

Political Memes in Shaping Public Opinion of Pakistani Youth

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Abstract

This study investigates how political memes influence Pakistani youth attitudes and engagement, notably around the 2024 general elections. It examines meme consumption, interaction, and its effects on political engagement using a quantitative survey methodology. Crosstabulations, Spearman's Rho correlation, one-sample t-tests, and reliability testing (Cronbach's Alpha) were used to analyze the data. The findings highlight the entertainment potential of memes by demonstrating that the most popular and active ones are satirical and humorous. According to the study's findings, political memes are a powerful tool for today's political communication that can affect public opinion and voting behavior. It highlights the power of creating memes ethically and the significance of teaching young people about how memes may affect their political opinions.

Keywords: Political Memes, Political Communication, Social Media and Political Meme, Political Parties, Pakistan General Election 2024, Agenda Setting, Political Polarization

Introduction

Political communication has evolved in the era of digital media, with the help of social media platforms i.e. X – previously known as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram & TikTok playing a key role in the dissemination of political ideas. According to Anwar, global communication, interaction, and information are now exchanged through the digital age. Social media platforms play a significant factor in this shift of influencing communication styles, cross-cultural interactions, way of thinking and the spread of knowledge. Pakistan is the one of the most populated countries in the world, where internet penetration is increasing day by day and bringing people into the digital era. Social media platforms are essential to this digital revolution because they provide a virtual forum for various communities to come together, express themselves, and take part in international discussions (Anwar, 2024.)

With a population of more than 240 million, Pakistan has a large youth population, more than 60% of its people are young aged 18 to 25 (The Digital Census, 2023). Approximately 30 percent of Pakistan's population, or 72 million people, use social media regularly, while there were 54.38

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million users aged 18 and above using social media in Pakistan which was equivalent to 38.9 percent of the total population more likely to use sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Kemp, 2024). Political memes, which combine humor and analysis to influence beliefs, have become an effective tool in political communication because of the widespread use of social media by young people. (Anwar, 2024).

Memes are humorous images, videos, Gifs, or text that are shared online, and contain deeper meanings and have a big influence on public perceptions. People's opinions on political issues, politicians, and events have been influenced by the rise in political memes in recent years (Khurshid et al., 2023).

Political memes are powerful methods for shaping public impressions of political individuals, campaigns, and policies. (Kulkarni, 2017) Memes, which are frequently humorous and satirical in nature, have the power to spread immediately and have an impact on how people perceive politicians and political events (Qazi et al., 2022).

The extensive distribution of memes featuring political leaders of Pakistan such as Imran Khan, Nawaz Sharif, Bilawal Bhutto, Asif Ali Zardari, Altaf Hussain and Maryam Nawaz has influenced public opinion. These memes frequently strengthen divisions, support preexisting opinions, or mislead others who are still unsure. With more than 60% of Pakistan's population under 30, young people are important both as producers and users, utilizing memes to voice their thoughts and participate in political debate (Kemp, 2024).

Research Problem

Political memes have become popular on social media, particularly among youth. This study examines the impact of political memes on the opinions and belief formation of Pakistani youth, exploring how they interpret and engage with such content in shaping their political stances.

Research Objectives

- To understand which types of political memes (satirical, critical, humorous) are most popular engagement among youth.
- To quantify the impact of political meme-sharing on social media platforms on shaping public opinion.

Research Questions

- Which types of political memes generate the most engagement, and how do they impact public opinion?
- What is the relationship between meme-sharing behavior and political polarization among Pakistani youth?

Hypothesis

- H1: Political memes that align with a viewer's pre-existing political beliefs are more likely to be shared and have a greater influence on youth.
- H₀: Youth share political memes for entertainment & it does not affect their political opinions.

Research Gap

As political memes are becoming more common in influencing public opinion, especially among young people in Pakistan, there is a significant absence of empirical research on the subject. Most of the research on political communication in Pakistan ignores the particular significance of memes as a unique form of political expression in support of traditional media or wide social media usage. By quantitatively examining the ways in which political memes shape young people's beliefs, this study seeks to close this gap.

The political landscape of Pakistan, particularly about the 2024 election campaign, has not yet been fully developed. Thus, the study will assist in addressing the gap between present and upcoming research. Additionally, the study will open doors for future academics to investigate, evaluate, and uncover fresh perspectives on a variety of problems that are concealed within the current culture.

Literature Review

The use of digital media and political communication has transformed the spread of information, especially with the frequent use of memes. Political memes are in the form of digital images, videos, texts, and GIFs that convey political beliefs and are often humorous or satirical (Ayu Lestari et al., 2024). A political meme is a platform designed to encourage involvement in or expression of views on political issues. Like memes in general, political memes contain jokes that may cause readers to respond (Haqqi et al., 2022).

The biologist Richard Dawkins used the term "meme" in his book "The Selfish Gene" (1976) to refer to ideas or actions that propagate within a culture, just as genes do. Later, Dawkins clarified that memes have the power for influencing people's feelings or behavior, particularly when they promote cultural or ideological beliefs (1982) (Shifman, 2013).

Dawkins provides the example of "suicidal memes," or ideas that might motivate people to commit extreme acts, like martyrdom, particularly when a horrifying incident catches a lot of media attention (Aunger, 2001). This idea shows how memes have an immense effect on emotions and actions in addition to being amusing or entertaining. In similar ways, political memes can influence public opinion, especially among youth, by appealing to strongly held beliefs or feelings that encourage political engagement or group activities.

The idea of memes has changed with the development of the internet and digital technology, Internet memes are "a piece of culture, usually a joke, which gains popularity through online transmission," according to (Branislav Buchel, 2012). "Internet meme" is an object of media, that usually has video, image, text & some other format that unexpectedly becomes very popular. Internet memes, in contrast to traditional memes, are mostly digital, because they create, produce and disseminate via websites, forums, and social media platforms. People can engage with and personalize the content; it doesn't matter what kind of media it is. A meme is created when it is shared, reposted, and remixed on social media until it becomes ingrained in the culture. Sometimes internet memes were ignored at first but gained popularity by time, on social media platforms i.e. YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter- X, Reddit & other forms of media. It draws attention to how basic media items can influence culture and communication (Jay Hathaway, 2021).

In digital media, memes mostly use humor and satirical language to interact with their audience. Memes, which are frequently made up of text, pictures, or cartoons, are a form of entertainment as well as a critical tool for allowing people to make humorous comments on current events. Memes can address a variety of subjects, including political, cultural, and economic ones, in ways that encourage examination and generate new discussions because to their dual function (Ayu Lestari et al., 2024).

Memes are a powerful tool for shaping public opinion because they use humor to expose societal issues, question governmental systems, and challenge cultural conventions. For youth viewers, memes become a source of entertainment & information; they can even cause obsession. Meme

creators frequently prioritize entertainment over moral considerations, which can occasionally lead to emotional pain or trolling of politicians (Javed et al., 2022).

Political Parties' Engagement with Youth Meme Culture

Political memes can be used as powerful tools for political discourse. In Pakistan, political memes are used to comment on national events, politicians, and election processes. According to research, memes often communicate and reinforce public emotion while also influencing political opinions. (Muhammad Suleman & Dr. Noshina Saleem, 2024) focus on how political memes associated with Pakistan's three main political parties, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Pakistan People's Party (PPP), act as platforms for political expression. These memes can either help party goals or harm opponents because they usually simplify complex political subjects into easily accessible information.

The rise of political memes became widespread in Pakistan in the early 2010s. Memes are frequently created from political speeches, campaign blunders and sometimes from interviews. For example, during public appearances, politicians occasionally make grammatical errors or use amusing words, which are subsequently raised and disseminated on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and X formerly Twitter. Politicians can refer to these errors to as "slips of the tongue," to boost their social media presence and interact with the public (Al-Tufaili & Rahi, 2020); (Hussain et al., 2021).

In the past, Altaf Hussain held considerable power and influence in Karachi's political system. Despite this, his speeches were frequently the target of memes that were satirical and humorous. (Hasan, 2019) This was particularly significant because Altaf Hussain's comments offered plenty of fodder for jokes during a period when memes criticizing public figures were less common. One of the most well-known instances is his line, "*aik pappi idhar, aik pappi udhar*", which became a symbol of playful mockery and inspired the creation of several memes. These memes demonstrated how internet culture started to use humor to criticize the actions of even the most powerful politicians.

Even when Nawaz Sharif was dismissed as Prime Minister in 2017 in the Panama Papers scandal, his statement "*Mujhe kyun nikala*" went viral and was used as a meme on different occasions by social media users (Siddiqi, 2020). Similarly, Asif Ali Zardari in his interview to Hamid Mir's show 'Capital talk' said "*Aisa Dil rakhte he nahi hai jo toot jaya*" which become famous meme.

Viral memes have also been created based on Bilawal Bhutto's remarks, transforming his embarrassing moments and mispronunciations into relatable and humorous content. In 2020, Bilawal Bhutto's remarks about Karachi's rainwater went viral throughout the country and people start creating its memes. “*Jb ziada barish hoti ha tou ziada pani ata ha*”, “*Islamabad Main Kanpain Tang Rahi hai*” are the famous memes (Dawn Images, 2022). Politicians now seem to embrace these moments of humor, realizing their potential to go viral and reach a wider audience even now politicians accept this fact publicly (Geo News, 2024).

Memes are used in political discourse not only because of mistakes but also as a purposeful tool. To reach younger audiences, politicians like Imran Khan have also engaged in the meme culture by producing content that is simple to share and distribute online. However, these memes aren't always about blunders (Muhammad Suleman & Dr. Noshina Saleem, 2024). They also function as instruments for political commentary, expressing criticisms and public opinions as well as making fun of rival leaders. Some of them include “*Tabdeeli aa Nahi Rhi Tabdeeli aa Gai Hai*”, “*Aapne ghabrana nahi hai*”, “*Go Nawaz Go*” and others. In addition, PTI has its own meme posting channel on its official website where they feature a special meme page for reposting online content for Khan's followers (Joles, 2023).

(Rida Shahid, 2024) explain how meme concept envelope, memes maker creates memes on politicians' actions, the one of notable example is Maryam Nawaz, who faced a wave of memes when she was seen struggling with writing Urdu in visitor books during Pakistan's 77th Independence Day celebrations.

According to (Kulkarni, 2017) the purpose of memes is to influence people to support & vote for a specific political party. In his book "Memes in Digital Culture," Shiftman describes how this platform was effectively employed during the US elections in 2008. According to his research, these memes contain more user-generated content than information produced by political authorities. Despite being user-generated, these memes have a polished appearance. They contain images and videos created by skilled artists.

(Batoool & Qaisar, 2024) observed that social media had profound influence on 2018 general elections. Through social media, the PTI—and Imran Khan in particular—changed the political landscape of Pakistan. If we discuss current social media trends, millions of users follow them on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter now X. In recent years, GIFS, hashtags, memes, blogs, live

videos, and other content have gained so much popularity that they have become a social media trend.

Pakistan General Election 2024

Pakistan General election held on Thursday, 8 February 2024, from 8am to 5pm, for its National Assembly and four provincial assemblies. (Fareha Naaz, 2024) discussed that social media became overloaded with memes as the voting process came to an end and the results were being counted. People started making memes to entertain themselves, express their emotions, and offer criticism of the electoral process. Pakistanis demonstrated their innovative thinking and sense of humor during important national event by including edits of political personalities, satirical forecasts, and imaginative interpretations of the long wait.

The general election in Pakistan in 2024 experienced an extraordinary rise in political memes, which had a significant impact on public opinion. Apart from political campaigns, memes that mocked, defended, or disapproved political parties, individuals, and their ideas were also widely shared on social media platforms.

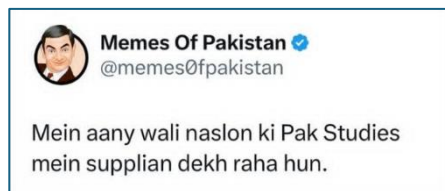
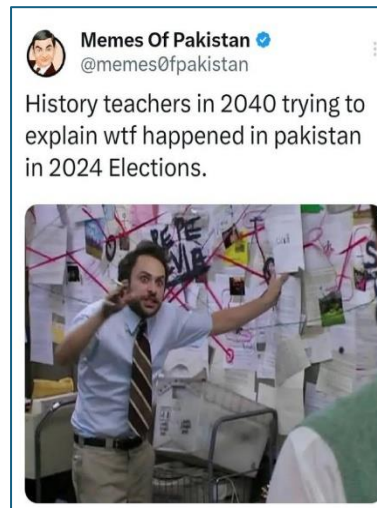
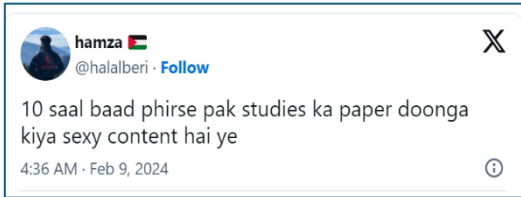
(Business Recorder, 2024) article explained that throughout the 2024 election season, memes that targeted party slogans and symbols were popular. Several parties lacked proper branding, which gave internet users fodder for humorous stories. The significant increase of political memes during the 2024 elections demonstrates how traditional political campaigns are being replaced by social media platforms, where unofficial informational transmissions like memes are essential in influencing public opinion.

(Sharma, 2024), The internet was temporarily blocked during voting, teenagers in Pakistan actively produce memes during elections. Once the internet is restored, memes spread on social media sites despite the limitations.

Memes are not only limited to social media. Memes frequently originate from traditional media coverage of elections. Occasionally, audiences are drawn in by surprising or interesting conversations in live performances and discussions. During elections, meme culture spreads to social media and traditional media as memes leverage these occasions to produce even more material (Geo tv, 2024).

Numerous well-known memes that were connected to significant event in Pakistani politics were making the rounds on social media in this general election. These memes, which are frequently

shared a lot, are impressive and humorous because they imaginatively portray political individuals' remarks, gestures, or situations. For reference, relevant pictures of these well-known memes are included.



Theoretical Framework

The agenda-setting theory is integrated into the theoretical framework, which offers a thorough comprehension of the phenomenon. This study examines how political memes influence public opinion among Pakistani youths using the agenda-Setting Theory.

(Maxwell McCombs & Donald Shaw, 1972) first proposed the theory to explain how the media might influence public interests by emphasizing concerns through selective emphasis. Although the media doesn't directly tell people what to think, agenda-setting implies that it does so by drawing attention to problems, occasions, or figures.

This study suggests that social media memes are a unique type of media that can sway public opinion in online forums. The theory is used in this study to analyze how memes affect political events like elections, where they are used as a tool for comments, satire, and dissemination.

Methodology

This quantitative cross-sectional study will examine how political memes are influencing Pakistani youths' public perceptions.

Research Design

This study utilizes a survey methodology to gather data from the participants. The survey method used to analysis the impact of the political memes in shaping public opinion of Pakistani Youth. A systematic questionnaire was created on Google Forms and distributed among different WhatsApp groups. To investigate the study's hypothesis, a closed-ended questionnaire was created. The Likert scale pattern was used as the basis for creating the questionnaire.

Sampling Technique

This study uses non-probability purposive sampling technique method.

Universe

The universe includes all social media platforms like X, Instagram, and Facebook where political memes related to Pakistan's General Election 2024 are created, shared, and consumed.

Population

The population comprises Pakistani youth aged 17–36 years who actively produce and consume political memes on social media during the General Election 2024.

Sample Size

The sample of this research consists of 205 individuals based in Pakistani society.

Time Frame

Memes created and shared during General Election 2024.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire has 24 questions related to the how political memes impact on Pakistani youth, asked in English. The analysis of the survey data (N = 205) was conducted in three structured stages to evaluate the influence of political memes on the opinions and behaviors of Pakistani youth.

- **Preliminary Analysis:**

Cronbach's Alpha was utilized to assess the study instrument's reliability and confirm that the questionnaire items were valid.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.785	24

Figure 1.0 Reliability Statistics

The Cronbach's Alpha value was found to be 0.785, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency.

- **Crosstabulation Analysis:**

Crosstabulations analyzed differences in meme viewing, sharing, and interpretation across key demographic groups, such as age.

Demographics

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	89	43.4	43.4	43.4
	Female	114	55.6	55.6	99.0
	Prefer not to say	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	205	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1.1 Gender of respondents

Figure 1.1 shows the survey was completed by 205 participants, comprising 89 males (43.4%) and 114 females (55.6%). This indicates the female representation is slightly higher in the study, while 2 prefer not to disclose (1.0%) their gender.

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 18	1	.5	.5	.5
	18-24	146	71.2	71.2	71.7
	25-30	30	14.6	14.6	86.3
	31-35	12	5.9	5.9	92.2
	36 and above	16	7.8	7.8	100.0
	Total	205	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1.2 Age of participants

Figure 1.2 shows that most participants, 71.2% were aged between 18 to 24 years, followed by 14.6% in the 25 to 30 age range, 5.9% between 31 to 35 years, and 7.8% aged 35 and above

Social Media and Meme Interaction

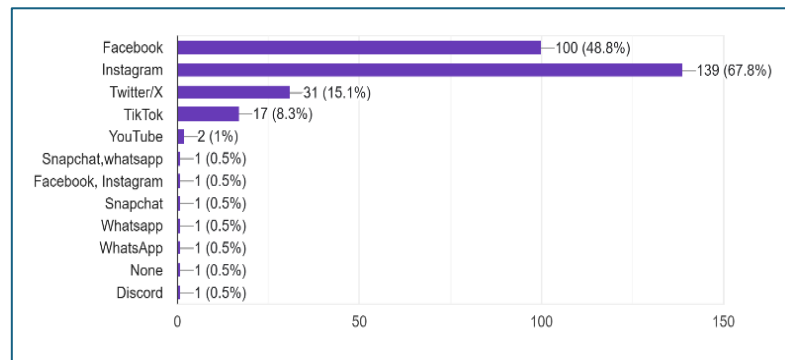


Figure 2.0 Social Media Platform use

Figure 2.0 shows that Instagram is the most used platform for political memes, with 67.8% of participants indicating they encounter political memes there. This is followed by 48.8% on Facebook, 15.1% on X/Twitter, 8.3% on TikTok, and 4% on other platforms, highlighting the dominance of visual-based platforms like Instagram in the sharing and consumption of political memes.

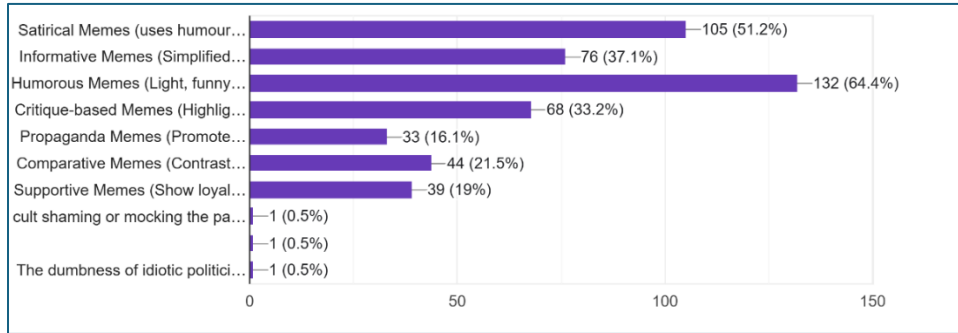


Figure 2.1 What type of political memes do you interact with most frequently?

Figure 2.1 shows that the most common types of political memes participants interact with were humorous memes, which accounted for 64.4% of the responses. These were followed by satirical memes at 51.2%. Informative memes made up 37.1% while critique-based memes made up 33.2% & Supportive memes were selected by 19%, comparative memes by 21.5%, and propaganda memes by 16.5% of participants.

Count		Interaction on political memes					Total
		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
Age	Below 18	1	0	0	0	0	1
	18-24	8	28	35	43	32	146
	25-30	3	5	9	7	6	30
	31-35	1	1	4	1	5	12
	36 and above	1	1	6	1	7	16
Total		14	35	54	52	50	205

Figure 2.2 Interaction on Political Memes?

Figure 2.2 shows crosstabulation that participants aged between 18–24 years had the highest interaction with political memes, with 25-30 often and 31-35 sometimes engaging with such content. Interaction decreases among older age groups, with very few respondents above 30 reporting frequent engagement. This shows that youth are the most active consumers of political memes on social media.

Age * Political memes important for propaganda Crosstabulation							
Count		Political memes important for propaganda					Total
Age		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Below 18		0	0	0	1	0	1
18-24		27	37	62	17	3	146
25-30		3	11	12	4	0	30
31-35		3	3	5	1	0	12
36 and above		3	7	6	0	0	16
Total		36	58	85	23	3	205

Figure 2.3 Political memes are important for propaganda purposes.

Figure 2.3 shows crosstabulation, the participants' aged 18–24 years view political memes as important for propaganda, with 27 respondents strongly agree and 37 respondents agree. A large portion of 62 respondents remained neutral. In contrast, older age groups show lower levels of agreement. This suggests that younger audiences are more likely to perceive political memes as an effective tool for propaganda compared to older participants.

Age * Internet memes be used as a tool for political discourse Crosstabulation							
Count		Internet memes be used as a tool for political discourse					Total
Age		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Below 18		0	0	1	0	0	1
18-24		18	76	43	6	3	146
25-30		3	13	12	1	1	30
31-35		2	9	0	1	0	12
36 and above		5	10	0	1	0	16
Total		28	108	56	9	4	205

Figure 2.4 Internet memes be used as a tool for political discourse

Figure 2.4 shows the crosstabulation, the most of participants aged 18–24 believe internet memes can be used as a tool for political discourse, with 76 respondents agree and 18 respondents strongly agree. Among older age groups, 25–30 years had 13 respondents agree and 3 respondents strongly agree, while 31–35 years included 9 respondents agree and 2 respondents strongly agree. For respondents 36 and above, 10 respondents agreed and 5 strongly agreed. Only a small number of all ages disagreed. The result represents that belief in memes as a tool for political discourse is highest among youth (18–24) but is also shared, to a lesser extent, by older participants.

Age * Understanding different viewpoints in political discourse Crosstabulation						
Count		Understanding different viewpoints in political discourse				Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Netural	Disagree	
Age	Below 18	1	0	0	0	1
	18-24	17	91	25	13	146
	25-30	2	16	9	3	30
	31-35	1	8	2	1	12
	36 and above	2	7	7	0	16
Total		23	122	43	17	205

Figure 2.5 Political memes help in understanding different viewpoints in political discourse

Figure 2.5 shows that the crosstabulation, that most respondents aged 18–24 years believe political memes help in understanding different viewpoints, with 91 respondents agreeing and 17 strongly agreed. Support was lower among older groups, with 25–30 years, 16 respondents agree, 2 strongly agree and 36+ years, 7 respondents agree, 2 strongly agree. Overall, the 18–24 age group showed the strongest belief that memes aid political understanding.

Age * Memes make you aware of ongoing political events Crosstabulation							
Count		Memes make you aware of ongoing political events					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Netural	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Age	Below 18	1	0	0	0	0	1
	18-24	39	75	20	11	1	146
	25-30	4	18	8	0	0	30
	31-35	3	4	3	2	0	12
	36 and above	3	10	2	1	0	16
Total		50	107	33	14	1	205

Figure 2.6 Memes make respondents aware of ongoing political events

Figure 2.6 shows that the crosstabulation, most participants aged 18–24 years believe memes make them aware of ongoing political events, with 75 agreed and 39 strongly agreeing. Among older groups, 25–30 years had 18 agree and 4 strongly agree, while 36 and above had 10 agree and 3 strongly agree. Only a few respondents across all age groups disagreed.

		Read more about political events after seeing memes					
Count		Strongly Agree	Agree	Netural	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Age	Below 18	1	0	0	0	0	1
	18-24	16	40	45	32	13	146
	25-30	2	9	9	8	2	30
	31-35	2	3	2	3	2	12
	36 and above	0	4	7	4	1	16
Total		21	56	63	47	18	205

Figure 2.7 Respondents read more political events after seeing memes

Figure 2.7 shows that the crosstabulation, most respondents aged 18–24 years believe that memes encourage them to read more about political events, with 40 agreed and 16 strongly agreeing. Among older groups, respondents aged 25–30 years had 9 respondents agree and 2 strongly agree, while those 36 and above had 4 respondents agree and no strong agreement. Only a few respondents across all age groups disagreed with the statement.

		Internet memes influence your support for any political party					
Count		Strongly Agree	Agree	Netural	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Age	Below 18	1	0	0	0	0	1
	18-24	6	35	48	37	20	146
	25-30	1	6	10	10	3	30
	31-35	1	3	2	4	2	12
	36 and above	0	2	8	6	0	16
Total		9	46	68	57	25	205

Figure 2.8 Internet memes influence respondents support to political party

Figure 2.8 shows that, the crosstabulation results show that most respondents aged 18–24 years believe internet memes somewhat influence their support for political parties, with 35 respondents agreed and 6 strongly agreeing. However, a considerable number of 48 respondents neutral and 37 disagree indicate mixed opinions within this group. Older respondents showed weaker influence levels, as most expressed neutrality or disagreement with the statement that internet memes influence respondents’ support for political parties.

Age * Political parties use memes to defame their opponents Crosstabulation							
Count		Political parties use memes to defame their opponents					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Netural	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Age	Below 18	0	0	0	1	0	1
	18-24	20	71	38	15	2	146
	25-30	5	18	6	1	0	30
	31-35	4	6	0	2	0	12
	36 and above	5	6	2	3	0	16
Total		34	101	46	22	2	205

Figure 2.9 Political Parties use memes to defame opponents

Figure 2.9 shows that, the crosstabulation results indicate that most respondents believe political parties use memes to defame their opponents, with strong agreement among the 18–24 age group, where 71 respondents agreed and 20 strongly agreed. Similar patterns were observed in the 25–30 and 36 and above groups, though at lower frequencies. Only a small number of respondents disagreed across all age groups with the statement that participants think political parties use memes to defame their opponents.

Age * Internet memes influence your political decisions Crosstabulation							
Count		Internet memes influence your political decisions					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Netural	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Age	Below 18	1	0	0	0	0	1
	18-24	3	36	39	47	21	146
	25-30	0	8	10	8	4	30
	31-35	1	1	3	5	2	12
	36 and above	0	0	10	5	1	16
Total		5	45	62	65	28	205

Figure 2.10 Internet memes influence respondents’ political decisions

Figure 2.10 shows the crosstabulation results reveal that most participant aged 18–24 years are divided on whether internet memes influence their political decisions, with 36 respondents agreed, 39 remaining neutral, and 47 disagreeing. Older respondents (25 and above) mostly expressed neutrality or disagreement. Overall, the findings suggest that while political memes engage youth, their direct influence on decision-making remains limited.

**Age * Political memes are more influential than traditional media in shaping youth opinions
Crosstabulation**

Count

		Political memes are more influential than traditional media in shaping youth opinions					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Netural	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Age	Below 18	0	0	0	1	0	1
	18-24	29	63	41	9	4	146
	25-30	5	15	7	2	1	30
	31-35	2	5	0	4	1	12
	36 and above	3	4	8	0	1	16
Total		39	87	56	16	7	205

Figure 2.11 Memes influential than Traditional media

Figure 2.11 shows that the crosstabulation shows that most participants aged 18–24 years believe political memes are more influential than traditional media in shaping youth opinions, with 63 respondents agreeing and 29 strongly agreeing. Among older participants, 25–30 years had 15 agree, and 5 strongly agree, while 36 and above ages, had 4 agree and 3 strongly agree. Only a small number across all groups disagreed with the statement that political memes are more influential than traditional media in shaping youth opinions.

**Age * Political memes increase political polarization between different groups
Crosstabulation**

Count

		Political memes increase political polarization between different groups					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Netural	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Age	Below 18	0	0	0	1	0	1
	18-24	16	69	48	12	1	146
	25-30	4	20	5	1	0	30
	31-35	1	6	3	2	0	12
	36 and above	1	10	5	0	0	16
Total		22	105	61	16	1	205

Figure 2.12 Increase political polarization in different groups

Figure 2.12 shows that the crosstabulation, that most participants aged 18–24 years believe political memes increase political polarization between different groups, with 69 respondents agreed and 16 strongly agreeing. Among older participants, 25–30 years had 20 respondents agreed and 4 strongly agree, while 36 and above aged had 10 respondents agreed and 1 strongly agree. Only a small portion of respondents across all ages disagreed with the statement that political memes increase political polarization between different groups.

Age * Type of election-related memes did you see most often Crosstabulation						
Count		Type of election-related memes did you see most often				Total
Age		Criticism of political leaders/parties	Support for political leaders/parties	Humor or satire about the election process	Comparison between past and current elections	
Below 18		0	0	1	0	1
18-24		44	16	64	22	146
25-30		9	7	10	4	30
31-35		4	1	4	3	12
36 and above		4	3	6	3	16
Total		61	27	85	32	205

Figure 2.13 Type of election related meme

Figure 2.13 shows that the crosstabulation, that most participants aged 18–24 years most often saw memes related to humor or satire about the election process (64), followed by criticism of political leaders or parties (44). Among older groups, 25–30 years saw mainly criticism (9) and humor (10), while 36 and above also viewed humor (6) and criticism (4) most frequently. Overall, across all age groups, humorous or satirical election memes (85 total) were the most common, showing that humor was the dominant style in political meme circulation during elections, especially among the youth (18–24 years).

Age * Memes role in election campaigns Crosstabulation							
Count		Memes role in election campaigns				Total	
Age		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree		Strongly disagree
Below 18		0	0	0	1	0	1
18-24		20	64	43	15	4	146
25-30		3	17	7	3	0	30
31-35		5	2	2	3	0	12
36 and above		2	12	2	0	0	16
Total		30	95	54	22	4	205

Figure 2.14 Memes role in election campaign

Figure 2.14 shows that the crosstabulation, most participants aged 18–24 years believe memes play an important role in election campaigns, with 64 respondents agreed and 20 strongly agreeing. Respondents aged 25–30 years also supported this view (17 agree, 3 strongly agree), while older groups showed lower but consistent agreement levels. Only a small number of participants across all age groups disagreed.

Age * Meme influence your vote choice 2024 Pakistan General Election Crosstabulation					
Count		Meme influence your vote choice 2024 Pakistan General Election			Total
		Yes	No	Maybe	
Age	Below 18	1	0	0	1
	18-24	20	111	15	146
	25-30	4	21	5	30
	31-35	2	7	3	12
	36 and above	1	12	3	16
Total		28	151	26	205

Figure 2.15 Influence on respondents' vote choice

Figure 2.15 shows that the crosstabulation, most participants aged 18–24 years reported that memes did not influence their vote choice, with 111 respondents saying “No”, while 20 said “Yes” and 15 said “Maybe.” Similar patterns were observed among older age groups, with a majority indicating no influence from memes on their voting decisions.

• **Inferential Analysis:**

Spearman’s Rho and one-sample t-tests were used to find links between youth opinions, political involvement, and meme activity.

Correlations							
			Political memes that align with your beliefs influence your opinion more than other memes	Meme influence your vote choice 2024 Pakistan General Election	Political memes help you understand political issues	Political memes cause political polarization by creating bias against other parties	watch political memes
Spearman's rho	Political memes that align with your beliefs influence your opinion more than other memes	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.046	.191**	.310**	.147*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.514	.006	.000	.035
		N	205	205	205	205	205
Meme influence your vote choice 2024 Pakistan General Election	Meme influence your vote choice 2024 Pakistan General Election	Correlation Coefficient	.046	1.000	.016	.129	.294**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.514	.	.824	.065	.000
		N	205	205	205	205	205
Political memes help you understand political issues	Political memes help you understand political issues	Correlation Coefficient	.191**	.016	1.000	.086	.040
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.824	.	.223	.569
		N	205	205	205	205	205
Political memes cause political polarization by creating bias against other parties	Political memes cause political polarization by creating bias against other parties	Correlation Coefficient	.310**	.129	.086	1.000	-.039
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.065	.223	.	.581
		N	205	205	205	205	205
watch political memes	watch political memes	Correlation Coefficient	.147*	.294**	.040	-.039	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	.000	.569	.581	.
		N	205	205	205	205	205

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 3.0 Spearman’s Rho Correlation test

Figure 3.0 the correlational analysis showed several significant relationships among the youth's political behaviors and beliefs. Memes aligned with a person's existing views were moderately and significantly linked to an increase in perceived political bias ($p = 0.310$), meaning consumption of supportive content contributes to polarization. Crucially, the frequency of watching political memes was also significantly linked to the self-reported influence on voting decisions ($p = 0.294$), which provides statistical evidence to reject the idea that this type of media is politically harmless. Finally, young people tend to see memes that support their views as more informative about political issues ($p = 0.191$).

One-Sample Test						
Test Value = 0						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Age	38.729	204	.000	2.493	2.37	2.62
Political memes that align with your beliefs influence your opinion more than other memes	41.082	204	.000	2.771	2.64	2.90
Political memes are more influential than traditional media in shaping youth opinions	34.020	204	.000	2.341	2.21	2.48
Share or watch political memes for entertainment purposes	31.966	204	.000	2.844	2.67	3.02

Figure 3.1 T- Test “One-Sample Test”

Figure 3.1 the analysis from the one-sample t-tests reveals that, across all tested statements, the youth sample significantly agrees with the claims ($p < 0.001$).

- Political memes significantly influence youth opinions.
- Memes serve as a stronger medium of political engagement than traditional media.
- Entertainment value plays a central role in meme consumption and sharing behavior.

The humor and satire in political memes not only entertain but also shape political perceptions.

Results

The study findings show that 87.8% respondents watch political memes; Instagram and Facebook are the most popular sites for viewing political memes, whereas TikTok and X/Twitter are less frequently used for this purpose. 46.3% of respondents encounter political memes on a regular basis; and 70% encounter them a few times per week or rarely.

People interact with humorous and sarcastic memes the most, but memes that comment on or educate about politics are less popular.

59% of the respondents believe that the most powerful component of a meme in influencing people's ideas is its visuals, such as pictures and graphics, which are followed by its emotional content, such as humor or dissatisfaction. Even though these memes are frequently seen, 49.8% of respondents rarely or never interact with them by liking, commenting or sharing them.

Compared to taking politics seriously, most individuals watch or share political memes for entertainment. 45.9% of respondents think memes are utilized for propaganda while 41% have neutral opinion about this and remaining are unsure.

Memes are thought to be useful for keeping up with current affairs and understanding political opinions, but they are less useful for knowing complicated political topics. 65.9% of respondents think memes are often used to defame their political opponents. Despite their widespread dissemination, political memes don't appear to have a significant impact on people's political choices or party affiliation.

60.9% of respondents think that memes impact election campaigns, hence, have a significant impact on public opinion, especially among Pakistani youth, as this study shows. Political memes serve as both a source of humor and a powerful tool for political communication.

Conclusion

In conclusion, political memes are emerging as a potent tool for influencing youth Pakistanis' political views and beliefs. The most captivating memes, according to the study, are satirical and humorous ones, which appeal to young audiences. Although these memes are entertaining, they often reinforce preexisting political beliefs and polarize society. Although many respondents said that memes had no direct influence on their voting decisions in the 2024 general elections, the findings indicate that memes are currently more influential than traditional media in molding the political opinions of young people in Pakistan.

Recommendations

Political parties and groups should utilize memes responsibly to raise public awareness of important political issues while ensuring that they promote rational discussion rather than hate

speech or personalized attacks. It is essential to educate young people about the impact of memes on their political opinions and to encourage the sharing of many viewpoints to reduce polarization.

Limitations

- The study focuses on users of social media sites like Facebook, Instagram and X-Twitter, and meme interpretation is subjective. Answers to inquiries concerning the influence of memes may be influenced by respondents' prejudices toward political parties or personalities.
- Self-reported survey data will be used, which could lead to biases such as social desirability bias. Additionally, because the study only looks at certain political events, i.e. 2024 General Elections, the results cannot be applied to other historical periods or political contexts.

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