

Facebook and Political Socialization in Pakistan: An Exploratory Study

Noor Nabi Khan	Lecturer, Department of Communication & Media Studies, Hazara University Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan Email: noor_cms27@yahoo.com
Dr. Azam Jan	Assistant Professor, Department of Communication & Media Studies, Hazara University Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan Email: azamjancms@gmail.com
Abdul Qayum Khan	Department of Archeology, Hazara University Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan Email: qayumkhan.phd@gmail.com

ISSN: 3006-6549 (ISSN-L)
ISSN: 3006-6557 (Online)
ISSN: 3006-6549 (Print)

Vol. 2, No. 3 (2024)
Pages: 37 – 43

Keywords

Facebook, Political Socialization, Pakistan, Youth

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Azam Jan
 Email: azamjancms@gmail.com

Abstract: *Facebook is a social networking site where users, especially young people, can connect with each other for a variety of reasons, including political socialization. This study examines how young people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan, make use of Facebook for political information and in turn political socialization. The Uses and Gratification theory provides theoretical foundation for the current research study. Data collection was accomplished using a survey research methodology. A standardized questionnaire served as the research tool in this exploratory research. Students enrolled in seven selected universities of KP made up the population for this study. In total, 525 students, including undergraduate and graduate were selected using convenient sampling technique. The sample size was extracted from the total enrolment of the aforementioned universities by using the Cochran's formula. The researcher received 501 responses from participants. Analysis of the data disclosed that political parties and politicians engage with voters by means of Facebook for political socialization.*

Introduction

Social networking sites have a significant impact on how people interact with one another. The people's political behaviour has undergone a complete transformation. Given the importance of social networking sites, political parties and their leaders are mobilizing their workers to use these platforms, particularly Facebook, to gain as many supporters as possible. According to McFadden (2020), Mark Zuckerberg co-founded Facebook in 2004 with fellow Harvard University classmates and roommates Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes. Shortly later, thefacebook.com, the new website, was launched. In the first 24 hours after it went live, 1200 students signed up for the platform, illustrating its immediate success.

Facebook improves political discourse and increases political interest. Young people's participation in politics is greatly and positively impacted by using Facebook for political purposes. The greater their political interest, the more politically engaged youth are on Facebook (Pap, Ham, & Bilandzic, 2018).

The outcomes of Ahmed, Azam, and Siddiqua (2021) study indicate that 72.8% of respondents agreed that many young people participate in politics on Facebook. It also educates young people about current affairs and motivates them to participate in politics. Therefore, Facebook made such a big difference in the political engagement of young people in Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

1. To search out Facebook's usage of political parties and leaders in KP
2. To explore Facebook's role in affecting voters' turn out in KP.
3. To find out Facebook's influence in bringing political parties closer to voters.
4. To investigate Facebook's role of convincing people in joining political rallies.

Literature and Theoretical framework

One of the best platforms for spreading political messaging is Facebook and political advertising messages posted on Facebook have a considerable influence on people's political preferences for political groups, political figures, and candidates for office (Yousif & ALSamydai, 2012).

The results of the US presidential elections in 2008 and 2012 have shown that Facebook was a successful tool for the candidates to reach their desired audiences. Obama mostly employed humour and impassioned appeals in his Facebook posts, in contrast to Republican politicians who primarily use fear-based arguments. Obama's Facebook page demonstrates that humour and heartfelt appeals garnered the most Likes and Shares, which helped him, win the election (Borah, 2016).

According to Liberini, Redoano, Russo, Cuevas, and Cuevas (2020), nearly 70% of Americans in 2016 had a Facebook account, and most of them used it regularly. Donald Trump's campaign spent 44 million dollars on Facebook commercials during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, compared to Hillary Clinton's campaigns of 28 million dollar expenditure. Donald Trump's election as US president may have been significantly influenced by Facebook and Twitter.

Role of Facebook in Politics of Pakistan

There was a significant Facebook Election Campaign in Pakistan in 2013. The first political party to launch a social media campaign was Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, which was swiftly followed by other parties including Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), Pakistan People Party, etc. The Facebook campaign increased enthusiasm among people in voting for their rights, especially in Pakistan's largest cities (Ahmed, Azam, & Siddiqua, 2021).

Kaleemullah (2016) investigated how young individuals use Facebook to learn about, understand, and experience political participation. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted to learn more about the type of political activities that young people are engaging in on Facebook. The ten responders, whose ages ranged from 22 to 27, were recruited from Pakistan's NUMAL and FUAFAST institutes. The study's conclusions demonstrated that young adults commonly discuss politics on Facebook. They think that Facebook as a platform for political debate and speech.

Likewise, Minhas, Khan, and Haq (2022) assessed the impact of social media on political awareness in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The study's sample consisted of 260 active users. Using a structured questionnaire and the purposive sampling method, 130 male and 130 female users were contacted. The study found Facebook as a source of political awareness in this political arena.

Political Socialization

Political socialization is a process by which individuals form politically conscious identities, attitudes, and behaviours that are largely constant over the course of their lifetimes, (Neundorf & Smets, 2017). Similarly, Political socialization is a concept that describes how people approach, understand, and participate in politics, (Razzaq, Asif, & Ahmad, 2020).

There are several political socialization agents. The first inspiration in individual's socialization is their family. This is the family that has a significant impact on a person's political behaviour and helps to transform politics (Rahman, et al, 2021). Another factor influencing the socialization process is religion. As stated by Nelson (2004), while parental religiosity has the biggest impact on their children's religiosity as adults, adolescent experiences also have their own independent effects on religious behaviour. According to Lee (2016), schools can foster civic virtues, offer civic education initiatives, and encourage political discussion in the classroom. As said by Kononova, Alhabash, and Cropp (2011), the mass media could be a good resource for promoting political socialization as well. Also, Gulzar (2020) stated that social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, for instance, introduce children to a completely new universe and open up a whole

new world. Blazevic (2016) indicated that peers groups are characterized as age-related social gatherings that are important for political socialization. Gulzar (2020) claimed that due to the state's growing influence over the life cycle, social scientists are increasingly acknowledging the state's function as a socialization agent. Deb (2015) believed that political socialization scholars agree that political parties play a significant role in people's political socialization and they think that political parties are the main source of public mobilization.

The existing research study is based on Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G). This approach puts more emphasis on the audience or consumer than the actual content by asking "what people do with media" rather than "what media does to people." It is believed that audience members actively participate in understanding and integrating the media into their own lives, as opposed to being passive media consumers. This viewpoint contends that audiences are also in charge of making decisions about the media that best suit their need. According to the theory, people use media to satiate particular social and psychological needs like, information need, entertainment need and social interaction need. It implies that media organizations fight for viewers' attention with other information sources (Cruikshank, 2011). The Uses and Gratification Theory is considered to be out of date by many individuals. But the development of social networking sites has given this old notion new life by applying it in social media domain (Musa, Azmi, & Ismail, 2015).

In order to gratify their needs, Pakistani youth, particularly those in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), use social networking sites such as Facebook for a variety of reasons, including political socialization. Khan, Ali, and Abbas (2021) revealed that young people in the province of KP are very keen to use social networking sites to get political information for satisfying their political needs. Ahmad and Ahmad (2020) found that when browsing for political news, KP students prioritized Facebook and YouTube whereas, Minhas, Khan, and Haq (2022) found Facebook as a source of political awareness.

Research Methodology

The study makes use of quantitative methods to evaluate the pattern of political socialization among the students by exposing the sample students to the social networking site, Facebook. The investigation was carried out using a survey methodology. The University of Peshawar and Islamia College University, Peshawar were chosen from the public sector for the purpose of data collection, while Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar, and Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar, were chosen from the private sector. The students at the BS (four years), MSc (two years), MS/M.Phil and PhD level participated in the survey. A sample of 525 individuals was selected at a ratio of 2% (Cochran's Formula) from the total enrolment of 26234 students of the four universities.

Questionnaire: There were three major parts in the questionnaire, first was about the respondents' demographics, the second was students' usage pattern of Facebook and the third was related to political socialization of Facebook users.

Facebook and Political Socialization:

There were three items in the questionnaire with respect to the use of Facebook for political socialization. The respondents were asked to show the extent of their agreement with those statements. The statements included: i) Facebook helps affect voters' turn out, i) Facebook brings political parties closer to voters, and iii) Facebook convinces people in joining political demonstrations.

Findings and Discussion

The first stage involves examining various demographic factors, such as gender, university, study program, age, and region. Each demographic feature is investigated using a single comprehensive table.

Table 1: Demographics of the Respondents

Category	Values	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	352	70.3	70.3
	Female	149	29.7	100
University	University of Peshawar	261	52.1	52.1

	Islamia College University	124	24.8	76.8
	Qurtuba University Peshawar	25	5	81.8
	Sarhad University Peshawar	91	18.2	100
Study Program	BS	338	67.5	67.5
	MA/Msc	52	10.4	77.8
	Mphil/MS	79	15.8	93.6
	PhD	32	6.4	100
Age	16-20	167	33.3	33.3
	21-25	232	46.3	79.6
	26-30	58	11.6	91.2
	more than 30	44	8.8	100
Locality	Rural	226	45.1	45.1
	Urban	275	54.9	100

N=501

The survey was completed by a total of 525 students. Three participants did not use social networking sites, nine questionnaires were not returned, and 13 were not fully completed. As a result, the data analysis does not include these questions. The remaining 501 responders consisted of 352 (70.3%) men and 149 (29.7%) female students were included in the data analysis.

The results showed that out of 501 students, 52.1% were from the University of Peshawar, followed by 24.8% from Islamia College University, 18.2% from Sarhad University, and just 5% from Qurtuba University (see table 1 for details).

Table 2: Usage of SNSs

Value	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Facebook	196	39.1	39.1
Twitter	90	18	57.1
Instagram	62	12.4	69.5
You Tube	118	23.6	93
WhatsApp	35	7	100

N=501

The social media platforms that respondents used are listed in the above Table 2. It demonstrates that 39.1% (N=196) of the respondents use Facebook, followed by 23.6% (N=118) of respondents who used YouTube, 18% (N=90) of respondents who used Twitter.

Table 3: Mode of Access to Facebook

Value	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Laptop	46	9.2	9.2
PC	19	3.8	13
Mobile Phone	436	87	100

N=501

The gadgets that the respondents used to access the internet are noted in the above Table 3. It reveals that 87% of respondents access the internet through their mobile phones, followed by 9.2% who use laptops and 3.8% who use PCs.

Table 4: Log in Pattern; Real/Fake identities

Value	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	433	86.4	86.4
No	68	13.6	100

N=501

Data in the above table demonstrates that 86.4% of respondents login to Facebook using their genuine identities, whereas 13.6% of respondents use fake identity to access the social networking site.

Table 5: Frequency of Facebook use

Value	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Once a day	63	12.6	12.6
Twice a day	52	10.4	23
3 times a day	69	13.8	36.7

4 times a day	48	9.6	46.3
More than 4 times a day	269	53.7	100

N=501

Results from the above table indicates that 53.7% students login to Facebook more than 4 times a day followed by 13.8% with 3 times, and 12.6% once a day (see table 5).

Table 6: Time spent on Facebook

Value	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0-1 hr	46	9.2	9.2
1-2 hrs	85	17	26.1
2-3 hrs	106	21.2	47.3
3-4 hrs	99	19.8	67.1
More than 4 hrs	165	32.9	100

N=501

Table 6's data reveals that 32.9% (N=165) of respondents spend more than 4 hours on Facebook every day, followed by 2-3 hours (21.2%), 3-4 hours (19.8%), and 1-2 hours (17%) (N=85).

Items about "Facebook and Political Socialization"

There were three items in the questionnaire with respect to the use of Facebook for political socialization. The respondents were asked to show the extent of their agreement with those statements. The ensuing three tables reflect data in line with said statements.

Table 7: Facebook helps affect voters' turn out

Value	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	79	15.8	15.8
Disagree	82	16.4	32.1
Neutral	123	24.6	56.7
Agree	134	26.7	83.4
Strongly agree	83	16.6	100

N=501

In line with exploring the role of Facebook in political socialization of the user, the students were asked to show the level of agreement with the first statement - 'Facebook helps affect voters' turn out'. According to the data in table # (7), 43.3% of respondents agreed with the premise that Facebook influences voters' turnout, while about 32.2% disagreed with the asking. However, 24.6% remained neutral in response to the same claim.

Table 8: Facebook brings political parties closer to voters

Value	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	57	11.4	11.4
Disagree	90	18	29.3
Neutral	98	19.6	48.9
Agree	161	32.1	81
Strongly Agree	95	19	100

N=501

As per data in the above table, 51.1% of students believed that using Facebook brings political parties and politicians closer to voters, while 29.4% of respondents disagreed to the statement.

Table 9: Facebook convinces people in joining political demonstrations

Value	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	61	12.2	12.2
Disagree	65	13	25.1
Neutral	115	23	48.1
Agree	179	35.7	83.8
Strongly Agree	81	16.2	100

N=501

The afore stated analysis suggests that nearly 52% of respondents have shown their agreement with the assertion that Facebook persuades individuals to participate in political protests, whereas, 25% disagreed, and 23% remained impartial to the same statement (See table# 9).

Conclusion

This study investigated the usage of Facebook for political socialization by university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The research's findings indicated that Facebook was one of the most well-liked websites, and the vast majority of students (87%) regularly used their mobile devices to access it. A typical day's login frequency was about (54%) and more than (86%) of users accessed the internet using their real identities. Nearly (33%) all users spent more than four hours every day on Facebook.

In light of the results, the majority of participants (43.3%) concurred that Facebook use affects voter turnout. The greater number of students (51.1%) claimed that Facebook brings political parties closer to voters, while around (52%) of the survey respondents revealed that Facebook is used to sway people to participate in political demonstrations.

It is concluded that Political parties and their leaders in Pakistan have used Facebook for political socialization of their supporters and the public at large.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest in line with publishing this paper since neither I nor any of the co-authors are contributing to this Journal as editor or reviewer.

References

- Ahmad, S., & Ahmad, S. (2020). Exploring the News Seeking Behavior of Under Graduate Students, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. *Journal of Information Management and Library Studies*, 3(1), 74-87.
- Ahmed, K., Azam, M., & Siddiqua, A. (2021). Facebook as an Instrument of Political Participation in the Youth of Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, 4(1).
- Blazevic, I. (2016). Family, Peer and School Influence on Children's Social Development. *World Journal of Education*, 6(2), 42-49.
- Borah, P. (2016). Political Facebook use: Campaign strategies used in 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 13(4), 326-338.
- Cruickshank, J. (2011). Uses and gratification theory. Retrieved from https://www.springwoodhighschool.co.uk/_site/data/files/users/2/6th%20form/2020%20summer%20tasks/y12/77ACE924FDE84DF2FA70BBD79C55BAC0.pdf
- Deb, K.C. (2015). Agents of Political Socialization and the Women of Bangladesh. *Development Compilation*, 11(1).
- Gulzar, A.A (2020). Agencies of Socialization. Retrieved from <https://www.educarepk.com/agencies-of-socialization.html>
- Kaleemullah (2016). Youth Political Participation through Facebook in Pakistan. *International Journal for Social Studies*. ISSN: 2455-3220, 2(11).
- Khan, M. Z., Ali, F., & Abbas, M. Z. (2021). Social Media and Political Socialization of Students in Higher Education Institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. *Ilkogretim Online*, 20(5).
- Kononova, A., Alhabash, S., & Cropp, F. (2011). The role of media in the process of socialization to American politics among international students. *International Communication Gazette*, 73(4), 302-321.
- Lee, C. W. (2016). Schools, peers, and the political socialization of young social movement participants in Hong Kong. *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 12(2), 105-125.
- Liberini, F., Redoano, M., Russo, A., Cuevas, A., & Cuevas, R. (2020). Politics in the Facebook Era Evidence from the 2016 US Presidential Elections. *CESifo Working Paper No. 8235*
- McFadden, C. (2020). *A Chronological History of Social Media*, Retrieved from <https://interestingengineering.com/a-chronological-history-of-social-media>
- Minhas, S, Khan, Y; and Haq, A. (2022). Exploring Social Media Role in Political Awareness among Voters of Peshawar. *Global Digital & Print Media Review*, 5(1), 35-42.

- Musa, A. S., Azmi, M. N. L., & Ismail, N. S. (2015). Exploring the uses and gratifications theory in the use of social media among the students of mass communication in Nigeria. *Malaysian Journal of Distance Education*, 17(2), 83-95.
- Nelson, P. M. (2004). *Montana Boys' State and Montana Girls' State: Political socialization of the adolescents in transition to adulthood in the context of family, school and community. A Doctoral Dissertation*, Montana State University.
- Neundorf, A., & Smets, K. (2015). Political socialization and the making of citizens. Oxford Handbook Topics in Politics (online edn, Oxford Academic, 6 Aug. 2015) <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935307.013.98>
- Pap, A., Ham, M., & Bilandžić, K. (2018). Does social media usage influence youth's interest in politics? *International journal of multidisciplinary in business and science*, 4(5), 84-90.
- Rahman, A. U., Said, M. G., Ahmad, I., Kashif, M., & Hassan, M. (2021). Family as a Voting Determinant in 2013 General Elections. *Ilkogretim Online*, 20(5).
- Razzaq, A; Asif, S; & Ahmad, R.W. (2020) Effects of the Usage of Social Media on Political Socialization of Youth. *Journal of Peace, Development and Communication*, 4, 67–81.
- Yousif, R. O., & ALSamydai, M. J. (2012). The Impact of the Political Promotion via Facebook on Individuals' Political Orientations. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(10), 85.