

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AMONG YOUTH IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Social media use enables communication between people in different parts of the world. The current study investigates the effects of social media on the political mobilization in terms of youth and heightened political awareness. Social media's development has altered how politics are communicated. Nowadays, like, publishing, commenting, and sharing political content online as well as following politicians on Facebook and Twitter have all become increasingly popular ways to engage in political activity. The purpose of this study was to examine how social media has contributed to Pakistan's democracy using 300 respondents of equally male and female students from university of Narowal. The sampling technique of purposive and convenience sampling is used to collect the data while using questionnaire as research tool. The study's main goals were to examine how young people use social media in order to promote political mobilization and to assess how social media affects young people's political awareness in Pakistan. Whereas the uses and gratification theory is applied in current study. People actively engage in media consumption and connect with communication tools by building profiles and organizing activities that are similar. Therefore many researchers have worked on these topics. Additionally, it is clear from research results that young use of social media is promoting democratization and political participation in Pakistan.

Keywords: *Social Media, Political Mobilization, Political participation, Pakistani Youth.*

INTRODUCTION

Social media;

The term "social media" involves a variety of online platforms which facilitate communication and allow users to actively participate in the universe, sharing, and exchange of knowledge and ideas within online communities and networks. Users can use it as a flexible medium to connect, communicate, and work with others online.

A system for gathering computer-based communications and exchange tools based on people's dispersed encounters and thoughts is another way to define social media. Currently, a few examples include Facebook, Twitter, Interest, and LinkedIn. These platforms let their users share, discuss, and express their views, ideas pictures, and videos with their loved ones. Social media primarily serves as a forum for people to express their thoughts, learn more, and engage in discussions. Users of social media also have more freedom to communicate.

Social media plays an impactful role in the 2013 & 2018 General Elections in Pakistan. All major parties had started physical election campaigns by addressing people in jalsas and they were campaigning mostly on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as well as other social media sites. Social networking is now a necessary tool for maintaining relationships with friends and family. Not only does it serve as a means to maintain personal relationships, but it also plays a significant role in professional networking and job hunting for some individuals. Moreover, social media facilitates communication with like-minded people, allowing them to share common interests and express their ideas freely. Thanks to the widespread adoption of social media and technology, the boundaries between individuals and cultures seem to shrink, making the world feel more

interconnected than ever before. As a result, it can be challenging to imagine a life without the pervasive influence of social media.

Impact of social media:

Social networks have grown to be important forums for young people, providing chances for political participation and the exploration of viewpoints that go beyond their financial means the level of political conversation among young people will determine how social networks affect political participation. Interestingly, even individuals with limited literacy can easily access social media tools and programs, revolutionizing the way people interact socially.

Social media dramatically contributes to the development and maintenance of government sustainability and accountability (Ward, 2002). Viewers may access and evaluate the platforms used by political parties to promote their views during elections, and it provides a crucial venue for political parties to do so. Media is considered the fourth revolution in the modern world. (Wasserman, 2007) It provides a platform for candidates to convey their messages to the public and facilitates direct communication between the interested parties and a wide audience. In elections, print and broadcast media play a dominant role, becoming the primary means of reaching the electorate (Van, 2007). The most important impact of social media is that everyone can talk, share and connect and make healthy conversation with each other's. Social media is only platform which work as bridge to fulfill the communication gap worldwide. We can share our opinion safely. Social media is commonly used by 85% worldwide. Statistics shows that 5.27 billion mobile phone users in the world. India also ranked as second number of social media users with 755.47 million, but the United States uses social media very rare as compare to other countries. Youth utilizing social media has been rising quickly. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others have become more and more popular. Other parties are also competing for voters on this potent platform by employing social media, such as the PML-N, PPP, Jamat-e-Islamic (JI), and MQM, among others. As the political landscape unfolds, PTI takes the lead in effectively harnessing the power of social media for political purposes, positioning them ahead of PML-N in this race. PTI Chairman, Mr. Imran Khan, stands as the most popular politician in the country, boasting an unprecedented number of followers on Facebook and Twitter. Because to the party's skillful use of social media platforms, political activists have a great way to get in touch with the party and its leadership, as highlighted in the study by (Ghannam 2011.) PTI has advanced to the forefront of national political engagement as a result of its strategic advantage in utilizing social media.

Election and Political Awareness

In the legislative period (1947-1958), Pakistan did not conduct any national elections directly. On the other hand, there were four direct provincial elections: in 1951 for the NWFP and Punjab, in 1953 for Sindh, and in 1954 for East Bengal. Periodically, these provincial elections would take place. For the first time, direct elections were held to fill 197 seats in the Punjab Provincial Assembly from March 10 to March 20, 1951. The election had a total of 939 people running for 189 seats, leaving the other seats vacant. The election campaign saw participation from seven political parties. A million or more adults were eligible to vote under the adult franchise system. Despite this, only 30% of the registered voters actually cast ballots, resulting in a lower area of Punjab.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH:

- To analyze the differences in social media usage depending on demographic characteristics.
- To examine the social media activity of young people.
- To learn more about the goals of using social media.
- To determine the extent to which social media is facilitating political awareness and mobilization.
- To determine whether social media is effectively influencing the political beliefs of young people.

Research Question:

RQ1: What role do social media play for the dissemination of political news and information?

RQ2: What role do social media play in political debate and exchange within young voters?

RQ3: What type of political issues youngsters share with each other through social media?

RQ4: Does social media Support the recruitment and mobilization of youngsters in political movements?

RQ5: Does the youth consume Social Media for getting political information, opinion building, and participation in political activity

LITERATURE REVIEW

Innovation is constantly changing people's behaviors, which has an impact on society. The concept of all powerful media effects originated with the development of radio and was promoted by the "magic bullet" theory. Later, television impacted the consumer habits, and the landscape as a whole has now been drastically changed by the internet. The primary benefit of online communication for global communities, according to (Bennett, 2003), is that it overcomes physical boundaries. Social media extends the scope of collective action by bringing together people who are geographically separated and kilometers apart. This indicates that social media, compared to traditional media, gives citizens more motivation to respond to social structures and institutions.

It has also been investigated how social media use and political engagement are related. Recent studies looked at how people utilize social and digital media in larger cities, as well as in other socioeconomic spheres like politics, health, and education; however the bulk of the studies have not taken those with limited opportunities into account. Furthermore my research focuses on Pakistani youth to analyze how they use social media across all aspects of politics. Social media created new political participation trends and altered political communication patterns (Juris, J. 2004)

According to Kugelman (2012): To report news that hasn't been covered through traditional media;
To mobilize people for outgoing and other campaigns;

To highlight and coordinate the social aspects of issues and problems;

Social media is primarily used for interacting with others therefore the role depends on how it is used. By providing simple ways to plan events, give to charities, and gather information, it may be assumed that the internet is having an impact on politics (Murray, 2005).

Abbey(2021) looked into how social media users' offline and online political participation was impacted by the Internet. He has investigated how the Internet affects how people view politics. In a recent analysis titled Digital Statistical Indicators 2018, another digital marketing company calculates that 44.6 million out of 198.9 million people, or 22% of the population, use the Internet. Only 35 million of them, or 18% of the population, regularly use social media. There are 109.5 million mobile users worldwide, and 32 million (or 16% of all users) regularly utilize their mobile devices to access the Internet and social media. In both urban and rural settings, youth predominate.

During Pakistan's 2013 elections, social media was utilized for the very first time. PTI, PMLN, PPP, and MQM all observed political campaigns using social media. According to Ahmed & Skoric (2014), PTI frequently updated the election campaign on Twitter. Ahmed and Skoric study the 2013 elections from the standpoint of the election campaign in their book "My Name Is Khan: The Use of Twitter in the Campaign for the 2013 Pakistan General Election," and they assert that Twitter is employed as a crucial tool for communication. According to them, the usage of social media, particularly Twitter, was unmatched in the history of elections. This indicates that this platform gives voters, especially young people, the chance to first educate themselves on news before expressing their ideas by posting a status or a video. They can utilize this to learn more about politics and evaluate the data that users on social media are sharing about certain news items. All of this has an impact on their political participation (Amjad, A. (2012). Students actively engage in political debates, express their ideas, and study politics on social media. According to Marcheiva (2008), who noted that this platform aids in comprehending politics, Facebook offers a space for debating themes. Young people have responded by using social media to learn more about politics and government because social media has a big impact on political engagement (Ahmad, Alvi, & Ittefaq, 2019). Ceron, 2017 also discussed the favorable relationship in this regard between internet use and political participation.

Influence on Political Awareness

Facebook and blogs are influencing how young Pakistanis view politics. These forums expose people to political discussions and content who might not otherwise be interested in politics. Facebook Groups as Protest Platforms: Facebook groups have become significant platforms for political activism and protests in Pakistan. For instance, the group 'Go Musharraf Go!!!' was created to voice opposition against the then-President Pervez Musharraf.

The international Pakistani community used online petitions to mobilize support for a range of concerns. One such petition, which called for the restoration of the constitution, attracted close to 16,000 signatures and featured photographs of protesters as well as links to protest blogs are widely available now, which has had a significant impact on Pakistan's information environment. According to the data provided (in 2008), there were 80,301,327 mobile phone customers in the nation.

We Oppose Emergency, a Facebook protest group with 14,085 members as of March 23, 2008, was the most well-known at the time in Pakistan. These developments show how digital media and technology have given people and communities in Pakistan the ability to express their political opinions, plan rallies, and rally support for a range of causes. This new era of political engagement among the youth and wider people has been greatly influenced by the accessibility and widespread use of mobile phones and internet access (Eijaz, 2013).

The public's participation in conventional democratic engagement activities, such as voting, joining political parties, and joining labor unions, has declined in many industrialized countries. However, the ramifications of this propensity remain debatable. Some individuals express profound apprehensions about these changes, viewing them as a serious threat to democratic institutions (Putnam, 2000). On the other hand, there is a more optimistic perspective that asserts democracy is changing because people are migrating outside of traditional political institutions in search of fresh and innovative ways to express their political views and achieve their social and political goals Norris (2002) and Dalton (2008).

Youth political engagement is increasingly being driven by social media. In Pakistan, providing them with significant freedom to fulfill their social needs through various channels. However, Social media's effects can be both positive and bad depending on its usage. In countries like Egypt, Japan, and Canada, social networks have demonstrated the potential to increase political engagement and mobilization (Ikeda & Richey, 2005; Lee, 2006; Attia et al. (2011) and Conroy et al. (2012), among others). Even in Moldova's 2009 election, Twitter had a substantial impact on public opinion (Hodge, 2010). Campaigners and demonstrators have benefited greatly from platforms like Facebook, Twitter, text messaging, and Live Journal, which encourage support, connectivity, and information sharing (Hodge, 2010). The uprisings that took place in Yemen, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Egypt, and Bahrain were also significantly influenced by these social media platforms (Attia & Friedman, 2012). Political parties play a vital role in mobilizing voters to support shared interests, concerns, and goals, serving as the link between citizens and the government in numerous countries (Mohammad, 2016). They are crucial in establishing political agendas, choosing candidates, managing election campaigns, and monitoring the work of elected officials, providing citizens a say in the affairs of their nation. According to Karamat and Farooq (2020). Developed countries like the United Kingdom are where social media predominantly has a positive impact. The United States, Italy, Australia, Finland, and others. Popular sites that act as gatekeeper free outlets and aid in political mobilization include Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube, among others. A powerful tool in various well-known political revolutions around the world, social media has been. The Iraqi anti-war movement is highlighted by Court Right (2007) as an illustration of how social media was essential in bringing about change.

The mobilization of the Arab Spring in Egypt and Tunisia provided compelling proof of social media's essential role as an essential tool for public involvement. During the January and February 2011 uprising, Egyptian activists made great use of websites like Twitter and Facebook to raise public awareness and encourage effective mobilization. Similar to this, political parties and leaders in Pakistan are conscious of the importance of social media for interacting with the public, particularly the rapidly growing number of young people who do so. Major parties such as PTI, PPP,



and PML-N actively Utilize social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Skype, and others to organize people and get them involved in politics (Lee,2006)

The US presidential election of 2008 is seen in this perspective as the first election in which political candidates used social media. The success of US President Barack Obama is widely credited to the use of new media to inspire teenage voters. In the US presidential elections of 2012, social media acted as a forum for political engagement once more, and President Obama once more engaged the youth to support his campaign. Most politicians use social media as the foundation of their campaign strategies, modeling their usage of the platform after that of President Barack Obama, and now that they have a strong track record, they view Facebook and Twitter as crucial tools in their arsenal.

Social media and youth in politics:

During elections and other political events, political parties frequently organize rallies and processions in Pakistan. Politicians also speak to audiences in person or on television. These gatherings and processions have as their main objective educating and encouraging people to join the political party by educating them about the party's principles and tactics.

Young people in Pakistan frequently use social media for political mobilization. They have a lot of freedom since people can get their wants met through these social media outlets. Socialization is social media's primary goal, but how it is used can have a beneficial or harmful impact. Additionally, social networks have a direct impact on interpersonal interactions in both social life and politics. Over 100 million people in Pakistan use mobile phones, while 29 million people utilize the internet. Over 14 million individuals are thought to be utilizing mobile Internet (Qadeer, 2016). Users of social media who have access to the Internet are active on them frequently. The majority of internet users (i.e., 92%) regularly use social media, according to a Gallup Pakistan survey. Male customers outnumber female consumers in Pakistan because it is a society predominately ruled by men (Gallup, 2016). It's important to keep in mind that Pakistan is one of the nations with a significant population of young people worldwide. Youth between the ages of 18 and 24 represent about 62 percent of the population of the nation (Awan, 2013). Most young individuals regularly use social media, especially those who live in cities.

Social media platforms primarily serve the aims of social connection and political dialogue. Additionally, it is employed in social interaction, politics, and online shopping. Due to the growth of new media, young people in Pakistan are apparently now able to publicly express their opinions on a range of social and political topics. The nation's political parties used their official websites as well as YouTube to some extent to present their platforms and other materials during the general elections in 2008, but current political use of new media in Pakistan has been relatively modest. Compared to earlier times, youth are substantially more connected and engaged. (Riaz, 2010).

Young people in Pakistan have participated in political learning groups utilizing online social media accounts. It is crucial to remember that if political parties and organizations in Pakistan and Indonesia wish to improve society and the political system, they must update their party agendas to incorporate youth. Young people now have a platform to take part in political activities because to social media's dynamic features.

Hypotheses of the study

H1: Whether Social media use increase among youths' political efficacy or not.

H2: Whether social media play effective role to changing political behavior in elections.

H3: Whether Young people actively and purposefully use social media to find out political news.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratification theory

Three hypotheses have been used in the study to structure it in a methodical approach. A concept called "uses & gratification" is applied in media studies to help discover people's mental demands and satisfy them (Blumberg & Katz, 1974; Blumberg, 1979). According to this hypothesis, people choose the media that would best serve their requirements while also providing them with all the

information they need. However, in the age of digital technology, young people are more inclined to use particular new media platforms to increase their political awareness, which in turn encourages them to participate in politics. The goal of this work is to examine how social media might help young people become politically aware and interested in participating in politics.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1994), Researchers first started to wonder why audiences engaged in particular media activities like reading newspapers or listening to the radio in the 1940s, which led to the development of Uses & Gratification. Others, however, countered that U&G's perspective originated with Schramm's idea of media gratifications, which made a distinction between immediate reward and delayed pleasure. Most early U&G studies were descriptive and persisted with categorizing the audience into different groups.

The theory is applicable for the study since it will examine how social media is used to mobilize political opinion. It has been encouraging to see young people using social media and getting involved in politics. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, and others are more popular in today's world. In order to understand how and why individuals use the Internet and its interactive applications, such as e-mail, bulletin boards, social network browsing, chat rooms, and use of online media, several academics have utilized and argued for the uses and gratification method. Studies that have looked into why people use political blogs and information from social media have shown that there are various strong reasons to do so, including political surveillance and guidance, information seeking and convenience, social utility, and amusement. Further investigation into the variables that predicted the various reasons people had for accessing political blogs revealed that political efficacy, political involvement, and the degree of party allegiance were highly significant predictors of reasons People used social media to access political blogs and other online sources of information.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the term "method" refers to the research technique employed to gather data or the logical sequence of steps followed in implementing the research plan. It also encompasses the philosophy of the research process, which includes the underlying assumptions, values, and criteria guiding the scientific collection and interpretation of data, ultimately leading to drawing meaningful inferences (Baily, 1982).

Research approach

A quantitative research methodology is used for this investigation. In quantitative research, the purpose and conclusion are determined by collecting and analyzing numerical data in order to produce statistical results. The study will use a quantitative research approach to gather and examine information about young people's use of social media and political engagement in Pakistan.

Survey method:

Given the purpose of the study, Survey research is a well-established approach in the social sciences, and it involves systematically collecting data from a diverse group of individuals, organizations, or relevant units of interest. By employing the survey research method, the study sought to gain insights into how the way young people consume political media content affects their voting habits. The survey examined how actively engaged young people in Pakistan were on social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, among others.

Population

"A population is a comprehensive and well-defined group (a universal set) of the elements pertinent to a given research question or hypothesis," claims Smith (2000).

The universe in this study refers to the male and female of Narowal City, which is the designation for the broad general group of numerous examples from which a researcher draws a sample and which is typically presented in theoretical terms

Sample Size

Due to restrictions and limited resources, the district's big population made it impossible for the researcher to gather data from them. Total 300 respondents were selected from university of

Narowal and along the surrounding colleges who were the users of social Media. These respondents were having different demographics and psychographics. An equal proportion of respondents were selected for the study having 150 males and 150 females. These responders are all current graduate, masters, and MPhil students.

Sampling Method\ Technique

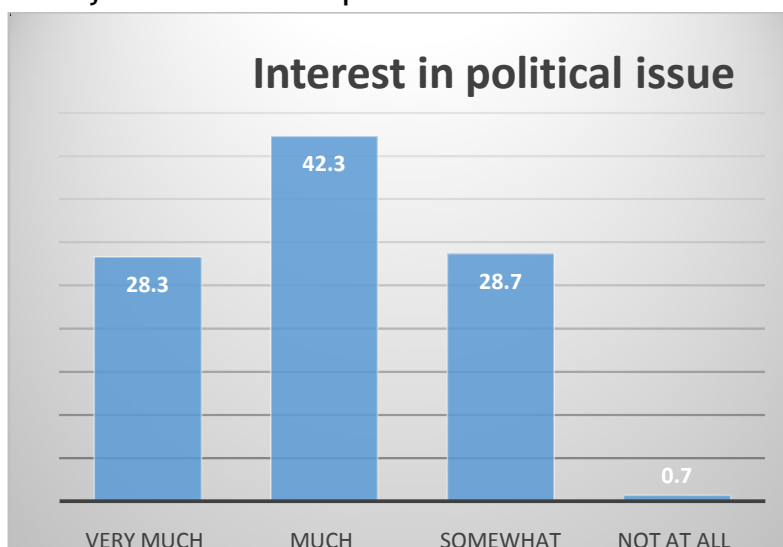
An intentional sampling strategy that is focused on persuasion is utilized to classify respondent groupings (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). A convenient sample that is easy to get and is selected with a specific purpose. To gather information for this study's research aims, the researcher used a straightforward random sampling. Convenience sampling is another method used by researchers to choose respondents based on their availability and accessibility.

Data Collection and Reduction

After the respondent's demographics were specified, a convenient and purposeful method of data collecting was recommended. All respondents were approached directly via a face-to-face procedure. Following this process, questionnaires were given to 300 responders, who were then interviewed. To make the data more comprehensible, the frequency and percentage is displayed in the form of visuals and tables and graphs along with an explanation and interpret data of graphs according to questionnaire.

Results and Analysis

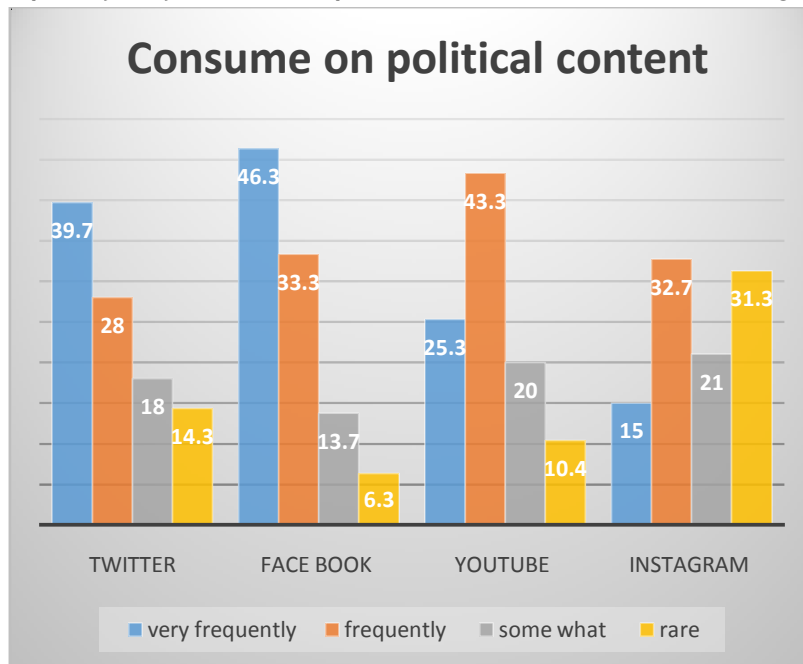
Figure:1 How much do you take interest in political issues of national concern?



They were encouraged to share their personal experiences in order to communicate their views and interests on political issues. The findings showed that of those surveyed, 28.3% had a great interest in politics, 42.3% had a must-have interest, 28.7% had a slightly interest but only contributed their time as a means of getting by, and 0.7% had no interest in politics at all. Regarding age, respondents (18 to 24) are more interested in political topics than respondents (24 to 28).

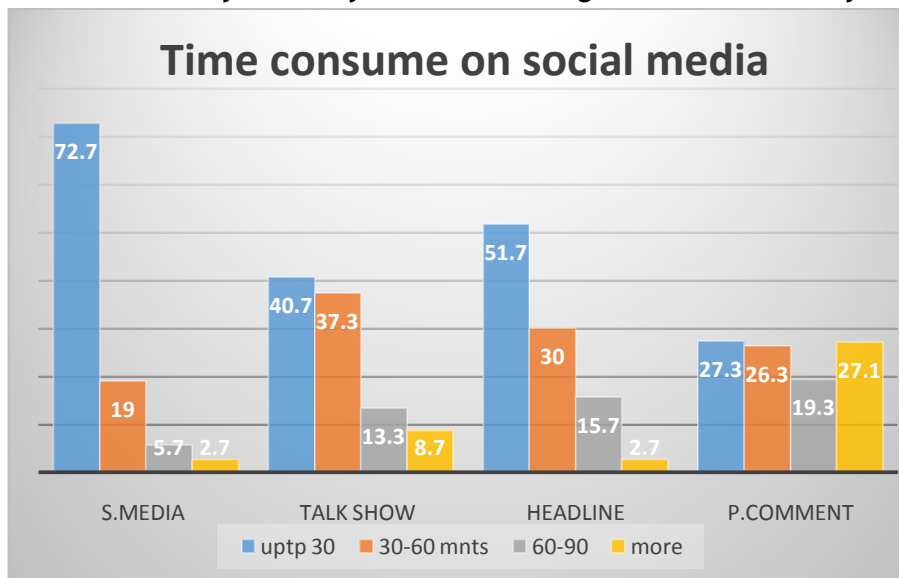


Figure:2 How frequently do you consume political contents from the following sources?



According to the findings, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter were the most popular sources of political information for respondents (46.3%, 43.3%, and 39.7%, respectively), while Instagram provided political content for the remaining 31.3%. rarely as compared to other social media tool which are higher used by youngsters.

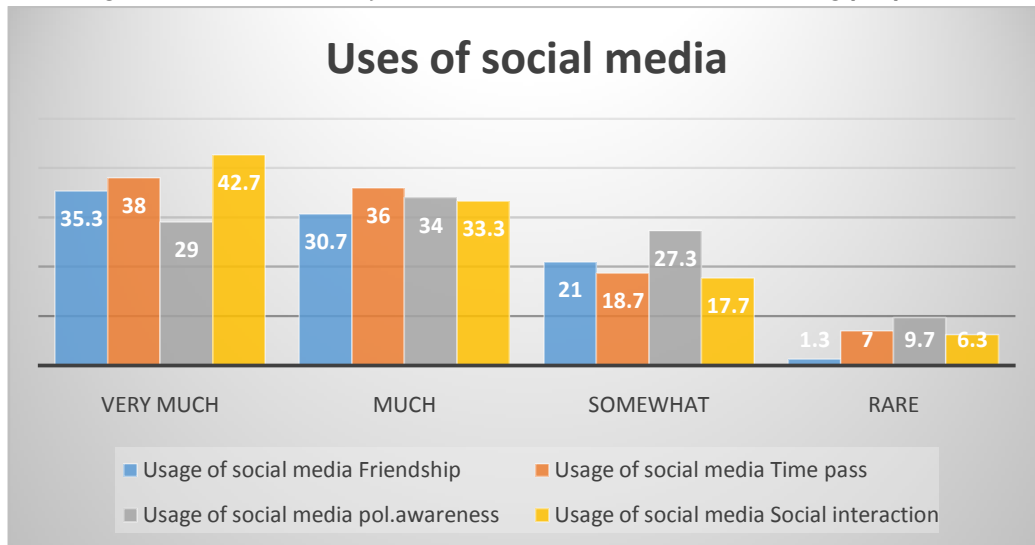
Figure:3 How much time do you usually consume on using social media in a day?



Correspondents are asked about their time consumptions on social media by using different sites as well as priorities sites where they preferably have choices. Finding shows that 72.7% correspondents use their time on social media, 51.7 % correspondents on listening and watching headlines, 40.7% respondents used social media to watching talk shows and rest 27.3% respondent’s debate within a peer group on public comments. While correspondents consuming up to 30 minutes on social media , 30-60 minutes consuming on talk shows and 60-90 minutes consumed on public comments and debate in a peer groups to support your favorites. Overall finding shows that 18-24 correspondents consumed majority time on social media.

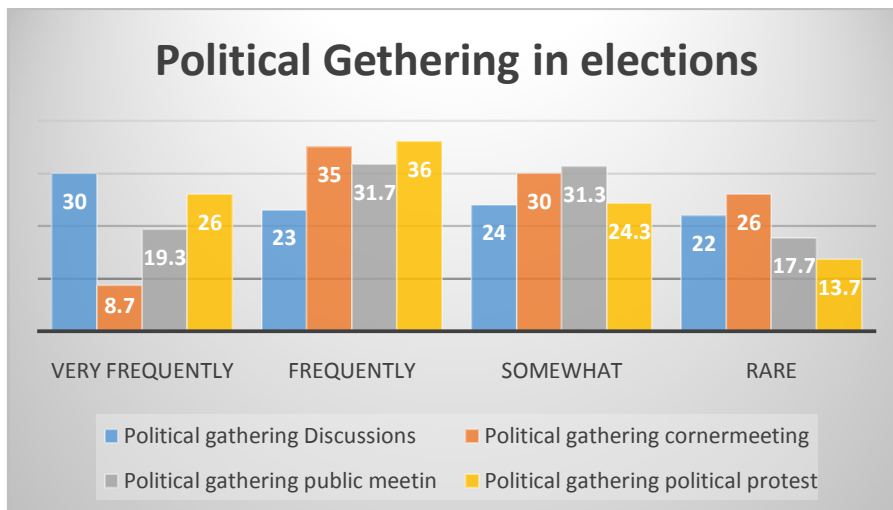


Figure:4 How much do you use the social media for following purposes?



The results show that virtually everyone uses social media to learn new things and keep up with current events in their own country and around the world. Facebook is the most popular social network, with 42.7% of users regularly connecting to the site for social interaction. 35.3% Youth use social media for friendship very much, 38% for Time pass while 34% youth use to update yourself politically and remaining 42.7% youth actively using social media platform for social interaction purpose as this is a very fast and comparatively low cost tool to interact with others.

Figure:5 How frequently did you attend the following political gatherings during previous elections?



Findings reveal that 36% of respondents frequently use social media and engage in political behavior to improve voting rates and strengthen and transparent electoral systems while also valuing and motivating voters. Correspondents very frequently 30% gained political information through political gathering discussions, 35% to join and consume their time in corner meeting while 31.7% correspondent attaining the information through public meeting and rest 36% gained political gathering through political protest frequently.

Figure:6 Which of the following can play more effective role in making your political behavior in



the upcoming elections?

According to Figure 5.11, educated youth in our community engage in political discourse on a variety of social media platforms. When surveyed, the majority of respondents (61% of the total) believed that Facebook is utilized widely. The majority of people are dependent on social media instead of print media, and when talking about social media sites, Facebook play a crucial role to update the correspondents relating to political contents. Very much, 44% used twitter at much scale and discussing the political issues on twitter at large, while 43% agreed with You Tube to gain to political information, and 34.3% of the rest are used Instagram at much scale.

CONCLUSION

A number of societal and political facets are being greatly impacted by new technology, particularly the Internet. Social scientists now face the need to revise previous explanations of attitudes and behaviors and adapt classic beliefs as a result of this new challenge. The study's main research questions and current debates on social media's impact and use in politics were acknowledged by the researcher. However, because the transformation of political phenomena as a result of new technology is a recent process, researchers might try to identify regions where there seems to be a relative consensus, areas where the conversation is definitely open, and other areas that demand attention.

The research initiative aims to investigate how social media affects young people and students and how it affects how much they participate in politics. According to research, there is a correlation between political engagement and social media usage. In other words, students who use social media more regularly are more likely to utilize it to promote political agendas. Students that frequently participate in political activity on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and other social media platforms are more active in political activities both online and offline.

This study took into account the theories of uses and satisfaction, media richness, and social involvement. Youth utilize social media to learn about politics, the voting process, political parties, and leaders in the presence of uses and pleasure. Additionally, youth have more political beliefs, opinions, and decision-making power as a result of using social media. Social media use encourages youth political engagement by giving them the chance to share, like, and comment on political content. Youth also receive a wealth of knowledge on Pakistan's political system from social media, according to the media richness theory. Youth engage with other social media users for more political updates, according to the social engagement theory. Young people participate in political discussions

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