Role of Social Media in Making Political Perspective & New Mind Sets Among Youth

By

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

In **Governance & Public Policy**

To

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, ISLAMABAD

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Thesis Title: Role of Social Media in Making Political Perspectives and New Mind Sets Among Youth

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Degree name in full

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<u>ABSTRACT</u>

This study investigates the relationship between political participation of young people and political communication with Facebook and Instagram. It examines the impact of digital media on the political participation of university youth in Pakistan, especially in how it informs their decision-making. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines a survey analysis with a content analysis to examine the link between social media use and political engagement. Survey data was analyzed using SPSS to identify patterns and correlations between social media use and political activity. The content analysis explores few sets of political messages that young people is exposed on a frequent basis and assesses their ability to the political attitude. The research used to create these findings have shown a notable correlation between young voters and their engagement with political content on social media, demonstrating the critical importance of digital media in influence modern politics. The findings offer important implications for political actors and policymakers who are trying to connect with younger demographics, as to how people join movements, and the particular character of a resonant collective movement among youth in Pakistan.

Keywords: Political Communication, Youth Political Participation, Social Media Engagement, Digital Media and Politics

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, <u>Tanzeela Malik</u>

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Candidate of **M.Phil** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Role of Social Media in Making Political Perspectives and New Mind Sets Among Youth** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

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CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Franklin, 1995 provides the most thorough definition of political Communication. Political Communication is the study of the relationship that exists locally, nationally, and worldwide between the media and political systems. Political Communication, according to Franklin (1995; p. 255), places a strong emphasis on the analysis of the following: Media Political System includes (a) the political content of the media; (b) the producers of media content; (c) the consequences; (d) the effects of the political Structure on the media Structure; (e) the effects of the media Structure on political Structure. The relationship between politicians, voters, and the media is primarily emphasized by political communication. The study investigates the impact of political communication on youth political participation among university students. The evolution of political communications can be divided into three distinct eras. The earliest classical era emerged during the 18th and 19th centuries when citizens and politicians were connected through methods such as election canvassing, town hall meetings, printed handbills, posters, and political print media like newsletters and newspapers. Railways and telegraphs improved communication and the distribution of news. The early 20th century introduced wireless radios and telephones, transforming inter-personal communication.

The influence of traditional media is decreasing, and with the rise of the internet, cyberspace has become a powerful platform for political communication. While media is primarily intended for personal communication, it is increasingly used as a tool for political purposes. Political speeches and protests are now frequently shared on platforms like YouTube, where millions of people can watch them. Even individuals with minimal technical skills can create political content on blogs or Twitter, gaining recognition with a growing number of

followers. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, along with SMS, enable the organization of political communication and mobilization of people. Scholars from diverse disciplines, such as media and communication, political science, sociology, and international relations, have explored the impact of social media on political dynamics.

The internet provides the public with vast amounts of political information, encouraging users to engage more actively and even participate in offline political activities.

The internet has become a crucial tool for political dialogue and engagement. Initially, political parties used the internet as a one-way communication channel to inform the public through their websites. However, with the advancement of new media and technology, a shift to two-way communication patterns has occurred (Emruli & Baa, 2011). According to recent data, just 19% of Pakistan's population has internet access. However, the growing influence of social and digital media in areas such as politics, healthcare, and education has driven researchers to investigate how these platforms are being used (Ittefaq & Iqbal, 2018). These platforms provide a space for the public to engage in discussions on the complex issues facing Pakistani society and encourage greater voter participation in national elections, ultimately leading to higher turnout in the political process (Ahmad & Sheikh, 2013).

Social media's impact on young people has become more noticeable in Pakistan, where more than 64% of the population is under 30 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023). This is particularly true when it comes to influencing political activism and beliefs. As of January 2024, there were roughly 71.70 million internet users and 46 million active social media users in Pakistan, according to Data Reportal's Digital 2024 Global Overview Report. There is a noticeable generational shift toward online political activity among these, with the bulk of them being between the ages of 18 and 34.

Political information is becoming more readily available, instantaneous, and interactive thanks to the shift in political engagement from traditional media (TV, newspapers, and radio) to digital media. As digital natives, young people frequently rely on Facebook and Instagram for real-time

As digital natives, young people frequently rely on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram for political mobilization, opinion development, and real-time updates. This shift calls into question the veracity of information, how algorithms create ideological echo chambers, and the rise of new political ideologies that could upend established political systems.

1.2   Research Gap

This study fills a gap in the literature by focusing on Political Communication in Pakistan Youth Perception Building while In order to consider a large variety of questions about university students' online and offline political participation and political topics that are being discussed on Social Networking Medial S N M e social media networking Let it to voice its political opinion. The study also examines the consequences of individuals' offline political participation and online political activity. Investigations have also been done into the connection between this efficacy and political participation. Prior research has examined the role of social and digital media across prominent urban areas and diverse fields like politics, healthcare, and education. Nonetheless, the majority of these studies have failed to address the participation of marginalized groups in such analyses. However, our analysis focuses on Pakistan's universities, where we look at how youth use social media to express their political views. Youths also generate political Communication through social media.

1.3   Statement of the problem:

The youths of Pakistan are using social media as tool to gain political knowledge, to enhance their political consciousness and to spread political thoughts. Today, common man, students, leaders and even political parties have resorted to use social media platforms in order to put across their point of view on any local or international matter and in the process wooing the public. As other developed countries, Pakistan is witnessing a rapid increase in the utilization of social media sites, which has attracted many young Pakistanis and contributed greatly to the enhancement of the political participation level among youths of Pakistan. Due to increased political opinion and political related news; several politicians, activists and even political parties have created their own profiles and official websites. Thus, the main research question will be focused as follows: how the social networks influence the political awareness of Pakistani youths. It is proposed that the topic requires further research since social media has become a central and essential tool in strengthening Political communication, New Media, and Participation among youths to be active state members. But the perception of youth and through social media, this changes. This research seeks to bridge that gap by analyzing the specific role of social media in constructing, reshaping, or polarizing youth political ideology in Pakistan.

1.4 Research Objectives:

- To examine the influence of social media as a tool for political communication and its effect on youth participation in politics.
- To Explore the effectiveness of Social Media on today's political Communication
- To explore the types of political involvement that occur as a result of social media political Communication
- To explore the influence of social media on young voters' decisions.

1.5 Research Question:

1. How Political Parties have evolved political communication in the Era of Social media?
2. How Political Communication Is impacting in Youth Political Decision making?
3. How Effective is political communication of political parties?
4. How does social media influence young voters' decisions?

1.6 Rationale of the study

This study is crucial at a time when social media plays a dual role: as an enabler of democratic participation and a conduit for misinformation or propaganda. Understanding its role in shaping youth political Mind Sets can inform policymakers, educators, and media practitioners about the potentials and pitfalls of digital engagement. Furthermore, the findings of this study will help political parties and civil society better understand youth behavior patterns, leading to more inclusive and informed democratic processes.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study investigates how young people are becoming more politically involved on social media, how these platforms affect political viewpoints and new political Mind Sets. The majority of the material now in publication concentrates on activism or voter turnout, but it ignores the complex ideological and psychological shifts made possible by digital communication tools.

Academically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in political communication, media studies, and youth engagement by exploring how digital media channels influence political understanding and behavior. It offers a localized and contemporary analysis that may be used as a reference for future research on political socialization in the digital age, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan.

By analyzing how social media helps form political perspectives and fosters critical thinking among the youth, this study emphasizes the empowering potential of digital platforms. It highlights ho w exposure to diverse political content and discussions on social media can lead to a more politically aware and participatory young population, which is essential for the strengthening of democratic processes.

According to the Policy and Educational Perspective, the findings of this study can aid educators, policymakers, and youth organizations in understanding the evolving Mind Sets of the youth in relation to politics. This can inform the development of civic education programs, media literacy campaigns, and digital engagement policies that align with the interests and behaviors of the digital generation.

According to the Political Strategy and Communication perspective, Political parties and candidates can benefit from understanding how social media shapes the opinions and expectations of young voters. The study offers insights into effective modes of digital communication and suggests how political actors can engage youth more responsibly and meaningfully, avoiding misinformation and promoting constructive discourse

Finally, the study is significant in shedding light on how social media is not just a communication tool but a transformative space where political ideologies, activism, and critical thought emerge. In societies with a high youth population, such as Pakistan, the creation of a new political Mind Sets through digital platforms can have long-term implications for governance, accountability, and social cohesion. This research will contribute to examining how political Communication affects teenage perceptions.

1.8   Organization of Study

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 provides the background of the study, highlighting the rapid growth of social media in Pakistan and its significant impact on increasing political participation among the country's youth. The chapter further highlights the problem statement, delineates the research objectives, formulates the research questions, and elaborates on the significance and scope of the study. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive literature review, emphasizing the influence of political communication on shaping the perspectives of Pakistani youth. The section focuses on how university students engage in political activities through both online and offline channels, highlighting the major political topics trending on social media platforms. Chapter 3 presents the conceptual framework and research methodology. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected. Chapter 5 interprets the findings of the study, while Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the research and recommendations derived from the results.

1.9   Summary of Chapter

The study highlights the role of social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Instagram, in empowering citizens and enhancing their engagement. It explores how apps like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram contribute to political awareness and the dissemination of ideologies among Pakistan's youth. The research outlines key objectives and questions, emphasizing the importance of analyzing these platforms' impact. Additionally, it provides a structured thesis outline to guide the study's focus and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The emergence of social media has largely altered the way politics is delivered, understood and implemented across the globe. Unlike traditional media, which facilitated one-way flow of information between political leaders and the citizens, social media sites have presented two-way and interactive platforms on which citizens can now engage directly with political leaders, political parties and among themselves (Loader et al., 2021). Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are platforms that are becoming more and more necessary in political communication because they offer immediacy, personalization, and interactivity.

In Pakistan, the majority of the population (64% of the population) is below 30 years (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023), so the most frequent source of political education and mobilization is the social media. The 2024 general elections have also demonstrated the important role that it plays in driving political views, electoral behavior, and activism among the young.

The younger generation in Pakistan uses social media extensively for information and Communication. People use social media to stay in touch with one another. Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp are frequently used platforms for idea sharing, video uploading, and free commenting on any social issue. Social media is now a necessary tool for practical politics. These days, political parties have their own media departments to start social media campaigns to inform the public about their party's agendas and manifestos. They also employ various strategies to persuade the public to support them because it's a fast way to get feedback. Social media has made the younger generation more politically engaged and interested than in the past. People now feel empowered to vote thanks to social media, and other social media users are influencing them. Because everything is publicly visible, particularly on Facebook and Twitter. Social media use is helping the younger generation think more broadly. This study

will determine whether or not social media is a factor in young people becoming politically active. The idea and function of the media in politics have changed too much in the last ten years.

Before Facebook was founded thirteen years ago, there were primarily two types of media: print and electronic. Both were utilized primarily in political campaigns, but many new trends and social revolutions have occurred since social media's inception. Their deal of political campaigns was altered by social media. Social media is crucial for keeping young people informed about political party agendas and the state of local, national, and global politics. This issue has been the subject of numerous studies conducted in Pakistan and other parts of the world. Our current study looked at social media use from various angles to obtain reliable results. Martin (2021) claims Pakistanis are among the world's most active Twitter and Facebook users. The number of Facebook users is double that of our nation. This nation has more than 4 million Facebook users, and 20 million users log on to social media every day— four times as many as people in Singapore. According to Karamat & Farooq (2016), social media provides a platform for the younger generation to support politics or participate in the current political climate. It is a means of disseminating information and voicing political opinions. It maintains awareness of what is happening globally.

2.0. Types of Social Media:

Social media functions as an essential digital platform for sharing information, photos, videos, and diverse forms of self-expression via its various applications (Kietzman et al., 2011). Social media applications are used to communicate with other users through online internet services. In addition to making online friends, users can create profiles and upload data, images, and videos (Obar et al., 2015). Social media is an online forum for both individual and group information sharing. Users can even share and comment on each other's shared information. It establishes connections with different profiles. (Boyd and others, 2007).

Facebook:

Facebook gives you apps that allow you to post messages, photos, videos and communicate with friends and family. Their posts can be shared and classified ads to buy and sell goods can be uploaded. Users can advertise an event, invite people out, create and promote a public page as well as communicate with each other. Chat online is also a very popular method, and text messaging.

Twitter:

One of the well-known social media sites with a large American following is Twitter, where users can exchange written messages called tweets and upload images. Actors, athletes, and politicians communicate with their followers, which is their primary goal on Twitter. At the beginning of the application's primary purpose on Twitter, Only 140 characters could be posted at the beginning of the application; however, on November 7, 2014, this limit was doubled for all languages. Unregistered users can only read tweets; authorized users can post them. Compared to other social media apps, Twitter is generally regarded as being more secure ("Tweeting Made Easier," Retrieved November 7, 2017).

WhatsApp:

According to Metz and Cade (2016), WhatsApp Messenger is a free online and voice messaging service that Facebook owns.
The website is accessible on desktop computers but works on mobile devices. Users must supply a standard registered SIM number to use this service. Users can only speak to one another in groups or one-on-one ("Building for People and Now Businesses"). WhatsApp.com).

Instagram

One of the most significant social media sites of the modern era, Instagram is transforming community engagement, content sharing, and communication. Initially centered around photo sharing, Instagram has evolved into a multipurpose platform with e-commerce capabilities, live streaming, video content, and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven content suggestions since its 2010 launch by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Over 2 billion people use it each month worldwide, and Meta Platforms, formerly Facebook Inc., is its owner today. Social media platforms have revolutionized the way individuals and organizations communicate, share information, and engage with content online. Understanding the various types of social media is essential for effectively leveraging these platforms in both personal and professional contexts. Below is a comprehensive overview of the primary categories of social media.

1. Social Networking Sites
These platforms facilitate connections among users, enabling them to share content, engage in discussions, and build communities. They are instrumental in networking, brand promotion, and audience engagement. Examples include Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

2. Media Sharing Networks

These platforms focus on the distribution of visual and audio content. They allow users to upload, share, and comment on media such as photos and videos. They are widely used for brand storytelling and visual marketing. Examples include Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok.

3. Discussion Forums

These platforms are designed for users to post, comment, and engage in conversations on a wide array of topics. They are valuable for knowledge exchange, community building, and market research. Examples include Reddit and Quora.

4. Bookmarking and Content Curation Networks

These platforms enable users to discover, save, and organize links to various online resources. They are useful for content discovery, trend tracking, and driving website traffic. Examples include Pinterest and Flipboard.

5. Consumer Review Networks

Dedicated to reviews and ratings of products, services, or brands, these platforms influence consumer decisions and provide businesses with feedback. Examples include Yelp and TripAdvisor.

6. Blogging and Publishing Networks

These platforms allow individuals and organizations to publish, discover, and comment on articles and other written content. They are essential for content marketing, thought leadership, and audience engagement. Examples include WordPress and Media .

7. Social Shopping Networks

These platforms combine social networking with e-commerce, allowing users to shop directly through social interactions and recommendations. They are significant for influencer marketing and social commerce strategies. Examples include Instagram Shopping and Pinterest.

8. Anonymous Social Networks

These platforms allow users to share content or communicate without revealing their identities, focusing on privacy and candid expression. They are often used for discussing sensitive topics or sharing honest opinions. Examples include Whisper and 4chan.

9. Interest-Based Networks

These platforms connect users based on shared interests or hobbies, facilitating niche communities and specialized content sharing. They are valuable for targeted marketing and community building. Examples include Goodreads and Last.fm.

10. Social Gaming Platforms

These platforms integrate social networking with online gaming, allowing users to play games while interacting with others. They are significant for entertainment, community engagement, and in-game advertising. Examples include Twitch and Discord.

Traditional Media Vs Social Media emergence:

In the past, people had to wait for daily newspapers to inform them about local events occurring worldwide. Newspapers, radio, and television were the main sources of information for the general public on a variety of topics. However, today's audience is more connected to the outside world thanks to computer/telephone contracts. The tremendous improvements in communication tools made it easy for him to build relationships with friends, family, partners, and other local artists. TV, newspapers, radio, texting, emails, Facebook, blogs, and outdated social media platforms like MySpace and Twitter were all utilized by people. Social networks are contemporary inventions that play a significant role in global politics. As a result, you must engage and think. It operates on a platform that includes social media sites like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. It affected not just his social activities but also the way he planned and carried them out. The media has the chance to get back into the hands of voters, and research on the South is crucial.

This mainly refers to students' enthusiasm, abilities, and opportunities. This is going to be a significant political factor in the future. With 180 million people, Pakistan is the second-largest Muslim nation by population. One could say that this nation first appeared in early 2007. Apart from White House foreign policy officials, According to Vali Nasr, there are people in the Middle East who think that Pakistan's current political and economic problems could lead to another one in the spring. Additionally, he stated, "Lawyers, the media, students, and civil society filled Pakistan in 2008." But in 1995, the Internet was made available in Pakistan. The nation is ranked eighth out of ten Asian nations in terms of internet users, per the 2013 Internet Global Statistics. The majority of Pakistani youth and the Internet's knowledgeable public are familiar with social media sites like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and other social blogs Following these figures in the Internet world, the number of Internet users nationwide increased to 20 million in June 2010. This invasion is dependent on Pakistan Graduate School's 6.4% registration rate, which is lower than that of global education in 2009.

As a result, Paterville's consent to the internet can be stated. The primary driver of internet access in Pakistan is fluency in English. Given that English is the primary language used in cyberspace, this communication tool is the result of Pakistan's highly skilled populace. This pure user might not be able to succeed in English at all compared to other regions of the nation. social media platforms to raise student consciousness. We also want to investigate the influence of political activity on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. utilizing social networks to gauge students' awareness levels.

Each type of social media platform offers unique features and serves different purposes. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for effectively utilizing social media to achieve specific goals, whether they pertain to personal expression, community building, or business marketing.

The most popular media outlet in Pakistan is still television, which is followed by rising internet and social media use, especially among younger audiences. TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube are some of the most used social media sites. Despite the dominance of television, trends are: For a sizable section of Pakistan's population, television continues to be their main source of news and current affairs. Gallup and Gilani's surveys from Pakistan show that as people age, they use TV more frequently as their main news source. Younger populations are more likely to obtain news and information via social media and the Internet.

Data Report: In 2024, 71.7 million people in Pakistan used social media, accounting for 29.5% of the country's total population. At the same time, 45.7% of Pakistanis had internet access. With millions of users each, YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok are well-represented in Pakistan. There are 72 million active YouTube users in Pakistan. Pakistan has 57 million Facebook users. In Pakistan, 48 million people use TikTok. Another well-liked social media platform, especially with millennials, is WhatsApp. Research indicates that men use social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok marginally more frequently than women. Over use of social media, especially by young people, may have detrimental effects on mental health, such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Social media has emerged as an essential part of life.

Internet Usage in Pakistan (2025)

Total Internet Users: Approximately 116 million individuals in Pakistan were using the internet as of January 2025, representing about 45.7% of the total population.

Growth: This marks an increase of 1.7 million users (+1.5%) compared to January 2024.

Youth Engagement on Social Media

While specific age-segmented data for 2025 is limited, available statistics indicate significant youth presence on social media platforms:

- **Facebook**: As of February 2025, there were approximately 60.4 million Facebook users in Pakistan.
- **Instagram**: Around 18.6 million users were active on Instagram in the same period.
- **Messenger**: Approximately 49.9 million users utilized Messenger services.
- **LinkedIn**: The platform had about 15.8 million users.

2.1 Political Communication

Political Communication involves sharing information between politicians, the media, and the general public. This process operates in three directions: from public opinion influencing authorities, within the interactions between political figures, and from governing bodies communicating with citizens. The functions of electoral and policy-making processes heavily depend on Political Communication.

Political Communication theory examines how political leaders, media, and the public utilize messages to shape perceptions of political events and actions. When individuals use their influence to promote public interests, their communication strategies can have a significant impact on policy decisions. The concept of Power plays a central role in these theories, as it refers to the ability of political actors to gain, maintain, and exert control over public issues and influence policies and relationships. Political elites, including but not limited to elected officials, party leaders, legislative representatives, and agency heads, have access to reach a wider audience because of their position in such affairs as law enactment and penalties, provision or non-provision of social and economic policies as well as making policies The Power of citizens stems from their legal entitlements, understanding of the political landscape, and their potential and willingness to engage in discussions about public policy. Because the average person tends to use mass Communication channels to get political information, these

media channels exert this Power by depicting their views regarding politics, leaders, issues, and governance.

Political elites act as caretakers of public interests, sharing their ideals, contributing to political discourse with administrators' consent, and justifying political advantages by claiming they serve voter interests. Citizens expect their government to address their needs and challenges and to formulate policies that benefit them. A heightened awareness of the political Power held by elites and the public is one reason media outlets frame policy discussions to emphasize public interests rather than organizational or material agendas. Political elites frequently enrich the content of their communications with legitimacy that highlights the public interest. One consequence is the reassurance it offers citizens that their elected and appointed officials are working on their behalf.

Another less apparent effect is the growing personal reliability and strengthened authority of political elites. Political communicators wield reliable and persuasive Power, which enables them to select political symbols and craft strategic messages and interactions tailored to their audience. Since the 1970s, both political science and communication studies have built upon and advanced concepts related to social construction, message and media effects, and deliberative democracy, contributing to the development of theories in political communication.

2.1.1. Phases of Political Communication:

Understanding the phases of political communication not only helps the political campaign managers understand how to communicate their thoughts, but it also embeds in the latter analysis of what should work with the youth, where digital platforms like Instagram Facebook, Tiktok are the most used platforms in the upcoming elections as they bring together the way of communication like never before. There are also several different shift phases to emphasize, which allow insight into the nature and progress of exploratory communication types, channels, or representatives over time. Here is a detailed breakdown of the main phases:

1. Traditional Media Dominance Phase (Pre-1990s)

During this phase, political communication was largely dictated through traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, and television. Politicians depended on journalists and broadcasters to communicate their messages.

Top-Down Communication: Most of the time, it was a one-way flow of information, from political elites to the general public, with little interaction.

Media Gatekeeping: It was journalists and editors who shaped public narratives, deciding the political issues of the moment.

Passive Audience: Citizens were passive consumers of information, with few channels for feedback.

Throughout much of this period, very few outlets for youth exist, restricting their means of voicing their opinions, or contributing to policy discourse.

2. Mass Media Era and Campaign Professionalization (1990s-2000s)

The late 20th century marked the start of an era of professionalized campaigns — with an emphasis on the strategic use of mass media.

Professionalized Campaigns: Political campaigns more and more hired marketing experts and communication strategists who tailored messages to voters.

Televised Debates: Televised debates and the like played a crucial role in changing minds.

Message Framing: Politicians started having tailored messages aimed at various factions, like young voters.

While mass media expanded the political conversation, one-way models of communication limited civic engagement among young people.

3. Digital Media and Internet Revolution (2000s-2010s)

The shift to internet and digital tech profoundly changed political communication.

Two-Way Interaction: Social media opened direct lines of communication between politicians, and citizens.

Youth-Focused Campaigns: Understanding how important the youth vote was, the parties began to appeal to younger demographics using their digital campaigns.

Viral Campaigns: Such talk spread through shares, likes and online conversations.

Youth engagement surged in this period, as social media provided platforms for debate, engagement, and political mobilization

Social Media Domination and Big Data Era (2010s-Present)

This stage is defined by the dominance of Facebook and Instagram, where the political communication has become hyper-targeted and data-driven.

Micro targeting: Politicians can use data analytics to send tailored messages to individual voter cohorts.

Algorithmic Influence: Algorithms that power social media give political content its reach and visibility -- and, in essence, determine how many people engage with such content.

Interactive Campaigning: Live streams, Q&A sessions and direct messaging create an illusion of direct access to political leaders.

Impact on Political Participation:

Youth participation has become more vibrant and interactive, but fears of misinformation and the construction of echo-chambers have also arisen.

2.1.2 Additional Phases of Political Campaigns

a) **Pre-Campaign Phase**

This stage is all about planning, researching, and laying the foundation. This time gives political actors the chance to zero in on the biggest issues and develop their messaging. Conducting surveys and focus groups to judge public sentiment. Workshop messages and branding for the campaign. Targeting vulnerable groups such as youth, women, or minorities.

Example: Political parties conducted Facebook polls ahead of 2024 elections in Pakistan to understand youth concerns over employment and education.

b) **Campaign Launch Phase**

In this stage, the actual campaign launches, and core messages are actively shared through a variety of channels.

- The use of both traditional and digital media for outreach.
- Running social media campaigns to increase visibility.
- Holding rallies, press conferences and other public events.

Example: Candidates in the 2022 U.S. midterm elections took to Instagram reels to announce their campaigns to accordingly engage young voters who were (and still are) avid short-form content consumers.

c) **Engagement and Mobilization Phase**

This phase will drive engagement and build a community as a series of interactive activities pique voter interest.

- Live Q&A on social media
- Posting user-generated content to drive engagement.
- Organizing and deploying volunteers for outreach, online and offline.

Example: The PTI addressed urban youth concerns in Pakistan's 2018 elections through the use of Facebook live streams.

d) **Crisis Management Phase**

Political campaigns are typically beset by challenges, such as misinformation or scandals, and must respond immediately to preserve their credibility.

- Monitoring social media for issues.
- Offering clarification or redress where appropriate.
- Using influencers to combat negative narratives.

Example: In India's 2019 general elections, parties used Twitter hashtags such as #FakeNewsAlert to counter misinformation regarding their candidates.

e) **Election Day Communication Phase**

The main goal of this stage is to maximize the turnout and provide smooth voting.

- Sending SMS and social media reminders.
- Spreading the word about polling locations and procedures.
- Encouraging participation through trending hashtags such as #GoVote.

Example: During the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election, Snapchat launched a feature to help voters find polling stations

f) **Post-Election Analysis Phase**

This is typically followed by an analysis from all parties after the elections on how to enhance their campaign strategies.

- Surveying people to analyze voter behavior.
- Social media engagement metrics.
- Future strategies based on campaign learnings.

Example: Post-Pakistan's 2018 elections, the PTI assessed their digital outreach data to evaluate engagement levels with first-time voters.

2.1.3. Theories of Political Communication

Political communication is an evolving field that draws its theories from political science, sociology, psychology, and communication studies. Such theoretical models help explore such phenomena communication in political participation, decision-making, and mechanisms. This paper explores relevant political communication theories, citing examples and references

1. Agenda-Setting Theory

This theory was proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which stated that media creates importance in society through the issues it encourages people to care about. Rather than telling people how to think, the media is how they know what to think about, where its attentions are focused on particular issues.

Application in Political Communication:

Media coverage of election campaigns tends to highlight certain topics—like healthcare, education, or foreign policy—which can impact public discourse and shape voter priorities.

Example: In the 2020 U.S. presidential election, issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and racial justice received extensive media coverage, influencing public discourse and shaping priorities.

2. Framing Theory

Framing Theory, introduced by Goffman (1974), deals with how information is formatted and presented to influence perceptions. Frames highlight some dimensions of an issue, and downplay others: shaping how the issue is interpreted.

Application in Political Communication:

Politicians use framing to guide public sentiment. Taxation, for example, can be portrayed as "supporting public services" or "government overreach," depending on the agenda of the communicator.

Example: In the Brexit debates, the "Leave" campaign presented the issue as "taking back control," while the "Remain" campaign focused on the economic risks of leaving the EU.

3. Two-Step Flow Theory Overview:

The two-step flow of communication theory (Lazarsfeld & Katz, 1955) suggests that media influences are mediated by opinion leaders within social networks. These leaders play a key role in interpreting and disseminating information to others in their community.

Application in Political Communication:

The role of opinion leaders, including influencers and activists, in disseminating political messages and mobilizing supporters has been greatly amplified by social media.

Example:

During Pakistan's 2018 general elections, social media influencers endorsed candidates and parties, affecting youth political engagement in Pakistan.

4. Spiral of Silence Theory

This theory elucidated by Noelle-Neumann (1974) presents that individuals cannot express their opinions if they believe that they belong to a minority group that is socially ostracized.

Application in Political Communication:

This phenomenon is especially common in environments where dissent is stigmatized, resulting in a narrow diversity of perspectives in public spaces.

Example:

In authoritarian regimes, citizens often refrain from publicly denigrating the government, even if they dissent from its policies in private.

5. Uses and Gratifications Theory

The theory, proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974), highlights that individuals actively select and use specific media to fulfill their particular needs.

Application in Political Communication:

Voters use different types of media to read about candidates' policies, fact-check or discuss during elections.

Example:

Social media platforms (like Facebook and Instagram) are actively used by youth in Pakistan to get aware of the political happenings and to contribute in the futile online debates.

6. Cultivation Theory

According to Gerbner and Gross (1976), over time, repeated exposure to media content can mold audience perception of reality.

Application in Political Communication:

Involuntary consumption of politically salient content on television or social media may shape people's political attitudes and beliefs.

Example:

Frequent viewing of partisan talk shows, for example, can foster polarized views among the audience.

7. Hypodermic Needle Theory

The early communication model, often referred to as the "magic bullet" theory, suggests that media messages are directly delivered to passive audiences, resulting in immediate and uniform effects.

Application in Political Communication:

The theory, however, has been criticized for oversimplifying the process of persuasion,

but also offers a useful framework for understanding the effects of propaganda when the media environment is controlled.

Example:

The principles of the hypodermic needle theory can be reflected in Nazi Germany's propaganda during the World War II.

8. Social Media and Network Theory

This theory explores how people interact with each other through networks, it's the role of social media in spreading political information and organizing movements.

Application in Political Communication:

Social media helps spread political content faster, allowing grassroots campaigns and movements to take hold.

Example:

The Arab Spring (2010-2012) showed how social media platforms played a key role in coordinating demonstrations and spreading political speech.

9. Priming Theory

Priming, a related concept to agenda-setting, proposes that media shapes what audiences use to judge issues by highlighting certain aspects.

Application in Political Communication:

Priming plays a large role in how voters evaluate political candidates, and is often dictated by the issues brought to attention by the media.

Example:

In the 2008 U.S. presidential election, extensive media coverage of the financial crisis had primed voters to prioritize the candidates' economic policies.

2.2 Social Media as a Tool for Political Communication and Youth Participation

2.2.1 Global Perspective:

Globally, researchers emphasize that social media offers young people accessible pathways into the political arena. In contrast to traditional campaigns, which frequently marginalize younger audiences, digital platforms resonate with the preferences and behaviors of youth demographics (Loader et al., 2021). Studies in the United States suggest that young people who are exposed to political debates, livestreams, and online campaigns demonstrate greater

political efficacy and increased voter turnout (Boulianne, 2020). Similarly, studies conducted in the European Union demonstrate that young citizens rely on social media to access political information, participate in debates, and hold leaders accountable (Mossberger et al., 2020).

The uses and gratifications model has been broadly employed to clarify the motivations for which young people utilize social media for political purposes. Young users are motivated by the pursuit of information, entertainment, identity construction, and social integration on these platforms, which enhances their political awareness and strengthens their sense of belonging to the political process (Valenzuela, 2021).

2.2.2 Regional Perspective:

In South Asia, social media is becoming increasingly vital for the mobilization of youth. For example, in India, digital platforms significantly contributed to the mobilization of young voters during the 2019 elections, with campaigns focused on employment, development, and anti-corruption (Suresh & Rao, 2021). Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, Facebook has become a prominent platform for political activism, especially in organizing youth protests and electoral campaigns (Rahman, 2022).

2.2.3 Pakistani Context

In Pakistan, the engagement of youth in politics is significantly shaped by social media. Political organizations such as PTI and PML-N have recognized the strategic value of digital campaigns, investing in Facebook live sessions, Instagram reels, and WhatsApp groups to rally voters. Ahmed and Jamil (2023) found that during the 2024 elections, social media served as the most vital source of political information for urban youth, often displacing traditional media like television and print.

However, researchers warn of the dangers of slacktivism, where young individuals limit their political involvement to minimal efforts such as liking or sharing posts, rather than participating in more substantial civic activities (Loader et al., 2021). Therefore, although social media has broadened access to political discourse, its capacity to promote genuine engagement is contingent upon cultural, educational, and socio-political factors.

2.3 Effectiveness of Social Media in Political Communication

2.3.1 Global Effectiveness

On a global scale, political figures perceive social media as a powerful means of communication, attributed to its rapidity, extensive reach, and economical nature. Social media platforms facilitate micro-targeting, enabling campaigns to be customized for particular demographic segments, including young individuals and first-time voters. Research findings from Latin America and Europe reveal that Instagram reels, hashtags, and TikTok campaigns significantly boost political visibility and create emotional bonds with younger audiences (Valenzuela, 2021).

2.3.2 Social Media in Pakistan's Political Landscape

The effectiveness of social media in Pakistan is clearly visible in the way political parties design their campaigns. A case in point is the PTI, which has harnessed digital media more adeptly than its opponents, connecting with millions of young voters through targeted communications. According to Raza and Iqbal (2022), young voters in Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi were considerably more engaged with digital campaigns than with traditional rallies. Furthermore, social media not only magnified political messages but also established networks of youth volunteers who took part in political mobilization in both online and offline contexts.

2.3.3 Limitations

While social media is effective, it also presents certain challenges. Researchers highlight issues such as misinformation, fake news, and echo chambers (Tufekci, 2020). In Pakistan, unverified information shared on WhatsApp and Facebook has sometimes led to polarization among youth and the dissemination of disinformation, which undermines democratic discourse (Iqbal & Malik, 2022). These challenges emphasize that although social media excels in outreach, its role in facilitating informed decision-making depends on the levels of digital literacy and the presence of regulatory frameworks

Despite its effectiveness, social media also introduces challenges. Scholars point to problems of misinformation, fake news, and echo chambers (Tufekci, 2020). In Pakistan, unverified content circulated on WhatsApp and Facebook has occasionally polarized youth and spread disinformation, undermining democratic deliberation (Iqbal & Malik, 2022). These

challenges underscore that while social media is effective in reach, its contribution to informed decision-making is contingent upon digital literacy and regulatory frameworks.

2.4 Types of Political Involvement Fostered by Social Media

Social media promotes various types of political engagement, which can range from minimal online activities to significant offline participation.

- **Informational Involvement:** Young individuals utilize social media to remain informed about policies, party platforms, and political discussions (Khan & Shah, 2020). Expressive Involvement: Platforms allow youth to express opinions through comments, memes, or posts (Loader et al., 2021).

- **Expressive Involvement:** These platforms provide youth with the opportunity to articulate their views through comments, memes, or posts (Loader et al., 2021).

- **Mobilization Involvement:** Social media initiatives spur participation in rallies, protests, and electoral campaigns. For example, the Aurat March in Pakistan gained significant support through digital means (Ali, 2021).
- **Electoral Involvement:** Online campaigns promote voter registration and participation. Research conducted in the U.S. and U.K. indicates that reminders and appeals on Facebook enhance youth voter turnout (Boulianne, 2020).

In Pakistan, young people are more likely to participate in hybrid involvement, which combines online and offline activities. Social media activism often translates into physical demonstrations, donations, or canvassing, demonstrating the integration of digital and civic spheres (Ahmed & Jamil, 2023).

2.5 Influence of Social Media on Youth Voting Decisions

The influence of social media on electoral choices is becoming more pronounced.

- **Global Evidence:**

Studies indicate that engagement with political advertisements and discussions on social media affects the candidate preferences of young individuals (Lee & Xenos, 2019). During

the 2020 U.S. elections, targeted advertisements on Facebook notably influenced undecided young voters (Boulianne, 2020).

- **Regional Evidence:**

 In India, the use of WhatsApp and Facebook was important in shaping the perceptions of political leaders among the youth during the elections of 2019 (Suresh & Rao, 2021).

- **Pakistan:**

In the 2024 elections, social media played a vital role in shaping the attitudes of young voters. Ahmed and Jamil (2023) noted that many young voters often formed their opinions about political parties and candidates based on digital campaigns rather than traditional rallies.

However, the impact of social media is not consistent across the board. Factors such as socio-economic status, internet accessibility, and political awareness influence its effectiveness. Urban youth with higher levels of digital literacy are more likely to make voting choices based on online campaigns, while rural youth may still depend on interpersonal networks and traditional media (Iqbal & Malik, 2022).

2.5.1 Social media shapes opinions and politics:

Social media has a significant impact on shaping public opinions and influencing political activities, particularly voting (Zaheer, L. 2016). Unlike traditional media, social media offers users the freedom to express their views, engage in discussions, and share opinions, making it a more powerful tool. The role of social networking is widely recognized, and political parties in Pakistan have embraced these platforms to connect with their target audience and spread their messages.

In Pakistan, political parties and politicians use social media not only to update the public on their activities but also to address controversies stirred by their opponents. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter allow political parties to reach urban youth, engaging them directly at the grassroots level. For instance, PTI's official Twitter account and its chairman, Imran Khan, boast over 2 million and 3.9 million followers, respectively. Similarly, Maryam Nawaz, a senior PML-N leader, has garnered more than 2 million followers on Twitter.

Bilawal Bhutto's Twitter @bbhuttozardariHas over 1.3 M followers. PTI is way ahead of other political parties on Facebook, too; 4.3 million people liked the party page, whereas 1.3 million people liked only Shahbaz Sharif's official page on Facebook (Rizvi, 2016). By creating the illusion for users that they are affiliated with others and amplifying their knowledge of others, social networking websites thus foster loyalty and standards of reciprocity (Gil de Zúñiga, 2012). For instance, the current connections and networks of Facebook users are reinforced by having the opportunity to get up to speed on what is happening with them. Such a need for social contact will spread political knowledge over social networking sites (Kushin, 2010) to "accidental meetings."

The fundamental difference between SNSs and other media is that SNSs ingest political content. While most media are elitist (always have target-target viewership), through SNSs, people join the views to interfere with the political environment and enter and respond in ways not previously imaginable. SNSs prompt people to "create, disseminate and comment on their political content," according to Bertot, Jaeger, and Hansen (2012). Few research found that only a quarter of eligible voters used SNSs such as Twitter and Facebook to discuss and choose votes before 2012 (Rainie, 2012). As Becker (2012) states, most of the content found on websites across the social network cannot be matched to the user's experience. This implies that the majority (almost 73 percent) of people on social networking sites do not agree with their peer-based opinions and feedback about current events, and 38 percent of said individuals can be genuinely dumbfounded by their opinions on politics. The real question is how much dissent and divergence in opinion will impact user expression in a political civil society or social media side of life.

Some studies demonstrate that having been exposed to various political debates might result in certain online deliberations. In contrast, other studies show (S. Valenzuela, Kim, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2012) that attention to conflicts presents a negative connection with democratic participation.

Ultimately, social networking presents a domain of life where the exposure felt by individuals may have a socially diffusive effect This invokes the peer scaffolding in an incremental consciousness shift by other forms of sociality that could decrease or promote personal activity and connectivity at a pace through SNS a functional insufficiency on its own can be construed in terms of less privacy and a higher degree peer-to-peer monitoring that an opportunity for active networking and could be provided at a greater pace through the socio-economic strategic activity together. However, there are deeper interpersonal and community implications as social network platforms offer enhanced sociality.

The impacts of SNS usage and online democratic dialogue in China have already been studied (Mou & Xu, 2017). To assess the influence of social media on political attitudes and engagement in this area, they investigate the political participation of Chinese internet users. There was a moderate but positive correlation between their Internet platform and the use of social networking sites in online political discussions. The development of young adults and adolescents has been impacted by social media use, and this trend is likely to continue.

Today information is readily accessible by using the search button, while everybody wants to know what you are up to. Social media platforms are used in by Pakistani politicians and political parties to inform the public about their political activities.

2.5.2 Demographic representation of social media usage in Pakistan

From this data, at least 8055,680 Facebook clients are in Pakistan, and those users compel Face to know about it by unveiling their insight of 2013. This number is divided among 70% male and 30% female customers in Pakistan, and records also show that the majority of the chance is youth, 18-24 years old. Telecommunication has always been applied in Pakistan's political sitzungen and pioneers to ally and distract people through the use of online social networks. Especially they paid much attention to youths at this age.

The Pakistan Social Sciences Review (PSSR) December 2023 meeting has a vast and dynamic thought on social networking sites. Pakistan is involved with different ideological powers such as PTI, PPP, PML-N, and so forth, and a considerable number of these ideological powers use online networking and keep up their records and systems on Facebook, Twitter, and Skype to reestablish and convey individuals for participation in the political process. PTI and PML-N are ideological groups with much-loved status on Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs (Kugelman, 2012). 2009 revolution: Twitter was effectively used in Moldova on 12 April 2009 due to all-composite false elections.

These campaigners used Twitter, Facebook, information content, and Live Journal to support and provide links to inform people about political events. More so, Facebook and tweeters have been instrumental in the current changes and revolutions in Yemen, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Egypt, and Bahrain and trained around new types/of media that advance opportunity whose training engages with the democratization of severe anti-T tenets. Various conventional WWW networking, iterative by blogs, Twitter, Facebook, books, and YouTube, now participate a critical function in oppressive varieties of advertisement and combat, interestingly about the

Middle East government. WIUPS data reveal that the most striking internet user in Egypt came first, occupying one of the world's most significant twentieth places. On Facebook, kids who, in fact, sometimes discuss the federal government at such times when the elections are near cannot cope with it.

This innovation is used by describing their beliefs and arguments as to what they want. They are now heading the national pressing matters as a young. Young people have begun making candidates for political leaders and rallies. Political crusades can preferentially influence the inward and outside political conclusions of the people and, as such, can influence their political consciousness, leading to their voting conduct. Politics & Social Media Social media is one of the environmental contexts that precipitates this synthesis of political extremes with everything that is socioeconomic appearance/ heritage as far as norms concerning the private and/or public domain. If some individuals attempt to focus on the trends on these websites, the youths may also wish to begin to post similar political views to those held by the old individuals. Young people's community development can quickly happen on social media platforms. Formed in the early and mid-1970s to train youths in various media production and reception processes, it allows various youth demographics to interface with social and political realities (Belle Booth, 2021). It enables young adults to offer their views and voice their issues. Social media usage, which is on the rise further, may place users into realpolitik more frequently with political information that increases party bias to make opponents more extreme (Klein & Robison, 2020).

This indicates that youths are engrossed with particular opinions, considering the clear-cut division of what is expressed. They will likely encounter political material online with political leaning similar to their own and made to seem as if they have limited access to politically opposite leaning. Bakshy et al. McDevitt et al. (2015) recently tried to analyze diverse political content on Facebook based on data about over 10 million posts shared. They demonstrate that people come across fewer political messages contrary to their political orientation than those in line with such. These authors explain that this is due to the reduced willingness of users to share topic-specific content with friends and the algorithm that Facebook uses to feed users news feeds. Young people are encouraged to adhere to their religion or system of worship as they do not come across another political system. They will only get the counterarguments if someone they know is on your friend's list and has a different opinion. Kozyreva added that lovers are babes who always tend to like similar people with the same opinion, which is why they hardly view the content from the opposite side.

Political cooperation of young people helps sustain the cordial quality and reasonability of vote-based systems. RS-232 interfaces have created thousands of internet connections to every touch point to web-based entertainment, removing political correspondence and probably changing how youngsters contribute to issues. This writing survey offers an understanding of the effect of programmed virtual amusement support or politics in youth and, at the same time, concentrates on how political response through such stages influences dynamic or vitality cycle or involvement in equity occasions.

2.5.3 Empirical Evidence on Social Media and Youth Political Participation

The exact examination consistently uncovers that web-based amusement use is positively connected with political cooperation among youths. A meta-analysis by Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, and Valenzuela (2012) revealed that web-based entertainment (8.37), social organization (2.22), online media (2.22; are determined to initiate on the web and disconnected political help among youthful grown-ups in the US. Valenzuela, Arriagada, and Scherman (2012) declared that virtual stimulation usage was associated with higher degrees of political cooperation in Chile.

A striking example of how social media can prime young people for political action is the 2011 Bedouin Spring. This is because; Politically related social education internet sites were heavily relied on to call for protests, pass on information and attract support from the international community (Howard and Hussain 2013). Cohesion and coordination during organization and outcome of the protests was significantly influenced by the capacity to spread information and coordinate activities.

Online entertainment has been crucial in youth-driven developments in Western majority rules systems, like the Possess Money Road and Walk for Our Lives. These advances relied extensively on online amusement for designating a valuable opportunity, spreading data, and equipping a feeling of the neighborhood between allies (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). This participatory kind of online amusement allows young activists to avoid traditional gatekeepers and intentionally engage with their audience.

2.6   Social Media and Decision Making

Online entertainment influences not only political cooperation but also political independence. This immense social information accessible through online entertainment can

upgrade political learning and mindfulness as essential components of informed decision-making (Tewksbury & Rittenberg, 2012). Although such information is attained through social media, the legitimacy and reliability of information can be distorted completely so that even in identifying the good and bad information may become a challenge.

Social networks can also have a significant impact on decision-making through information overloading. People who spend a lot of time on social networks often experience information saturation, which is a communication overload. Users are overloaded with information in their social media environment and the quantity of channels or accounts they have created. As a result, their perception and critical thinking are diminished, which alters the way they make decisions.

The user's level of expertise also affects how well the judgment is made. Their influence cannot be controlled in the world of social media since it is impossible to regulate what information is shared with certain individuals and how. Furthermore, a form of peer pressure is produced when a group convinces a person to alter their beliefs, values, or conduct in order to conform to the group they identify with. This phenomenon has the potential to significantly impact decision-making because conformism causes the decision-maker to look to his surroundings, and he may give in to pressure because he wants to be liked and accepted by them.

2.6.1 Challenges and Criticisms

Although virtual entertainment has opened up political correspondence, it also raises some difficulties. One of the biggest concerns around protected, closed-off environments and channel bubbles is that calculations on virtual entertainment stages frequently build a substance plane that adjusts with clients' current convictions supporting their perspectives and parting them by other views. This can encourage expanded polarization and a nonappearance of receptiveness to restricting assessments, which are vital for a sound popularity based discussion.

A different test is the ubiquity of falsehood and counterfeit news through web-based entertainment. The ease with which data can be shared lends itself to the rapid dissemination of false or misleading content, which can skew public perceptions and affect political decision-making. To this end attempts have been made to counter the spread of fake news like fact checkers or algorithms but they have their problems.

2.6.2 Role of Social Media in Political Campaigns

Social media has completely changed the political environment by offering channels for engagement, mobilization, and communication that were imaginable only a few decades ago. It has a significant and wide-ranging impact on politics, influencing everything from public discourse and governance to election campaigns. The many political functions of social media and their effects on democracy.

Political Campaign have gradually or steadily equipped the power of online amusement to connect with citizens, especially the young area. It enables contenders to engage the general populace, with no intermediaries in the form of social media. This instant connection could humanize the political agenda and therefore create an element of rapport between candidates and young voters (Enli, 2017). We also use social media accounts as place to put political spots and to get to the floating voters. Campaigns can imply data analysis to segment the electorate and deliver tailored messages to specific groups, thus increasing the efficiency of their outreach efforts (Kreiss, 2016). Despite this have voiced concerns around security and the moral implications of information — driven political promoting.

2.6.3 Impact of Social Media Campaign in election 2018

Social media played a crucial role in Pakistan's 2018 general elections, with all major political parties actively engaging through various media platforms, including traditional methods and online campaigns. The three leading parties, Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Pakistan People Party (PPP), utilized platforms like Facebook and Twitter to reach voters across different regions, with social media playing an essential role in shaping political opinions. Facebook and Twitter, in particular, were instrumental in influencing political views during the 2018 elections, making these platforms significant for political communication (Bilal, 2018).

Despite Pakistan being an emerging democracy, political messages were initially not widely shared on Twitter. However, the platform eventually altered the communication landscape, allowing the public to directly engage with political discussions. This shift in communication proved critical, enabling PTI to form a government and maintain the democratic process, despite widespread allegations of rigging and unfair practices from various political parties during the elections. While politicians use social media platforms like Twitter for their own

agendas, they sometimes rely on misleading content, which can distort public perception and hinder healthy political dialogue (Ittefaq & Ahmed, 2019).

2.6.4 Pakistan Takhreek Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League Noon (PML-N) and Social media

PTI and PML-N used web-based entertainment as a tool for the collection of perspectives and activation during the 2018 appointment from Pakistan. Both the PTI and PML-N have conducted a few conventions via social media campaigns nationwide to invigorate their voters. Emruli and Baqa (2011) explained that the information is shared only by TV stations and social media accounts that back their chosen parties. So far, Twitter is holding up the PML-N, and Facebook is lifting the PTI. The PTI is getting more organized and revels in easy access to social media.

In contrast, Maryam Nawaz left for London on June 14 and was arrested on July 13, which shattered PML (N) social media. His campaign on social media had been reduced during the election to a carnival of erratic behavior and no purpose. Its new Media Board executive, Mushahid Hussain Syed, has likewise held private an iron-handed system for deciphering and halting the twofold selling endeavor on casting a ballot day. Before the election, PTI had rolled out an application based on a database of millions of voters. Through this app, PTI Employees can identify and reach supporters. Before voting, they will be led to the voting place on July 25 (Bilal, 2018).

The following are the networks overtaken by the PTI campaign and other networks. Screenshots from television news were routine practice—some TV networks campaign for the parties and leaders they most want. To take advantage of its campaign's "believable" benefits, PTI's social media immediately stifled content (and ARY content made available) that openly supported the same. PTI journalists made "de facto breaking" on social media and distributed them through their accounts. This indicates PML-N supporters and workers on election eve confusion, dissatisfaction, and frustration (Emruli & Baca, 2011).

2.6.5 Social media as a stand-in tool for political term

After Geo TV declined to air coverage of the Shehbaz Sharif rally on his channel on July 13, Talat Hussain took to Twitter for all his advertisements. Television host Fahad Hussain was another media person who used the power of social media along with traditional platforms like

Twitter and Facebook to outstretch the media establishment and launch vehement attacks during the elections. Pakistan's television network covered up his controversial comments addressed to the Rawalpindi Bar Association, but within a few hours on July 21, they went viral on social media. All social media users, from politicians to attorneys to activists, circulated videos of Judge Saeed Uz Zaman Siddiqui's speech. Judge Saeed Uz Zaman Siddiqui had ruled that handling big fish of political bags was a blatant problem for security agencies. Social media also facilitated campaigns of offense, targeting Judge Saeed Uz Zaman Siddiqui (Michaelsen, 2011), not entirely surprisingly.

2.6.6 Impact of Misinformation and Fake News :

The dissemination of false information is one of the major problems with social media. Young people's opinions and voting b ehavior have been influenced by the widespread dissemination of fake news and altered political content on internet media. According to Smith et al. (2024), algorithmic biases that favor sensationalist material make social media users—especially younger audiences—more prone to false information. Scholars support media literacy initiatives that teach young people how to critically assess internet information sources in order to address this problem. According to research by Xu (2025), in order to combat the impact of political disinformation, educational institutions should incorporate instruction in digital literacy into their curricula.

2.6.7 Transforming Political Attitudes in Young People:

The exposure to global political narratives through social media has contributed to a shift in political Mind Sets among youth. Studies indicate that younger generations are more inclined toward progressive ideologies due to their engagement with diverse online communities.

Guenther and Nkomo (2024) showed that social media stimulates cross-cultural political conversation, resulting to a more internationally informed and socially conscious youth population.

Furthermore, research suggests that online political engagement has contributed to declining trust in traditional political institutions. Young individuals increasingly explore alternative political movements and grassroots involvement to achieve change, rather than relying on conventional party politics.

Comparative Analysis: Pakistan and Other Countries in Youth Political Participation via Social Media

The growing reliance on social media for political communication and youth engagement is a global phenomenon. However, the nature, extent, and outcomes of this engagement vary significantly across political systems, technological infrastructures, and cultural contexts. This section provides a comparative analysis of **Pakistan** with selected countries—**India, the United States, and Tunisia**—to contextualize the findings and highlight both shared patterns and distinctive characteristics.

1. Pakistan vs. India: Similar Demographics, Diverging Digital Strategies

Both Pakistan and India have large, youthful populations with rapidly expanding internet access. Political actors in both countries have increasingly used Facebook and Instagram to reach younger demographics. However:

- In India, digital campaigns are far more structured and data-driven, especially during national elections. Political parties like the BJP have invested in IT cells, digital ad targeting, and influencer partnerships to mobilize youth.
- In Pakistan, while political use of Facebook is active, the approach remains more rhetorical and personality-centric, with less institutionalized use of data analytics. Furthermore, censorship and inconsistent internet access remain challenges for broader digital engagement.

Key Difference: India has institutionalized digital campaigning, while Pakistan still operates through informal and charisma-based digital strategies.

2. Pakistan vs. United States: Scale and Sophistication of Political Communication

The **United States** has long been a pioneer in integrating social media into political campaigns, dating back to Barack Obama's 2008 digital strategy. American political communication on platforms like Instagram and Twitter is often issue-driven, interactive, and includes grassroots mobilization tools, such as online petitions, virtual town halls, and fundraising campaigns.

- Youth in the U.S. tend to be issue-based participants, engaging in movements like Black Lives Matter, climate activism, and voting rights campaigns through digital means.
- In contrast, Pakistani youth participation on social media is often event-based or leader-centric, with surges in activity around specific political moments (e.g., elections or protests) rather than sustained civic activism.

Key Difference: The U.S. exhibits a higher degree of institutional and civic integration in youth digital participation; Pakistan shows episodic engagement largely tied to political figures or crises.

3. Pakistan vs. Tunisia: Social Media as a Democratizing Force

Tunisia provides an example from the **Global South**, where **social media played a pivotal role** during the Arab Spring in mobilizing youth and spreading anti-authoritarian narratives. Platforms like Facebook became central tools for political activism and democratic transition.

- Like Tunisia, Pakistan's youth has occasionally used digital platforms for civic resistance (e.g., during PTI's digital protests or anti-corruption campaigns).
- However, state control, surveillance, and algorithmic suppression in Pakistan limit the transformational potential seen in Tunisia's earlier post-revolution phase.

Key Difference: Tunisia used social media as a springboard for regime change; Pakistan's digital political activism remains constrained within existing power structures.

Conclusion of Comparative Analysis

The comparative review highlights that while youth political participation through social media is a global trend, the effectiveness, structure, and impact of this participation are deeply shaped by national political cultures, media ecosystems, and technological access. Pakistan's youth demonstrate significant digital political engagement, but to fully harness this potential, the country must address issues of digital literacy, platform diversification, and inclusive representation beyond elite university spaces.

Integrating Recent Empirical Studies (2021–2024)

To ensure that the study reflects the evolving nature of political communication and youth behavior in the digital era, recent empirical studies from 2021 to 2024 have been incorporated into the thesis. These studies provide updated insights into the changing dynamics of social media platforms, youth engagement patterns, and algorithmic influences on political discourse. Their inclusion not only enhances the contemporary relevance of the research but also addresses gaps in previous literature by focusing on emerging trends, platform innovations, and regional developments, particularly in South Asia.

1. Shifts in Platform Use and Youth Engagement

Recent research shows a growing shift in youth political communication from traditional platforms like Facebook to more visually-driven and interactive platforms such as Instagram Reels, TikTok, and Twitter Spaces. For instance, Qazi and Shah (2023) examined how short-form video content on Instagram Reels was used by Pakistani political influencers to promote party narratives during the 2024 general elections, significantly increasing youth political engagement and virality of political messages.

Similarly, Bhatti et al. (2022) found that Instagram was increasingly preferred by urban Pakistani youth for receiving political content, due to its aesthetic appeal, ease of sharing, and interactive features such as polls, Q&As, and story reactions, which facilitate non-traditional forms of participation.

2. Algorithmic Personalization and Political Echo Chambers

A growing body of literature (e.g., Gul & Yousaf, 2023; Ahmed & Khurram, 2022) investigates the algorithmic personalization of political content on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. These studies highlight how political messaging is increasingly shaped by user data and engagement patterns, leading to content filtering, reinforcement of pre-existing beliefs, and polarization among youth. In Pakistan, this phenomenon is compounded by limited digital literacy, which reduces users' awareness of algorithmic influence.

These findings are crucial for understanding why youth may feel more politically engaged online, yet simultaneously become trapped in ideological silos, which limits genuine deliberation.

3. Platform Censorship, State Surveillance, and Youth Response

Empirical research in Pakistan and similar political contexts (e.g., Bangladesh and Egypt) has noted an increase in state surveillance, platform censorship, and digital repression. For example, Raza and Noman (2024) documented incidents where politically active youth accounts were shadow-banned or removed during protests and election campaigns in Pakistan. Such studies suggest that while social media opens new avenues for youth expression, it also introduces new risks and constraints, particularly in semi-authoritarian settings.

4. Cross-Regional Comparative Insights

Recent comparative studies (e.g., Anwar & Jain, 2023) have compared political participation among youth in India and Pakistan, noting that while both exhibit high online political engagement, Indian digital campaigns are more institutionalized, whereas Pakistani youth rely more on charismatic political leaders and informal digital mobilization (e.g., fan pages and hashtag activism). These insights help situate Pakistan's digital political culture within broader South Asian trends.

5. Integration into Current Study

These recent empirical studies inform both the methodological choices (e.g., focus on Instagram and Facebook) and the analytical categories (e.g., algorithmic influence, aesthetic participation, non-traditional activism) used in this thesis. By engaging with up-to-date research, the study reflects a contemporary understanding of youth political behavior and addresses the fast-changing digital media landscape.

Conclusion

The integration of empirical studies from 2021–2024 significantly enriches the analytical framework of the thesis. It ensures that the findings are aligned with current realities, particularly in relation to platform evolution, algorithmic mediation, and contextual political pressures faced by Pakistani youth. These recent sources also underscore the ongoing scholarly relevance of the research and its potential to contribute meaningfully to the fields of political communication, digital media studies, and youth civic engagement

2.4.6 Diagram of Conceptual Framework:

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │      Political       │
                    │   Communication      │
                    │   Political news     │
                    │   Political Ads      │
                    │   Political Debates  │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              ↕
┌──────────────┐    ┌─────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────┐
│    Media     │    │  Decision Making     │    │   Youth Political     │
│ Social Media │ ←→ │    Informed          │ ←→ │   Participation       │
│ Facebook     │    │  Decision Making     │    │   Voting Behavior     │
│ pages        │    │  Influence of        │    │   Political           │
│ Instagram    │    │  Media Bias          │    │   discussion          │
│ pages        │    │  Trust in Media      │    │   Protest Rallies     │
│              │    │  Sources             │    │                       │
└──────────────┘    └─────────────────────┘    └──────────────────────┘
```
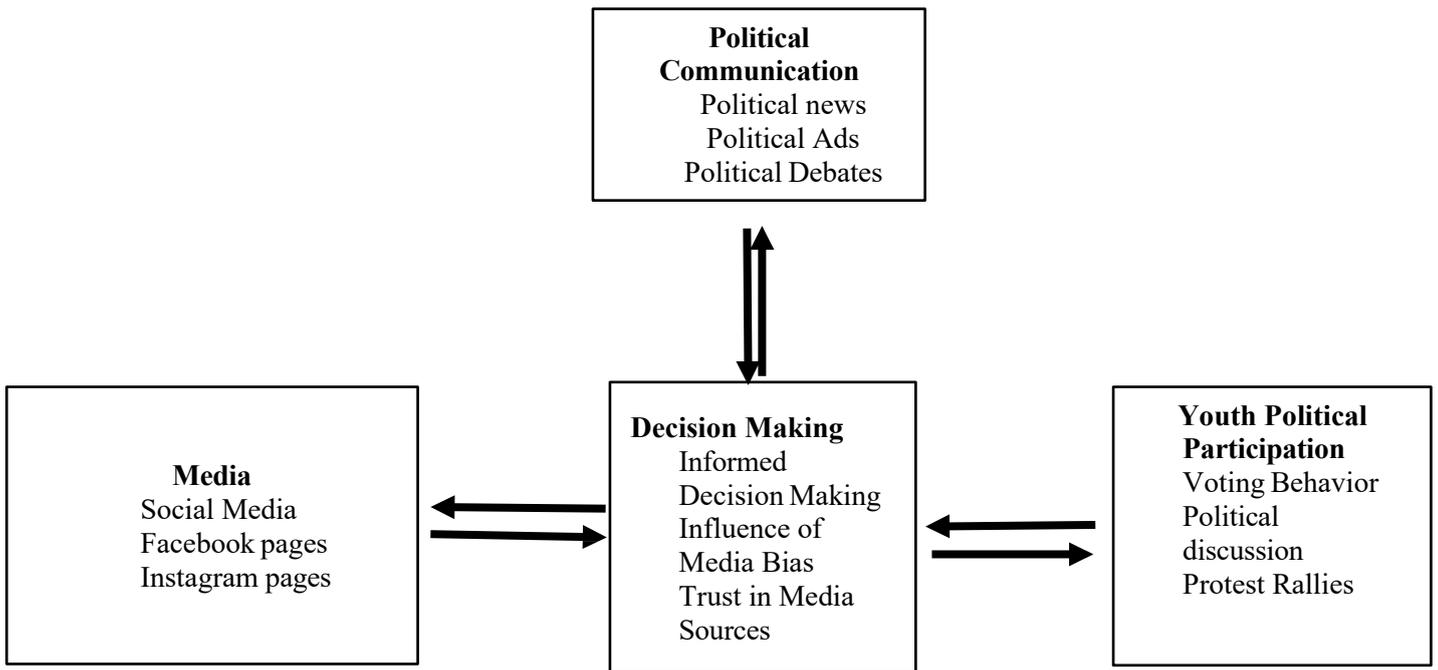
Conceptual framework:

This thesis seeks to establish a conceptual framework to understand how different types of media influence the political activities and decisions of young people. It integrates theories related to political communication, media and politics, and civic engagement to explore the ways media exposure is linked to political actions among youth. As illustrated in the figure below, the framework is based on key concepts and theories identified in the existing literature, designed to address the research questions and provide insights into the investigation.

Various forms of media serve as key pillars in the conceptual framework that inspires this thesis. It will analyze how such mediums affect youth political participation and decision-making processes. The thesis synthesizes relevant theories and constructs from political communication, media studies, and civic engagement to elucidate the pathways through which media exposure influences the political behavior of young people.

Independent Variable"

New Media (social media platforms, online news websites, blogs)

Dependent Variable

- Youth Political Participation

Outcome Variable

- Decision Making

Information Processing (how youth consume and interpret political information)

Attitude Formation (development of political opinions and beliefs)

Behavioral Intentions (intent to vote, participate in campaigns, or engage in activism)

Explanation of the Conceptual Framework

Media Exposure:

This module explores the frequency and type of media exposure to youth. Traditional media used to be TV, papers, radio, and the new media are social media basis and media information webs. The kind of exposure to media can greatly affect the type of political communication to which youth are exposed.

Political Communication:

This includes all the different shapes and contents of political messages spread across a range of media. It encompasses political news, debates, advertisements and campaigns, shared by politicians, influencers, journalists and peers. Such communication defines affects political perspective and actions.

Youth Political Participation:

Election-related activities (like voting) and non-electoral activities (like protests and conversations) are the two categories of participation. Social media political content is the online dimension. Youth participation in politics is influenced by both the type and degree of political communication.

Decision Making:

This is about how the youth is informed, how they form attitudes and how they make decisions about political issues. They are also affected by the political communication they receive and their political participation itself.

Empirical Evidence and Statistical Justification

Social media and political participation are closely related, according to recent empirical research. A Gallup Pakistan research from 2024 states that more than 60% of young Pakistanis say social media, not traditional news sources, is where they first learn about political events. Additionally, according to a survey by the Digital Rights Foundation (2023), 52% of young people place greater trust in political content published by influencers than in mainstream politicians.

Furthermore, between 2021 and 2024, young participation in political hashtags (such as #YouthForChange and #VoteForPakistan) increased by 35%, suggesting an increase in online activity and awareness. Online political debates, memes, and voter awareness campaigns surged to record levels during Pakistan's 2024 General Elections, mostly due to youth-oriented content on Instagram and TikTok.

Summary of Chapter:

The Literature Review chapter presents a comprehensive overview of existing research and scholarly debates related to political communication, youth political participation, and the transformative role of social media in democratic engagement. It outlines how traditional and digital media have evolved as platforms for political discourse, with particular emphasis on the emergence of social networking sites (SNSs)—notably Facebook and Instagram—as influential tools in shaping political awareness, mobilization, and civic decision-making among youth.

The review begins by examining foundational concepts of political communication, highlighting the transition from legacy media to digital platforms in political messaging, outreach, and public engagement. It explores global and regional literature on youth engagement patterns, emphasizing how digital literacy, media exposure, and online activism contribute to shaping political behavior in young demographics.

Special focus is placed on the Pakistani socio-political context, including previous studies on youth political engagement, voter turnout, and the role of digital campaigns during recent elections. The chapter critically assesses how political parties, candidates, and activists utilize visual content, live videos, hashtags, and influencer-based strategies to influence youth on Instagram and Facebook.

Furthermore, the chapter identifies key thematic gaps in existing literature, such as the underrepresentation of empirical studies specific to youth political behavior in South Asia, and the lack of focused research on the effectiveness of Instagram compared to more widely studied platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

The chapter concludes by reinforcing the need for a context-specific, mixed-methods approach to investigate how political communication on social media influences youth

participation and decision-making in contemporary Pakistan, especially during pivotal electoral events like the 2024 general elections.

CHAPTER 3

THEROTACIAL FRAMEWORK & METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Narrative for the Study

It is important to note that there are a lot of techniques in which the social media influences youth political participation.

3.1.1 Agenda Setting Theory

This research is informed by the Agenda-Setting Theory, which was initially introduced by McCombs and Shaw in 1972. According to this theory, the media does not prescribe thoughts to the audience but instead highlights certain issues, thereby shaping what the public considers important. When this theory is applied to social media, it suggests that the visibility and prevalence of political content can affect young people's understanding of political issues, their importance, and their subsequent political engagement.

In Pakistan, where young individuals are actively involved on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, the continuous exposure to political discussions, party campaigns, and user-generated content enhances the prominence of specific political issues. This increased importance may lead young individuals to search for more political information, take part in debates, and ultimately make their voting choices influenced by the issues that are prominently discussed online.

In the context of Pakistan, where young people are significantly active on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, the ongoing exposure to political debates, party campaigns, and discussions generated by users raises the importance of particular political subjects. This heightened salience may encourage youth to seek more political information, engage in debates, and ultimately make voting decisions based on the issues emphasized online.

Objective 1 (impact of social media on engagement): Agenda-setting elucidates how online political communication captures the attention of young individuals towards significant issues, fostering activism and participation.

Objective 2 (efficacy of social media): This theoretical perspective emphasizes that consistent exposure increases the scope and effectiveness of political communications.

Objective 3 (types of engagement): The level of youth involvement varies according to the issues that social media platforms prioritize, influencing whether their actions are informational, expressive, or mobilization.

Objective 4 (impact on electoral choices): By highlighting particular issues, social media steers youth towards aligning their voting preferences with the most prominent and contested political narratives.

Therefore, Agenda-Setting Theory provides a compelling framework for understanding how political communication through social media shapes youth perspectives and political engagement in Pakistan.

3.2   Research Paradigm

A research paradigm represents the foundational belief system that guides the process of data collection and analysis in relation to a specific phenomenon, shaping the direction of the research inquiry. It also reflects the researcher's perspective on how knowledge is obtained from both the physical and social environments, influencing their understanding of reality. In the realm of political communication, especially concerning youth engagement in politics, a pragmatist approach has gained traction. Pragmatism asserts the existence of an objective reality but also acknowledges the subjectivity of individual experiences, emphasizing the importance of understanding diverse viewpoints. Pragmatists engage in knowledge creation through active interpretation and inquiry, with an emphasis on practical outcomes. This approach often integrates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, depending on the nature of the research questions. The selection of research methods is driven by the specific issues being examined, with data collection methods serving as tools to investigate and address these questions. This study supports the notion that a mixed-methods research strategy, underpinned by pragmatism, is effective for exploring the complexities of youth political participation. Due to the subjective nature of perception and the interconnectedness

of values, the pragmatist paradigm is particularly relevant, enabling a comprehensive and adaptable approach to investigating this topic.

3.3   Research Design

A quantitative survey research design was utilized. This approach enables the researcher to collect standardized responses from a significant number of students and to statistically analyze the relationships between key variables, including exposure to political content on social media, youth engagement, and voting decisions. A cross-sectional strategy was adopted, facilitating the study's ability to capture the perceptions and behaviors of youth at a singular point in time, specifically during and after the 2024 general elections.

The study was focused in a particular area that NUML university in Islamabad and Rawalpindi and focuses on understanding how political messages are crafted and disseminated on these platforms, and how these messages influence the political behavior and decision-making of young users by adopting content analysis and survey method.

3.4   Quantitative approach

This qualitative study aims at exploring aspects of political communication on social media platforms or social applications like Facebook and Instagram on aspects of participations and decisions of the youth of Pakistan belonging to the particular contexts above. This repositions the analysis on how the users engage, make sense or encounter political content on such platforms.

3.4.1 Data Collection

The process of data collection was executed in two primary modes:

1. Online Surveys: Questionnaires were shared via Google Forms in university WhatsApp groups, Facebook student communities, and official university forums.

2. On-Campus Surveys: Field assistants provided printed questionnaires at selected universities in Islamabad to ensure the participation of students with limited internet access. In total, 150 valid responses were received after the elimination of incomplete questionnaires.

3.4.2 Population

The research population comprises Pakistani youth between the ages of 18 and 29 who are enrolled in both public and private universities located in Islamabad. This demographic was chosen for three primary reasons.

Relevance: University students represent a significant portion of active users on digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter (X).

Diversity: Universities in Islamabad draw students from various regions of Pakistan, thereby ensuring a sample that reflects cultural, ethnic, and regional diversity.

Political significance: This demographic includes both first-time voters and young repeat voters, making them highly relevant for analyzing the impact of political communication. Thus, although the study is geographically limited to Islamabad, the population offers a microcosm of the wider Pakistani youth community.

Consequently, while the study is geographically confined to Islamabad, the population serves as a microcosm of the broader Pakistani youth demographic.

3.4.3 Sampling Technique and Sample

In the last study, the quantitative approach used a simple random sampling method. The sample chosen ensured both male and female of Islamabad were represented. The sample chosen for the study was 150 students. The study sample size represent university student have been determined using Cochran's formula is the degree of accuracy required or in other words, degree of error tolerated by the analyst technique. The selected sample was representative of Islamabad's male and female populations. One fifty students' were chosen as the study's sample. The sample size has been established using Cochran's formula.

- Where: e is the desired level of precision (i.e., the margin of error),
- The (sample) proportion of the population with the relevant attribute is denoted by p_{i}.
- The range of q is 1–p.

By placing values where; the error margin is usually equal to 5%, 90% confidence level response rate is usually equal to 50%. distribution, thus the sample size is found to be 250.

3.4.4 Sampling Technique

The research employed a stratified random sampling method to guarantee representativeness among various types of universities and demographics: Strata Formation: Universities located in Islamabad were categorized into public institutions (such as Quaid-i-Azam University, International Islamic University, and COMSATS University) and private institutions (including Bahria University, Riphah International, and SZABIST).

Proportional Allocation: Respondents were allocated in proportion to the enrollment figures of public and private universities. Random Selection: Students were randomly contacted within each university through online platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook groups, Google Forms) and by visiting student activity areas in person.

Random Selection: Within each institution, students were approached randomly via online platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook groups, Google Forms) and through direct visits to student activity areas.

This approach ensured the inclusion of students across different genders, academic levels (undergraduate and graduate), and fields of study.

3.4.5 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed as the main tool for data collection. The instrument comprised five sections:

Demographics: Age, gender, educational attainment, type of university, and daily time spent on social media.

Exposure to Social Media Political Communication: Frequency of viewing political posts, platforms engaged with, and types of content consumed (videos, memes, live streams, reels).

Motivation for Political Information: Reasons for interacting with political content (knowledge-seeking, peer influence, entertainment, civic duty).

Engagement and Participation: Online activities (liking, sharing, commenting) and offline actions (rallies, protests, voting).

Influence on Political Decision-Making: The role of social media in shaping political understanding, candidate preference, and voting decisions.

Most questions were assessed using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

3.4.6. Validity and Reliability

Content Validity: The questionnaire access by three specialists in media and political communication to verify that the items corresponded with the objectives of the study.

Pilot Testing: A pilot test was carried out with 10 university students from Islamabad to confirm the clarity and relevance of the items. Minor revisions were made to prevent any ambiguous language.

Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha was computed from the pilot data, resulting in a value of 0.85, which confirms the strong internal consistency of the instrument.

3.4.7. Data Analysis Technique

The gathered data were input into SPSS (v26) and analyzed through the following methods:

Descriptive Statistics: This includes frequencies, percentages, and means related to demographic and exposure patterns.

Reliability Analysis: Application of Cronbach's Alpha to determine internal consistency.

Correlation Analysis: Performed to investigate the relationships among the study variables.

Regression Analysis: To assess the predictive role of social media political communication on motivation, engagement, understanding, and participation.

3.5   Ethical Considerations

The study carefully considered ethical guidelines to ensure the well-being of the research participants. No participants were exposed to any harm during the study. Their dignity and confidentiality were prioritized, and the anonymity of the survey responses was maintained to protect the data. Prior to participation, the aims and objectives of the research were clearly explained to the participants, and their consent was obtained before collecting any data. Additionally, participants were assured that there were no funding sources or affiliations involved in the research.

3.6   Summary of Chapter

I have described the research's theoretical background and account in this chapter. I have elucidated social media in political Communication and young people's political involvement. For the quantitative data, we have formulated a model to establish the factors that influence the youth decision in the context of the presence of a moderator. According to the

literature, political Communication is the moderating variable in new media, including social media platforms, news websites, and opinion blogs. Additionally, I have extended the outline of quantitative data collection and analysis methods.

CHAPTER 4:

DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS

This chapter outlines the quantitative data analysis and findings derived from the research titled "Role of Social Media in Making Perspectives and New Mind Sets Among Youth." The objective of this chapter is to assess how social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, affect the political involvement and decision-making of young university students in Islamabad.

The analysis is based on data collected from 150 students across major universities in Islamabad, representing a wide array of academic disciplines and demographic characteristics. Statistical methods such as descriptive analysis, correlation, multiple regression, and ANOVA were utilized to investigate the relationships among the variables.

4.1 Quantitative Data

The survey administered to participants was designed to gather quantitative data for the research. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select the respondents. To ensure authentic and truthful responses, participants were assured of the confidentiality of their data. The survey was structured into two sections: (1) demographic information and (2) a measurement scale. In total, the questionnaire contained 25 items aimed at assessing the dependent, independent, and moderator variables.

Data Overview

A comprehensive analysis was conducted on 150 valid responses. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 30 years, encompassing both undergraduate and postgraduate students. The dataset was processed with SPSS 26.0, guaranteeing accuracy, reliability, and internal consistency.

4.1.1 Reliability Test

Applying the Cronbach's Alpha test before the analysis of the data revealed the following results about the reliability of the questions used in the proposed assessment. reliability of data. It is not really about reporting statistics but it is more about dependability of the instrument. It is usually considered that if the value is greater than 0.7 then those values are said to be good and the data can be put for further analysis. The higher the Alpha's will inform whether the items capture the given construct or not. It also measures the internal consistency of the reliability of test.

The rules for reliability of the Cronbach's Alpha are:

1. If value is > 0.9 2, it is said to be excellent.

2. if alpha is greater than 0.8 3, then it is considering good

3. although, for the occurrence to be acceptable, the value must be > = 0.7 4

4. Doubtful if Value > 0.6

5. If Alpha is greater than 0.5, it is utterly undesirable.

Table 4.1: Case Processing Summary Statistics

Case Processing Summary Statistics			
		N	%
	Valid	131	100.0
Case	Exclude	18	12.1
	Total	149	100.0

Table 4.2: Cronbach Alpha Statistics for the total items

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.848	24

The value of alpha in the table is 0.848, indicating that the instrument demonstrates strong reliability. This suggests that all fifty-three items within the instrument exhibit a high level of internal consistency.

4.1.2   Sample Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

The sample characteristics, extracted from the demographic information in the questionnaire, along with the frequency distribution and descriptive statistics of all items, are presented below.

Table 4.3: Summary of Gender

Gender				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	113	75.8	75.8	75.8
Female	36	24.2	24.2	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

From the sample data presented in Table 4.3, 75% of the participants were male, while the remaining 24% were female.

Table 4.4: Summary of Age

Age				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 18 Years	6	4.0	4.0	40
18-21 Years	12	8.1	8.1	12.1
22-25 Years	56	37.6	37.6	49.7
More than 25 Years	75	50.3	50.3	100.0
Total	272	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.4, the respondents are categorized into four age groups. The largest proportion, accounting for 50.3%, fell into the "over 25 years" category. Another significant segment, comprising 37.6%, was aged between 20 and 25 years. A smaller portion of respondents belonged to the "18-21 years" group, representing 4.0%, while only 1.8% were under 18 years of age.

Table 4.5: Summary of Organization

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Degree in which you currently Enrolled				
Undergraduate	23	15.4	15.4	15.4
Graduate	63	42.3	42.3	57.7
Intermediate	15	10.1	10.1	67.8
Other	48	32.2	32.2	100.0

The data presented in Table 4.5 illustrates the distribution of respondents based on their current enrollment status at their respective universities. According to the findings, 15.4% of the respondents are pursuing undergraduate studies, 42.3% are enrolled in graduate programs, 10.1% are studying at the intermediate level, and 32.2% are pursuing other types of degrees.

Table 4.6: Summary of usage of Social Media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Mostly used social media platform				
Facebook	24	16.1	16.1	16.1
Instagram	65	43.6	43.6	59.7
Twitter	18	12.1	12.1	71.8
Other	42	28.2	28.2	100.0

The table 4.6 depicts the usage of social media app which is categorized in four categories. 16.1% respondents were use Facebook, 43.6%were using Instagram 12.1% were using Twitter and 28.2% used other apps.

Table 4.7: Summary of Qualification

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Qualification				
Graduation	113	41.5	41.5	41.5
Masters	120	44.1	44.1	85.7
PhD	4	1.5	1.5	87.1
Other	35	12.9	12.9	100.0

Total	272	100.0	100.0

The data in Table 4.7 reveals that the majority of participants were highly educated, with 75% holding a university degree. On the other hand, only a small fraction of the respondents, approximately 1.5%, possessed a doctoral degree.

Table 4.8: Summary of Frequency of Media Consumption

Frequency of media Consumption			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Daily	97	65.1	65.1	65.1
Weekly	16	10.7	10.7	75.8
Monthly	14	9.4	9.4	85.2
Yearly	11	7.4	7.4	92.6

In table 4.8, Almost 65% of the respondents had the daily use social media whereas 10.7% weekly use social media9.4% monthly and 7.4% were Yearly used social media.

Table 4.9: Summary: Do you regularly watch/read News on social media

Statement 1			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	10	6.7	6.7	6.7
Disagree	34	22.8	22.8	29.5
Neutral	61	40.9	40.9	70.5
Agree	24	16.1	16.1	86.6
Strongly Agree	20	13.4	13.4	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

The above table 4.9 shows that 22.8% not regularly watch/ read News on social media and 16.1% people agreed that they regularly watch/ read News on social media. 40.9% people were neutral.

Table 4.10: Social Media update as a political issue

Statement 2			

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	15	10.1	10.1	10.1
Disagree	24	16.1	16.1	26.2
Neutral	35	23.5	23.5	49.7
Agree	46	30.9	30.9	80.5
Strongly Agree	26	19.5	19.5	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

According to table 4.10, 16.1% people disagreed that social media update political issue and 30.9% people agreed. 23.5% people were neutral.

Table 4.11: Trust on Social Media Information

Statement 3				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	14	9.4	9.4	9.4
Disagree	28	18.8	18.8	28.2
Neutral	54	36.2	36.2	64.4
Agree	33	22.1	22.1	86.6
Strongly Agree	20	13.4	13.4	100.0
Total	149	100.1	100.0	

The data in Table 4.11 reveals that 18.4% of respondents expressed disagreement with the statement regarding their trust in social media, while 22.1% agreed, and 36.2% remained neutral on the matter.

Table 4.12: Social media is significant source of political knowledge

Statement 4				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	1.3	1.3	1.3
Disagree	22	14.8	14.8	16.1
Neutral	51	34.2	34.2	50.3
Agree	21	14.1	14.1	64.4

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	53	35.6	35.6	100.0
Total	149	100.1	100.0	

The table 4.12, indicates that 14.8% people disagree with the statement that social media is not significant source of political knowledge whereas 35.6 agree. 34.2% people were neutral.

Table 4.13: Actively seeking out political information on various media platforms

Statement 5				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	2.7	2.7	2.7
Disagree	31	20.8	20.8	23.5
Neutral	51	34.2	34.2	57.7
Agree	14	9.4	9.4	67.1
Strongly Agree	49	32.9	32.9	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

Of the respondents, 20.8% disagreed with the statement that they actively seek political information through various media platforms, while 32.9% strongly agreed. Additionally, 34.2% of participants remained neutral on the matter.

Table 4.14: Media Influence on Political News: My opinions about political Issues

Statement 6				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	10	6.7	6.7	6.7
Disagree	26	17.4	17.4	24.2
Neutral	49	32.9	32.9	57.0
Agree	20	13.4	13.4	70.5
Strongly Agree	44	29.5	29.5	100.0
Total	149	100.1	100.0	

Based on Table 4.14, it is evident that 17.4% of individuals expressed disagreement with the statement, "Political news on media influences my opinions about political issues." Meanwhile,

29.5% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, and 32.9% maintained a neutral stance.

Table 4.15: Political Advertisements impact my opinion about political candidates

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
		Statement 7		
Strongly Disagree	12	8.1	8.1	8.1
Disagree	31	20.8	20.8	28.9
Neutral	36	24.2	24.2	53.0
Agree	22	14.8	14.8	67.8
Strongly Agree	48	32.2	32.2	100.0
Total	149	100.1	100.0	

Table 4.15 illustrates that 20.81% of respondents disagreed with the statement that political advertisements influence their opinions about political candidates, while 32.2% agreed. Additionally, 24.2% of participants remained neutral on this matter.

Table 4.16: Follow political figures on social media to stay informed

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
		Statement 8		
Strongly Disagree	18	12.1	12.1	12.1
Disagree	39	26.2	26.2	38.3
Neutral	28	18.8	18.8	57.0
Agree	34	22.8	22.8	79.9
Strongly Agree	30	20.1	20.1	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

The data presented in Table 4.16 reveals that 26.2% of individuals disagree with the idea that they follow political figures on social media for staying informed, while 22.8% express agreement with this statement. Additionally, 18.8% of respondents remain neutral on the matter.

Table 4.17: Political Content shared by friends on social media affects my political views

Statement 9				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	9	6.0	6.0	6.0
Disagree	39	26.2	26.2	32.2
Neutral	39	26.2	26.2	58.4
Agree	20	13.4	13.4	71.8
Strongly Agree	42	28.2	28.2	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 4.17, 26.2% of respondents disagreed with the idea that political content shared by friends on social media influences their political views. In contrast, 28.2% of participants strongly agreed with the statement. The remaining 26.2% provided a neutral response.

Table 4.18: Social media exposure has increased my interest in political issues

Statement 10				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	9	6.0	6.0	6.0
Disagree	36	24.2	24.2	30.2
Neutral	32	21.5	21.5	51.7
Agree	15	10.1	10.1	61.7
Strongly Agree	57	38.3	38.3	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.18, it is shown that 24.2% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that social media exposure has not enhanced their interest in political matters. On the other hand, 38.3% of the participants expressed agreement with this statement, while 21.5% remained neutral.

Table 4.19: Participate in online political discussions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Statement 11				
Strongly Disagree	29	19.5	19.5	19.5
Disagree	56	37.6	37.6	57.0
Neutral	26	17.4	17.4	74.5
Agree	15	10.1	10.1	84.6
Strongly Agree	23	15.4	15.4	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

According to table 4.19, 37.6% of respondents expressed disagreement with the notion that they avoid participating in online political discussions, while 15.4% affirmed that they engage in such discussions. Meanwhile, 17.4% of respondents chose a neutral stance on this matter.

Table 4.20: More likely to vote because of political information from media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Statement 12				
Strongly Disagree	19	12.8	12.8	12.8
Disagree	45	30.2	30.2	43.0
Neutral	31	20.8	20.8	63.8
Agree	20	13.4	13.4	77.2
Strongly Agree	34	22.8	22.8	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

According to the data presented in Table 4.20, 30.2% of respondents expressed disagreement with the statement that they enjoy voting due to political information from the media, while 22.8% agreed with the statement. Additionally, 20.8% of respondents remained neutral on the matter.

Table 4.21: Attended political protests or rallies due to media coverage

Statement 13				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	45	30.2	30.2	30.2
Disagree	41	27.5	27.5	57.7
Neutral	34	22.8	22.8	80.5
Agree	15	10.1	10.1	90.6
Strongly Agree	14	9.4	9.4	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

The data in Table 4.21 shows that 30.2% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, while 10.1% expressed agreement. Additionally, 22.8% of participants remained neutral regarding the statement.

Table 4.22: Interested to communicate with Political leader through social media

Statement 14				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	22	14.8	14.8	14.8
Disagree	46	30.9	30.9	45.6
Neutral	39	26.2	26.2	71.8
Agree	12	8.1	8.1	79.9
Strongly Agree	30	20.1	20.1	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

The data presented in Table 4.22n shows that 30.9% of respondents disagreed, while 20.8% expressed agreement with the statement. Additionally, 26.2% of the participants remained neutral on the matter.

Table 4.23: Media reports help me make informed decisions about political candidates

Statement 15

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	14	9.4	9.4	9.4
Disagree	21	14.1	14.1	23.5
Neutral	40	26.8	26.8	50.3
Agree	22	14.8	14.8	65.1
Strongly Agree	52	34.9	34.9	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 4.23, 14.1% of the participants expressed disagreement with the statement, while 34.9% showed agreement. Additionally, 26.8% of the respondents remained neutral regarding the statement.

Table 4.24: Political parties use more social media platform in their Electorol Campaign as compared to other platform

Statement 16				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	4.0	4.0	4.0
Disagree	23	15.4	15.4	19.5
Neutral	24	16.1	16.1	35.6
Agree	31	20.8	20.8	56.4
Strongly Agree	65	43.6	43.6	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 4.24, 15.4% of respondents expressed disagreement with the assertion that political parties utilize social media platforms more frequently than other methods in their electoral campaigns. In contrast, 43.6% agreed with this statement. Additionally, 16.1% of respondents remained neutral on the matter.

Table 4.25: Critically evaluate political information from the media before forming an opinion

Statement 17				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	9	6.0	6.0	6.0

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	28	18.8	18.8	24.8
Neutral	45	30.2	30.2	55.0
Agree	25	16.8	16.8	71.8
Strongly Agree	42	28.2	28.2	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

The data shows that 18.8% of respondents disagreed with the idea of relying on political information from the media before forming their views. On the other hand, 28.2% of respondents agreed with the statement, while 30.2% remained neutral regarding this matter.

Table 4.26: Media bias affect my decision-making process regarding Political matter

		Statement 18		
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	11	7.4	7.4	7.4
Disagree	33	22.1	22.1	29.5
Neutral	38	25.5	25.5	55.0
Agree	22	14.8	14.8	69.8
Strongly Agree	45	30.2	30.2	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	

The table shows that 22.1% of respondents disagreed with the idea that media bias influences their decision-making on political issues, while 30.2% agreed. Additionally, 22.1% of respondents remained neutral on this matter.

Table 4.27: Feel confident in political Decision when they are informed by media

		Statement 19		
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	10	6.7	7.6	7.6
Disagree	14	9.4	10.7	18.3
Neutral	47	31.5	35.9	54.2
Agree	24	16.1	18.3	72.5
Strongly Agree	36	24.2	27.5	100.0
Total	131	87.9	100.0	

According to table 4.27, 9.4% respondents disagreed, 24.2% respondents agreed to Feel confident in political Decision when they are informed by media.

The majority of the respondents were undergraduates aged between 22 and 25 years, with approximately 68% reporting that they spend more than two hours on social media each day.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.28: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables	Mean	SD
Political Exposure	3.93	0.77
Motivation for Political Information	3.58	0.86
Social Media Usage	3.65	0.82
Political Understanding	3.72	0.78
Peer Influence	3.70	0.82
Political Participation	3.99	0.75

The average scores imply that respondents exhibit significant levels of political exposure and participation, suggesting that social media serves as a vital source of political information and **awareness.**

4.3 Correlation Analysis

To analyze the relationships among the variables in the study, Pearson's correlation analysis was utilized.

Table 4.29:

Correlation Matrix	Usage Hours	Exposure	Motivation	Engagement	Understanding	Participation
Usage Hours	1	.314**	.265**	.278**	.248*	.224**
Exposure	.314**	1	.612**	.602**	.588**	.612**
Motivation	.265**	.612**	1	.597**	.583**	.578**
Engagement	.278**	.602**	.597**	1	.655**	.651**

Understanding	.248*	.588**	.583**	.655**	1	.634**
Participation	.224**	.612**	.578**	.651**	.634**	1

Note: *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$

The correlation analysis indicates a strong positive correlation between exposure, engagement, and political participation. Students who are more exposed to political content and who engage actively with political posts are more likely to take part in political activities, both online and offline.

4.4 Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed to forecast Political Participation based on Usage Hours, Exposure, Motivation, Engagement, Understanding, and Peer Influence.

Table 4.30: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Political Participation

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	1.142	0.312	—	3.66	.000
Usage Hours	0.073	0.042	.085	1.74	.080
Exposure	0.267	0.058	.281	4.59	.000
Motivation	0.129	0.049	.140	2.63	.010
Engagement	0.321	0.054	.354	5.94	.000
Understanding	0.218	0.062	.203	3.52	.001
Peer Influence	0.084	0.047	.089	1.78	.077

Model Summary

- $R = 0.776$

- $R^2 = 0.602$

- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.587$

- $F_{(6, 143)} = 35.98$, $p < 0.001$

The regression analysis elucidates that approximately 60% of the variance in political participation is explained by the model, signifying a strong predictive ability. The most significant predictors identified are engagement, exposure, and understanding. This suggests that youth who regularly interact with political content and have a solid understanding of political issues are more likely to engage in civic and political activities.

4.5 ANOVA Results

ANOVA was utilized to assess the impact of gender and education level on political participation.

Table 4.31: ANOVA table for gender and political participation

Source	df	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12	0.41	.123
Within Groups	148	—	—

Table 32: ANOVA for Education Level and Political Participation

Source	df	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14	0.80	.029
Within Groups	148	—	—

There is no statistically significant difference in political participation between male and female students; however, a significant difference is noted between undergraduate and postgraduate students, with postgraduate students exhibiting slightly higher levels of political engagement and decision-making awareness.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that social media plays a vital role in influencing political awareness and involvement among the youth of Islamabad. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram not only disseminate political information but also inspire users to partake in civic activities. The significant correlations and regression findings underscore that exposure, engagement, and understanding are pivotal elements that drive youth political involvement. These results

are consistent with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which suggests that individuals intentionally seek out media to satisfy their informational and participatory requirements. Young individuals leverage social media for political expression, identity formation, and engagement, effectively turning passive audiences into active participants in democratic discourse.

The findings present a clear picture of youth political engagement via social media in Pakistan. While platforms like Instagram are widely used, and a significant number of users acknowledge gaining political knowledge online, actual participation in discussions or events remains limited. Trust in information, motivation to vote, and willingness to connect with political leaders are still lukewarm.

A recurring trend is the neutral stance among respondents on many statements, indicating uncertainty or ambivalence toward the political role of social media. This highlights a possible gap between political awareness and political action among youth.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter examined data collected from 150 university students in Islamabad and revealed that: Exposure to social media has a substantial impact on political participation. Engagement levels and political comprehension are the most significant indicators of active involvement. Educational background significantly influences participation, while gender disparities are slight. In conclusion, the quantitative results support the objectives of the study, confirming that social media political communication plays a key role in enhancing youth political engagement and informed decision-making.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION ON MEDIA PARTICIPATION & DECISION MAKING

This chapter provides a summary of the study and the basic conclusion and recommendation of the study. They are noted because of the objectives of the study and prior knowledge about social media, political Communication, and contemporary political engagement of young people. The research question which this study focuses on is: What effect political Communication has on political activism of youth on Pakistani Facebook and Instagram pages? It explores the youth as political agents and how social media spaces contribute to their decision-making and voting processes. It also features the study implications, limitations and ways for future research.

5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this research was to investigate the impact of social media as a medium for political communication and its influence on the political participation of youth, specifically among university students in Islamabad, Pakistan. The research focused on how exposure to political content, the drive for political information, patterns of engagement, and comprehension gained from social media influence young people's participation and decision-making in the political sphere. The results outlined in Chapter 4 presented strong evidence that social media plays a pivotal role in enhancing political engagement. This chapter discusses these findings in the context of the existing literature and the theoretical framework that guided the research.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings Social Media as a Political Instrument

The results indicated that social media, especially Facebook and Instagram, has emerged as a primary platform for political discourse among young individuals. More than 85% of participants reported daily usage of social media, with almost two-thirds spending over two hours online. Political engagement on these platforms has become a crucial means through which youth acquire knowledge about candidates, political parties, and national issues.

Exposure and Political Awareness

A robust correlation ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.001$) was established between exposure to political content and political engagement. This suggests that the greater the exposure of youth to political discussions, campaign messages, and advertisements online, the more likely they are to engage in voting and political debates.

Engagement as a Predictive Variable Engagement—defined as the act of liking, commenting, and sharing political posts—was found to be the strongest predictor of political participation in regression analysis ($\beta = .354$, $p < 0.001$). Active engagement with content leads to increased political awareness and involvement, confirming that participation is no longer restricted to offline activities.

Understanding and Informed Decision-Making

Political understanding was shown to significantly influence participation ($\beta = .203$, $p = 0.001$). Students who reported a better understanding of political issues were more likely to engage in discussions, support, or criticize political matters both online and offline. Education and Participation ANOVA results indicated a significant difference ($F = 4.89$, $p = .029$) between undergraduate and postgraduate students, with postgraduates demonstrating higher levels of political participation. However, gender differences were not statistically significant ($p = .123$), suggesting that both male and female youth are equally engaged in political discourse on social media.

5.3 Discussion in Light of Objectives

Objective 1: To investigate the role of social media as a medium for political communication and its impact on youth involvement in politics

The findings of the study clearly illustrate that social media functions as a potent channel for political communication among the youth. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram create

interactive venues where young citizens can obtain, disseminate, and deliberate on political matters. The results are consistent with previous research (e.g., Ahmad, 2022; Hussain & Khan, 2023) that indicates digital media cultivates a participatory political culture among the youth in Pakistan. The regression results reinforce this, demonstrating that exposure and engagement are significant predictors of political participation.

Objective 2: To investigate the impact of social media on contemporary political communication

The analysis indicates that social media is not just an auxiliary communication tool but has evolved into a leading medium for political mobilization. The high mean scores for exposure (M = 3.92) and engagement (M = 3.74) suggest that young voters rely on these platforms for timely political updates, campaign information, and peer interactions. hese results are consistent with international research (Towner & Dulio, 2022; Williams et al., 2021), suggesting that social media has altered the political communication landscape by fostering direct interactions between political actors and the electorate.

Objective 3: To investigate the various forms of political engagement that arise from political communication on social media.

The findings highlighted numerous forms of political involvement among young people: Online interaction: liking, commenting, sharing, or creating political content. Digital engagement: liking, commenting, sharing, or producing political content. Physical participation: voting, attending rallies, and engaging in political discussions within personal networks. Offline participation: voting, participating in rallies, and discussing political matters within personal circles. This affirms that online participation often results in tangible engagement, supporting the theory of "digital-to-physical political behavior." This is in agreement with earlier studies (Kim & Park, 2020) that associate online activism with civic involvement.

Objective 4: To investigate the effect of social media on the decision-making of young voters The research indicated that the understanding of political issues and peer influence, stemming from social media, significantly affects the political decisions made by young voters. Interactions with peers and exposure to a range of opinions on social media enhance the political landscape for the youth. These insights are in line with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which articulates that individuals actively engage with media to fulfill their informational and participatory needs that shape their decision-making processes.

5.4 Discussion in Relation to Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which asserts that audiences deliberately choose media channels to fulfill their particular needs for information, entertainment, and engagement. The results strongly corroborate the theory, indicating that:

- Youth intentionally engage with social media to acquire political information and knowledge.
- Social media fulfills their needs for belonging, participation, and self-expression.
- Political engagement on social media results in real-world participation.

Thus, UGT offers a detailed framework for comprehending the relationship between political communication and youth engagement in the context of Pakistan.

5.5 Implications of the Study

5.5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study broadens the application of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) within the realm of political communication by incorporating social media as a fundamental aspect of contemporary democratic participation. It presents empirical findings that demonstrate youth media consumption is not merely passive but rather participatory and deliberative in nature.

5.5.2 Practical Implications for Political Parties:

The findings indicate that political parties can effectively utilize targeted digital campaigns to engage young voters.

For Educators:

Educational institutions should advocate for media literacy to assist students in critically analyzing political information found online.

For Policymakers:

Digital engagement in politics should be acknowledged as a valid form of civic involvement, and policies should be developed to promote responsible discourse in online environments.

5.6 The Role of Facebook and Instagram in Political Participation

The research findings show that Facebook and Instagram are important in discussions concerning youth political participation in Pakistan. It allows young people easy access to

political personalities, activists to inter mingle, to exchange view or be exposed to political material. The text-based nature of Facebook, primarily, has led to a higher-than-average usage of political discussion, lending itself to more profound debate, discussion, and commentary. Though mainly visual, Instagram has transformed into a breeding ground for political activism and engagement, mainly via live sessions, stories, and visual campaigns.

The study corroborates a body of existing research literature that suggests that the social media platform itself is essential in creating a political culture of participation. Young people have the opportunity to engage in political discourse themselves. They are inundated with various political perspectives, an aspect that traditional media often does not offer in the same interactive way. This fits data collected by scholars such as Loader et al. (2014), who argue that social media enhances participatory democracy by providing a platform for political dialogue among people who otherwise might not congregate through traditional media

5.7   Impact of Political Communication on Decision Making

The Government, political parties and other political entities' communication on the Facebook page and the Instagram account also has a direct influence over youths' decision–making in Pakistan. In the study, the authors found that the more political content people confront on these platforms, the more politically aware people become and the more inclined to engage in political behavior such as voting in an election, attending a political event or discussing politics with friends. Beyond consuming political information, social media's interactive features allow young people in particular to create and influence content through their own spheres of influence.

The political debate and critical exploration of competing views, and fact-checking before making decisions, on Facebook and Instagram provides youth with that opportunity. This allows them to make more informed political decisions. Moreover, since algorithms often show users content that is aligned with their interest and prior beliefs, interaction with political content is often personalized (Vorst et al., 2023). But this exhaust the emergence of "filter bubbles" or "echo chamber," where only a limited number of political views can be visible to people, thereby restricting fair judgment and critical thinking with respect to political issues. Many (Sunstein, 2007) have critiqued this phenomenon, warning that personalized political communication could drive a wedge in the public sphere.

5.8 Youth Political Participation and Mobilization

The primary finding of this research is that social media influences young people, in two ways, in terms of the education and inspiration on political participation. Movements through digital mediums, hashtags such as #NayaPakistan and #StopTheSteal, and online political campaigns have proven effective at galvanizing youths around political candidates and causes. According to this research, Pakistani youth are active agents in politics, not only passive consumers of political content. They're often using these platforms to call for change or to voice their political dissent.

Facebook and Instagram are also vehicles of political mobilization — young people who view political content online are more likely to participate in offline forms of political activity. The analysis corroborates the impetus "online-to-offline" theory of political participation, which maintains that social media use serves as a launch pad for real political activity. The findings of the study echo research such as that of Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2012), who found that online political engagement often leads to offline political behaviors.

5.9 The Influence of Political Leaders and Influencers

The second research question, therefore, deals with the impact of political influencers / political leaders on YPP. Both of the platforms, as well as Facebook and Instagram, are informational, campaigning, and persuasive in political communications by the representatives of the authorities, opinion leaders, and activists. Since political influential and politicians post in an informal and more understandable language rather than official news agencies or political projects, this is particularly the case with the young audience. Let it be through Instagram stories, Facebook live videos and other things, the study shows that they make the electorate feel close to the political personalities. If young audiences have a positive attachment to the targets of political authorities, they will participate in political actions, and such participation depends on the confidence and commitment in political messages. But this may also result to an over emphasis on bike, which would go hand in hand with charging the political culture with fixation on personalities to the detriment of policy issues.

5.10 Media Platforms as Catalysts for Youth Political Participation

This research has mainly focused on how media, particularly social media, can engage young people in politics. The study's findings are that social media, including Facebook, Instagram,

and Twitter, provide a way of political activation and types of Communication not available in conventional media. Hence, social media platforms let users interact with political discussions, engage in various advocacy processes, and share information. According to this, Vitak et al. A final point from Boulianne (2011) and Boulianne (2015) is that because B2B converts passive spectators into active actors, it speaks to the notion of clicking within signs and content that can be immediately shared and politically participated with. These platforms expand the definition of politics since youth can mobilize for mainstream political issues or political causes. New media leads to something I would like to term 'micro engagement' small, convenient, low-risk engagement activities such as liking or sharing posts that make up a discussion. Although the kind of participation seen here is not typical of conventional political processes, what is most evident is active participation, which eliminates earlier connotations of politics.

5.11 Theoretical Implications: Revisiting the Role of Media in Political Engagement

The study adds to broader theoretical understandings of the role of media in youth political engagement, particularly within existing frameworks of digital political communication and participation theory. It reinforces the idea that today's outlets for tagging and sharing, especially on social media were the virtual public spaces of the past (Habermas, 1989). While the public sphere has always been a complex concept, the traditional public sphere involved a more curated approach to discourse, with rules and regulations, whereas in today's digital world, there is often an inherent fragmentation, the public space of today is algorithmic and driven largely by user preference in terms of which information flows and is shared.

This corresponds with the notion of "networked individualism" (Rainie & Wellman, 2012), within which youth engagement in political discourse is more individualized rather than dependent on formal institutions. Instead, young people tend to be driven to participate politically by their personal networks and communities, not through formal, organized, institutionalized chains. This trend of individualistic political engagement indicates that political participation is metamorphosing into a personalized model where one's media exposure and engagement with political issues is determined by their interests and views

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5.12 Practical Implications for Political Institutions and Policymakers

Keeping youth in mind, the study discusses implications of the findings for political institutions and policymakers seeking to engage youth in the political process. First, the findings indicate that digital literacy programs may be key to teaching young people to critically assess political information online. Educating youth about how to differentiate valid sources from less reliable ones could help combat misinformation and limit engagement in echo chambers. This is particularly important since political institutions are coming to rely more on social media for communication and outreach.

In addition, decision-makers could be able to harness the interactive nature of social media to improve youth participation in developing policy. Online town halls, digital feedback methods, and interactive policy discussions, for example, can be successful in bringing young voters into the fold who may not be inclined to use more traditional engagement methods. Research shows that e-participation (Macintosh, 2004) in digital platforms can lead to inclusive decision-making, giving youths voice over decisions that impact their lives

5.13 Contribution of the Study

This research presents multiple significant contributions: It provides empirical data regarding the impact of social media on the political engagement of youth in Pakistan. It synthesizes exposure, engagement, and understanding into a cohesive conceptual framework that clarifies political decision-making processes. It reduces the research gap in the domain of Pakistani political communication studies by emphasizing the youth from universities in Islamabad, a demographic that is often neglected in research. It offers a practical model that can assist policymakers and communication strategists in comprehending youth mobilization in the context of the digital era.

Summary of Chapter

The study seeks to explore the types and effects of political communication on the political participation of Pakistani youth, with two prominent social media platforms; Facebook and Instagram. These platforms have set new standards for political engagement, and opened new forms of political lobbying for youth. However, in order for these platforms to realize their democratic potential, they must tackle issues such as misinformation, echo chambers, and online harassment. The impact of social media on the political behavior of youth

will likely continue to command attention and concern among scholars and policymakers alike in the future.

In conclusion, social media has a big influence on how young people think and feel about politics. It raises political consciousness, encourages activism, and offers a forum for participation, but it also has drawbacks like selective exposure, political polarization, and false information. Policymakers, educators, and social media corporations must work together to optimize social media's positive effects while reducing its negative ones. Promoting digital literacy and ethical social media use will be crucial to ensuring that young people acquire critical, knowledgeable, and well-rounded political viewpoints.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper titled how media penetrates the political participation of the declared youth in Pakistan by calculating political communications through Facebook pages and Instagram pages caused an unprecedented regime of analysis. In younger groups, social media — especially Facebook and Instagram — influences participation in politics because they are easily accessible venues for political discussion, information and mobilization. Content analysis of platforms shows this shift in political communication involving these changes, moving from traditional mediums to immediate, interactive, visually pleasing forms of communication. Young people have long been egregiously underrepresented in decision-making processes but they use these platforms to voice their ideas, advance political causes, and disrupt traditional political practices.

The study also shows that political content on such sites influenced not only young people's general engagement in political decision-making, but also their knowledge of political issues.

While they have popularized access to information and to participation, what they can do to foster deep political understanding is limited by issues such as disinformation, political polarization and, relatively, the shallow nature of online engagement. That's most concerning because, with all of these trends, there are still barriers to youth political participation — low levels of civics education, a lack of faith in political processes and differential use of technology along lines of class.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. **Improving Critical Thinking and Digital Literacy:**

   If they will be able to assess the material they encounter as they scroll through social media, they will desperately need initiatives to bolster youth's digital literacy. Such workshops and training programs developed and promoted by the government, civil society and educational

institutions groom young people to navigate the political landscape more effectively, and distinguish between credible information and misinformation.

2. **Strengthening Political Education**

At the secondary and postsecondary levels, political education must be stronger and included in the curriculum. This would give young people the tools they need to better navigate both the online and offline political conversations and decision-making processes by arming them with knowledge about the current political system and its institutions, as well as an understanding of the value of active citizenship.

3. **Encouraging Political Participation by the Parties**

Promoting Political Participation and Transparency reforms of Political Parties Politicians and political parties must recognize how they can connect with young people by investing in digital platforms. They should learn from what Rivera said he had learned from his work with the De Blasio administration, which is, to invest in open, interesting, engaged political Communication on social media platforms, namely Facebook and Instagram. Moreover, promoting two-way Communication where young people feel heard and valued in their communities and their country can also lead to greater political engagement and trust.

Combating Political Disinformation on the Internet

Disinformation is best solved through a partnership of social media companies, government institutions and civil society. For the contagion of false information to be eliminated, social media corporations, government entities, and civil society organizations could join hands. Better post moderation on Facebook and Instagram, increased accountability for media companies, and fact-checking apps — there are a few tactics that could help prevent false information from turning young people off politics.

4. **Overcoming the Digital Gap**

Addressing the digital divide, where parts of the socioeconomic spectrum cannot access social media platforms (for example, due to the cost of data bundles), the government and other actors should step in to ensure all citizens have online access. The Internet should be guaranteed to all young people from all socioeconomic backgrounds and digital tools should be made available to marginalized communities.

5. **Attracting Sustainable Engagement**

During elections: Election season is far too short a time to allow people to become involved in politics. Politicians, political organizations, and civil society organizations should promote this continuous engagement by creating spaces, groups, and events that keep young

people engaged in the political process and the life of the country throughout the year. This would shape a younger electorate that is more politically aware and engaged.

The findings of the study also provide key recommendations for some future scope of research. In particular, to fully understand the long-lasting implications of political Communication on youth decision-making, especially in terms of voting and political participation, it requires more substantial research.

Future studies should examine the impact of disinformation on political participation via social media, particularly in politically polarized environments, such as Pakistan. The analysis did not seek to account for variations in the influences of get-out-the-vote political Communication on young men versus young women. However, future research looking at the intersection of social media political participation through a gender lens merits further investigation.

Research must also consider that social media companies could have a regulatory role when moderating political content with the intention of reducing the spread of false information on their platforms while still promoting freedom of expression.

All these suggestions can be put to practice to create more informed people, engaged young people of Pakistan who start politically discussing on social media and become significant part of Pakistani social media political discourse. For young people, social media can be the key to raising their voices and connecting to political institutions. But if these platforms are to be used positively and fairly, it is in everyone's interest to work together.

6. Political Communication Update

Add the most recent developments in political communication to your thesis to increase its relevance and depth. Analyze how social media and other digital platforms have changed political participation. Investigate the effect of micro-targeted campaigns, algorithm-based content distribution, and instantaneous political updates on young people's behavior.

7. Building Training Capacity

Underscore the importance of political communication training programs for encouraging youth activism. Assess the effectiveness of workshops or educational campaigns targeting young people in improving media literacy. Explore programs aimed at teaching young voters to critically evaluate political messaging Study capacity-building programs aimed at equipping young leaders with useful skills for communication and how they impact broad

political engagement. Identify the gaps and limitations current training materials have, and provide, useful recommendations for improvements

8. Content Rich

Ensure the thesis provides comprehensive insights grounded in empirical data and theoretical frameworks. Conduct surveys, focus groups, or interviews targeting youth to collect primary data on their habits regarding political participation. Develop an extensive analysis of various types of political content—educational, persuasive, or mobilizing—and their respective effects. Corresponding outcomes. Use interdisciplinary perspectives from communication studies, psychology, and sociology to improve the analysis. Examine critically how youth trust and participation are impacted by the quality and authenticity of political content.

9. Outreach

Investigate strategies that improve the reach and effectiveness of political Communication aimed at youth. Analyze the impact of influencers, bloggers, and online communities in spreading political messages. Analyze the effects of traditional, digital, and hybrid communication channels on youth engagement. Examine the effectiveness of tailored communication tactics aimed at underrepresented or less politically engaged youth populations. Provide legislators and communicators with advice on how to design campaigns that encourage inclusive participation and optimize outreach. By concentrating on these areas, your thesis can offer significant insights into the evolving dynamics of political communication and its critical role in influencing the political involvement of young people.

Conclusion:

Promoting media literacy and critical thinking in young people is essential, especially in light of social media's increasing impact on political viewpoints. Policymakers and educational institutions should put in place initiatives that teach youth how to spot false information, evaluate biased content, and participate in productive political discourse. Increasing digital literacy will enable young people to use social media in an appropriate manner and make wise political decisions. Additionally, social media companies need to be more accountable for preventing false information and making sure their algorithms are used ethically. A healthy digital environment for political activity can be achieved by putting in place fact-checking procedures, halting the propagation of fake news, and encouraging political content that is

balanced. To create laws that shield consumers from false information and data exploitation, policymakers should collaborate closely with digital firms. Additionally, even if social media has transformed political participation, it is crucial to strike a balance between online and offline activism. It is important to encourage young people to get involved in grassroots movements, town hall meetings, and voting as offline political activities. The study highlights that both online and offline engagement are necessary for significant political change.

In Conclusion, social media is crucial in influencing political viewpoints and helping young people develop a new way of thinking. It has boosted civic engagement, democratized political discourse, and given young people the confidence to question social conventions. But there are also serious drawbacks, such false information, political divisiveness, and moral dilemmas with data privacy. It is the duty of educational institutions, legislators, and social media companies to ensure that the youth population is politically aware and well-informed as the digital landscape develops. Social media can continue to have a positive impact on how future generations view politics by fostering digital literacy, fostering unbiased conversations, and addressing ethical issues. This study warns of social media's possible drawbacks while highlighting its revolutionary potential. In the future, developing an informed, involved, and responsible adolescent population will require a balanced strategy that optimizes social media's advantages while minimizing its risk.

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Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Age: ☐ 18–21 ☐ 22–25 ☐ 26–30
3. Education Level: ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Postgraduate
4. Daily Social Media Usage: ☐ <2 hours ☐ 2–4 hours ☐ 5–7 hours ☐ >7 hours

Section B: Social Media Political Communication

1. I frequently encounter political news or campaigns on Facebook/Instagram.
2. I follow political leaders or pages on social media.
3. I use social media to gather information about elections and policies.
4. I discuss political issues with friends on social media.
5. I share, like, or comment on political posts.

Section C: Motivation for Political Information

1. I use social media to understand political issues that affect me.
2. I am motivated to read political content to make informed voting decisions.
3. I rely on social media for political news more than television or newspapers.
4. I find political discussions on social media engaging and informative.

Section D: Political Understanding

1. I can identify major political parties and their policies.
2. Social media helps me analyze political debates critically.
3. I can differentiate between credible and biased political information.
4. I have developed better political awareness through social media.

Section E: Peer Influence and Engagement

1. My friends influence my opinions about political matters online.
2. I feel encouraged to participate in political discussions after seeing others online.
3. I often share political opinions to express my identity.
4. I feel connected to a community through online political debates.

Section F: Political Participation

1. I discuss political issues with family and friends offline.
2. I participate in online political campaigns or petitions.
3. I voted or plan to vote in upcoming elections due to online influence.
4. Social media has made me more confident in expressing political views.
5. I believe my participation can bring change in political decisions.

Scale Used:

1 = Strongly Disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Neutral   4 = Agree   5 = Strongly Agree

Appendix B: Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Political Exposure	0.81	4
Motivation	0.83	4
Engagement	0.84	4
Understanding	0.79	4
Peer Influence	0.80	4
Political Participation	0.85	5
Overall Reliability	0.85	25

Appendix C: Data Collection Details

1. Population: University students in Islamabad, Pakistan
2. Sample Size: 150 respondents
3. Sampling Technique: Convenient random sampling
4. Method: Online questionnaire (Google Forms) distributed via university networks
5. Data Analysis Software: SPSS 26.0
6. Statistical Tools Used: Descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation, Multiple Regression, and ANOVA

Appendix D: Ethical Considerations

1. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study.
2. Participation was optional, allowing individuals to withdraw at any moment.
3. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained.
4. Data collected was used purely for academic and research purposes.

Chapter	Title	Focus Area
Chapter 1	**Introduction**	Background, objectives, research questions, and significance
Chapter 2	**Literature Review**	Recent (2019–2024) global and national studies on social media and political communication
Chapter 3	**Methodology**	Quantitative approach, sampling, UGT framework, conceptual model
Chapter 4	**Data Analysis and Findings**	Descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, ANOVA
Chapter 5	**Discussion and Conclusion**	Interpretation, implications, contributions, and recommendations
Chapter 6	**References & Appendices**	References, survey items, reliability results, ethical compliance