on political crowdfunding campaigns promoted by various advocacy groups. This label encompasses various groups organised around the defence of a common cause or objective and oriented towards collective action (Johansson, Scaramuzzino and Wennerhag, 2019). Some of the issues identified in various studies show a wide diversity in terms of the objectives defended: environment, democracy, labour rights, health, religion, education, etc. (Prakash and Kay, 2012). In any case, and beyond the specific theme, political change is the common denominator of the political crowdfunding campaigns promoted by advocacy groups.

Having pointed out and delimited the scope of our research, we must remember that our object of study is framed within the thematic field of political participation. Thus, our research will focus on the individuals who made financial contributions to political crowdfunding campaigns promoted by advocacy groups. This paper has a twofold objective: firstly, we will try to understand the profile and socio-demographic characteristics of people who participate through donations in political crowdfunding campaigns promoted by advocacy groups; secondly, we will try to determine the effects of donations in political crowdfunding campaigns on integration and participation. In order to do so, we will try to answer the following research questions:

- What are the profile and socio-demographic characteristics of individuals who participate through donations in political crowdfunding campaigns promoted by advocacy groups?
- Does participation through political crowdfunding campaigns increase or decrease inequalities in the degree of participation between activists and non-activists?

It should be noted that this paper is exploratory in nature as a result of the limitations encountered throughout the research. In any event, we consider the progress made in this area of knowledge and modality of digital political participation, which has not been investigated to date, to be relevant.

2. Donations through political crowdfunding campaigns and political participation

2.1. Donations, political crowdfunding and connective and consumer participation

In order to characterise our object of study within the framework of the theories and concepts linked to political participation, we will start from the dominant advances and approaches in the first decades of the 21st century. Specifically, we consider important the work presented by Jan Teorell, Mariano Torcal

and José Ramón Montero (2007) in which, based on a broad view of the idea of political participation, various modalities are categorised and characterised according to their differential elements. According to the authors, political participation is when a politically oriented action or activity has the following characteristics:

- The actions or activities will be carried out by individuals who do not belong to the world of professionalised politics.
- The actions carried out are necessarily aimed at influencing the decisions taken by third parties.
- The activities are not directed solely at the public administration. The idea of political participation includes all those actions that seek to achieve a political result by influencing the hierarchical allocation of values within society.

Having pointed out the characteristics that shape the conceptual and open-minded approach adopted in our research, which are close to the perspective used by other authors such as Jan Van Deth (2012), we will focus on the typology developed by Teorell, Torcal and Montero (2007). The aim is to classify the participation carried out through donations in political crowdfunding campaigns within one of the typologies presented.

Table 1. A typology of the modes of political participation.
Source: Teorell, Torcal and Montero (2007)

		Channel of expression	
		Representational	Extra-Representational
Mechanism of influence	Exit-based	Voting	Consumer participation
	Voice-based	Non targeted: party activity	Non targeted: protest activity
		Contacting	

According to the specifications listed by Teorell, Torcal and Montero (2007), donations to political crowdfunding campaigns can be categorised within the modalities associated with consumer participation. Specifically, we can link this type of donation to activities of an extra-representative nature. The functioning of this modality of participation shares the features of those activities based on 'output', articulated through self-regulating market mechanisms that send anonymous and imprecise signals to the system (see Table 1). Within the set of actions linked to consumer participation, we can also include boycotts or buycotts based on the defence of a political cause (Copeland, 2014). Individualised forms of participation appear to be characterised by features such as informality, intermittency, flexibility and temporality. This situation would have a negative impact on forms of political participation that imply commitment and permanence with organised political actors (Van Deth, 2012).

However, to characterise political participation through financial contributions to political crowdfunding campaigns, we must go beyond the

definitions and features of consumer participation. In this respect, we must consider the ubiquity associated with the Internet and digital tools that modify the variables of space and time, reducing the costs and the level of commitment required for political participation (Anduiza, Cantijoch and Gallego, 2009). In this way, social change and technological change interact, giving rise to new forms of political participation such as the so-called connective action, based on participation through the Internet in an ad hoc and selective manner (Ruess et al., 2023). In this way, a flexible relationship model is established based on the personalisation of causes and organisations with which individuals participate on an ad hoc basis and through an occasional and time-limited linkage (Bennet and Segerberg, 2012). Based on the above conceptual and theoretical elements, we consider that participation through political crowdfunding campaigns can be structurally categorised as a model of consumption and connective participation.

2.2. Effects of connective and consumer forms of participation

The proliferation and growing diffusion of participatory forms of consumption and connective participation, such as donations in political crowdfunding campaigns, are associated with the academic debate on the possibilities of attracting an increasingly distant and disaffected citizenry to non-electoral political processes through the institutional channels of political participation of liberal systems. Around this academic controversy, two main trends can be distinguished. Firstly, we will address the approaches of the techno-optimistic current, which includes the advocates of the mobilisation hypothesis concerning the potential of the Internet and digital channels to integrate citizens into political processes. Secondly, we will synthesise the proposal put forward by authors close to the techno-pessimistic thesis, and by extension, the ideas related to the reinforcement hypothesis that point out the limitations of the Internet as a channel for participatory integration. Before entering the subject, it should be noted that this is not a static debate. The controversy has evolved over time, from the initial hegemony of techno-optimistic postulates to the current predominance of much more moderate positions regarding the potential of digital channels.

The positions close to the techno-optimistic current emphasise the structural characteristics of the Internet and mobile forms of communication as a reality that allows individuals and organisations to interact at a lower cost (Anduiza, Cantijoch and Gallego, 2009). Thus, the modification of space and time variables facilitates ubiquitous communications between the different individual and collective actors involved in political processes. This configuration would facilitate coordination, mobilisation and participation (Shirky, 2011). Close to the techno-optimistic view is the characterisation by Lance Bennet and Alexandra Segerberg (2012) of the forms of connective participation described in the previous section (Valenzuela, Correa, and Gil de Zúñiga, 2017). In relation to our object of study and within the scarce literature published on the subject, we should

mention the work of Gil-Moreno (2017). For this author, instruments such as crowdfunding campaigns are giving rise to a change in political culture as a result of the values implicit in this instrument related to transparency, participation and horizontality.

In contrast to the techno-optimistic view, the techno-pessimistic authors lower expectations regarding the democratic and participatory possibilities of digital tools and applications. The main criticism has to do with the characteristics of the relationships and interaction established on the internet. In this respect, authors such as Zygmunt Bauman (2007) or Jeroen Van Laer (2010) describe digital political participation on the basis of a low level of commitment and high volatility. In this way, and as a consequence of the low entry and exit costs, participation and hegemonic political interaction on the Internet would be based on weak links and ties. Beyond the structural weaknesses with respect to the hegemonic prototype of sociability and interaction established on the Internet, we must attend to the assumptions established by the reinforcement hypothesis. According to Pippa Norris (2001), in a pioneering study, the Internet would increase the participation and engagement of previously active citizens. Thus, instead of closing the gap between participatory and non-participatory citizens, digital tools would be widening the gap between the two groups. In the same vein, Alexander Van Deursen et al. (2017) point to an increase in the participatory repertoire of politically experienced citizens and a widening of the gap between participatory and non-participatory profiles. According to Van Laer (2010), the participation developed through the Internet would be hegemonically led by multi-activist citizens, highly engaged with organised socio-political actors and with previous political experience. Following the arguments put forward by the advocates of the reinforcement hypothesis, it would be plausible to expect that the people involved through donations in political crowdfunding campaigns would mostly belong to this experienced profile.

However, to complete the picture of the discussion about the potential of the Internet for participatory integration, we must go beyond the structure of the network, cost savings or the previous experience of the participants. Several studies point to a certain asymmetry when it comes to explaining digital political participation in terms of various social and demographic variables (Schlozman, Verba and Brady, 2010). The following section will focus on the importance of the socio-demographic profile, resources and skills of individuals in explaining digital political participation.

2.3. Social and demographic determinants of consumer and connective participation

To complete the analysis and understanding of political participation in connective and consumer activities such as donations to political crowdfunding campaigns, we will focus on the characteristics and determinants that condition the participation of individuals. To do so, we will start from the classic approach developed by Henry Brady, Sidney Verba and Kay Schlozman (1995) in which they argue that political participation is driven by three fundamental

factors: time, money and skills. In this regard, and in relation to our object of study, several studies underline the importance of the availability of a sufficient level of financial resources for participation through donations (Ritter and Solt, 2019). In the same vein, Raquel Gallego (2008) points to a positive relationship between income level and the different forms included in consumption participation, which, as we have already noted, involve a monetary transaction. As a second determinant pointed out by Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995), we will look at the level of skills of individuals who donate to political crowdfunding campaigns. We should point out that civic skills are conditioned by multiple variables. First, there is a broad consensus in the academic community regarding the importance of formal education as a predictor variable for political participation regardless of the modality analysed (Schlozman, Verba and Brady, 2010; Van Deursen et al., 2017). This phenomenon is related to an increase in individuals' cognitive capacity to process information related to social and political processes and to acquire tools for interaction and socialisation. In line with the above findings, several studies confirm the political relationship between digital political participation and the level of formal education (Schlozman, Verba and Brady, 2010; Van Deursen et al., 2017). In addition to the educational variable, several studies point to age as a predictor of digital political participation. In this case, Christian Hoffman and Christoph Lutz (2019) point to a higher likelihood of political participation through digital channels in unconventional ways for people in the younger age range (Ruess et al., 2023). In this sense, positions close to the mobilisation hypothesis point to the potential of the Internet and digital channels to incorporate young people, who are disaffected from institutional and representative channels for participation, into political processes (Anduiza, Cantijoch and Gallego, 2009). Conversely, the digital divide is manifested in the exclusion of older people from participatory channels hosted on the Internet. This phenomenon appears to be associated with the availability of technological and digital skills and knowledge. Moreover, as Hoffmann and Lutz (2019) underline, young people will participate to a greater extent through digital channels as a result of a higher level of self-efficacy.

But beyond individual resources linked to social and economic position and the availability of skills related to education and age, we must take into account the participatory opportunities offered by social capital as an available resource. In this way, participatory experience and the relationship and interaction with organised actors will increase the possibility of participating politically in a greater number of causes through a more varied repertoire. As Mariona Ferrer, Luis Medina and Mariano Torcal (2006) point out, contact with associations, collectives and socio-political actors provides key information and knowledge for participation. In the same vein, Robert Putnam (2003) argues that social capital and network arrangements have an important value as a resource for participation as a consequence of the information and social trust they possess. Conversely, but in line with the reinforcement hypothesis, social capital and participatory experience may have certain negative effects related to social inequality. In this respect, those with a good level of social capital improve their level of

participation relative to those who remain isolated and outside participatory networks (Putnam, 2003).

To conclude this section, we must take into account the influence of the gender variable on connective and consumer participation. In this respect, it is necessary to point out the complex and composite nature of the gender variable. Thus, in the specialised literature, three sets of non-exclusive factors are observed that allow us to analyse and explain the relationship between gender and political participation: structural, situational and cultural factors (Pfanzelt and Spies, 2019; Sartori, Tuorto and Ghigi, 2017). In relation to our object of study, and from the situational approach, several studies relate a higher level of female involvement in forms linked to consumer and connective participation (Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010). This fact would be related to the ease of combining this type of participatory modalities, which are not very demanding in terms of time resources, with the double presence in the work and domestic spheres. Finally, we must take into account the cultural factor related to the different political socialisation of men and women. In this regard, various studies (Pfanzelt and Spies, 2019; Sartori, Tuorto and Ghigi, 2017) point out how the lower level of self-efficacy among women influences the ways in which they participate politically. Thus, women would participate more intensely through modalities characterised by a lower degree of visibility and linked to consumer participation (Heger and Hoffman, 2021).

Having outlined the main elements that form part of the academic debate, below we will try to answer the research questions formulated in the introductory section.

3. Methodology

In order to answer the questions posed in the previous section, we designed a questionnaire aimed at finding out the socio-demographic profile and participatory experience of people who donate to political crowdfunding campaigns promoted by advocacy groups in Spain between 2012 and 2017. Once the questionnaire had been prepared, a matrix was drawn up in which all fundable campaigns promoted by various advocacy groups in the given study period were recorded. A total of two hundred and thirty-three campaigns developed on the web platforms Verkami, Totsuma and Goteo were recorded. Once the campaigns had been delimited, and with the aim of knowing the study universe, we proceeded to establish contact via email with Verkami and Goteo, the two state-wide crowdfunding web platforms. The Verkami platform rejected the possibility of collaboration from the outset, while Goteo offered the possibility of sending the questionnaire to all those who had made financial contributions to the selected campaigns. However, the Goteo web platform unilaterally ceased communication and the questionnaire could not be sent. Given the impossibility of determining the study universe and of carrying out a probabilistic and representative sample, we analysed possible ways of drawing up a non-probabilistic sample. Finally, after reviewing the page of each campaign on the Goteo web platform, we managed to collect the names and surnames of

one thousand and eight hundred fifty people who financed one of the eighty socio-political projects promoted on this portal through donations. Once the file with the one thousand and eight hundred fifty names had been configured (62.86% men and 37.14% women), the next phase was to locate the registered individuals through the social networks LinkedIn and Facebook in order to send the questionnaire. A total of three hundred and forty-five people were located on social networks. The survey was sent out between May and September 2019. The final result was a non-probabilistic purposive sample based on the object of study of this research and the objectives related to the participatory dimension. A total of one hundred and twenty-five valid and complete responses were obtained after the questionnaire was completed and sent via the Eval&Go platform (36.23% response rate).

Table 2. Study variables. Source: Own production.

Acronym	Variable
VINPRO	Links to the organisation promoting the campaign
VINORG	Links to socio-political organisations
ORGCAN	Number of socio-political organisations with which the respondents have had links
REP	Typology of the actions that make up the participatory repertoire
REPCAN	Number of actions that make up the participatory repertoire
TIEMP	Time investment in participatory activities
EDAD	Age range of participants
SEXO	Sex of participants
ESTUDIOS	Level of formal education
RENTA	Level of net annual income

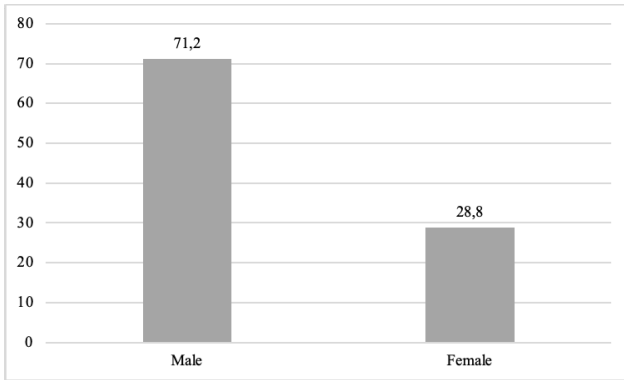
The limitations indicated in relation to the sample obtained conditioned the scope and model of analysis developed. Thus, the analysis developed will be strictly exploratory and descriptive in nature. We hope that this research will be a first step in the development of future research that will attempt to overcome the problems encountered in relation to the fieldwork. The study variables listed in Table 2 summarise the information collected in the questionnaire.

On the basis of the aforementioned variables and taking into account the limitations of the study sample, in the following section we will present the results in statistical graphs of a descriptive nature. On the basis of the information collected on the different study variables, we will discuss the implications of our findings with the specialised literature cited in the theoretical section. Finally, we will present the conclusions of the work in the form of hypotheses oriented towards their verification in future works.

4. Results

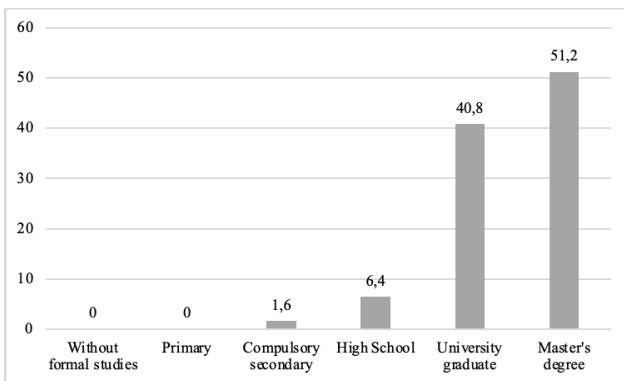
In this section we will present the results derived from the research carried out by means of the questionnaire conducted among the participants in the political crowdfunding campaigns promoted by various advocacy groups in Spain.

Figure 1. Gender. Source: Own production



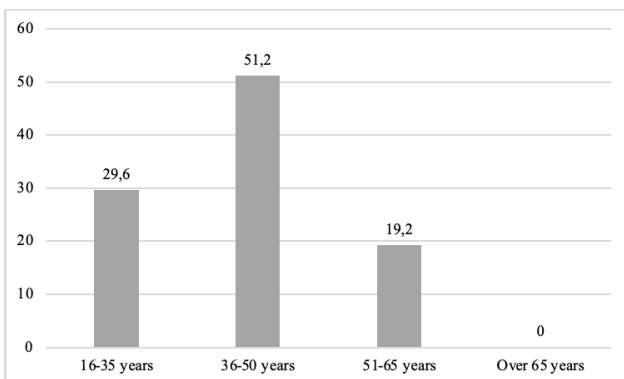
In relation to the socio-demographic profile, we can observe that most of the people who have made financial contributions to the campaigns analysed are male (71.2%). Women are under-represented (28.8%) (see Figure 1). Although in a similar sense, these figures show a more accentuated tendency than the data provided by the database elaborated for the sending of the questionnaires (62.86% men and 37.14% women).

Figure 2. Level of formal education. Source: Own production



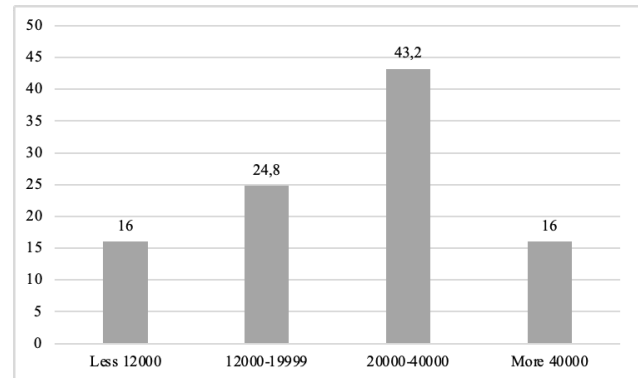
In relation to the level of formal studies, we can observe a high concentration in the undergraduate and postgraduate university categories, representing 92% between them. Next, with 6.4% of the total, are those individuals who completed baccalaureate studies. Finally, with only 1.6% of the total, there are people who have completed compulsory secondary education. As can be seen in Figure 2, there is a notable absence of people with only primary education and individuals with no formal training.

Figure 3. Age range. Source: Own production



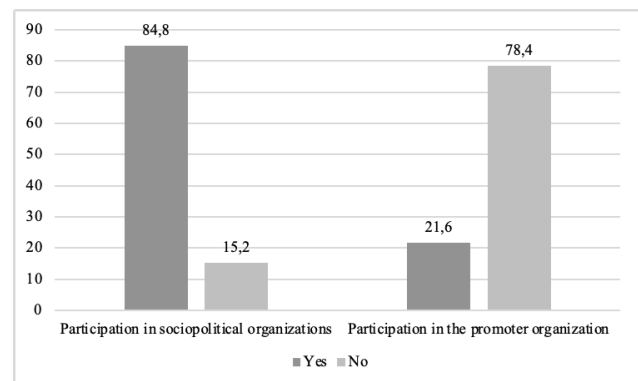
As can be seen in Figure 3, the bulk of participation in political crowdfunding projects analysed is concentrated among adults, with 51.2% in the age range from thirty-six to fifty years old. This is followed by the younger age group of participants, located in the sixteen to thirty-five age range (29.6%). We should also note the response from people over fifty years of age, with a total of 19.2%. Finally, there was a notable absence of participants over sixty-five years of age (see Figure 3).

Figure 4. Income level: Annual net income. Source: Own production



If we look at the level of net personal income received over the course of a year, we find that 43.2% of participants have an income level in the range of 20,000 to 40,000 euros. Next, we can see that 24.8% of participants claim to have earned between 12,000 and 19,999 euros in the previous year. Within the lower range, we find 16% who responded that they had obtained an income of less than 12,000 euros, close to the minimum wage in Spain. Finally, at the other end of the scale, 16% of the participants reported a net annual income of more than 40,000 euros (see Figure 4).

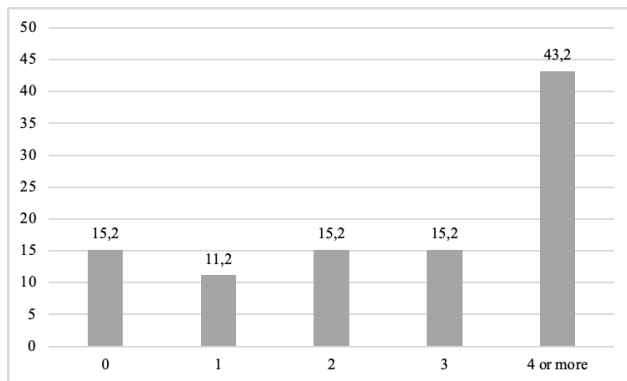
Figure 5. Links to the organisation promoting the political crowdfunding campaign (VINPRO) and links to the socio-political organisation (VINORG). Source: Own production



Note: VINPRO: affiliation to a political party, trade union, social movement, association or NGO.

As can be seen in Figure 5, most of the people who donated to the campaigns analysed come from outside the promoting organisations (78.4%). However, it should be noted that the majority of respondents (84.8%) have membership and contact with other socio-political organisations.

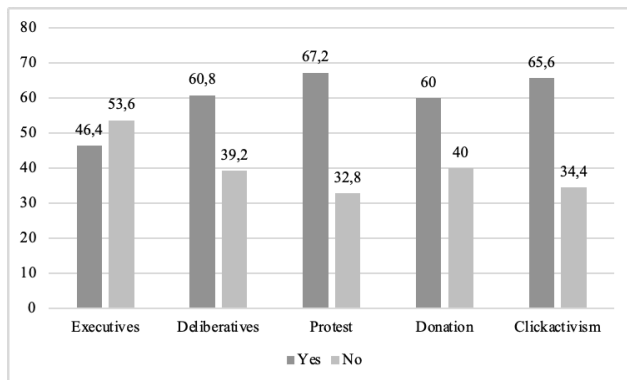
Figure 6. Number of socio-political organisations with which respondents have been associated (ORGCAN). Source: Own production



Note: ORGCAN: cumulative number of memberships in political parties, trade unions, social movements, associations or NGOs.

Figure 6 confirms the link between the people who donated to political crowdfunding campaigns and organised socio-political entities. Specifically, 43.2% claim to have been involved in four or more organisations. This figure rises to 73.6% if we take into account all those individuals who have been part of two or more socio-political organisations.

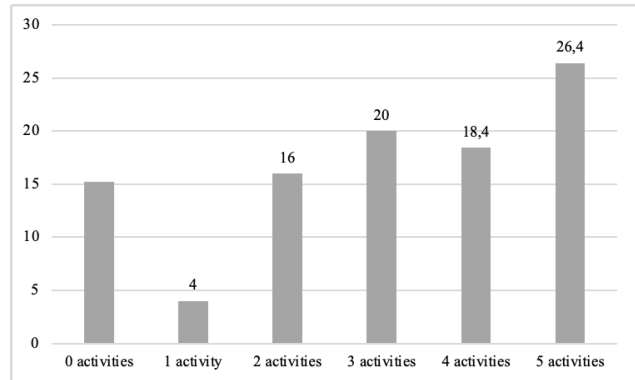
Figure 7. Typology of the actions that make up the participatory repertoire. Source: Own production



Note: Executive: leadership and management activities; Deliberative: attendance at assemblies and meetings; Protest: demonstrations; Donation: financial contributions to socio-political causes; clickactivism: dissemination of information, posters and support for political initiatives.

With regard to the participatory actions that make up the repertoire of the individuals consulted, we can see how the hegemonic activity developed appears to be related to protest and attendance at demonstrations in public spaces (67.2%). We should also highlight the high level of participation through actions involving a higher level of effort and commitment. Thus, 46.4% of the people who contributed to political crowdfunding campaigns at some point carried out leadership and management activities and 60.8% attended deliberative meetings and assemblies. Lastly, we can observe that 60% had previously made donations aimed at defending socio-political causes and 65.6% took advantage of social networks and digital channels to carry out activities related to denouncing and disseminating information in support of a socio-political cause or organisation (see Figure 7).

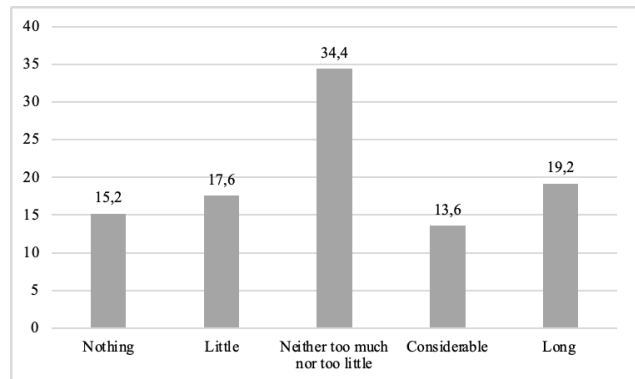
Figure 8. Number of actions that make up the participatory repertoire. Source: Own production.



Note: Cumulative number of participatory activities for each individual. Executive: leadership and management activities; Deliberative: attendance at assemblies and meetings; Protest: demonstrations; Donation: financial contributions to socio-political causes; Clickactivism: dissemination of information, posters and support for political initiatives.

If we take a closer look at the actions carried out by the people surveyed, Figure 8 shows how the majority take sides through a repertoire of a plural and composite nature. Thus, 26.4% of the people who donate to political crowdfunding campaigns have participated at some point in the five types of campaign studied. The figure rises to 80.8% if we look at those individuals who have participated in two or more political activities. Only 15.2% had participated for the first time by donating to the political crowdfunding campaigns analysed (see Figure 8).

Figure 9. Time investment in participatory activities. Note. Time investment in participatory activities measured in time per week. Source: our own production



With regard to the effort made by the individuals surveyed, measured in hours per week dedicated to participatory activities, we found that up to 84.8% of people invest time in such actions. It is worth noting that 32.8% say that they spend quite a lot or a lot of time per week on socio-political actions, while only 15.2% do not spend any time on political participation (see Figure 9).

5. Discussion

The rise of consumer participation and connective actions developed through the Internet has opened up new research questions in the last two decades. The political application of crowdfunding campaigns since 2008 presents a structure that

fits the defining characteristics of consumer and connective participation. Moreover, participation through donations in this type of campaign would fit the definition of connective action as a consequence of the flexible, selective, sporadic and time-limited nature of the relationship established between the organisations promoting the campaigns and the donors (Bennet and Segerberg, 2012). Based on this conceptual framework, in this research we have tried to address the participatory effects of participatory forms of consumption and connectives for the participatory integration of those who are distanced from political processes. In addition, we have tried to improve the level of knowledge that currently exists regarding the configuration and socio-demographic profile of the people who participate in this type of campaign.

To answer the first research question, we have used four variables to describe the socio-demographic profile of people who donate through political crowdfunding campaigns. Firstly, the results relating to the gender variable show a highly male-dominated participation (71.2% of the total). The figures presented clash with the findings of previous research which affirms the existence of greater female involvement through participatory modes of consumption and connectives (Coffé and Bolzendahl, 2010). The greater female involvement in consumption and connective participation modalities would be related to the lower costs in terms of time and privacy that characterise these types of activities (Heger and Hoffman, 2021; Pfanzelt and Spies, 2019). In any case, as we have pointed out several times, we must take the data used with caution. It remains for further research to confirm these data, which would differentiate participation through political crowdfunding campaigns from other consumer and connective actions at the gender level. Secondly, the variable relating to the level of formal education places the donors in political crowdfunding campaigns hegemonically among university graduates. Specifically, 92% of those surveyed stated that they had undergraduate or postgraduate degrees. The figures presented are consistent with the broad consensus in the academic community regarding the importance of formal education as a predictor variable for political participation beyond the modality analysed (Schlozman et al., 2010; Van Deursen et al., 2017).

Next, with regard to the age ranges of the donors interviewed, we found an absence of individuals over sixty-five years of age. On the other hand, the majority age range (51.2%) is between 36 and 50 years of age. This percentage increases to 70.4% if we consider the range of middle-aged people between thirty-six and sixty-five years of age, while the youngest age group represents 29.6%. The results presented for the age variable reflect an important coincidence with previous analyses that address the issue of forms of political participation among older age groups (Hoffmann and Lutz, 2019). However, the data do not support the thesis of the advocates of the mobilisation hypothesis (Anduiza, Cantijoch and Gallego, 2009) insofar as the hegemonic protagonists of this form of consumer and connective participation are middle-aged people. The lower participation of younger people could be related to the relevance of financial transactions in the type of participation

analysed. In any case, this possibility should be analysed in subsequent studies. Finally, with respect to the socio-demographic variables, we observe that the majority of respondents (59.2%) have an income level above the most common salary in Spain, 18,490 euros (INE, 2022). In contrast, only 16% of individuals are below the minimum wage. These data point in the same direction as the findings presented by authors such as Ritter and Solt (2019). Their studies underline the relevance of the availability of sufficient financial resources for political participation. This fact is confirmed by Gallego (2008) in relation to consumer participation, which, as we have already pointed out, involves some kind of financial transaction. Having pointed out the characteristics collected by the socio-demographic variables, we will summarise the answer to the first research question in the form of a hypothesis:

H1. The characteristics and participatory profile of the people who donate to political crowdfunding campaigns will be predominantly male, middle-aged (thirty-six to fifty years old), with a high level of formal education (university studies) and a sufficient level of income.

In order to answer the second research question, we have presented several variables aimed at finding out the experience and level of commitment of the people consulted who have previously donated to political crowdfunding campaigns. To begin with, we should point out that 78.4% of the people consulted come from outside the organisations promoting the campaigns analysed (VINPRO). However, 84.8% stated that they had participated at some point in their lives in some kind of socio-political organisation (VINORG). A first assessment of these data suggests the power of connective and consumer forms of participation to mobilise resources from outside organisations on a selective and ad hoc basis (Bennet and Segerberg, 2012). In contrast, the data show the limitation of participation through crowdfunding campaigns to attract people without militant experience and outside organised structures to political processes (15.2%). In the same vein, the results show that 43.2% of people claim to have participated in four or more socio-political organisations in their lifetime (ORGCAN).

Secondly, the results show a high percentage of individuals who at some point in their lives carried out tasks and activities that involve a significant consumption of resources in terms of time, such as the development of executive (46.4%) or deliberative (60.8%) actions in socio-political organisations (REPs). In relation to the five participatory modalities analysed, 26.4% stated that they had been involved in all five. This figure rises to 64.8% if we take into account those who claim to have participated in three or more. The data on weekly time spent on participatory activities also show a majority profile that is clearly activist and participatory in nature. The information presented coincides with the hypotheses of the reinforcement hypothesis. Thus, the activist and multi-activist profile (Van Laer, 2010) of the respondents who donated to the political crowdfunding campaigns analysed would point to the potential for increased participation of experienced and previously participatory individuals. Therefore, consumer and connective forms of participation

could be generating an increase in asymmetries between participatory and non-participatory individuals (Norris, 2001; Van Deursen et al., 2017). Along the same lines, and as we have already observed in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, the profile of the individuals analysed would be in line with the prototypical characteristics of participative people, except for the exclusion of older people. In summary, the hypothesis for the answer to the second research question would be as follows:

H2. People who participate through donations in political crowdfunding campaigns have significant levels of prior political experience and engagement. Thus, this type of participation would increase inequalities in the degree of participation between activists and non-activists.

6. Limitations of the research

The sample size derived from the difficulties encountered in determining the study universe and in sending out the questionnaire has conditioned the scope of this research. Among the possible biases derived from the aforementioned limitations, we found a significant imbalance in the sex variable. Although in the first (62.86% men and 37.14% women) and second phase (71.20% men and 28.80% women) of the research we observed a greater number of men than women, these data contradict the findings of various studies published to date and noted in the discussion section. In this sense, the results of the present research should be viewed with caution. The explanation could be related to gender-related cultural issues. Specifically, with the lower public exposure of women in the digital environment. In this way, anonymous participation may have been associated to a greater extent with women. This fact may have conditioned the configuration of the sample since the first phase.

In the same way, the bias derived from the aversion to public exposure may have conditioned the results of the second part of the study. The super-activist profile deduced from the data analysed may be related to the fact that people characterised by a higher level of experience and political commitment may have a lower level of aversion to public exposure. This fact may have conditioned the annotation of the one thousand and eight hundred and fifty names registered on the Goteo website.

7. Authorship contribution statement

Bruno González-Cacheda: Conceptualization, Methodology, Research, Writing, original draft, Writing – revision and editing.

Celso Cancela Outeda: Project management, Resources, Supervision, Acquisition of funds, Writing – revision and editing.

8. Data availability

González-Cacheda, Bruno, y Cancela Outeda, Celso. (2023). An approach to the effects and characteristics of political participation through donations in political crowdfunding campaigns in

Spain, Zenodo [Data set]. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8307880>

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