



Effects of Facebook on Political and Voting Behavior

of Women in Gujrat

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Abstract

The social media applications provide space for the people to discuss political, societal, and religious issues the study investigates to examine the surveillance of Facebook to develop political awareness, analyzes whether facebook usage successfully changes the voting behavior, and finds out whether Facebook gratify the political needs and motivate women to cast their vote. The researchers collected data from women of Gujrat city who have valid CNIC and registered voters of Pakistan through the Survey method keeping in mind age, education, profession, and marital status. The researchers used “Uses and Gratification theory” as a theoretical framework in the study. The researcher used SPSS for statistical analysis, to check the percentage, and apply the T-Test to verify the objective of the study. Demographic findings of the study show that most of the females who participated in the survey belong to age 18-30 years, have BA/MA education, with single marital status & students. The findings of the study show that most of the respondents agree that women participated in political



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discussions and gratify their needs by using Facebook. Results of the study indicated that Facebook successfully develop political awareness among women which plays an important role to change the voting behavior of females and motivate women to cast their votes during the election.

Keywords: *Social Networking Sites, Facebook, Political Behavior, Awareness, Women, Gujrat, Pakistan*

Introduction

Social media is the emerging, fast and direct source of communication that provides information from daily life to political life. Social media is a platform where people can share their views and information; people act as writer and viewers at same time. Social media applications provide space for the people to discuss political, societal, and religious issues (Aksar et al., 2020), which injects political information into the minds of people, and active social mediums like Facebook and Twitter create space to discuss the political issue with peer group and face to face communication with political leaders (Arshad & Khurram, 2020). Pakistan is a developing country where people are adopting the latest technologies for better and fast communication. Social media has important and noteworthy impact on the minds of youth and it becomes a part of their lives. People use Twitter, YouTube, Skype, Facebook and Instagram for personal and group communication with people living in other parts of the world. Many countries and political leaders around the world have used social media platforms to engage people in political processes for political purposes (Shehzad et al., 2021).



Social media is online stage of social networks which used for socialization and interaction with other people to distribute same individual and career benefits, behavior and life time relations, and in current era youth use social media networks for their daily communication whereas it is not only famous in politics but also used in political campaigns as a tool of communication. Usage of social media networking increased day by day in Pakistan. The women of Pakistan are very energetic and active to participate in the growth and expansion of social groups. Social media platforms are playing an important role to create a bridge among people for better communication and the welfare of society (Jin, 2013). Last 10 years, computer and smartphone-based social networking has transformed into a variety of social networking sites (Hosseini et al., 2020). The voting decisions of citizens are based on previous voting experiences, current attitudes, and various sources of direct and mediated communication (Redlawsk, 2002). In political culture, political organizations and leaders use social media networks to maintain beneficial relationships with active people (Linde & Peters, 2020). The world becomes a global village and people from all over the world use the latest technologies for a better future and gain publicity through them. Facebook is a popular online social networking platform around the world (Ross et al., 2009). Facebook is considered an important area of research. Facebook groups support social networks and discuss political issues (Murthy, 2013). In the era of globalization, the people of Pakistan also use social media applications for communication and political awareness. Political parties use these applications to disseminate party information among voters (Madueke et al., 2017) and in Pakistan; social media is also playing a vital role in reshaping the minds and behaviors of youth (Eijaz, 2013). Social media network users, use Facebook most of the time for



political discussions (Orfan, 2020). People living in the 21st century are bold and active members of social networking sites. Facebook becomes an important platform not only for the school and college students but also the globally most popular networking site for sharing political knowledge (Earl & Kimport, 2011; Ward, 2012).

After examining the accessible literature, the researcher has a point of view that most of the people all over the world especially in Pakistan using social media applications like Facebook to gratify their political needs. Women use Facebook for the Surveillance (to get political information) and develop personal relationships (friendship and societal efficacy) to gratify their needs. There would be a large quantity of research done in the field of social media and its effects on the political perception of people. The researchers used two variables Surveillance and Develop personal relationships of Uses & Gratification theory to highlight the political participation of women. Facebook is a widely used platform that provides users with a variety of features. Researchers have analyzed specific platform features such as photo sharing and streaming music in the light of usage and gratification theory. Researchers have identified six basic needs that users are trying to meet by sharing photos on Facebook. Therefore, these requirements are triggers for estimating photo sharing on Facebook. These stimuli are affection, seeking attention or information, confession, habits, data sharing, and social impact. In Pakistan, social media is a newly developed medium and a lot of researchers researched the effects of social media, but there are very fewer studies on Facebook's effects on women's political and voting behavior in Pakistan.

Objectives



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1. To examine the surveillance of Facebook develop political awareness among women.
2. To analyze whether facebook usage successfully changes the voting behavior of women.
3. To find out whether Facebook gratify the needs of women and motivate to cast their vote.

Literature Review

Social media is an important tool for political socialization which provides a big platform to its user. People all over the world use different social networking apps to develop relations, share their political views, and advertise their products (Bronstein & Aharony, 2015). Users of social networking sites mostly discuss political affairs and they regularly use these applications (Rainie et al, 2012). Balo & Shawon (2018) researched on Use of social media in Election Marketing in Bangladesh: Its impact on Voting Behavior and findings show that the use of social media among voters creates awareness and political knowledge about voting, changes the way we think about politics, and informs them about their right to vote. The best summary of this survey is that social media builds relationships between politicians and the public through online campaigns that help build public confidence in politicians. whereas Pew Centre finds out that active Facebook users are politically more advanced in comparison to occasional users (Hyun & Kim, 2015), exposure to social media leads to political involvement (Vaccari et al, 2015; Zhang & Lin, 2014). Zaheer (2016) researched to investigate the use of Facebook applications among students of Pakistan and their participation in political activities. The findings of the study revealed that Facebook users who spend more time on it are more inclined toward political activities and participate in political discussions.



Findings also said that there is a significant relationship between political participation and users' age and gender. There is a positive association between online political appearance and political involvement (Bode et al, 2014; Hsieh & Li, 2014)

Shehzad et al., (2021) investigated the impact of Facebook usage on political participation among women in Pakistan. The findings of the study reveal that online political participation on Facebook among women of Pakistan persuades offline political participation, and women are actively involved in online political activities. Social media allows its users to make friends or follow others which creates a big chain of social networking and people like, share, and comment on the posts and videos of their friends (Travers & Milgram, 1967). Conventional media producers have strong control over message construction and act as gatekeepers (Gainous & Wagner, 2014), whereas social media is more free and friendly for their users to produce their content for others (Chadwick, 2017, pp. 70-102). People around the world use social media to connect (Park et al, 2009), and people expand facebook concentration which contains time, and friends list behaviors (Ellison et al, 2007), whereas many researchers find a considerable association between the usage of Facebook and political involvement (Valenzuela et al, 2009).

Munir (2018) researched to investigate "Social Media and Shaping Voting Behavior of Youth: The Scottish Referendum 2014 Case". This study focuses on the behavior of youth in the Scottish Independence referendum in 2014 shaped by media, especially by Facebook. Findings show that young voters get information mostly from Facebook because they are active on it. Usage of Facebook changes the voting behavior of Scottish youth. Politicians of Sweden, Finland, UK, Italy, Norway, India, Pakistan, and



many other countries used Facebook & Twitter in their political campaigns to motivate voters to cast their vote and participate in political activities (Larsson et al, 2012; Strandberg, 2013; Lilleker, 2010; Vaccari et al, 2013; Ravi & Vasundara, 2015; and Khushi & Ilyas, 2013). In the contemporary world media, social media becomes an important tool and conventional media has been changed and converted into social media (Schlozman et al, 2010), social media is an active place where people all over the world interact with people and transform their views about, culture, values, norms, religion, and politics. Youth actively participate in political activities and share their views among people on Facebook and spread information and political knowledge of their selected political party or leader among their peer groups, family members, and friends (Cohen & Kahne, 2011).

Hellweg (2011) researched the usage of Facebook and Twitter pages by the political figures that how they influenced the readers through their pages. By using social media pages, the politicians attract the attention of the masses. Facebook has given access to people to develop political opinions. In Greece, local government social media managers post rich media content on Facebook in videos and encourage citizens to participate in a variety of offline activities (Lappas et al., 2021), and political digital media literature suggests a positive link between the use of the Internet and political participation (Kim & Lee, 2019). In Pakistan, social media rapidly developed and become a strong platform for political dialogue. People use it for communication, dissemination of information, voter mobilization, and political affairs. Social media applications also provide space and platform for their users to raise their voices against the corrupt leadership, inequality, power disaster, and unskilled leaders (Ahmad & Sheikh, 2013) whereas it



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is a good place for users to raise their voices on the other hand leadership to listen to these voices (Ali et al, 2013).

Tang & Lee (2013) conducted research and finds there is a positive relationship between social media and political involvement in youth. Findings of the study show that direct communication with political leaders through facebook increases the political participation of youth and it also increases the political knowledge of youth. Facebook is a big market for advisors and politicians, where they advertise their brands and party slogans (Bendor, 2014). Most companies, political parties, businessmen, political leaders, and research scholars use social media to get information and share their views which enhance users' knowledge and provide better opportunities to settle their lives. Masiha et al. (2018) researched to investigate the use of Facebook and the political participation of Pakistani youth. Findings of the study reveal that most of the Facebook users are youth and they share policies of specific political parties rather than their pictures and videos on their Facebook timeline. There is a significant relationship exists between the usage of Facebook and political participation. Findings also show that users who spend more time on Facebook, chatting with friends and close friends have more interest in political activities which leads to the enhanced democratic system. Visser & Stolle (2014) said that Facebook creates new ways to engage political issues because of its low cost as compared to conventional media campaigns and Elin (2003) has a point of view that a Facebook is an active place where youth share political views and get the latest information of local politics.

Theoretical Framework

To get excellent results from the research study, a decent and appropriate theoretical design will help the researcher (Richard, 2013). The social



structure of every society is different from each other and has its own cultural and political thinking. Uses and Gratification theory deliberately elaborate that users of media are very active and choosy in the selection and its use. Uses and Gratification Theory is not anxious about what media did with people but it is clear about what people did with media. Users influenced the effects of media whereas users actively participated to understand the role of media in their lives and they also use it to gratify their needs (Anaeto et al, 2008). The uses and gratifications theory suggests that individual users will continue to be engaged with social networking sites if their gratifications and needs are fulfilled by such tools. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) added four basic elements Diversion, Personal Relationship, Personal Identity and Surveillance in the theory whereas Katz, Haas and Gurevitch (1973) saw mass media as a way for individuals to connect and disconnect with others. They created 35 requirements from the literature and categorized them into five categories, based on extensive assumptions about the social and psychological function of the media which are Cognitive, Affective, Personal Integrative, Social integrative and Tension release needs.

Facebook is a big platform, which is widely used to fulfill the needs of information and users to express their political opinions. Uses and Gratification is the inspiration behind the back to the use of Facebook and political participation among youth (Joinson, 2008). Inspiration is an essential element of political participation and has a universal nature to influence users' actions. Facebook is an interactive platform where the user's actively gratified their needs and therefore use and gratification provides an effective base for the involvement (Ko et al, 2005), youth get news and information from Facebook (Seldon, 2008), participate in political activities



lead young people to use Facebook (Roy, 2009), youth use Facebook online & offline to fulfill their needs for political participation (Park et al., 2009). The advancement in the field of communication and the junction of mass and digital media change the viewing pattern of media viewers (Finn, 1997). A new form of media provides multiple choices, motivations, and satisfaction to its users. Scholars have a point of view that the conventional model of uses and gratification provides a realistic framework to investigate the internet and new media communication (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Method

The researchers used a purposive sampling technique to investigate the effects of Facebook on the voting behavior of Gujrat city women. The researchers used a survey method and designed a questionnaire which consists of demographic variables and 14 items related to surveillance and political information. The researchers physically gathered information and viewpoints from 300 females of Gujrat city who have valid CNIC and are registered voters of any city of Pakistan. The researchers choose Gujrat city to save time, cost and above all Gujrat city is Politically very rich where all political parties have strong hold. The researchers develop their own instrument and do pilot study to confirm the validity of the scale items. The value of the Cronbach's Alpha was .815 of 14 items related to surveillance, political information and voting behavior.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables	Percent (%)
18-30	64%
31-45	16.3%



Age	46-60	19.7%
Education	Metric	15%
	Intermediate	17.7%
	BA/MA	49.7%
	M.Phil or Above	17.7%
Profession	Working	36.3%
	Student	44.3%
	Household	19.3%
Marital Status	Single	62.3%
	Married	21%
	Widow	6.7%
	Divorced	10%

The table shows that 64% of respondents have age 18-30, 16.3% of respondents have aged 31-45 and 19.7% of respondents have aged 46-60 years participated in the survey. 15% of respondents have metric education, 17.7% have intermediate, 49.7% have BA/MA and 17.7% have M.Phil or above whereas 36.3% of respondents belong to the working class, 44.3% are students and 19.3% are household. The findings of the study show that 62.3% are single, 21% are married, 6.7% are widows and 10% are divorced.

Table 2: To examine the role of Facebook to develop political awareness among women

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Age	300	1.56	.801	.046



Facebook political content motivates women to participate in political activities.	300	3.78	.748	.043
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One-Sample Test

	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
					Test Value = 0	
Age	33.64	299	.000	1.557	1.47	1.65
Facebook political content motivates women to participate in political activities.	87.48	299	.000	3.780	3.69	3.87

The findings of the study show that respondents (N=300) have different age groups with a Mean (M= 1.557) association with Facebook political content that motivates women to participate in political activities (M=3.780). Independent sample t-test results show that the p-value is .000 which is less than the value of 5 which shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between age and Facebook political content. Findings approve



the objective that Facebook political content motivates women to participate in political activities.

Table3: Facebook is an active tool to change the voting behavior of women

One-Sample Statistics						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
Age	300	1.56	.801	.046		
Facebook political content affects your political affiliation for vote casting.	300	3.86	.821	.047		

One-Sample Test						
Test Value = 0						
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Age	33.64	299	.000	1.557	1.47	1.65
Facebook political content affects your political affiliation for vote casting.	81.53	299	.000	3.863	3.77	3.96



The results of the study show that respondents (N=300) have different age groups with a Mean (M= 1.557) association with Facebook political content affects your political affiliation for vote casting with a Mean (M=3.863). Independent sample t-test results show that the p-value is .000 which is less than the value of 5 which shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The findings of the table approve the objective that Facebook political content affects your political affiliation for vote casting.

Table 4: To find out whether Facebook is motivating women to cast their vote

One-Sample Statistics						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
Age	300	1.56	.801	.046		
Facebook motivated you to cast vote in the election.	300	3.88	.927	.054		

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0					
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Age	33.643	299	.000	1.557	1.47	1.65



Facebook	72.561	299	.000	3.883	3.78	3.99
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motivated you
to cast vote in
the election.

The results of the study show that respondents (N=300) have different age groups with a Mean (M= 1.557) association with Facebook that motivated them to cast vote (M=3.883). Independent sample t-test results show that the p-value is .000 which is less than the value of 5 which shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between age and Facebook. The findings of the table approve the objective that Facebook motivated you to cast vote in the election.

Discussion

People living in the 21st century are bold and active members of social networking sites. Social media applications are an important tool of communication in the globalized world and Facebook becomes one of the most important platforms for students, workers, and professionals not only in Pakistan but all over the world for the sharing of common information to political information. Pakistani people are using social media in daily life not only to communicate with fellows about fashion but also to discuss political activities. Pakistan is a country where the political setup is very strong and many political parties participated in the political process. The people of Pakistan are also very active, enthusiastic, and keen to participate in political activities.

The current study "Effects of Facebook on the political and voting behavior of women in Gujrat" was conducted to find out whether Facebook creates



awareness among women of Pakistan to participate in the political process. The findings of the study show that Facebook has positive effects on the political perception of Gujrat women. The researchers collect views from 300 females of Gujrat city through a survey method from the age of 18-60, from metric to M.Phil education; also consider their profession and marital status. The researchers use SPSS software and confirm the results statistically. The researchers check the percentage of the questions and apply a t-test to verify the objectives of the study.

Findings of the study show that most of the respondents (64.0%) belong to age 18-30 and most of the respondents (49.7%) have education BA/MA whereas most of the respondents (44.3%) are students. The findings of the study also show that most of the respondents (62.3%) have a single marital status.

An objective analysis of the study shows that Facebook has positive effects on the minds and behavior of women. The results of the Table 2 show that respondents (N=300) have different age groups with a Mean (M= 1.557) and have an association with Facebook political content that motivates women to participate in political activities (M=3.780). Independent sample t-test results show that the p-value is .000 which is less than the value of 5 which shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between age and Facebook political content. The findings of the study approve the objective that Facebook political content motivates women to participate in political activities. Social media networking site and mostly Facebook is the most famous and influential tool to disseminate political information and awareness among people. Many researchers support the objective of the current study that the use of social media among voters creates awareness and political knowledge about voting, changes the way we think about



politics, and informs them about their right to vote (Balo & Shawon, 2018). There is also a positive association between online political appearance and political involvement (Bode et al, 2014; Hsieh & Li, 2014)

The results of Table 3 show that respondents (N=300) have different age groups with a Mean (M= 1.557) have an association with Facebook political content affecting your political affiliation for vote casting with a Mean (M=3.863). Independent sample t-test results show that the p-value is .000 which is less than the value of 5 which shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The findings of the study approve the objective that facebook's political content affects your political affiliation for vote casting. Many researchers researched to investigate political affiliation and vote-casting behavior. Usage of Facebook changes the voting behavior of youth. Politicians of many countries used Facebook & Twitter in their political campaigns to motivate voters to cast their vote and participate in political activities (Larsson et al, 2012; Strandberg, 2013; Lilleker, 2010; Vaccari et al, 2013; Ravi & Vasundara, 2015; and Khushi & Ilyas, 2013). (Joshi & Rosenfield, 2013; Gine & Mansuri, 2011; Mhlanga and Eaglestone, 2013; Everitt and Gidengil, 2003).

The results of the Table 4 show that respondents (N=300) have different age groups with a Mean (M= 1.557) and have an association with Facebook that motivated them to cast vote (M=3.883). Independent sample t-test results show that the p-value is .000 which is less than the value of 5 which shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between age and Facebook. The findings of the study approve the objective that Facebook motivated you to cast vote in the election. Many researchers of media studies and technologies researched the impact of Facebook and social media on voting behavior. Such studies support the current objective that



Facebook is motivating women to cast their votes (Shehzad et al., 2021; Zaheer, 2016). Conventional media producers have strong control over message construction and act as gatekeepers (Gainous & Wagner, 2014), whereas social media is more free and friendly for their users to produce their content for others (Chadwick, 2017, pp. 70-102). People around the world use social media to connect (Park et al, 2009), whereas many researchers find a considerable association between the usage of Facebook and political involvement (Valenzuela et al, 2009).

The world becomes a global village and with the invention of social media and social networking sites, people all over the world use such medium for communication to get the latest news related to lifestyle, culture, religion, politics, and everyday life. The current study "Effects of Facebook on Voting Behavior of women in Gujrat" shows that Facebook is a widely used networking site and application in Pakistan among women of Gujrat. They use this forum for political participation, to get political news and information about the party and its leadership. Users of social media networking sites use Facebook applications for political information and to gratify their needs. The researcher uses "Uses and Gratification Theory" as a theoretical framework that endorse the results of the current study.

Conclusion

Social networking sites are famous sites for communication. A few years back, conventional media including Radio and TV was the best source of communication, information, and knowledge sharing. With the advent of social media and globalization, the world becomes a global village and people all over the world connect only with the blinking of an eye. Usage of social media networking increased day by day in Pakistan. The youth of Pakistan is very energetic and participate in other activities for the growth



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and expansion of social groups. In the current era, social media is playing an important role to develop bridges among people for better communication and the welfare of society. The voting decisions of citizens are based on previous voting experiences, current attitudes, and various sources of direct and mediated communication (Redlawsk, 2002). Social media is the emerging, fast and direct source of communication that provides information from daily life to political life. It injects political information into the minds of people along with the traditional and other online social media channels. Active social mediums like Facebook and Twitter develop two essential factors in the public expansion of a firm vote preference: discussion on the political issue with peer groups and face-to-face communication with political leaders (Lappas et al., 2021). Pakistan is a developing country where people try to adopt new technologies for better and fast communication with the rest of the world. People use Twitter, YouTube, Skype, Facebook, and Instagram for personal and group communication with people living in other parts of the world (Lilleker & Jackson, 2010).

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