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USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL POLARIZATION AMONG YOUTH OF PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT
The current study examines how social media shapes political polarization among youth in Punjab, Pakistan. By adopting a quantitative research design, data were collected through an online survey from 200 graduate and postgraduate students in four major cities of Punjab, including Multan, Gujranwala, Lahore, and Faisalabad. Purposive sampling was used for data collection. Findings of the study revealed that social media plays a significant role in increasing political awareness and participation. Cronbach's Alpha values indicated acceptable reliability across the assumed variables. Pearson correlation analysis showed a strong positive relationship between social media usage and political activities ($r = 0.729$, $p < 0.01$). A moderate association was found between political participation and voting behaviour. The results showed that Facebook, Twitter (X), TikTok, and YouTube play a key role in creating political polarization. The study's results endorse that social media plays a pivotal role in not only politically empowering young minds but simultaneously creating an ideological divide among them, which calls for promoting digital literacy and balanced social media consumption.

KEYWORDS: Social media, political participation, voting behavior, youth, Punjab, political polarization, digital politics.

INTRODUCTION

The public is the sole receiver and disseminator of political messages. Systems of political communication might differ amongst civilizations; still, political information is primarily transmitted through the same fundamental pathways (Lilleker, 2006). Suitable functioning of communication channels is essential to political communication efficacy. The purpose of political communication is not merely sending messages, but it also entails reactions to messages coming from opponents. The system of political communication has undergone dramatic changes since the emergence of social media and digital technologies (Norris, 2004). People can now actively engage in political conversations online (Aziz et al., 2024). The venues and patterns of political communication have become more individualised. Although mass media often operate in a one-to-many manner, they can facilitate contact between the audience and political leaders through livestreaming (Stanyer, 2007). Politicians use these platforms extensively to deliver messages, influence public opinion, and gain electoral support. Therefore, political parties strategically employ a variety of communication tools and platforms to inform, persuade, and connect with the public throughout their campaigns (Alam et al., 2024).

There are three categories of political communication channels (Seizov, 2014). These are political communication's five fundamental purposes. Sharing knowledge about current events with the public is the first function. Educating people on the importance and meaning of facts is the second goal. Providing a forum to discuss political problems is the third. The creation of publications comes next, followed by the provision of programs and policies to the news media. Politicians convey their messages using a variety of media. Actions, speeches, symbols, or any image may all be used to convey messages (Castells, 2013). Every generation may easily participate in politics due to social media and current technology. Technology has created several avenues for young people to get involved in politics. From the perspective of democratic nations, young people's political engagement demonstrates both their civic duty and their ability to vote (Chareka et al., 2006). Numerous clues reveal young people's social responsibilities. Politicians may establish direct connections with young voters using social media, which encourages them to take part in political

events and cast ballots. Thus, social media might be considered to have a significant influence on elections. In the corporate sector, political party choice is therefore equivalent to consumer purchasing decisions (Younis et al., 2002). Furthermore, with the advent of social media and Google, the old political communication routes are no longer available. Political parties, however, found it challenging to lessen the influence of misinformation on social media. Although they can fight against fake news, it is hard to stop it from spreading. However, digital media makes it easier to create a democratic and healthy political group, something that was entirely impossible with old communication methods (Aziz et al., 2023). Political communication was restricted to a select few in the past. Criticizing political policies and actions was challenging for the political participant. Voters get disillusioned with politicians and refrain from supporting them in subsequent elections if they are unable to inspire and meet their expectations (Banaji, 2008). In this instance, social media might be quite helpful in providing voters with effective means of contacting political parties. Politicians benefit from social media connections while trying to win over voters (Loader, 2007). On social media, citizens may also obtain the information they need to make informed voting selections regarding political parties. Voters may have a strong inclination to support a political party if they agree with its ideas and political convictions. In this process of growing the number of supporters, trust is also crucial. One successful strategy that aids political candidates in gaining people's trust is the social media campaign and use of social media for political influence on shaping voter behavior (Henn & Foard, 2014).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent scholarship on youth political engagement in Pakistan highlights the growing centrality of social media as a primary source of political information, particularly among young people in Punjab (Hayat et al., 2022). Studies consistently show that platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, WhatsApp, and increasingly TikTok and YouTube Shorts serve as key channels through which youth access political content, form opinions, and participate in discussions (Lolai et al., 2025). Research conducted in Punjab and other urban centers indicates a significant positive relationship between social media exposure and political awareness, with stronger effects observed among younger and urban respondents (Safdar et al., 2025). Empirical evidence further suggests that social media not only disseminates information but also influences voting intentions, political interest, and online activism. Surveys in Punjab and Sargodha reveal that frequent exposure to politically oriented content correlates with higher levels of political participation and engagement (Quadri et al., 2025). Facebook and Twitter remain the most influential platforms for political marketing and opinion formation, enabling politicians to target youth audiences, mobilise supporters, and shape narratives (Abbasi & Shah, 2024). At the same time, scholars note important caveats: the same affordances that facilitate participation can also promote misinformation, selective exposure, echo chambers, and polarization (Lolai et al., 2025). Comparative findings indicate that while social media has largely overtaken traditional media (television and newspapers) as the preferred source of political news among Pakistani youth with some studies reporting that over 80% rely primarily on digital platforms, trust in social media content remains lower than in traditional outlets. The literature positions social media as a transformative yet contested space that simultaneously enhances democratic participation and introduces new risks for informed political decision-making among Punjab's youth.

Political players have effectively managed the election campaign using social media platforms, which also enable them to provide voters with the necessary information and involve them in the political process. Politicians may also use social media to get their partners' opinions to improve their campaign effectiveness and embrace ideas that will encourage voters to support them. Facebook and Twitter (X) are the most widely used social media platforms, supporting political marketing initiatives by providing a variety of channels for reaching the intended audience with messaging. Because of this, politicians are quite skilled at using social media to effectively promote themselves and their candidates (Opeibi, 2019). Additionally, this helps them project a favorable picture of their candidate and provide critical facts to the public to achieve political change and get more support. Social media has developed into a cooperative tool for overseeing political initiatives and movements.

These political forums go beyond basic information sharing. It allows political players to generate positive candidate images. It focuses on specific political topics, mobilizes supporters, and strategically targets certain audiences during political campaigns. Facebook and Twitter (X) also enable political campaigns to track public sentiment and adapt communication techniques. Social media has progressed beyond being only a supplemental communication method. The existing work has mostly focused on the participatory, informative, and mobilizing possibilities of social media. It promotes democratic involvement by allowing selective information transmission, emotional appeals, and political persuasion. As a result, further study is needed to investigate social media as both a medium for political involvement and a strategic decision-making environment. This viewpoint provides a solid foundation for analyzing the link between social media political communication and campaign methods.

The existing literature demonstrates that social media has transformed political campaigning from a predominantly one-way communication process into a more interactive and participatory form of political engagement. Bor (2014) emphasizes the informational and participatory functions of social media, while Opeibi (2019) highlights its strategic value for political marketing and audience targeting. Similarly, Vergeer et al. (2013) argue that social media can facilitate collective political action and campaign coordination. However, these studies largely emphasize the positive and functional dimensions of social media in political communication, particularly its capacity to disseminate information, engage voters, mobilize supporters, and enhance campaign effectiveness. This perspective requires further critical examination because the same affordances that enable political participation can also facilitate strategic manipulation, selective exposure, misinformation, emotional appeals, and political polarization. Moreover, the interactive nature of social media allows political actors to monitor audience reactions and continuously modify their messages according to public responses, thereby making political communication increasingly data-driven and strategically personalized.

Therefore, social media should not merely be understood as a neutral technological platform for political participation; rather, it represents a contested communication environment in which political actors, voters, influencers, and other stakeholders compete to shape political narratives and public perceptions. This gap in the existing literature provides a strong basis for examining how social media is strategically employed in contemporary political campaigns and how such practices influence voters' political perceptions, engagement, and decision-making. The participatory feature of social media allows political players to track audience reactions. It compares engagement patterns to public feedback. Social media should not be viewed as a neutral technology platform; rather, it represents a contentious communication environment. Participatory and engaging social media engagement can boost democratic participation. The political relevance of social media is not limited to its ability to boost political engagement (Kreiss and McGregor, 2018; Jungherr, Rivero, & Gayo-Avello, 2020; Tucker et al., 2018). This viewpoint indicates a significant gap in the current literature. Examining social media from this strategic standpoint can offer a better understanding of modern political campaigning.

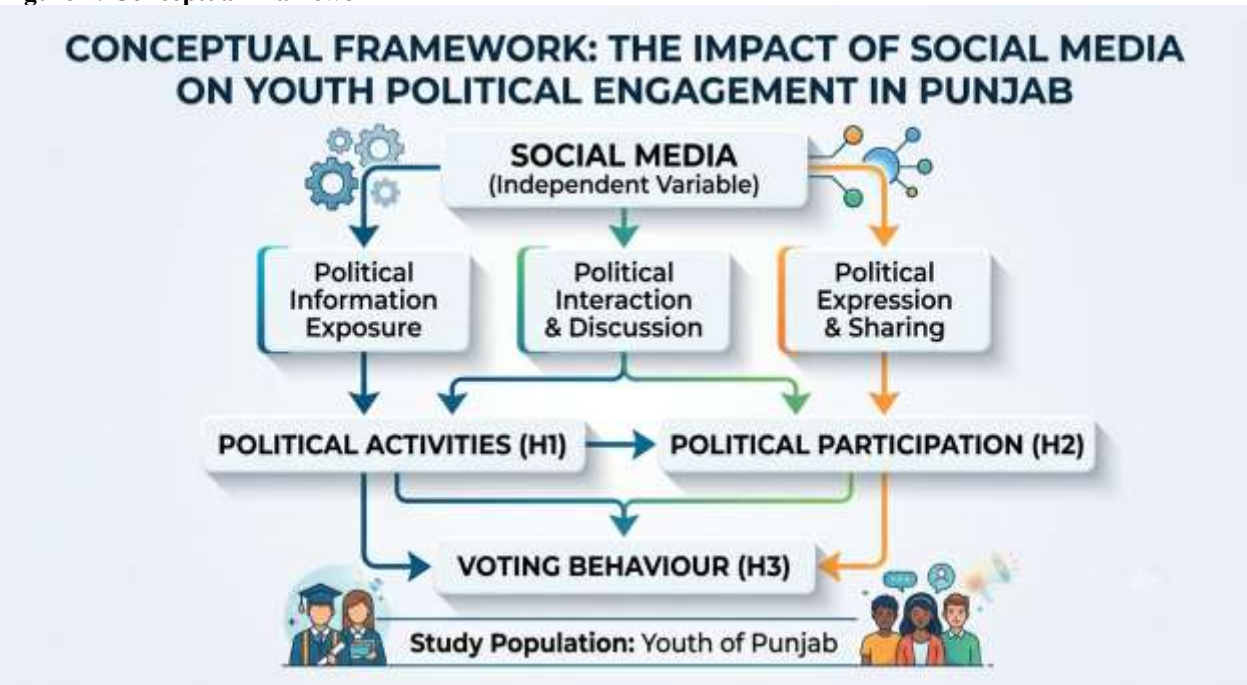
This study has shown how social media facilitates communication and engagement between citizens and politicians. This makes it easier to compile data from several sources to give a more complete picture (Apuke & Tunca, 2018). In recent years, social media has been used for several purposes, including business and politics. The most popular social media sites are Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter (X) (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). As a result, the bulk of research on this topic has concluded that many social media platforms help target certain audiences to successfully connect people with similar interests (Stier et al., 2020). Social media posts from different news sources tell the public about the preferences, activities, and dislikes of the candidates. Political engagement is significantly impacted by social media use (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013), which will help them become more successful in ensuring more participation (Bossetta, 2018). Politicians are using this medium for political goals. TV has always been the finest medium for advertising, including political advertising. On this platform, people may share ideas, anecdotes, and other important information. Social media is a tool for political involvement and democratic practice. Social media political participation directly influences the behavior of politically motivated people (Gibson, 2015).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework provides the conceptual and theoretical foundation for studying the relationship between social media use and political behavior among Punjabi youth. The rapid growth of social media has transformed political communication by enabling citizens, particularly young people, to access political information, interact with political actors and other citizens, express political opinions, participate in political debates, and run political campaigns. To understand these connections, the present study is mostly based on Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). This theory offers an appropriate framework for explaining why people actively select and use media to fit their needs. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch's (1973-1974) work established Uses and Gratifications Theory, which developed as an important method for analyzing audience engagement. It asserts that individuals are active media consumers who select certain media channels and content based on their needs. The rise of digital and social media has emphasized the necessity of UGT. Social media platforms provide customers with a number of possibilities for selecting political information. As a result, in the purpose of this study, social media is considered active communication. Young people can obtain political information via websites like Facebook, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Instagram, and others. The notion of knowledge seeking pleasure is particularly relevant to the current inquiry. The availability of political materials on social media may increase young people's understanding of political issues. The study also addresses UGT's social interaction and integration components. These acts are strongly connected to the political interaction features examined in this study. The personal identification and self-expression components of UGT help to explain why young people may use social media to express their political beliefs. Political

discourse and sharing are therefore another important aspect of social media use that may contribute to political action and participation.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

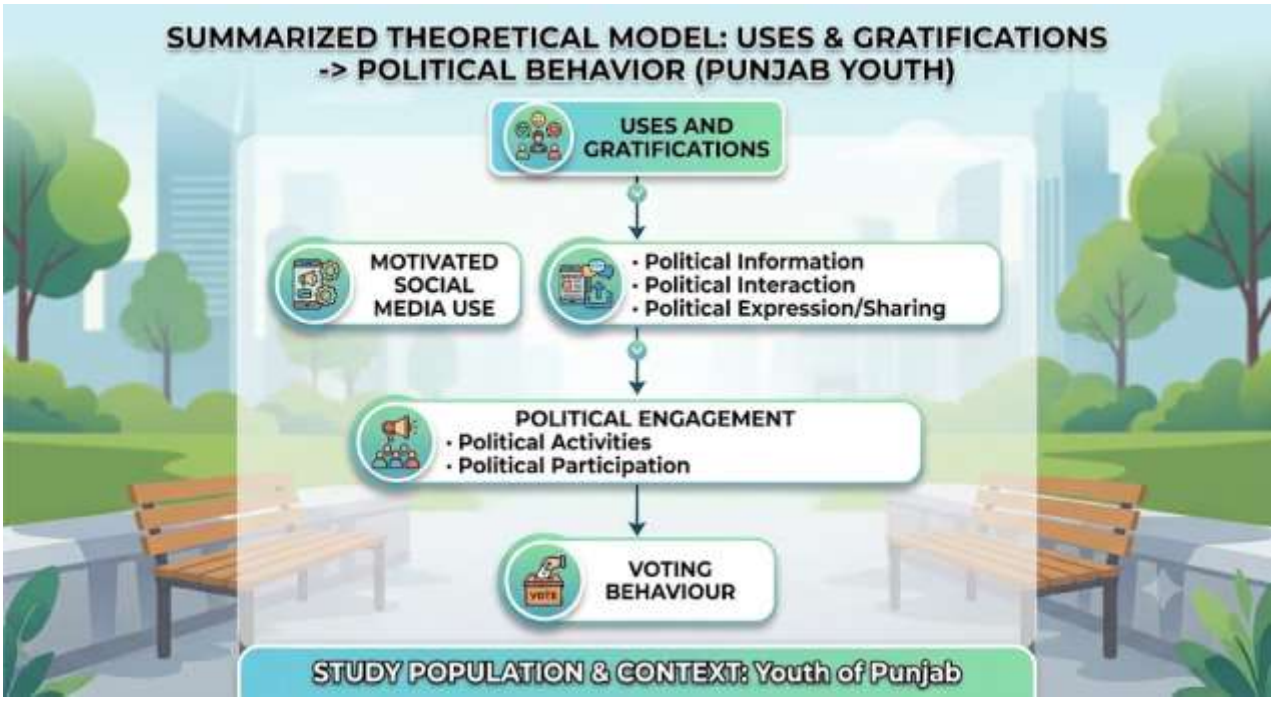


EXPLANATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This conceptual framework outlines the potential link between social media use and political behavior among Punjabi young. Social media is seen as the independent variable, with political activities, political involvement, and voting behavior serving as the primary dependent characteristics of political behavior. Three key dimensions characterize social media use. These elements include political information exposure, engagement and conversation, and political expression and sharing. Political information exposure relates to how much political news young people get. Political contact refers to young people's engagement with political players. As a result, this theory views social media as more than just a communication tool, but also as an essential ecosystem in which young people obtain political knowledge. Overall, it establishes the theoretical and analytical framework for assessing the study's three assumptions. Political expression and sharing refer to the degree to which young people express their political views. Political activities make up the first dimension of the dependent variable. The framework's arrows indicate the variables' hypothesized connections.

The theoretical framework indicates that young people utilize social media actively rather than passively. Their motives for utilizing social media shape the political statements they create and disseminate. Political actions may eventually lead to larger political participation. The Uses and Gratifications Theory is particularly pertinent to the current study. It enables the researcher to explore why young people utilize social media to obtain political information, communicate, and talk, express themselves, and share. The theory also applies to the Pakistani setting. The framework thus gives a theoretically justified explanation for the rising influence of social media in the political life of young Punjabis. Overall, the Uses and Gratifications Theory serves as the primary theoretical framework for the current study by explaining the relationship between motivated social media usage and political conduct. The theory therefore provides a cohesive theoretical framework for assessing **H_1, H_2**, and **H_3**, as well as understanding the study's empirical findings.

FIGURE 1: PROPOSED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



The image presents a summarized theoretical model linking Uses and Gratifications theory to political behavior among the youth of Punjab. It begins with Uses and Gratifications, which motivate social media use specifically for political information, political interaction, and political expression or sharing. This motivated social media engagement then fosters broader political engagement, encompassing political activities and political participation. Ultimately, these processes influence voting behavior. The model is situated within the study population and context of Punjab's youth, illustrating a pathway from media-driven motivations to concrete electoral outcomes.

H_1: THERE IS A STRONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES;

This relationship is particularly significant among youth and in circumstances where social media is the primary medium for communication and expression (Basit et al., 2024). These young political behaviors include, but are not limited to, participating in online political discussions or conversations (Campbell, 2013), disseminating political information, and participating in online political activities (Bimber et al., 2015). It indicates that frequent users of social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter (X) are more likely to engage in political activities (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). The idea that several research supports when social media usage increases generally, people are more likely to engage in political content and activities online.

H_2: SOCIAL MEDIA PLAYS AN EFFECTIVE ROLE IN THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH OF PUNJAB

Furthermore, this provides a platform for collective dialogue that will help arrive at the optimal political outcome (Valenzuela et al., 2012). According to Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2014), social media is greatly increasing university students' political participation by disseminating information, ideas, suggestions, and opinions on political acts and themes. On social media, university students can also share their personal opinions. Young people have been more interested in politics as they can now share their opinions on Facebook and other social media platforms. These chances for discussion and criticism of peers and groups have increased youth involvement in politics. Using social media is now simple due to the updated functions and additional features of social media sites. Social media also enables the young generation to support political candidates and play a significant role in contemporary politics (Halpern et al., 2017).

H_3: POLITICAL INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF YOUTH OF PUNJAB.

Social media is steadily rising to the top of political campaign platforms. Politicians, participants, and young people in particular are becoming more and fonder of this. This is also seen as a powerful instrument for mobilizing people, spreading political ideas, and influencing voting behavior. Additionally, politicians use social media sites, groups, and other features to interact with people and urge them to participate in politics and have conversations (Velasquez & LaRose, 2015). Numerous elements, including the traits of the leader, trust, expectations for services, policies, and

other information, change voters' voting decisions. Young people may now get this knowledge through social media and use it to rationally choose the best candidates to vote for. It has been asserted that social media and regular political engagement significantly influence adolescent voting behavior. Effective social media users can find and filter the information they need, gather reliable sources, and distribute them to peer groups. The availability of essential information has a big influence on how social media users vote (Skoric et al., 2016). Based on the evaluation of previous research (Banzi et al., 2011; Niemeijer & De Groot, 2008), a helpful conceptual framework has been developed to ascertain how Punjab youth see the use of social media in politics. In this chapter, hypotheses have also been developed to support this research for empirical examinations. The conceptual framework will act as a roadmap for the research study's conclusions throughout the investigation.

The study's first hypothesis implies a substantial association between social media and political actions. When young people use social media to get political information, their media use becomes inextricably linked to political actions. As a result, from the standpoint of UGT, political activity may arise when young users seek pleasure. The second hypothesis looks at the role of social media in political engagement. UGT explains this relationship by emphasizing the active and engaged nature of media viewers. Social media does not only disseminate political information. Young people may utilize social media to track political campaigns. It provides users with possibilities to meet their informational, social connection, and self-expression demands. From this theoretical standpoint, political engagement is not restricted to traditional activities. The third hypothesis focuses specifically on the relationship between political information obtained through social media and the voting behavior. Individuals actively seek information from media. They perceive as useful for satisfying their informational needs. Political information acquired through social media. It provides an environment in which information seeking can potentially translate into political decision-making. UGT does not assume that exposure to political information automatically produces a particular voting outcome. These three hypotheses can therefore be integrated within Uses and Gratifications Theory.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How frequently do youth in Punjab use social media to access political information?
- Which social media platforms have the greatest influence on the political opinions of youth in Punjab?
- Do youth in Punjab rely more on social media than traditional media for political information?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The positivist paradigm used in this work encourages objective measurement, hypothesis testing (Aziz et al., 2024). Using organized tools like questionnaires, a quantitative research methodology has been used to gather quantifiable data from respondents in four Punjabi areas that priorities education. This study aims to investigate how young political polarization in Punjab is influenced by social media usage. A methodical investigation of causal connections and statistical correlations between social media use and political polarization is ensured by the descriptive research approach. The construction of the analytical framework, the identification of constructs, and the formulation of hypotheses were all methodically described in the research approach. Construct validity was ensured by a comprehensive literature analysis that defined variables including ideological alignment, partisan prejudice, and exposure to political information (Alam et al., 2024). The method made it possible to develop and test theories about how much social media exacerbates polarization. The quantitative data collection was made easier by the organized technique, which made it possible to statistically measure behavioral patterns and changes in attitude (Mehmood et al., 2024). An online survey tool that was chosen for its effectiveness and capacity to gather extensive responses from geographically scattered people was the main method used to gather data. This approach assisted the inferential examination of polarization indicators and improved data dependability.

According to Rehmat and Manzoor (2023), the approach guaranteed a thorough, empirically supported investigation of the ways in which digital political communication is changing the political opinions of educated young people in Punjab. A non-probability purposive sampling strategy was used to produce a representative dataset for this study, guaranteeing the inclusion of respondents pertinent to the research's aims. Online data collection made it possible for politically active people to willingly take part; a final sample size of 200 respondents was chosen. To guarantee contextual relevance and data richness, four major cities in Punjab were chosen as the study's geographic emphasis due to their greater educational density and exposure to digital media. Original data analysis techniques are used since this study collects data from various sources. SPSS 27.0 is used for descriptive data analysis. These methodological procedures improve the quality and dependability of the study's conclusions. This study complies with all important ethical guidelines. No information from secondary sources has been plagiarized in this study in accordance with copyright laws. Researchers have appropriately gathered data from sources and solely employed pertinent data-collecting and analysis procedures. SPSS 27.0 statistical tools, which are quite dependable and assisted me in locating

trustworthy facts, have been utilized for the development of the relevant study. Since doing so will help fill the study gap, no findings have been purposefully altered. Additionally, no respondents were under any duress to take part in the study. Each respondent voluntarily took part in the research. Thus, this study has addressed every ethical concern.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Because the judgmental sampling procedure helped choose respondents who were interested in politics and studies, the data from this study are quite trustworthy. Thus, this outcome reflects the viewpoint of all respondents. The fact that the material was gathered from trustworthy sources is likewise trustworthy. To demonstrate the internal consistency of the variables, this study additionally conducted internal relations among them. The dependability of this study is further enhanced by the use of efficient statistical methods. The study's variables have also been adjusted through the analysis of several scholarly sources, which further improves the study's dependability. Because data collection and analysis were conducted using proper and genuine techniques, the study's findings are also legitimate. The validity of this study was enhanced by the use of email and internet sources for data collection. Internal consistency between variables has been assessed using Cronbach's Alpha technique. A number below 0.60 is not accepted, and the measurement is not considered credible if the alpha value is equal to or greater than 0.60.

Findings When assessing the internal consistency and dependability of study variables, Cronbach's Alpha is a useful tool. For Cronbach's alpha to be recognized, it must be greater than 0.60.

TABLE 1: RELIABILITY STATISTIC

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.781	.781	16

No. of responses (n=200)

A comprehensive summary of the participants' profiles is given in Table 2. In order to have a deeper understanding of the sample population, personal data were gathered for this study. This table uses Cronbach's Alpha to display the scale's dependability data. A satisfactory degree of internal consistency is shown by the estimated Cronbach's Alpha value of. 781. For additional statistical examination, the instrument's internal consistency is deemed sufficient. The demographic details of the responders are then displayed. This implies that the scale items assess the same underlying construct as a whole and are adequately correlated. Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items, the second number, is likewise (.781), indicating that standardizing the items had minimal to no effect on the dependability of the scale. There are sixteen items on the scale.

TABLE 2: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

CATEGORY	CRITERIA	COUNT	COLUMN VALID N %
Gender	Male	109	54.50%
	Female	91	45.50%
	TOTAL	**200**	**100.00%**
Age	18-22	92	46.00%
	23-26	77	38.50%
	27-30	31	15.50%
	TOTAL	**200**	**100.00%**
Educational Level	Graduate	122	61.00%
	Post Graduate	78	39.00%
	TOTAL	**200**	**100.00%**
Local residence	Multan	66	33.00%
	Gujranwala	57	28.50%

Lahore	44	22.00%
Faisalabad	33	16.50%
TOTAL	**200**	**100.00%**

No. of responses (n=200)

The demographic details of the research participants are displayed in this table. Only 200 respondents completed the online questionnaire with all of their demographic data, despite the fact that there were 240 total answers. Of the participants, 45.5% were female, and 54.5% were male. This suggests that there were somewhat more male respondents in the sample than female respondents. In terms of age, 46% of respondents were in the 18–22 age range. A further 38.5% of the participants were between the ages of 23 and 26, and 15.5% were between the ages of 27 and 30. Regarding educational attainment, 39% of participants were postgraduates and 61% of participants were grads, with a sizable portion having gone on to enhance their studies. 33% of the respondents were from Multan, 28.5% were from Gujranwala, 22% were from Lahore, and 16.5% were from Faisalabad.

TABLE 3: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CHANGE IN POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL
Social Media Usage and Political Activities	10	18	23	17	32	100.00
Political Participation of Youth	11	16	29	26	18	100.00
Voting Behavior of Youth	13	22	21	19	25	100.00

No. of responses (n=200)

According to the findings, the majority of respondents (32%) strongly agree with the statement about social media usage and political activity. Only 17% of respondents agree, while 23% are neutral. Conversely, 10% strongly disagree, and 18% disagree. While 18% strongly agree and 26% agree, a significant 29% remain undecided. In contrast, 16% disagree, and 11% strongly disagree. Social media has an influence on students' voting behavior, according to 25% of respondents who strongly agree and 19% who agree. While dissent is also noteworthy, with 22% disagreeing and 13% strongly disagreeing, neutral replies make up 21%.

FIGURE 1: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The distribution of 200 answers to a statement on a five-point scale is displayed in the pie chart (Figure 1). The largest group in the figure, "Strongly Agree," was chosen by 32% of respondents. "Agree" was selected by 28% of respondents, indicating significant support. 22% of people chose "Disagree," while 11% chose "Strongly Disagree." "Neutral," with 7% of responders, was the smallest category. This indicates that 60% of respondents tended toward agreement (32% strongly agree and 28% agree); the pie chart unmistakably shows that most respondents have a favourable opinion of the statement. These numbers show that people generally believe social media has a big influence on political conduct.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Analysis

		Social Media Usage and Political Activities;	Political Participation of Youth	Voting behaviour of Students.	P
Social Media Usage and Political Activities;	Pearson Correlation	1	.729**	.141*	0.066
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0.033	0.44
	N	**200**	**200**	**200**	**200**

Political Participation of Youth	Pearson Correlation	.721**	1	.180*	0.03
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0.013	0.665
	N	**200**	**200**	**200**	**200**
Voting behaviour of Students.	Pearson Correlation	.148*	.189*	1	.344**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.031	0.011		0
	N	**200**	**200**	**200**	**200**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). No. of responses (n=200)

Table 4 above presents the correlation analysis between three variables. Social Media Usage and Political Activities, Political Participation of Youth, and Voting Behavior of Students, based on responses from 200 participants. The value of the Pearson Correlation tells us the strength and direction of the relationship between each pair of variables. The Sig. (2-tailed) value shows whether that relationship is statistically significant or not. Between Social Media Usage and Political Activities and Political Participation of Youth, the correlation is 0.729, which is a strong positive relationship, and it is highly significant with a p-value of 0.000. This means that when social media usage increases, political participation among youth also increases. Between Social Media Usage and Political Activities and Voting Behavior of Students, the correlation is 0.141, which is a weak positive relationship, but it is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.033. This demonstrates that social media use and student voting behavior have a little but significant relationship. With a p-value of 0.011, the correlation between youth political participation and student voting behavior is 0.180, indicating a slight positive link. This implies that young people's voting habits marginally rise when they engage in more political activities. Double asterisks (**) indicate strong and dependable correlations, such as 0.729, which are significant at the 0.01 level. A single asterisk (*) indicates a significant correlation at the 0.05 level, such as 0.141 and 0.180, which is still statistically significant but weaker. There is no significant link, as indicated by p-values like 0.44 and 0.665, which are more than 0.05. In summary, the table shows that social media use is strongly linked to youth political involvement and slightly linked to voting behavior. Youth political participation is also slightly linked to voting behavior.

TABLE 5: CRONBACH'S ALPHA FOR EVERY VARIABLE

Hypothesis	**N of Items**	**Alpha Results (α)**	**Comments**
There is a strong Relationship between Social Media and Political Activities;	4	0.709	Accepted
Social media plays an effective role in the Political Participation of Youth	3	0.771	Accepted
Political information on social media has a positive impact on the voting behavior of Students.	3	0.817	Accepted

No. of responses (n=200)

This (Table 5) provides Cronbach's Alpha values for three variables related to the role of social media in political activities. Each hypothesis was measured using a different number of items, and the purpose of this analysis is to determine the internal consistency of those items. The first hypothesis examines the relationship between social media and political activities. It was measured using three items and resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.709. This indicates an acceptable level of reliability, suggesting that the items used to measure this concept are consistent in their results. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. The second hypothesis focuses on the role of social media in the political participation of youth. This was evaluated using three items as well, and the results showed an alpha value of 0.771. This score indicates that respondents provided consistent answers to this collection of questions, indicating strong internal consistency among the items. The theory is therefore regarded as trustworthy and approved. The third hypothesis investigates whether students' voting behavior is favorably impacted by political information on social media. It achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.817 when assessed using two items. This high alpha value indicates good dependability and internal consistency despite having fewer items, supporting the hypothesis' acceptance. All three

variables show acceptable to good reliability levels overall, with a sample of 200 respondents, demonstrating that the data-collection tool was reliable and consistent in assessing the desired ideas.

According to H_1'S findings, young people's voting behavior is significantly impacted by political social media use. Ahmed et al. (2011) claim that social media is used by political candidates and that it significantly influences young people's voting behavior. According to young people, social media provides them with the most recent information they require, which aids them in choosing an election candidate. It makes it possible for people to participate in political decision-making and group discussions. Consequently, it ensures that the public has access to the political system and promotes political involvement. They can understand how politics is going and how well-liked political parties are. Young people benefit from this type of knowledge when it comes to voting. Social media also motivates young people to vote for the parties that interest them by giving them the information they need.

Study hypothesis H_2 states that social media influences young people's political participation and is very advantageous for political goals. Most research participants agreed that social media gives them access to current and easily available information about political activities, which makes them want to get involved in politics. People use social media to connect regularly and express their emotions. They use popular social media platforms daily. Political parties also share their opinions, programs, and other projects on social media. Groups on social media share personal views and analyse the legitimacy of politicians. Social media has therefore evolved into a highly practical instrument for obtaining data for political decision-making. Since they think social media is easy to use, young people and political candidates are encouraged to use it for political goals, according to the study of the H_3 data. Using social media for feedback and communication is easy and needs less effort, according to most of the young people in our study. Young people are encouraged to participate in political activities on the platform by these social media characteristics. Social media is a great tool for communication, idea sharing, and feedback giving, claim Dzandu et al. (2016). A user's competency and ease of use grew with regular social media use. People are encouraged to participate in political activities on social media.

DISCUSSION

Table 3 shows that social media is seen as an essential channel for influencing the political conduct of Punjabi young. 49% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that social media influences their political actions. On the other side, 28% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this viewpoint. These ideas complemented the findings of Campbell (2013), Bomber et al. (2015), and Kahne and Bowyer (2018), who emphasized the significance of digital and social media in fostering political involvement. Similarly, 44% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that social media encourages young political engagement. According to Valenzuela et al. (2012), Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2014), and Halpern et al. (2017), 27% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that social media facilitates political conversation, information sharing, and engagement. 44% agreed or strongly agreed that social media influenced young people's voting conduct, while 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This conclusion is substantially in line with Velasquez and LaRose (2015) and Skoric et al. (2016). Overall, the findings indicate that social media plays a greater perceived role in political activity and engagement.

The available data, drawn from 200 youth respondents across Multan, Gujranwala, Lahore and Faisalabad in Punjab, does not directly quantify frequency of social-media use for political information, identify specific platforms, or compare reliance on social versus traditional media; instead it demonstrates that social media is widely perceived as influential in shaping political behavior. A majority of respondents (approximately 60 % when combining “strongly agree” and “agree”) endorsed statements linking social-media use to political activities, while smaller but still substantial majorities or pluralities linked it to political participation and voting behavior; Pearson correlations further confirm a strong positive association ($r = .729$, $p < .001$) between social-media usage and political participation and weaker yet statistically significant associations with voting behavior ($r = .141–.189$, $p < .05$). These patterns, obtained from a scale with acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .781$), indicate that social media functions as a salient channel through which Punjab’s youth (predominantly male, aged 18–26 and university-educated) encounter and act upon political content, thereby offering indirect support for the premise that social media is a frequent and consequential source of political information even though precise frequency counts, platform rankings and traditional-media comparisons remain unreported in the present tables.

Young people frequently use social media sites like Facebook, Twitter (X), YouTube, and TikTok (Saud, 2018). Users are less likely to come across competing viewpoints in these digital echo chambers (Bukhari, 2024). Social media's growing impact on young people's political beliefs and ideas has grown in importance, particularly in areas like Punjab, Pakistan (Shahzad, 2024). Political polarization is one of the most noticeable effects of this impact, though. The results of this study show that social media, which functions as a forum for political speech as well as a source of information, is crucial to young people's political socialization. Youth exposure to biased political information, which is sometimes

unconfirmed or emotionally charged, has been associated with greater animosity towards opposing opinions in Punjab, which prevents candid communication and compromise (Haider & Mubarik, 2024). This division is behavioral as well as ideological. Research indicates that young people who are politically divided may be less inclined to participate in polite conversation or accept opposing viewpoints both offline and online (Karamat & Farooq, 2020). This eventually widens the gap by making individuals more receptive to false information. However, it is also crucial to remember that, if efforts are made to encourage responsible usage, media literacy, and platform responsibility, social media may help close gaps by exposing people to other points of view and facilitating communication across political divides.
Political participation is successfully increased by the usage of social media in politics. The young people who participated in this study believe that social media may be utilized for debate and criticism. Each of these elements significantly influences the political engagement of youth. Social media is a popular platform for sharing information, thoughts, opinions, and recommendations that inspire youth to participate in politics. Youth use social media to participate in politics because it allows them to voice their personal opinions. Political participation among young people is steadily decreasing. Youth are becoming less involved in politics and acting as representatives for future leaders because of their disinterest in politics. On the other hand, the youth of Punjab now utilize social media every day. Social media is therefore a helpful instrument for motivating youth to participate in politics and cast ballots. Politicians increasingly utilize social media to spread the word about new developments and to run campaigns. The study found that social media had a beneficial effect on youth voting behavior. To make political judgments, youth utilize social media to obtain political knowledge. They believe social media is a great way to obtain the necessary political news updates. Additionally, they think that using social media for political purposes is pointless. Additionally, it offers the opportunity to share personal views and notions with the intended audience. Therefore, it can be said that youth political conduct is greatly influenced by social media use, which also offers a wealth of options for engaging in political activities. According to the study's conclusions, social media use in politics has a variety of effects on young people. Features, political marketing tools, and information provided by social media platforms have a significant impact on youth's use of these networks for political objectives. First, political parties and politicians have a great deal of power to influence young people to gain more votes and support since social media has a significant influence on their voting behavior.

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