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**SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SOURCE OF POLITICAL INFORMATION  
AMONG VOTERS OF SINDH, PAKISTAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Social media has developed a significant means to provide political information among voters of Sindh due to its convenient approach and accessibility at wide-reaching on a global scale. Social media will not only provide information on political parties and their candidates, but it will also encourage voters to engage among themselves to discuss their concerns about their individual politicians. From such a systemic standpoint, the study addressed use of such social media platforms to obtain political information during the Pakistan General Elections 2018. This paper has primarily associated with political information obtained through the use and application of social media platforms by main political parties and voters. This study was restricted to the Hyderabad district. The information was compiled in accordance with the general election of 2018, with a focus on registered voters in the district of Hyderabad between the ages of 18 and 35. The data was gathered by employing with the technique of probability sampling. The study indicates that voters belong to Hyderabad district were generally the regular users of SNS, whereas Twitter and Facebook are the most frequently used SNS sites. They have sufficient disclosure to political information by using Facebook and twitter. The analysis and interpretation of collected data shows that the voters of Hyderabad district gain more political knowledge by employing SNS sites and have enough exposure of party manifesto which is disseminated by political campaign being run on social networks. Hence the conclusion of the study is 'social media provide tremendous information regarding political communication, party's manifestoes and political campaign, makes effect on voters and let them to change their voting behavior and perception, leading to change their party affiliation.*

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**Keywords:** Social media, political information, voters' behaviors.

## INTRODUCTION

Pakistan have been a central element of transnational networking of social media webbing. The Pakistani youngsters are similarly getting engage to evolve attitudes reflecting social and political matters. In Pakistan the newly evolved pattern of social media in terms of employing is appears as to be the usage pattern of United State and UK with a little difference (Metzgar, Maruggi, 2009). In political sight, it notices that political parties of Pakistan often used social media forums to emphasize their supporters to increase their vote bank and political influence. Considering this phenomenon, scholars all over the globe have organized numerous studies on different attributes of social media (Golan et.al., 2019). The idea is to attract youth communal that is 18-24 aged, who never take part previously to cast votes in any election, enable to cast vote for upcoming elections (Udayakumar, 2005).

Throughout Pakistan's 2013 election, virtually all major political parties employed twitter and Facebook campaigning. It was showed that majority of Political parties use social media platforms such as Myspace, Orkut, Twitter, and Facebook (Moldovan, 2013). These Political parties are seeking to create political interaction amongst voters and party to cultivate party philosophy in addition to offering daily account reviews about their political leader and party manifestoes (Carty, 2010). Active and consistent participation in Pakistan on social media developed a political standards and image of major political parties.

The swift and continuous growth of digital sites, its appeal amongst some of the younger population, and growing digital efficiency in retaining users have ensured that social media is seldom far outside the mainstream. Pakistan Today (2013) As per census report, the total population of Pakistan is 207,774,520. The Pakistan General Elections 2018 had been held with altered constituency boundaries as an outcome of the Pakistan Census 2017. As per ECP (2018), the total proportion of the electorate in the 2018 general election was 105,955,409, with 59,224,263 (55.90 percent) being male voters and 46,731,146 (44.10 percent) being females. Sindh province accounted for 22,391,244 of the total. The aggregate number of voters in Hyderabad was 1,049,586.

For the very first time, the Election 2018 saw the highest voter participation. The majority of PTI voters got drawn from online

communities, and they are assumed to be active on social media. It indicates that it is possible that social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter, have changed voters' perceptions, behaviours, and attitudes regarding the parties and the politician for which those who intend to vote. (ECP, 2018).

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

With the time being, social networking come to be one of the massive and active channels for political news and information. Now it becomes a considerable source of political mobilization and submission of political thought at the global ground (Hindman, 2009). Social media has contributed by offering possibilities to carryout changes in terms of both social and political sight. In the era of political dominance, social networking has played its significant role in political and social revolts (McChesney, 2004). Moreover, political parties can alter the perception of general public by sharing various images, voice mails and video clips on social media.

The consumption of social media is greatly altering the way of election campaigns.” Naturally, young generation are the frequent users of social media, hence professionals acknowledged that social media enable the new generation to be expressed more in elections (Murse, 2019).

Social media has a tremendous effect on governmental decisions as researcher easily conclude that every major country to some level or the other is being affected by employing social media. As, Barack Obama during the 2008 presidential election had been criticised as he won the election by the effective use of social media with its complete potential to run his campaign(Moldovan, 2013). Through social media political candidates interact with the voters to enhanced online participation which let them to experience online campaign news (Franziska Marquart, 2020). Another significant effect of twitter trend is trolling by which political candidates seeks or divert attention of voters by negative tweets or troll opposition parties. Study of various research and literature review specifies that adverse language could increases the number of retweets of a amongst the Twitter handlers (Samuel David Mueller, 2020). As a result social media could set off networks for political appearance, conflict, involvement and sharing for both political leaders and their supporters voters at once (Tucker et.al., 2017).

However, social media is used by the most of Pakistani students of the university for political awareness and knowledge. Virtual political participation has a tremendous impact on political productivity (Ittefaq et.al., 2018). Furthermore, social media is an important venue for users to engage in real-world political activity. Finally, the literature's findings indicate that online political actions are highly linked to awareness and outdoor political participation. New generations in Pakistan's rural areas are particularly engaged on social media, participating in both online and offline political activity (Ahmed et.al., 2019).

When comparison to other social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook appears to be the best network among Pakistani young for political information. As per a study conducted, Pakistan seems to have the world's second-largest young population, behind Yemen, which has a substantial impact on Pakistan's political landscape. (Ittefaq & Iqbal, 2018).

Rahmad et.al., (2022) Users' opinions and behaviour, as well as particular local settings, can be learned a lot from social media. Authorities can utilize this tools to track citizen views as well as the participation of government leaders (Lorentzen, 2014) and (Huang & Yeh, 2019), as well as (King et.al., 2013, 2014) and (Qin et.al., 2017).

Similarly, Schmiemann (2015) looked at social media and political participation and found that Fb concentration encourages people to participate in politics. Gibson and McAllister (2012) investigated how digitally operating systems enhance political communication by evaluating online social connections and voter participation. Furthermore, online involvement strengthens bonds between unconnected interconnection networks; they discovered that online social communication encourages actual participation. However, Matthes, J. (2022) postulated in his paper that social networking sites use might dramatically decrease political activity since, on the whole, emerging adults employ social networking sites for non-political objectives, that isolates them rather than mobilisers.

As a result, the majority of research claim that social media has a political influence on peoples opinions as a result of geostrategic socioeconomic disparities (Casero-Ripollés, 2018; Matook & Butler, 2015). Social media is receiving increasing attention in forming public opinion, raising political knowledge, and changing people's

narratives in a clear and obvious manner through raising understanding of current political and social concerns (Ye et.al., 2020).

Gradually, digital networks has emerged as a significant dominant means of influencing and inspiring communities. This persuasion does indeed have a significant impact since that can alter individuals, community, as well as its mode of living through socialization and communication. As something of an example of the significance that digital networks has over its consumers, consider the fury that such Nepali citizens feel just after clip uploaded by Seema Subedi turned popular with the masses (Rayamajhi, Shreedeeep, 2017).

Western countries recognized social media mostly as a tool to increase interaction with their voters and facilitate them to change voters' behavior and perception towards them (Gattermann, Vreese, 2020).

DeLuca et.al., (DeLuca et.al., 2012) because of its ease of use and global availability, new media is becoming an excellent tool for influencing political leanings. Digital networks also provides information concerning political parties and politicians, but also it provides a forum for individuals to segregate according to its dreams, ambitions, and objectives. New media therefore encourages voters to communicate with one another in order to discuss various concerns over the specific candidates. (Saifuddin et.al., 2017).

Digital networks seems to be an engaging medium that appears to be an important way of linking, persuading, manipulating, including connecting their public, as well as forming public perception and generating opinion makers. Social media enables connections in which voters' perspectives could be discussed throughout electoral campaigns (Lane, 2020).

#### **OBJECTIVE OF STUDY**

To assess the use of social media for political information among voters.

#### **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

For this research, quantitative research is implemented as a research strategy since it allocates the researcher to get hold of the facts about the objective of the paper (Bryman, Bell, 2007). To collect data from the population survey method has adopted. Survey procedures entail collecting data from participants by determining a

cross section of society or population within consideration. However, the poll will be performed to learn regarding voters' and online consumers' perspectives on getting political information during the 2018 election. The data was assembled employing questionnaire. Krejcie and Morgan table (Krejcie, Morgan, 1997) is used to determine sample sizes. Though, a sample of 384 out of 1,049,586 population has extracted from the major taluka of Hyderabad. To collect data 96 questionnaire had distributed in each taluka. Questionnaire was distributed to the respondent of age group between 18-35, as the voter of this age regularly uses social media. Finally, the composed data was analyses by using SPSS software.

## RESULTS

The researcher's aim is to explore the extent of political information among voter's of Sindh by social media. Based on the research objective, the main research questions is to what extent social media provide political information during General Election 2018's election campaign and how the voters use social media during the campaign. In this context, data collected through the survey technique. The data is analyzed by SPSS and findings are presented below in tabular form. below.

According to table-1 outcome indicates that, 58.3 % respondents were male whereas 41.7 % were female. Additionally, 45.1 % of the respondents age was 18 to 22 years, 23.7 % was lies between the age bracket of 23 to 26 years old, 16.1 % were 27 to 30 years old and 15.1 % respondents were lies between the age group of 31 to 25 years old. The data about the qualification showing that 1.8 % respondents were uneducated, 3.1 % were primary, 11.2 % of the respondents were in Matric level whereas 26.3 % were in their intermediate level, 47.1 % were graduate and rest of 10.4 % were in Masters. The respondents were also queried about their marital status 65.9 % were Single and 34.1 % respondent were married. The findings about occupation showed that 39.6 % respondents were students, and this is the highest number of responses which lies in the student category, whereas 15.6 % answered as they are working in government sector, 19.5 % were employed in private organization, 14.6 % are running their personal business, while only the 10.7 % respondents are jobless. Generally, 55 % make earning around 10,000 to 20,000 monthlies while 45 % are earning above 20,000 approximately.

**Table-1**  
**Demographic Summary of the Respondent**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	224	58.3
Female	160	41.7
<b>Age</b>		
18 to 22	173	45.1
23 to 26	91	23.7
27 to 30	62	16.1
31 to 35	58	15.1
<b>Qualification</b>		
Illiterate	7	1.8
Primary	12	3.1
Matriculation	43	11.2
Intermediate	101	26.3
Graduate	181	47.1
Masters	41	10.4
Other	0	0
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	253	65.9
Married	131	34.1
<b>Profession</b>		
Government employed	60	15.6
Private employed	75	19.5
Unemployed	41	10.7
Own Business	56	14.6
Student	152	39.6
<b>Monthly Salary</b>		
10000-20000	211	55.0
21000-above	173	45.0
<b>Resident of</b>		
Hyderabad city	96	25.0
Latifabad	96	25.0
Qasimabad	96	25.0
Hyderabad rural	96	25.0

\*\* values show in percentage (%), n=384

Table-2 shows the descriptive statistics for responders inquiring about the demographics of eligible voters in by using medium of social networking sites. A five-point ordinal scale ranging from "very much" to "not at all" is being used to gather data on various social networking consumption behavior in attempt to decide how generally people have been using Facebook and Twitter, and therefore how participants gets affected to something and perceive wide and varied information via social media. Only a small percentage of respondents (16.4 percent) indicated they learned more about politics through facebook and twitter than in any other media in response to the second question (Mdn = 3.00, n = 63). But at the other side, participants (Mdn = 3.00, n, = 80), anywhere around (20.8 percent) indicated that by using political information through social networking sites made it simpler to know current parties. However, 25% of participants said that they could gain more about Pakistani issues by using social media information (Mdn = 2.00, n, = 96).

Almost (12.2 percent) stated that seem to be more likely to be swayed politically by a political party's official page on facebook and twitter rather than print and electronic media (Mdn = 3.00, n, = 47). The official webpages of major parties already have potential to change people' for the party allegiance throughout Hyderabad (Mdn = 3.00, n, = 84). Nearly (21.8 percent) said that official websites of politicians might influence individuals' behaviour for particular party affiliations. Furthermore, 23.4 percent argues that social media is indeed a key impact in affecting voter behavioural patterns toward their parties, along with voting preferences (Mdn = 2.00, n, = 90).

Being asking how frequently netizens change overall perspectives on matters of state as a result of the material on social media, the findings showed that 23.4% indicated it occurs most commonly (Mdn = 2.500, n, = 90). Additionally, is therefore generally believed that social media have developed into a promising technique for determining voting trends on an ordinal scale (17.6%) (Mdn = 3.00, n, = 69). Voters (29.9%) generally cited (Mdn = 2.00, n, = 115) that digital networks is important in electoral campaigns.



**Table-2**  
**The demographics of the district of Hyderabad's registered voters**  
**as determined by their frequent media consumption**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>S<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Consuming very frequently (%)</i>
<i>To what extent you spend more time on social media than other Media like Print and Electronic Media</i>	99	3.00	1.668	(25.8)
<i>Do you understand that you gain more Political knowledge on social media</i>	63	3.00	1.752	(16.4)
<i>Do you understand that use of social media's Political contents helps us in understanding Political parties?</i>	80	3.00	1.933	(20.8)
<i>What do you understand that use of social media political content can increase your information level regarding Political issues of Pakistan?</i>	96	2.00	1.913	(25)
<i>How much you politically influenced from social media Political Party official pages than Electronic Media and Print Media</i>	47	3.00	1.867	(12.2)
<i>Do you understand that Political parties' official pages can change perception/behavior of voters from Hyderabad regarding Political Party Affiliation</i>	84	3.00	2.070	(21.8)
<i>Do you understand that social media probably are the major cause to change voter's behavior and attitude towards their party and voting decision</i>	90	2.00	1.450	(23.4)
<i>Do you understand that the users of social media change their views on political issues by the content of social media</i>	90	2.500	1.793	(23.4)
<i>To what extent social media has become an influential means to affect the voting behavior.</i>	69	3.00	1.579	(17.6)
<i>To what extent social media political campaign is important among voters.</i>	115	2.00	1.611	(29.9)

**\*\* Note:** For the medians, higher scores equal more consumption. Scale ranges from 5 = Very frequently to 1 = Never.

Table-3 displays the results of a cross-tabulation of a variable regarding monthly salary and more duration spent using social media than that on mass media such as newspapers. It demonstrates how participants with only a basic income of 10,000 to 20,000 spend a considerable amount of spending social media connections instead than conventional or broadcast media. 210 participants (out of 384) claimed they were more engaged on social media than it does in magazines or newspapers. With such a monthly wage of 21,000 upwards of, 133 out of 384 participants felt they active on social facebook than just about any other platform. In total, 44 persons out of both divisions provide a negative response to this.

**Table-3**  
**Monthly income \* To what extent you spend more time on social media than on traditional forms of media such as print or electronic Cross tabulation**

		to what extent you spend more time on social media than on traditional forms of media such as print or electronic					Total
		Very much	Much	Some what	Rarely	Not at all	
Monthly income	10,000-20,000	57	42	69	42	1	211
	21,000-above	42	48	40	0	43	173
<b>Total</b>		<b>99</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>384</b>

Table-4, from out 384 respondents, 97 received and disclosed political coverage in newspapers and on facebook and twitter. Nevertheless, 72% among those polled stated that they favored social media as a source of political information. 58 and 12 respondents, accordingly, indicated that they rarely and infrequently access political news through social media. From the other side, responders from newspapers or traditional media haven't ever encountered any political messages. Overall findings shows that social media consumption of political coverage is much greater than even of newspapers.

**Table-4**  
**What extent do you like to read political content in newspaper \* to what extent do you expose to the political contents of social media**  
**Cross tabulation**

		to what extent do you expose to the political contents of social media					Total
		Very much	Much	Some what	Rarely	Not at all	
what extent do you like to read political content in newspaper	Very much	97	8	0	0	0	105
	Much	0	72	9	0	0	81
	somewhat	0	0	58	0	0	58
	rarely	0	0	12	35	0	47
	not at all	0	0	0	21	72	93
	<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>384</b>

Table-5 displays the cross-tabulation study of a variable using social networking sites during the 2018 elections that included genders and parties affiliation. Men appear as being the most impacted, as 169 out of 384 of respondents changed their political affiliation through social media. They switched parties as a result of their extensive content aggregation of political content throughout the 2018 presidential election campaign. Only 7 women report changing their voting preferences during the voting as a result of using social media, suggesting that women did not show any significant influence on political material on these platforms.

**Table-5**  
**What is gender \* Have you changed your political party affiliation throughout the 2018 general election campaign utilizing social media? Cross-tabulation**

		Have you changed your political party affiliation throughout the 2018 general election campaign utilizing social media?		Total
		YES	NO	
what gender is	Male	169	55	224
	Female	7	153	160
	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>384</b>

Table-6 contains a cross tabulation result of variable age and party affiliation changing. According with data, using social networks seems to have a massive effect on the 18-22 age group, since they frequently change their political membership. Out of 384 respondents, 152 claimed they shifted their party preference using digital platforms during the 2018 election, whereas 21 claimed those who did never modify their former loyalty to the party. During the 2018 election, online political campaigns affected the 23-26 age bracket, with 24 respondents shifting their party affiliation and 67 not yet altered their political affiliation. The cross-tabulation demonstrates that there would be no change in the political preferences of the age groups of 27 to 30 and 31 to 35. This demonstrates that despite the fact that young adults are avid users and hence probably receive a lot of political information through social media, election campaigns have such a massive influence on them.

**Table-6**  
**What is age \* Have you changed your political party affiliation throughout the 2018 general election campaign utilizing social media Cross-tabulation**

	Have you changed your political party affiliation throughout the 2018 general election campaign utilizing social media?		<b>Total</b>
	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	
What is age			
18-22	152	21	173
23-26	24	67	91
27-30	0	62	62
31-35	0	58	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>384</b>

**CONCLUSION**

Social networking has evolved in recent years with one of the most crucial and fluid media for political news and updates. New media is now a valid and somehow reliable source to mobilize political ideology by providing political information with easy access. Due to this mobilization and easy to access technology voter's come to be significantly informed by opening up opportunities, social media is often used as a tool to promote socio- political reforms. As a result,

this paper introduced a new paradigm into the framework of journalistic and media studies into contemporary situation, such as the political domination of major groups.

Voting behaviour, then, is a type of political behaviour displayed by eligible voters and could be impacted by a variety of elements, such as nationality, class, caste, affinity, gender, belief, and emotions, that might drive individuals in making particular decisions. Variables, which including political participation, socio cultural perspectives, understanding of and acceptance for distinct political objectives and viewpoints, as well as the medium, particularly the web - based social media, can sometimes have a significant impact on how voters behave. Alexandru (Alexandru, 2013). New media had already evolved into a powerful tool for influencing voting patterns due to its convenience and global availability. In order to provide information on political parties and associated politicians, social media has created a forum enabling individuals to express their aspirations, goals, and expectations. Social networking often encourages internal conversation among supporters regarding their concerns with the politicians they are supporting. (Saifuddin et.al., 2017).

The key finding show that Facebook and Twitter are the most frequent social networking sites among voters. Voters also consume sufficient disclosure to political content by the means of social media sites. Study findings demonstrates significance disparity amongst intellectual and valuable components of attitude and behaviors of the voters (Marco et.al., 2017). Results of the data indicates that voters gain information concerning party manifestos with the abundant awareness of political information through social media political campaign which make them effect by social media to change their voting behavior and perception, lead them to change their party affiliation. Findings show that social media platforms have developed into a major and competitive means of political information. The world's use of new media for political communication and political philosophy realization is significant. Owing to this mobilization, social media plays an important impact on participate in politics and has also been utilized as a tool for bringing about changes in society by opening up opportunities.

Regarding Pakistan's geography, it'd have been simpler to utilize digital platforms to sway voter attitudes. After observing the

campaigning and media exposure, it would not have been absurd to assume that new networking had an impact on voter attitudes in the 2018 council elections.

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