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Abstract: Social media plays an important role in enhancing the interest of individuals in politics. This study aims to understand how social media contributes to political consciousness and how social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter influence political interest. To collect and analyze the data, this study employed a quantitative research method and a cross-sectional research design. Data was collected from 381 students at Punjab University through a simple random sampling technique. Data was collected through a questionnaire that contains close-ended questions. The collected data was analyzed through SPSS by using chi-square and Kendall's Tau-b test to determine the association and direction of association between study variables. At the bivariate level, the results indicate that there was a significant ($p = 0.000$) and positive association between the use of Facebook and political interest. The association between the use of Twitter and political interest was also significant ($p = 0.000$) and positive. At the multivariate level, the results indicate a spurious association between Facebook use and political interest, which was significant ($p = 0.000$) and positive ($Tb = 0.941$) when controlling for gender. Similarly, there is a spurious association between the use of Twitter and political interest that was significant ($p = 0.000$) and positive ($Tb = 0.745$) for both male and female genders.

Key Words: Social Media, Facebook, Twitter, Political Interest

Introduction

Social media has an important role in an individual's life; they use various social platforms to be updated about the political scenarios in the country, and they also signify political interest while using such social media platforms (Harlow & Brown, 2021). In particular, global production, consumption, and availability of content in social networks and on the Internet have significantly increased in recent years. This growth has had certain repercussions on politics, which are described below. These days, politicians apply social networking sites to promote their candidacies, increase people's awareness of political topics, and engage the youth (Loader et al., 2016). Social media is a group of online communication platforms devoted to community-based participation, communication, sharing of content, and cooperation (Ripki & Wulandari, 2024). Among the various forms of social media are websites and programs devoted to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, and social curation. People may now share their opinions and keep themselves updated more easily, thanks to social media and new media. Social networking has ingrained itself into daily life, particularly among young, educated individuals. The role of social media in altering conventional political space is growing (Frasure & Williams, 2009; Smith et al., 2009). In Pakistan, the usage of social networking platforms has skyrocketed, particularly among young people. However, this does not imply that older adults are not active users of social media platforms. The increased usage of social media in Pakistan in recent years has given rise to an intriguing phenomenon (Khan et al., 2024).

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Social media has an important role in young engagement, particularly among the literate and educated. This medium has revolutionized the way people interact all across the world (Sachdeva & Tripathi, 2019). And as a result of this advanced sort of technology, the globe has shrunk into a computer screen. The nature of involvement and interaction has evolved into a new dimension of the advanced world. "Online tools and utilities that allow communication of information online and participation and collaboration (Jelínková, 2015)." Numerous pages linked to politics and political action can be found on websites such as Facebook, and individuals appear to be very engaged in political problems as they "Tweet" from their portable smartphones or laptops. According to Mossberger et al. (2007), youth political awareness is the term used to describe the active participation in civic and political life, including the formation of political groups, the dissemination of political information and manifestos, the expression of concerns regarding certain political issues, the promotion of political parties or leaders, and the development of particular agendas. A key factor in affecting the democratic process is seen to be civic and political engagement (Fishkin, 1997; Habermas, 2018). Scholars all across the globe believe that the media plays an important role in raising political awareness. Much of the world's youthful population has used new forms of media to learn about politics and express their political opinions with others, not just in their own nation but all around the world (Perloff, 2021).

The future of Pakistan has been altered by social media, claims Muzaffar (2019). The Supreme Court of Pakistan has made many decisions regarding social media reporting in recent decades. Many Pakistani political parties, like the Mutahida Qomi Movement (MQM), Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN), and Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI), use social media to spread their agendas and manifestos to try to inspire young people. Social media may raise young people's political consciousness, which is eventually a major factor in the political revolution. Young people may play a significant role in resolving their political problems if they are aware of them. One of the greatest platforms for raising young people's political consciousness is social media (Zeib, 2021).

Significance of the Study

The importance of social media is increasing day by day as a source of information about political affairs. University students now use social media universally, and their interests in political content influence mainstream media. More than 60% of the population in Pakistan is under the age of 35. All political parties assert that they are the sole representatives of the youth. Political parties are increasingly focusing their attention on young people, particularly those who are educated and studying at the university level. This research aims to evaluate the political awareness and interest of university students in politics, as well as to determine the level of political awareness among the youth.

Problem Statement

There is uncertainty about the role of social media in promoting political awareness in the Pakistani context. The aim of this study is to explore the role of social media in creating political awareness among university students. This study will also explore how much social media is helpful for promoting political awareness among the youth in the Pakistani context.

Objectives of the Research

1. The study aims to investigate how social media contributes to political consciousness among university students.
2. Aim to evaluate how Facebook, as a social media platform, influences political interest.
3. To ascertain whether social media platforms such as Twitter are linked to political interests

Literature Review

Social networking sites, or SNSs, were mostly used as online networking tools until they first appeared in the late 1990s (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Since then, social networking sites, or SNSs, have gained a lot of popularity, particularly among young people who want to understand more about politics and the changes occurring in their nation (Subair, 2020). In the last ten years, the number of social network users has grown significantly. For example, Facebook sees two million new users sign up each week (Khurana, 2015), and a poll (Zhuravskaya et al., 2020) revealed that social networking sites (SNS) offer a way to connect with



those who aren't as engaged in politics. According to early studies, social networks are crucial for establishing connections and fostering relationships with strangers. For instance, according to Touraine (1985), social networks are made up of people or groups who are connected by a common characteristic, such as a shared social rank, resemblance, function, geographic or cultural connection, or a particular need or interest.

Young people all throughout the nation were logging on, making intricate profiles, openly discussing their relationships with other participants, and exchanging lengthy remarks (Boyd, 2008). When Facebook was first introduced in 2004 as a student network, it immediately became well-liked among youth (Grebenshchikova, 2023). Facebook was made available to anybody with a working email account in September 2006. The majority of active Facebook users are still thought to be young individuals, despite the fact that this makes it more difficult to pinpoint the precise number of young users (Guess et al., 2019). Facebook was mostly utilized by college students on September 1st, 2006, and users were roving around, adding friends, leaving comments on other people's sites, seeing other people's posts, and other activities (Advani, 2020). Furthermore, every post or action on Facebook is widely shared with all members of the relevant list. It is referred to as "The Wall." In addition, My Space, Facebook, and other social networking sites are appealing because they let users connect with one another. The core of any social networking site is maintaining relationships with friends and forming new relationships with other users. Users also establish self-presentation profiles and link to the profiles of their friends and their friends (Monica, 2009).

Younger citizens may claim new communication technologies as their own, developing specialized knowledge and innovative applications (Notley, 2009). Young people's news consumption and interests are also of interest. New forms of mass communication have historically been very appealing to younger people (Oates et al., 2006). Young people are a non-homogeneous group, though, and their media consumption in relation to socioeconomic status—such as money, gender, and formal education—or parental media use indicates that the younger generation still differs greatly from the use patterns and interests of adults (Matthes, 2022; Busse et al., 2015). In order to encourage young people's political interest, political knowledge, political involvement, and political awareness, political information and content on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are crucial (Lady, 2023). Social media is becoming more and more integrated into everyday life and politics. Many people have hoped that the new technology will encourage new groups to get involved in politics and take action, as well as help dismantle obstacles and lower hierarchies and make it simpler to enter the political arena (Larcinese & Miner, 2012).

The idea of political consciousness is contentious among academics and has not received enough attention in the literature (Gerbaudo, 2024). There are not many national or international studies that address and investigate this idea. The researcher also observed that these studies used varied conceptual and methodological approaches to measure political awareness in addition to having an imprecise definition of the word. For example, some research measured it using political interest or political awareness questions, while others called it political involvement (Al-Khaza'leh & Lahiani, 2021). It is widely disputed among academics that the idea of political awareness has not received enough attention in academic studies (Özbay & Ipekci, 2024). There is a dearth of research on this topic, both domestically and internationally. Furthermore, the researcher observed that these studies had conflicting conceptual and methodological approaches for evaluating political awareness in addition to having an imprecise definition of the notion. Some studies, for example, called it political engagement, whereas others measured it using political interest or political knowledge questions (Al-Khaza'leh & Lahiani, 2021).

Political participation and political knowledge are strongly correlated, but we are unable to determine which comes first (Hopp et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the current study can provide insights into the relationship between the two; at the very least, in order to engage in politics, people must possess a certain level of political knowledge or comprehension of the political climate in their nation. There is a reciprocal relationship between political knowledge and political involvement (Carpini & Keeter 1996). Political participation, according to Ausat (2023), is giving people or citizens an equal chance to shape the composition of their government, to participate in decisions that affect their nations, and to highlight their positive role in politics by voting or running for office, as well as by engaging in political institutions, parties, and conversations with others (Ausat, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

Political literacy cannot be precisely assessed, but it is assumed that those who are politically literate comprehend party distinctions and are familiar with basic political concepts and facts. There are differing theories on the process that determines political literacy, including whether it is impacted directly by agents from social institutions like social media, an external force imposed by social roles, or an internal psychological force.

Structural Role Theory

According to structural role theory, the mechanism by which education and social position influence political conduct stems from external expectations of social institutions (Turner, 1956; Merton, 1968; Connell, 1987). According to this viewpoint, social institutions (the family, formal schooling, employment, and social media) shape a person's condition in life. That social standing, in turn, shapes political conduct through role-based learning and value assumptions. Formal education is an extremely powerful social structure since it affects one's social place for the rest of one's life (Meyer, 1977). Education gained structural importance as educational certification dominated the job market following World War II (Collins, 1979).

Proponents of social theory include Jennings and Niemi (1981), who concluded that high school tracking systems assign social rankings, which lead to political efficacy, interest, and information holding. Neuman (1986) believed that a socialization process based on social position leads to political superiority.

Socialization Agents Theory

Finally, proponents of classic socialization theories argue that "agents" such as the family, schools, and social media actively transfer political beliefs and knowledge to generate public support for democratic institutions (Hyman, 1959; Jennings & Niemi, 1974). By the 1980s, most political scientists had abandoned socialization agent theories; shifts in political opinions among the 1960s generation refuted the theory that political conduct learned in childhood remains (Conover, 1991). Furthermore, research conducted in the United States found that schools, especially at the college level, are ineffective agents of political socialization (Jaros, 1973; Jennings & Niemi, 1974). Recently, several political scientists have reintroduced socialization agent hypotheses. However, Jennings and Niemi (1981) determined that the family is merely a moderate to weak transmitter of most political behaviors.

Research Methodology

Methods of Research

The quantitative research approach was employed to collect data from the targeted population and statistically analyze it to make statistical inferences. This study adopts the cross-sectional research approach to determine the association between independent and dependent variables.

Sampling Technique

The study picked respondents from different departments at random using the random sampling approach. Data was collected from the students of Punjab university Lahore in various departments randomly. The target population was the students of BS program and MPhil program of the Punjab university.

The Size of the Sample

Since it is a quantitative research technique, the study's sample size was fixed. The current study has a sample size of 381.

Tools of Data Collection

The researcher constructs a structure questionnaire with the help of existing literature. This structure questionnaire consists of demographic questions, independent variables, and dependent variables. Data was collected with the help of this structured questionnaire from the targeted respondents.

Data Analysis



The data were analyzed statistically with the help of SPSS. At the univariate level, simple frequency and percentage were used to determine the frequency of responses; at the bivariate and multi-variate levels, the Chi-square test and Kendall's Tau-b test were used to determine the association between the independent and dependent variables, while gender was used as a mediating variable at the multi-variate level.

The study's Limitations

Only the Lahore area was included in the current study. Within the normal and unique features of a public university, the research was conducted.

Ethical Considerations

During the course of research, it is essential to take ethical considerations into account. In a natural environment, data was obtained from the individuals who responded to the survey at Punjab University. At first, the researcher makes it abundantly obvious to the respondents what the aims of the study are, and data is gathered only when the respondents demonstrate a desire to participate. In addition, the researcher made certain that the respondents' sensitive information and identities were protected.

Results

Frequency percentage of background variables of the respondents

The following table presents the frequency and percentage of study respondents, broken down by gender. The table reveals that the majority of the respondents were male (51.4 percent), and 48.6 percent of the study participants were female.

Table 1

Frequency Percentage of Background Variable of the Respondents

| Gender of the Respondents | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 196 | 51.4 |
| Female | 185 | 48.6 |
| Total | 381 | 100.0 |

Association between the use of Facebook with Political Interest

The table indicates that those respondents who are using Facebook are significantly and positively ($p = 0.00$, $T^b = .359$) associated with political interest. In addition, those who spend most of their time on Facebook have significant ($p = 0.00$) and positive ($T^b = .945$) associated political interest. Those who join various political communities and groups on Facebook also indicate high significance ($p = 0.00$) and positive ($T^b = .571$) association with political interest. Individuals who are searching political issues on Facebook are significant and positive ($p = 0.00$, $T^b = .534$) associated with political interest. Further, the results show that the respondents who followed various Facebook pages related to politics are significantly and positively ($p = 0.00$, $T^b = .566$) associated with political interest.

Table 2

Association between the use of Social Facebook with Political Interest

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | Statistics Statistics χ^2 (P-Value) Tau-b |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Use of Facebook | Political Interest | $\chi^2 = 49.075$ (0.000) $\tau b = .359$ |
| I am using social media/Facebook | | $\chi^2 = 340.354$ (0.000) |
| I spend most of my time on Facebook | | |

| | | |
|--|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | $\tau b = .945$ |
| I am part of the different political communities on Facebook | | $\chi^2 = 124.229$ (0.000) |
| | Political Interest | $\tau b = .571$ |
| I am searching for political issue on Facebook | | $\chi^2 = 108.721$ (0.000) |
| | | $\tau b = .534$ |
| I have followed different Facebook pages related to politics | | $\chi^2 = 121.874$ (0.000) |
| | | $\tau b = .566$ |

Association between the use of Twitter with Political Interest

The table results demonstrate a significant and positive ($p = 0.00$, $T^b = .677$) correlation between Twitter users and political interest. The individuals who spend most of their time on Twitter indicate significant ($p = 0.00$) and positive ($T^b = .724$) associations with political interest. Furthermore, Twitter is associated with political interest significantly and positively ($p = 0.00$, $T^b = .475$) by providing more information related to national politics. The association between political interest and those who condense a lot of information regarding political events through Twitter indicates the significance and positive direction ($p = 0.00$, $T^b = .640$). Further, the respondents who mostly like political tweets on Twitter show significant ($p = 0.00$) and positive ($T^b = .598$) associations.

Table 3

Association between the use of Twitter with Political Interest

| Independent Variable Use of Twitter | Dependent Variable | Statistics χ^2 (P-Value) τb |
|---|--------------------|--|
| I am using Twitter | | $\chi^2 = 174.652$ (0.000) $\tau b = .677$ |
| I spend most of my time on Twitter | | $\chi^2 = 199.619$ (0.000) $\tau b = .724$ |
| Twitter has rich information about political scenarios within the country | Political Interest | $\chi^2 = 86.104$ (0.000) $\tau b = .475$ |
| I condense a lot of information about political events through Twitter | | $\chi^2 = 156.252$ (0.000) $\tau b = .640$ |
| I like mostly political tweets | | $\chi^2 = 136.231$ (0.000) $\tau b = .598$ |

Association between the use of Facebook and Political Interest while controlling Gender

This table indicates the association between the use of Facebook and political interest with respect to gender; gender is an intervening variable between Facebook use and political interest. The table results indicate that the use of Facebook has a significant ($p = 0.00$) and positive ($T^b = .879$) spurious association with respect to the male gender. Furthermore, a spurious significant and positive association ($p = 0.00$, $T^b = .893$) exists between the use of Facebook and political interest within the context of the female gender. Further, the overall results of the entire table show significance ($p = 0.00$) and a positive ($T^b = .941$) spurious association between political interest and the use of Facebook with reference to gender.

Table 4



Association between the Use of Facebook and Political Interest while Controlling Gender

| Gender | Statistics Statistics χ^2 (P-Value) Tau-b | Level of Significance for Entire Table |
|--------|---|--|
| Male | $\chi^2 = 151.503$ (0.000) $\tau b = .879$ | $\chi^2 = 337.533$ (0.000) $\tau b = .941$ |
| Female | $\chi^2 = 147.657$ (0.000) $\tau b = .893$ | |

Association between the use of Twitter and Political Interest while controlling Gender

The following table results demonstrate the correlation between political interest and Twitter use, with gender acting as a mediating variable between Twitter use and political interest. The results indicate a significant and positive ($p = 0.00$, $Tb = 1.000$) spurious association between Twitter use and political interest, particularly among males. In addition, the results highlight that the use of Twitter and political interest are significantly and positively associated ($p = 0.00$, $T^b = .576$). The entire table results indicate that the use of Twitter and political interest have significant ($p = 0.00$) and positive ($T^b = .745$) spurious associations with respect to gender.

Table 5

Association between the Use of Twitter and Political Interest while Controlling Gender

| Gender | Statistics Statistics χ^2 (P-Value) Tau-b | Level of Significance for Entire Table |
|--------|---|--|
| Male | $\chi^2 = 196.000$ (0.000) $\tau b = 1.000$ | $\chi^2 = 211.221$ (0.000) $\tau b = .745$ |
| Female | $\chi^2 = 61.481$ (0.000) $\tau b = .576$ | |

Discussion

As the world grows day by day and experiences technological advancements in different aspects of human life, In the modern era, the majority of the population is using social media on various platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Social media is the sum total of the web-based applications that are avowed to facilitate communication, discussions, and collaborations among a community of users (Okujeni et al., 2024). Different social media types that can be classified include Discussion boards, micro-blogs, social networks, social bookmarking, and Social curation (Stoycheff et al., 2017). Social media plays a vital role in the socialization of individuals, including political socialization. People get various knowledge on such platforms, including knowledge related to politics or political knowledge, and have political interests. The Internet and social media are increasingly influential in transforming conventional political arenas (Okujeni et al., 2024; Stoycheff et al., 2017). On platforms like Facebook, one can observe a multitude of pages about politics and activism, where individuals appear profoundly committed to political matters while "tweeting" from their mobile devices or desktops. Youth knowledge of politics denotes active participation in civic and political affairs, including the establishment of political groups, dissemination of political data and statements, expressing concerns regarding political issues, promoting political parties or leaders, and influencing specific agendas (Amankwah, 2024; Alenzi & Miskon, 2024).

It is clear that individuals who have a significant interest in politics are those who make frequent use of social media platforms such as Facebook, who follow a variety of political communities on Facebook, who routinely search for issues related to politics on Facebook, and who regularly interact with Facebook

pages that contain political knowledge. The fact that these activities are taking place demonstrates that the persons participating have a substantial interest in politics. The young adult population utilizes social media to acquire political information and knowledge in order to increase their political literacy. This attitude and behavior demonstrate that our younger demographics are interested in political discourse and engagement (Azkiya et al., [2023](#)). Additionally, the results show that individuals who use Twitter are spending more time on the platform due to its wealth of information about the country's political landscape. These individuals are particularly drawn to political tweets, which further their political interests. The majority of political leaders worldwide utilize Twitter as a platform to express their views on a variety of domestic and international political issues. That is why Twitter users show more interest in politics. They participate in political discourse through social networking sites. Certain academics and scholars are concentrating on the influence of social media in fostering political literacy. They believe there is a substantial correlation between social media and political knowledge (Ahmad et al., [2019](#); Kubin & Von Sikorski, [2021](#)).

In contrast to Putnam, they discovered that civic engagement is positively correlated with political knowledge and media consumption, regardless of whether the content is informational or entertainment-based, with the press being particularly beneficial in enhancing political awareness (Hooghe, [2002](#)). The projected growth of Pakistan has been altered by the function of social media platforms, as per Muzaffar ([2019](#)). In the past few decades, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has taken numerous actions regarding the coverage of social media (Javed et al., [2021](#)). Numerous political organizations in Pakistan are utilizing social media to publicize their manifestos and agendas and to motivate young people. These parties include Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN), and Mutahida Qomi Movement (MQM). Moreover, the results indicate that both males and females who are using social media platforms show significant interest in politics. Social media provides a wealth of political information, and its users are increasingly interested in politics. As the world becomes more complex and advancing day by day, both males and females work in the job market together to contribute to the country's economy. More women are entering the workforce and working with men to boost the economy (Rahman et al., [2024](#)). In the same way, they use Facebook and Twitter to get themselves updated regarding politics, and such activities contribute to the political interests of males and females. Under the coeducational System, males and females study and work together in one building (Rahman et al., [2024](#)). However, SNS (social network sites) were not invented until the late '90s and have since mostly functioned as a means of online networking (Zhang & Leung, [2015](#)). The number of people using social media has skyrocketed in the last decade (Purvis & Beckingham, [2024](#)). For young people to develop an interest in, understanding of, and capacity for political engagement and awareness, it is crucial that they have access to political information and material across a variety of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. Every aspect of public and private life is being impacted by the rise of social media. There has been a general expectation that modern technology will assist in the dismantling of barriers, the reduction of organizational structures, and the facilitation of simpler access to the political sphere. Additionally, it is anticipated that new groups will be encouraged to engage in activism and involvement in politics (Ahmad et al., [2019](#); Omotayo et al., [2020](#)).

Conclusion

This research investigates the ways in which social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are used, as well as the ways in which these platforms contribute to political interest. Considering the data, it can be stated that there is a considerable connection between political interest and social media. By utilizing social media platforms, individuals are demonstrating that they have an interest in politics or want to learn more about it. Individuals' political interest is further enhanced by their use of Facebook, spending more time on the platform, and scrolling through political content and issues. The usage of Twitter, which is a social media platform that provides a wealth of information relating to politics, also contributes to an increase in political interest. A significant number of political personalities make use of Twitter to disseminate their thoughts and views about political matters. Both men and women use social media platforms. Furthermore, both genders are looking for political information on Facebook and Twitter, which contributes to a rise in their interest in politics.



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