Exploring the Relationship between Social Media Use and Voting Decision

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Abstract

As the twenty-first century begins, traditional media has evolved into digital media. With the development of social media, this transformation underwent a significant change recently. The largest platform for users to intentionally express their thoughts in both positive and negative ways is currently social media. 4.75 billion social media users, or more than 70% of all users, view them for political reasons, according to the cited literature. The current study aims to examine users' use of social media and determine how it affects their choice of political parties when casting their votes. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan was chosen as the universe for the survey population and the primary source of data collection based on two research hypotheses. According to statistics, 56.8% of the sample used social media to read about politics, and 78% of shifts in how people view political parties were made public on social media.

Keywords: *Social-Media, User Engagement, Voting Decisions, Perception.*

Introduction

The world, communication styles, interpersonal interactions, and public opinion have all undergone a significant revolution thanks to information and communication technologies. Numerous studies on social media's effects have been done by scholars in political science, media and communication, and international relations (Golan, Arceneaux, & Soule, 2019). The studies showed that social media, particularly the internet, encouraged young people to participate in political activities both online and offline. Their voting and communication behaviors are also altered. Traditional media, on the other hand, had a small audience.

As a result of the innovative culture that the new media era brought to journalism practices, social media are now a significant component of the media landscape. In order to compete in the new media environment, mainstream media organizations have changed their communication strategies as a result of innovative media culture. In addition, they have altered their delivery

networks (Chadwick, Wesson, & Fullwood 2019). These modifications in media usage have an impact on how political parties and the government operate.

Patterns of Social Media Use in Pakistan
Social media is used more in countries with transitional democracies because they see it as the only forum for discussing political issues and events. As a result, there is an increase in political participation, which is good for society overall. The subjects discussed on social media also have an immediate impact (Halpern, 2017). Political perceptions can be changed through social media, according to Ida, Saud, and Mashud (2020).

Socializing people in an online setting is the goal of social media. Through interpersonal communication, primarily chat, it enables users to compile a follower list of their choosing. The majority of social media and networking site users are young people. The most popular networking sites they use to gather information and pass their free time are Facebook and Twitter. Scholars claim that social media has a significant impact on society (Goodyear, Armour & Wood 2018). In the case of Pakistan, social media significantly aided citizens in learning more about the current situation than they could have through traditional media. Due to organizational policies, it is not possible to publish or broadcast journalists' news via social networking sites after the editor sent it back. A few studies on social media have shown that it has made people more aware of various issues. Political communication is thought to be effective on social media. Social media helped the general public learn more, but it also made it easier for politicians to communicate with current and potential voters directly (Saud, Mashud & Ida 2020).

Political parties in Pakistan make the best use of social media because they have active accounts and the most effective teams for disseminating information to influence voters. In contrast, developing nations frequently have a large internet presence. According to the study's findings (Farooq, Karamat, and Chaman, 2016), social networking sites have a significant influence on Pakistan's youth. On the other hand, the pattern has spread to young people who engage in politics through social media and feel empowered by expressing their views on the matter at hand.

With over 300 million mobile users, Indonesia is the largest Muslim nation in the world and the biggest user of social media. Through a single message, it is simple for them to interact with users on social media directly. Indonesia allows young people to access the internet and take part in online political activities on purpose. Through the sharing of political content on social networking sites, social media has significantly altered the political behavior of Pakistani youth (Wikipedia, 2020). Through the sharing of political content on social networking sites, social media has significantly changed how Pakistani youth behave politically (Wikipedia, 2020). The hashtag also significantly contributes to enhancing the activity when the public is interested in learning more from social media accounts (Suwana, 2018).

Public and political interest in digital media activism is growing in Pakistan. Digital activism is defined as actions taken (campaign or movement) online to advance a particular cause, including social and political dialogue. Both the political parties and the electorate are divided in Pakistan. So, in order to influence and win over voters through social networking sites, political parties

hired social media experts. According to Ida, Saud, and Mashud (2017), Pakistan's current government was elected with a sizable margin in part due to a successful social media campaign.

After Egypt's uprising, Internet public mobilization became more popular. Politics in Pakistan have changed as a result of the news media's influence on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and even WhatsApp. Political discussions are currently most frequently held in WhatsApp groups in Pakistan. Additionally, social media and the Internet encourage people to organize and take part in group actions like rallies. The impact of social media on Twitter's situation has been enormous. Tweets have helped mobilize millions of people for the Iranian and Middle Eastern revolutions (Jenaibi, 2016). Twitter, which is regarded as the most genuine social networking site, changed the political discourses, where journalists and political leaders communicate information. Twitter is now used to distribute news (Jenaibi, 2016). Compared to other sites like Twitter and YouTube, Facebook is the social networking site that young people use the most frequently in Pakistan. According to the study, Pakistan has the second-highest youth population after Yemen, which has significantly influenced Pakistani politics (Ittefaq & Iqbal, 2018). Political parties in Pakistan have been actively utilizing social networking sites since 2008 to increase voter turnout (Eijaz, 2013).

Pakistan is a developing nation, so its internet penetration is lower than that of other Asian nations, though it is growing quickly (Ittefaq & Iqbal, 2018). The majority of the times, people use the Internet for entertainment, political participation, and health-related information. Discussing a variety of issues affecting society in general and the community in particular on social media is possible. Voter turnout is impacted by social media coverage even when there aren't general elections taking place in a nation. Utilization statistics for social media Twitter has 192 million users worldwide, whereas more than 2.85 billion people use Facebook. According to Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2012), social media usage patterns have undergone a significant change and have grown significantly. 4.75 billion People use the Internet specifically worldwide. When the country is preparing for general elections, social media coverage affects election participation and aids in increasing voter turnout.

Statistical Facts about the use of Social Media

While 192 million people use Twitter globally, more than 2.85 billion people use Facebook (Backlinko, 2020). According to Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, social media usage patterns have fundamentally changed, and the volume has significantly increased. While Pakistan has 76.38 million internet subscribers, 4.75 billion Internet users around the world use social media for political purposes and for entertainment (PTA, 2019). When these figures are compared to India, a neighboring country, 40% of the population uses the internet frequently (Brian Dean).

Twitter as a Source of Political engagement

The primary focus of the study is on Twitter and Facebook. Here are a few facts about these two networking sites:

When Keith Urban, the former Pentagon chief under the Bush administration, tweeted on May 2, 2011, "So I am told by a trustworthy person they have killed Osama Bin Laden," Twitter became a part of global politics. President Barack Obama addressed the nation two hours after the mainstream traditional media in America confirmed his claim. Twitter was not used for political communication prior to this incident (Russell, 2020). Following this incident, Twitter significantly influenced world politics.

Compared to other social networking sites, Twitter is a professional platform for political communication. The development of the internet changed political communication tactics and strategies in the middle of the 1990s. Social networking sites like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have recently introduced new tools for interactive communication and information sharing. These social networking sites become more significant during elections. Twitter is regarded as a reliable platform for information exchange. The first political communication technique was used on Twitter in the 2008 American election campaign, which was launched in 2006. Barack Obama, the country's first politician, ran an election campaign on Twitter (Stier, Bleier, Lietz, & Strohmaier, 2018).

Thus, it suggests that Twitter has established itself as a trusted intermediary between citizens or social media users and political party leaders. The most popular social media platform for influencing followers during political activities like election campaigning is Twitter. In this mode, Twitter has 200 million users and receives millions of daily visitors. Today, Twitter has evolved

into a platform where users can express their opinions and ideas, brands and famous people can advertise their goods, and journalists and news channels can publish headlines and breaking news in real time. Voters have been engaged by creative content in a number of recent and historical political campaign launches on social media platforms (Haber, 2011). Review of the Literature on Social Media Logic From content creation to content consumption, the Internet has merged a variety of media. According to Ahmed, Scho, and Jaidka (2017), the Internet is run by an adversarial logic rather than a single logic.
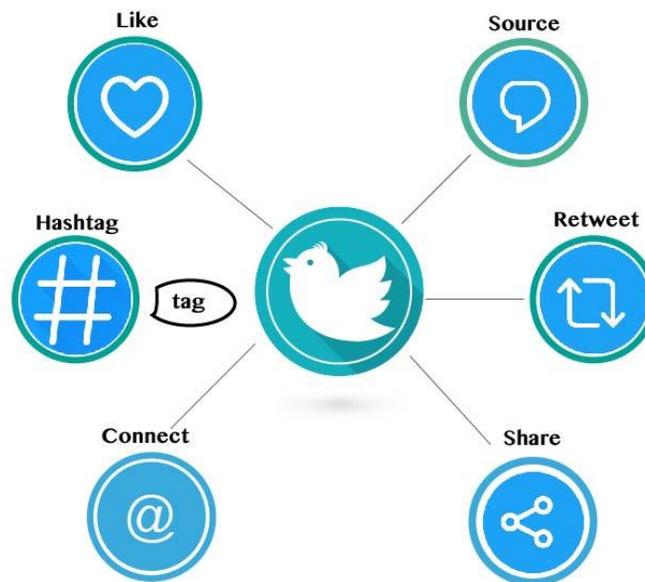
Literature Review on Social Media Logic

From content creation to content consumption, the Internet has brought together a variety of media. According to Ahmed, SCho, and Jaidka (2017), the Internet is not run by a single logic but rather by hostile logic. By applying the idea of social media logic, one can gain knowledge of the procedures, ethics, and customs that new media platforms "process information, news, and communication, and more generally, how they channel social traffic" through. The two distinct sets of strategies and tactics that make up social media logic and mass media logic have different technological and economic roots. However, in contemporary communication processes, these two logics coexist and blend together. The four fundamental components of social media logic are programmability, connectivity, ratifications, and popularity. The logic used by the media to promote "likeable" people as media personalities is at the heart of popularity. The "most likeable" content is what garners the most attention online. The mutual shaping of users, platforms, and advertisers as well as the emergence of groups and communities are all related to connectivity. According to José van Dijck and Thomas Poell (2013), "ratification" refers to the ability of networked platforms to render information into quantified data, such as customer demographic or profile data, GPS-inferred locations, likes, shares, and so forth that are frequently ratified" via social media. Last but not least, programmability describes a procedure in which users "post content and steer information streams, while the sites' owners may tweak their platforms' algorithms and interfaces to influence data traffic" (José van Dijck, Thomas Poell, 2013).

This aspect may have a big impact on how well a gatekeeping function works. The communication and informational processes in contemporary social life naturally include elements of social media logic. They have a significant impact on how social interaction, public opinion, and political discourse are shaped. Because of the proliferation of digital platforms, the Internet and its influence on politics have altered information. According to Chadwick (2013), it is acceptable that social media served as the primary means of disseminating information and political groups' claims to a wider audience.

Social media is the most widely used and popular web application that has ever been developed. Common people's widespread internet access and usage resulted in numerous technological advancements. There were 7,676 population groups in the world as of the "Social Community Research" statistics, with an urbanization rate of 56%. In 2018, the percentage of active mobile social users increased annually by 42%. It was reported that 52% of web traffic in January 2019 came from devices, mostly mobile, and that this percentage had been stable for a year. By enabling brands to present themselves as real people, form relationships with customers, and provide a forum for customers to share their insights with others, online media has elevated directness to a new level. The majority of experts agree that web-based media provides small start-up businesses with an affordable means of operating and interacting with the general public. It has aided in raising the standard of living for both the general public and businesses (Tina Mccorkindale, Marcia W. Distaso, 2014). It is further argued that straightforwardness involved different kinds of cooperation and responsibility in addition to the availability of information. This has led to the definition of straightforwardness as an interaction characterized by an emotional investment in securing, communicating, and creating information as well as an obligation to provide personal records (Halpern, 2017). This study focuses on Twitter, taking into account user classification and behavior, topological and geographic network characteristics, and arrays of growth. By examining Twitter's social interactions, the study delves deeper. Users only relate to a small subgroup of the friend and follower relationships they declare, according to an analysis of the social structure of Twitter users' friend and follower affiliations (Lomborg, 2013).

Web media use has been emphasized in political race strategies in Western democracies (Johnson, 2019). Media scholars are unsure of the effectiveness and viability of such media as a political force. In most hypothetical computer media conversations, a remarkable argument between two digital "self-aware people" dominates the conversation. People who are confident in themselves assert that online media offers new freedoms to energize public discourse and political cooperation; in this way, political culture is subsequently altered (Marie Grusell, Lars Nord, 2013).

The literature makes clear that locals use the Web liberally and not just to find information to support their political inclinations. Internet access may also increase political engagement among those who are unable to leave their homes without difficulty (van der Graaf, A., Otjes, Simon; Rasmussen, 2015). As residents who disassociate themselves from governmental issues tend to discuss governmental issues online, this ensures political control over the messages. Additionally, they view the field of computerized speech as one that strengthens preexisting ideologies rather than promoting the exchange of traits and beliefs (Chadwick, 2013).

Additionally, academic research on electronic media is growing as a crucial source of political correspondence during elections. One important justification is the ongoing professionalization of political campaigns, where an ever-increasing array of tools is routinely used to target specific segments of the electorate (McQuail, 2010). It is not difficult to imagine online media as useful mission apparatuses when executing party systems that inform and activate the electorate, especially when taking into account both the scattering and connection possibilities of these platforms.

Through social networking sites, the innovation offers an easy way to connect with voters. They work together with locals and citizens to engage the public in the electoral process. By sifting traditional press, supporting autonomous political plans, bolstering mission-centered messages, and increasing the accountability of dynamically assembling allies, the traditional press altered how perspectives were communicated. Online media has been regarded as an essential element of the current conflict. When using web-based media, experts might present different messages due to a hidden agenda. To ensure public support, many governments' elected officials set up online media outlets (Marie Grusell, Lars Nord, 2013).

Political parties frequently suffer from the lack of political or elite control over social media. Political parties create unpredictable political content as a result of their freedom, which the public then assesses (Larsson, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary to have content that is reality-based and focused in order to gain public support. Political and ideological movements have reached the point of equilibrium where they can both control and depend on technological advancements. Twitter has the power to break news, gather a huge following, and establish direct communication between residents and lawmakers.

Obama's web-based media campaign in the US in 2008 was studied by Haber (2011), who made the case that Twitter is the most popular platform for political leaders and government elites to interact with the general public. In the case of Obama, Twitter was widely used as a communication tool by the populace and political elites. Some political organizations use these new platforms to spin the media and play the same old game. They engage in more political activity because they use these channels to communicate with citizens directly (Haber, 2011). In the 2008 presidential race, Obama viewed a strong online media presence as a crucial tool for reaching voters outside of the traditional hierarchical correspondence perspective. During the mission, Blue State Digital-created informal organizations tweeted several times, while Republican candidate John McCain produced 25 tweets. According to the findings, Obama had 112,474 Twitter followers compared to McCain's 4,603 (Haber, 2011).

Researchers looked into how political powers used Twitter to accomplish their objectives, and the findings showed that between 2008 and 2010, Congress used it frequently and it had a significant impact on the US elections. According to Amanda Lee Hughes and Leysia Palen's 2009 research, majoritarian parties and young people were more engaged with Twitter as a source of political news and information.

A study of the elections in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland revealed that many legislators need the right training to effectively use online media. According to studies, "scarcely responsive"

Twitter accounts are not being used wisely. The idea that Twitter content is produced by ideological groups is not supported by any methodological framework that academics have yet developed (Marie Grusell, Lars Nord, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Due to its importance and reach on a global scale, extensive research has been done on the effects of social media. The introduction of social media gave people, especially political parties, a platform to communicate with potential voters directly. The practice of casting ballots online has also impacted voters' face-to-face interactions and their ability to identify the actual issues that voters face in order to set the agenda for the election campaign. This trend was primarily seen in Pakistan during the 2021 elections for local bodies. The main political parties in Pakistan engaged their social media followers during this election with engaging posts in an effort to project a positive image and increase voter turnout. The goal of the current study is to examine user engagement on social media. The purpose of the study is to determine the link between social media use and voting behavior, which has long been a contentious issue when it comes to influencing voters via social media as opposed to traditional media.

Modern mode of Communication

A new model of communication that is based on the internet and related organizations was brought about by social media. It is described as self-communication, self-coordination, self-choice, and self-created by Castells (2011). It suggests that the new media model is centered on the individual. Another new media model was proposed by the author, which consists primarily of intervened connection and intervened association (Jacqueline, Hogue JenniferS.Mill, 2018). It made the case that personal computers don't affect how people communicate with one another (Larsson, 2017). Additionally, intuitiveness is described as the media's capacity to participate in human communication, which has an impact on communication both directly and indirectly (Lomborg, 2013). Jensen (1998) discussed Mc Quail's model of communication and examined how new media communication revolves around single-direction correspondence modes, such as transmission and consultation, and two-way correspondence modes, such as registration and conversational.

Another study additionally offered a digital intelligence model. Talk and input are the two types of single correspondence in this model, and responsive exchange and shared talk are the two types of two-way correspondence (Johnson, 2019). The communication patterns on Facebook and Twitter were the subject of another study. According to the study, Facebook and Twitter have unique user interfaces and communication strategies, including wording and end-user services. Both of the aforementioned networks are used as backup communication channels by their users (Haber, 2011).

Social Media & Pakistan Perspective

Studies showed that social media usage in Pakistan significantly rose within a short period of time. According to Ida, Saud, and Mashud (2017), young people are the primary social media users in Pakistan. Additionally, sharing political information on social media has evolved into the new norm. Youth could now produce and share information on a different platform than they could in more traditional settings. Additionally, it gave Pakistani political parties a platform for

open dialogue with the populace. In the modern era, political parties use social media to broadcast first-hand information to the mainstream media (Batool, Yasin, and Aaima, 2020).

Another study looked into the significant influence Facebook has on Pakistan's legislative issues. It draws attention to legislative issues and general public concerns, which are then addressed by relevant authorities. Data is disseminated and political discourse is facilitated by social media. Online media in Pakistan is also anticipated to play a significant role in problem solving in the near future (Garrett, 2019).

Literature demonstrates that social media provides the average Pakistani citizen with incomplete information. For greater gains, certain ideological perspectives are consciously spread to social media users. Citizens frequently have ideological biases towards particular groups but lack knowledge of the viewpoint. Social media reinforces and activates already held beliefs, which compels users to behave in particular ways. According to studies, social media also gives the general public access to government information about local problems in Pakistan. Dissonance has long-term effects, which is what Pakistan is currently experiencing. A single message is spread across various media platforms, such as newspapers, radio, TV, and social media, in order to create that dissonance effect. In nations with shaky democracies, like Pakistan, it gains more clout (Sadiq, Zawiyah, and Na'eim Ajis, 2018).

A similar study was carried out to evaluate the public's participation on social media sites. Because of the widespread use of web media, users can now share their political and societal narratives about specific issues on social media to reach a larger audience. In Pakistan, the average person is not afraid to express their opinions on social media because doing so makes them feel more powerful. In Pakistan, a political party or leader typically prevails because of the participation of the populace. This is due to the ease with which social media followers can be multiplied, aiding political parties and leaders who run multiple accounts for campaigning. In this way, political campaigning is indirectly involving the general public (Batool, Yasin, and Aaima, 2020).

According to the literature, young people in Pakistan primarily use social media. Furthermore, when compared to traditional or mainstream media, Facebook's content has a higher degree of credibility. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organised a meeting to examine Pakistani citizens' current social media usage patterns and to educate them on how to use Facebook and Twitter effectively (Dawn, 2014). According to the study, Pakistan's citizens are very dissatisfied with their country's economic and social climate. They have created a model to alter the narratives Pakistani youth have about the system while taking into account how they use social media.

The study also showed that social media frequently fosters a culture of consumerism among Pakistani citizens. It forces them to purchase items that are out of their price range. Social media prevents young people from avoiding the internet and relying more on traditional media.
In the capital of Pakistan, various colleges and schools conducted studies of a similar nature. They looked at how young people use social media. It was further expanded to include political activism and the disclosure of the contents of underground communities. In times of political

emergency, it was investigated how political activists and government officials spread their narratives via social media. Social media users can thus shape opinions however they want. People are helped to believe in their perspectives and form opinions appropriately by direct communication with government representatives through online groups and pages (Shaheen, 2008). This topic was further explored in a study that looked at how online communities, groups, and pages helped like-minded people connect. They are able to quickly and effectively share information across several platforms thanks to this grouping. As a result, decision-makers or the general public hear what they have to say. Political leaders frequently deal with their problems, but if they become agitated, they can become a force that challenges the authority of politicians and other government officials. Due to their widespread global user bases, the study found that Facebook and Twitter are the major platforms with a greater impact (Shaheen, 2008).

Additionally, a different study was carried out to encourage honesty among Pakistan's populace via social media platforms. The study was carried out in the Pakistani province of Gilgit-Baltistan. The field has received less research funding and has seen fewer advancements in infrastructure and educational programmes. The study investigates how superficially political leaders in this region use social media. Due to the low literacy rate, they occasionally attracted common people by disseminating unrealistic information, but if they persisted, they lost the trust of the public. This is a result of the information that politicians have shared.

Social media influencers don't show up in social situations. The study looked into the need for Pakistan to practise being straightforward in its political communication. It has a gradual but long-lasting effect because regular people begin to trust political leaders with unbiased information. The public makes connections between the information shared on social media and the actual circumstances. Therefore, the author thinks that encouraging straightforwardness can change Pakistan's political culture (Poulakidakos and Veneti, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

The lens of uses and gratification theory, put forth by Blumler and Katz in 1974, has been used by the researchers. The theory made five fundamental assumptions, including the following:

1. The user actively chooses media;
2. The user's media choices satisfy their own needs;
3. The media form competes for the user's preference;
4. Contextual, social, and personal factors determine the activities of users; and
5. The relationship between media use and its effects. The theory of uses and gratifications explains how and why people use various media.

The relationship between social media usage and its influence on political judgements about the political party or leader is the main focus of this study. As a result, the author discovers uses and gratification as a unified theory for the research project and has support from the literature (Ahad et al., 2017).

The theory of uses and gratification was created for traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, and television (Lin, 1999; Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 1973), but it changed as the internet and

smartphones became more widely used (La Ferle & Edwards, 2009; La Ferle & Edwards, 2009; Matanhelia, 2010). Foregger claimed that both traditional media and online media can use the theory. Although many eastern scholars have studied the theory (La Ferle & Edwards, 2009; Leung & Wei, 2000; Wei & Lo, 2006; Roy, 2009), it is primarily used in the Western environment (Foregger, 2008; Smock et al., 2011).

Numerous media formats have converged with smartphones. The rise of smartphones has increased youth use of social media. They could use new media more freely, and they could access the internet from anywhere in the world. It allowed young people to interact with people who shared their interests, as well as with family and friends (Goggin, 2006)

Social media is now a typical tool used for political purposes as well. Kohut (2008) argued that social media is crucial to election outcomes. For the majority of their political news, young people rely more on new media than on traditional media. "Situational political involvement" is the term for using social media for elections and other purposes. According to literature, political involvement is more pronounced during election seasons and key political occasions like protests and movements. Social media has a big part to play in the uprising in Egypt in terms of inspiring people to support a cause. The user satisfies the need and participates in politics on a situational basis (Pinkleton & Austin, 2004). Situational political engagement is seen as an entry point for users during election seasons; over time, interest grows and participation in online political activities rises. They learn more as a result (Tan, 1980).
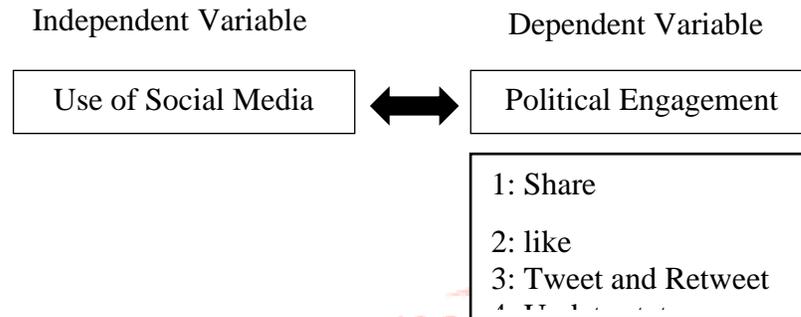
Research Hypotheses
H1: Youth mostly access political information through social media as compared to traditional media
H2: Exposure of political content on social media influence user's perception about political parties

Research Methodology
The survey method was used by the researchers to gather data, and the four-point scale was used to analyse the respondents' responses. Because the majority of young people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan's north-west province, use social media forums to satisfy their information needs, the respondents were university students there. The information was gathered in Pakistan in 2021 during local body elections. Based on the political involvement of young people on any online platform, such as Facebook and Twitter, the purposive sampling technique was used. Data was gathered from students at two top public universities, the University of Peshawar and the University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar, as well as two top private universities, IQRA National University and Qurtaba University.

The study's sample size was 379, and its error margin was 5% with a 95% confidence interval. There were 250 respondents, making up the 65% response rate. The two main factors in the study are political participation and use of social media. Social media use is the independent variable in this study, while political engagement is the dependent variable.

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

| Use of Social Media | ⬄ | Political Engagement |

1: Share

2: like
3: Tweet and Retweet

The study has following conceptual definition of the variables; the use of social media and operationalization of variables.

Results and Findings

The study analyzed online political engagement of user in local government elections of 2021. The data was collected through online survey. Results were deduced by the responses of 250 respondents, mainly university students. In this part of the research paper, results are explained with the help of hypotheses derived from literature.

H1: Youth mostly access political information through social media as compared to traditional media

In this hypothesis different mediums for the access of political information were explored. Respondents were given the option to choose newspaper, television, radio and internet.

Table 1: Access to political news and information

	Frequency	Percent
Newspaper	20	8.0
TV	82	32.8
Radio	5	2.0
Internet	142	56.8
Other	1	.4
Total	250	100.0

Table 1 indicated that 142 out of 250 university students accessed political news and information through internet during local government elections of Pakistan 2021. It comprises of 56.8% of the

sample. Whereas the second medium to access political news and information was television which is 32.8% of the sample. Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

H2: The exposure of political content on social media does not change user's perception about Political parties

Table 2: Social Media Changes Perception about Political Parties

		Use SNS	Perception about Political Parties
Use SNS	Pearson Correlation	1	.783[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	250	250
Perception about Political Parties	Pearson Correlation	.783[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	250	250

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Analysis And Discussion
The study's findings support the political participation of Twitter and Facebook users. The study also concentrated on their actions and how they affected how people viewed the political party and its leaders. Two hypotheses were created to analyses the results with the aid of the literature that was available.

The study's initial finding showed that university students—who make up 56.8% of the population access political news and information primarily online. At the same time, television ranks as the second most popular source of political news. It shows that social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter are regarded as the most popular and significant sources of political news and information. According to statistics, there were 223.0 million people living in Pakistan in 2021, and 61.34 million of them were actively using the internet. The number increased from 2020 to 2021 by 11 million. 20.6% of Pakistan's population, or 46.00 million people, used social media in January 2021 (Data Re-portal, 2021). According to the statistics, social networking sites are accessible to the majority of internet users. The majority of people with internet access spend more than five hours per day on social networking sites. Users are more drawn to social media than to mainstream media, where they have less freedom, because of the quick and simple access to news and information (Montgomery & Xenos, 2008).

The study's findings support the claim made by Abdu, Mohamad, and Muda (2017) that exposure to political content on social media changes perceptions. The perception of the political party will be negative if the campaign is negative, and vice versa. Similar findings from Castells (2012)

show that people will launch defamatory campaigns and social media protests against any political party if they are dissatisfied with it. These swing voters begin to have a negative opinion of the political party after being swayed by social media messages. According to Tandoc, Lim, and Ling (2018), opposition political parties frequently intentionally spread false and negative news, which has a negative impact on user perceptions.

Conclusion

According to the study, students who represent youth and are enrolled in various universities have largely used social media as a source of political communication. It concludes that the internet remained one of the primary sources of information for the younger generation during the Peshawar local body elections in 2021. Twitter and Facebook had a significant impact on voters' political behavior, and they reacted as a result. It demonstrates how social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are recognized as the most significant and popular sources of political news and information, and how they play an important role in political communication. During the 2021 election, Pakistan's major political parties used engaging social media posts to engage their followers and encourage voter turnout. The current study looked into the relationship between social media use and voting preferences. Exposure to political content on social media, according to the study, can alter user perceptions and behavior. According to the study, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter can be used effectively to spread any type of message intended to shape people's perceptions, making policymakers more aware of the importance of using social media when communicating with young people.

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