



THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN PAKISTAN: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

Democracy is the world's most widely recognised type of government, and this is especially true as the world becomes increasingly interconnected through technological advancements. Scholars consider the notions of a democratic global government, according to which the failure of democracy is doomed. Political accountability is an essential component of democracy and cannot be disregarded. Other than that. This study uses qualitative research methods, including qualitative content analysis and participant observation on social networking sites (SNS). There will be the widespread application of democracy, accountability, and the rights of free speech expression. According to a thorough evaluation of the available literature, social media improves the electoral process, increases political responsibility, and promotes freedom of speech in authoritarian nations and developing democracies. However, in a developing democracy like Pakistan, where the use of social media is on the increase and the state of accountability is dire, investigating how social media affects political accountability is wholly justified.

Keywords: *social media, accountability, political party.*



Introduction:

The social lives of citizens and their political engagement are significantly influenced by the internet and various forms of social media. Politicians (candidates, government officials, and members of political parties) now have a place where they can continue to exist, in the form of a space provided by social media, a form of digital communication. Here, they can build and influence the opinions of the general public. The effectiveness of a campaign, as well as the transmission of political information, is positively influenced by digital marketing. The reliability of the information offered on social media platforms contributes to expanding our shared knowledge. The quality of how information is presented can also affect a company's reputation on social media.

Regarding purchasing decisions, customers deal with content information overload and high levels of information asymmetry. This is due to the enormous amount of data that is present on social media. In addition, the level of trust that users place in the information provided by social media will influence the level of political participation among those users. The flow of information and questions of credibility often come up on social media and can be judged by the trust. (“The Role of Social Media in the Political Involvement of Millennials | Emerald Insight”)

With the rise of the information revolution and the spread of electronic media, the world has become almost like a small village. Now, information, news, and events can reach any part of the world without being stopped or slowed down. Even before the government can act and control them, these things are instantly in every living room. The expanded role of the media has affected modern society's social, economic, and political lives. The visuals offered by the media form the basis for one's thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions of the world. It has made its way into the day-to-day activities of every individual, including common people, elites, decision-makers, and statemen.

The effects of media in today's globe can be seen in Pakistan, despite the country's status as a developing nation struggling with a wide range of social, economic, political, and security concerns. The media in Pakistan is perceived to be more open, direct, and proactive than in the past. It now shows the wrongdoings in society, bad economic management, and political missteps in the country. The Pakistani media has developed into an effective tool for examining how government institutions operate over time; rather than providing the government with policy options, it now makes its policies. As a result, this paper aims to illustrate the importance of the media in Pakistan by exploring its history, current situation, main media outlets, controlling entities, and prospects for the industry's future in the nation.

Every citizen of Pakistan has the right to freedom of speech and expression, according to



Article 19 of the constitution. There will be freedom of the press, but the law can put reasonable limits on it to protect the honour of Islam or the unity, safety, or defence of Pakistan or any part of it. As a result, the country's legislative underpinnings are established with the freedom of expression and speech in mind.

The democratic system of government is widely accepted and practised across the world. More than 165 countries cooperating worldwide have democratic systems, which indicates this. Although democratic functioning varies from nation to nation, economic and social stability play a vital role. Despite this, democracy operates in much the same way around the world. The democratic system protects citizens' rights and allows them to choose the officials who will represent their interests and advance their ideals as the nation grows and develops. Political accountability is a crucial feature of democratic administration. The democratic method involves organising public power to hold the government accountable to the general populace. Political accountability in democratic regimes refers to the obligation of elected officials to uphold the nation's laws and the constitution on its citizens' behalf, protecting the public interest and providing public services. Accountability, as understood by the democratic method, is achieved when both houses of parliament operate normally and the electoral process is open and transparent. For these things to happen, freedom of speech must be respected, journalism must be fair, and citizens must be able to speak out and participate in political discourse. The purpose of the media is to educate the public on important political and social topics. Not only does it provide people with the essential background knowledge they require, but it also connects them to the wider world of knowledge. (Anwar & Jan, 2010)

In Pakistan, young people are turning to social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter to acquire knowledge, heighten their political consciousness, and float their political ideas. People from all walks of life, students, political figures, and even political parties have started to use social media to share their opinions on various national and international problems and rally public support. Social networks help and provide a platform for young people to learn the fundamentals of politics. Therefore they are playing a critical and active part in their development. Social media is like a hot cake for the young because it allows them to interact with their loved ones and as a forum to discuss politics. Back a few years ago in Pakistan, the only places for people to get information and entertainment were the government-controlled television and print media, as well as the very few private channels that were available at the time. These were the only places where the youth could get information and be educated. The government used various methods to restrict print media's freedom of expression and censor it. (Muzaffar, 2019)

The era of digital communication has here, and the internet and social networks have fundamentally altered our understanding of the meaning of information and



communication. In Pakistan, as in other countries around the world, the use of social media is expanding at a rapid rate. This quick growth has attracted many young people from Pakistan and has significantly impacted Pakistan's youth's political engagement. Political leaders, political workers, and even political parties have established their accounts and official sites on various social media platforms to offer their perspectives and keep up with the latest political news. The primary goal of the research is to investigate the effect social media networks have on increasing political awareness among young people in Pakistan.

Looking at Pakistan's history, the country has not had a stable democratic system since it was established in 1947. Every time the military intervened, it upset the democratic system. Military dictators wanted to stay in power for longer, so they only held some people accountable. Most likely, the military and the court system were not held accountable. There have been no free and fair elections since 1970. There is a culture of not having a voice and demanding accountability in Pakistan. The truth is that there is not enough legislation to support the right to free speech and direct public accountability. Not many provisions in the constitution deal with people's rights to freedom of expression. Although a right to information legislation was passed recently, it is not yet operational. After that, another bill, known as the electronic crime prevention bill, was passed and approved by the National Assembly. So, laws about freedom of speech are not good for promoting voice and accountability. (Dawn.com)

Twitter is also referred to as a "micro-blogging" social network. That was established in March 2006. Twitter's main purpose was to allow users to communicate their ideas in a maximum of 140 characters. Microblogging is the term used to refer to the activity of publishing incredibly brief status updates. The people who made Twitter first thought of it as a way to share quickly where they were and what they were doing, thinking, or feeling. It is still used this way, but like any other way people talk, it has become more friendly. The microblogging system Twitter has only been around for a few years, but it has become a worldwide sensation. It is like traditional blogs in that it focuses on the most recent posts, but its posts, called "tweets," can only be 140 characters long. Twitter uses the concept of blog feeds by allowing you to subscribe to or "follow" any other Twitter user. The personalised feed of a user displays the most recent tweets posted by all the people the user is following, thereby producing a real-time stream of bite-sized chunks of information. Many services compete with each other, and some improve the functionality of other services. For example, status updates on Facebook and LinkedIn serve as microblogs that friends can read. Google Buzz and the open source identi.ca offer services that are similar. Microblogging sites make some interesting structures for social networks. The "follows" and "is followed by" relationships make the most obvious network. These "follow" relationships, in contrast to those on Facebook, might be considered directed; you can follow people who are not already following you and vice



versa. This differs from Facebook and LinkedIn, where connections do not go anywhere. Other networks are formed that connect individuals based on the frequency with which they respond to others' microblog postings or repost messages they encounter ("retweet" or "RT"). ("Microblogging - an Overview | ScienceDirect Topics").

Social media users who focus and People who use social media and follow politics are more likely to be able to find political content they want to see. In the context of general elections, using social media for political acts and activities is one of the predictors and forecasters of political participation, especially for mass engagement in the system and voter turnout. Facebook provides a means for younger people and students in higher education to communicate with one another, get political knowledge, and improve their political effectiveness. These political actions include posting political status updates and presenting them on politics-related websites, and disseminating political messages to large groups of people. Composing and disseminating political notes throughout their network of party employees, collecting feedback on their posts from the general public, discussing political ideas, joining political gatherings via live streaming, following the participants, and installing the political apps. These political posts will then display on the user's wall in the news stream, where the user's friends can view them. Social media users can also observe this, as well as the conversations their followers are having and the content their concerned friends and family share. By scrolling through the News Feed on their website's homepage, they can stay informed about the latest happenings inside their party and any pertinent party events. Similarly, these activities are also known to take place in Pakistan. Since Facebook is getting a new version, and made more modern, political events like people following the candidate in their area have changed to clicking "like" on the candidate's profile.

Objectives of the study:

- To understand the modern method of conducting political campaigns in the media and the implications of this method on forming political attitudes.
- To understand the political socialisation that occurs through social media, as well as the accountability of political representatives of constituencies.
- To investigate the influence of the media on people's decisions to vote literature.

Literature review:

Anwar, M., & Jan, M. (2010) discussed in this paper that a framework for political socialisation in Pakistan had been developed. This study examines political socialisation through media and is both exploratory and explanatory. Political communication involves interactions between the media and political systems at the local, national, and worldwide levels. In a democracy, public opinion is formed not just through participation in elections



but also by voting and completing polls. Special attention has been paid to election campaigns, how people vote, and the role of the media in making people aware of politics. Batool, S., Sultana, S., & Momineen, F.-. (2019) discussed in the paper that, Patterns of social interaction have shifted due to developments in modern communication technologies. The development of various communication modes makes it easier for individuals to transmit their worldviews to others. By conducting a comprehensive assessment of the relevant literature, this study makes an effort to investigate the part that social media plays in fostering democracy in Pakistan and draws attention to the significance of the media in democratic regimes. The primary objective of the research was to investigate the role that mass media plays in the institutionalisation of democratic governance. These platforms allow for building a bridge between the population and a robust democratic structure.

Rafi, M. S. (2020).examines in his research that,1. How Facebook (and other social media) users remark on political events as they unfold,2.Irrespective of whether or if political expressions disclose anything about political representation, and 3. What effects has social media had on Pakistani political discourse? To examine participants' political expressions and representation on social media, a purposefully chosen sample of 75 people was used. The information was limited to their Facebook talks about Nawaz Sharif, the former prime minister of Pakistan, being disqualified. They engaged in communication actions and events interpreted from a sociocultural standpoint. The survey has noted a notable increase in young people's political participation in Punjab's urban districts. Young people's growing political consciousness may persuade Pakistan's political parties to increase their spending on social media advertising.

Muzaffar, M. (2019). to research how social media might play a role in raising political awareness among young people in Pakistan; this is in recognition of the fact that new interactive technologies can have a significant influence on young people, leading to an increase in the latter's political understanding. This study is quantitative in its methodology and descriptive in its overarching purpose. Students enrolled in Bachelor's, and Master's degree programmes at public universities in the Gujranwala division were the intended audience for this. The information was gathered with the use of a questionnaire and an examination, and then it was analysed using descriptive statistics. However, the test findings indicated that students have a lower level of political awareness than was predicted, even though the study found that social media plays a significant part in socialising young Pakistanis. According to the findings of this study, educational institutions and public departments should share the truthful information they have via social media to raise students' political awareness.

Discussion:

Polity The term "usage of social media in politics" refers to incorporating various online



social media platforms into political operations and endeavours. The concept "political processes and activities" refers to any activities administrating a nation or region. This encompasses political structure, international politics, political graft, political parties, and political principles. The internet has established communication channels that play an important part in disseminating news. Social media can influence not just the message but also the dynamics of political corruption, values, and conflict dynamics in politics. Diplomacy worldwide has grown less private and more sensitive to public perception due to the usage of social media in election processes, international conflicts, and extreme political situations. It has been argued that social media enable everyone with an Internet connection to become a content creator. Content creation is the supply of information to any medium, especially digital media, for specified end-users or audiences. The term "content" refers to "anything to be expressed through some media, as speaking, writing, or any of the various arts for self-expression, dissemination, marketing, and publication. (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/content>).

It is possible that social media's role in democratizing media involvement, which its proponents celebrate as advancing the cause of participatory democracy by allowing all users to contribute news and opinions, falls short of its objectives. According to the results of international surveys, most people who consume media online do so in a passive capacity, whilst only a minority of users actively contributes to the production of content by posting comments and writing new articles. (Cokley, 2013)

Others contend that the impact of social media will differ from nation to nation and that domestic political structures will have a bigger influence on how citizens express their thoughts about stories of public interest than social media. Most people believe that social media platforms restrict political viewpoints that they find offensive. In June of 2020, users of the social media platform TikTok organised a movement to prank a Trump rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, by purchasing tickets and then not attending the rally so that it appeared as though there were no attendees at the gathering. ("TikTok Teens and K-Pop Stans Say They Sank Trump Rally (Published 2020)")

The rapid growth of social media has made the dissemination of knowledge more rapid and accessible in every region of the world. The ability of social media to magnify messages instantly across various digital platforms has led to its emergence as an influential tool in political affairs, one of the many effects social media has had. Recent events in Pakistan are a clear sign of this truth. The political scene in the country has been stressful in recent months, with surprising new developments happening in a short amount of time. People are increasingly using social media platforms to talk about politics and express their feelings on different platforms. Just like the rest of the world, Pakistan has seen an increase in the number of people using social media. There were 82.90 million internet users in Pakistan at the beginning of 2022, with 71.70 million active social media



users. This represents an internet penetration rate of 36.5 per cent of the country's total population. (Arif, 2022)

YouTube first ranks in Pakistan's digital app ranking with 71.70 million users, followed by Facebook with 43.55 million users. The number of people who use Twitter is relatively low at 3.40 million, equivalent to 1.5 per cent of the overall population. It is important to point out that Twitter is becoming more significant in political terms because practically every important figure in domestic and international politics has a Twitter account. It is important to emphasise that Twitter is becoming increasingly prominent in the political realm because practically every important figure in politics on both the domestic and international levels has a Twitter account, which contributes to the platform's authenticity and legitimacy. Similarly, each political party has an official account on Twitter that it uses for outreach purposes. In addition, various hashtags were trending for multiple days in a row, and these hashtags eventually evolved into social media campaigns. (Arif, 2022) Because it is so simple to launch a channel on YouTube and users have more freedom than ever, it has become an excellent venue for people to air their opinions. Any person is capable of establishing their channel and employing it as a means by which they can communicate their ideas to any specific audience. Compared to television talk programmes, the leading journalists and anchors of talk shows in Pakistan have also created their own YouTube channels to provide independent and unfiltered analyses of current events. In addition, because much of the content on YouTube is video-based, it is far more interesting to users and easier to navigate. According to these patterns, it is clear that Pakistani individuals take a major interest in social media concerning recent political events. It is quite clear that social media is quickly becoming a widespread force and will continue to play an essential part in domestic politics in the years to come. It would not be difficult to conclude that all of this activity also has some effects. For various stakeholders, swaying public opinion has taken on greater importance and increased the level of difficulty than ever before. Social media has evolved into an asset that is becoming increasingly essential in this regard. At the same time, these platforms can also be used to find out what most people are thinking at any given time. It is also important to note that 63.5 per cent of Pakistan's population, or 144.4 million people, do not have access to the internet. Almost certainly, this number will go down over time. Even though social media is important for getting information about current events to people who do not have access, misusing social media platforms can have poor results. Social Media

Nowadays, people can communicate with one another quite successfully through the use of social media. Through the usage of this platform, people can share their ideas, experiences, and other important information. Social media can be used to practise democracy and political engagement in the context of politics. All of this directly affects the political behaviour of those with political aspirations. A good example is an election



that just happened in the United States of America. During the election campaign, political players have used social media platforms to run the campaign well. Social media also helps them tell voters what they need to know and get them involved in a political campaign. (Jiang, 2016). It is also a highly effective location for politicians to seek out the advice of their running partner in order to improve the effectiveness of a political campaign and to adopt strategies to influence voters to support them. This can be done via social media, which is a very effective place. The most popular social media network, Facebook, is useful for political marketing campaigns since it gives users access to a range of channels through which messages can be shared with the intended audience. (Kahne et al.). Politicians are therefore well-versed in great abilities that increase their effectiveness in promoting other politicians and candidates on social media.

Additionally, it helps them present their candidate in a favourable light and disseminate crucial information to the public to spur political change and win more supporters. Users can create groups of people who share common interests by sharing content like articles, photographs, videos, and documentaries on all the well-known social media platforms. Therefore, most studies on this subject concluded that social media offers a variety of instruments for targeting specific audiences and successfully bringing together people who share interests.

However, social media revolutionises communication methods and grows into a major political force on a worldwide scale. Even though former President Pervez Musharraf was the first in Pakistan's political scene to recognise the possibilities of social media. Imran Khan, Chairman of Tehreek-e-Insaf, is currently the most well-known figure on social media at this time. On Facebook, he has a following that exceeds eight million people. ([facebook.com/ImranKhanOfficial/](https://www.facebook.com/ImranKhanOfficial/), 2018), Furthermore, he has 7.8 million people following him on Twitter. (twitter.com/ImranKhanPTI, 2018). All main political parties (PML-N, PPP, and PTI) established their social media cells after the 2013 general elections to promote the viewpoint of their representation and their purpose and mission. This is in addition to the political leader's social media accounts. On the other hand, there is the counterargument that political parties have exploited their media cells to smear other political parties' reputations. Despite both of these realities, it is undeniable that sixty per cent of eligible voters participated in the general elections held in 2013.

Social Media and the Pakistani Perspective:

The use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter is extremely commonplace in the country of Pakistan, particularly among young people. One could argue that it has become a necessary component of our daily routine. It gives people more ways to find information about everything. Recent studies have shown that social media can be a reliable news source. Additionally, political parties have a significant amount of



space to conduct their campaigns using various online news websites and social media platforms.(Zulqarnain & Hassan, 2016). In the same vein, the ramifications of the study acknowledge that Facebook plays an extremely important part in the political process of Pakistan. The proliferation of social media is threatening the conventional mode of politics as an important communication venue. In addition, it acts as a conduit for disseminating information and as a facilitator for political debates. In the not-too-distant future, it is also anticipated that social media in Pakistan will play a very significant role in promoting change.

Also, the media is a way for Pakistani citizens to get involved in politics. It is observed that the media, including the press, television, radio, and the internet, impact young people's political opinions. Study conclusions show that the media significantly impacts how political opinions are spread.

People in Pakistan are always finding new ways to use social media (mainly Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Blog, YouTube, etc.) for political expression and representation (speaking up for a party one supports) that goes beyond gossip and entertainment. They are the same people who have not been involved in politics long. However, as reported by numerous academics, social media platforms appear to represent a new precursor of political expression for them. (Rafi, 2020). Compared to traditional forms of media such as print and electronic publications, social networking sites are regarded as more efficient and successful in disseminating unfiltered information. The utilisation of social media informs users about current events and their perspectives on political matters. It promotes interpersonal interactions and self-efficacy, leading to engagement in political processes. It should be no surprise that the mainstream media in Pakistan, acting in the wider interest of the political parties with which they are aligned, suppresses, manipulates, or otherwise controls public opinion on the most important political matters. Social media platforms have supplied this void, enabling young people to express themselves politically freely and (a) synchronously. In Pakistan, the shift from traditional media to social media for replicating political material, finding information, and amusement is becoming increasingly contentious and debatable. (Batool et al., 2019) Since the emergence of social media, particularly in the lives of the approximately 50 per cent of Pakistan's population that is comprised of young people, there is a growing tendency among them to express and represent their political stances without restraint – even during a dialogue on various political issues such as Panama leaks. . The former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, as well as his family, were accused of engaging in money laundering through the use of overseas businesses in the Panama Papers. The news quickly spread across social media platforms. The Pakistani public requested Nawaz Sharif's resignation and an investigation into the corruption allegations. Finally, the complaint was filed with the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) by PTI and its associated political parties. . PTI and other interest organisations paid close



attention to social media in order to increase public awareness of the Panama Scandal. . An atmosphere that would pressure the SCP to take significant action against Nawaz Sharif and his family was created in many different ways.

Even though previous research indicates a connection between the usage of social media and political participation as well as the political mobilisation against regimes and organisations, there is just a small amount of academic study that has been done on the topic of people in Pakistan using social media platforms to express their political views or to represent themselves in a political capacity. (Tareen & Adnan, 2021)

Conclusion

To sum up, that social media help the Pakistan youth become more politically aware and hold their representatives accountable. People have indeed acquired political awareness as a result of using social media. However, there is also hostile and unfavourable proof showing people do not have as much information and are not as competent up to as much of an optimal level as was expected. Although social media encourages young interaction, their level of understanding falls short of expectations. It is advised that institutions be urged to post political information on social media to educate the youth in light of the findings and the discussion above. Youth should access correct information on the political system and political process on media websites. More public agencies should be digitised, and the public should easily access them. Engaging young people in the political process should be a priority for political parties, and this should include doing so via social media as well as through community socialisation. Because political parties frequently provide content of a political nature on their social media accounts, these accounts must be followed.

In Pakistani literature, The role of social media and how it helps hold politicians accountable are not well acknowledged. A few studies have been conducted from the perspective of Pakistan; however, the literature is dispersed, and the studies have only had a limited reach. Although many studies have been conducted on social media globally, most of these studies have concentrated on political protest and electoral campaigns rather than ordinary politics, which receives the least attention from academics. On the other hand, ensuring accountability through the election process is a very time-consuming process. Consequently, it is worthwhile to investigate the possibilities of social media for political responsibility. After conducting a comprehensive literature review, the underlying study concluded that most published research is centred on electoral campaigns and the strategic promises made by candidates to win elections. This finding has important implications for the direction of future research. However, every aspect of politics is still relatively unexplored, so upcoming researchers will need to direct their attention in that direction. It is important to look at politics in the real world



to determine each party's policy preferences and how voters affect them. In addition, the electoral process of political accountability is time-consuming; conversely, the conversation on social media is a quicker approach to examining the seriousness of political issues.



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