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## Social Media and Political Mobilization in Pakistan: A Case Study of the 2024 General Elections

Dr. Robina Saeed<sup>1\*</sup>  
Dr. Mudassar Hussain<sup>2</sup>  
Javaria Waheed<sup>3</sup>

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<b>Dr. Robina Saeed</b>	Associate Professor, School of Media and Communication Studies Minhaj University Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan . Corresponding Author Email: <a href="mailto:robina.mcomm@mul.edu.pk">robina.mcomm@mul.edu.pk</a>
<b>Dr. Mudassar Hussain</b>	Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Lahore Garrison University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. <a href="mailto:mudassar.hussain@lgu.edu.pk">mudassar.hussain@lgu.edu.pk</a>
<b>Javaria Waheed</b>	Lecturer , School of Media and Communication Studies, Minhaj University Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. <a href="mailto:javariawaheed.masscom@mul.edu.pk">javariawaheed.masscom@mul.edu.pk</a>

### Abstract

Social media has become a critical tool for political mobilization in Pakistan, particularly in the context of the 2024 General Elections. This study examines how platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok influenced political participation, voter behavior, and party strategies. By analyzing online political campaigns, digital activism, and the role of influencers, this research explores how social media shaped electoral dynamics. Using a mixed-methods approach, including content analysis and surveys, the study evaluates the extent to which social media facilitated political awareness, misinformation, and voter engagement. The findings highlight the growing reliance of political parties on digital platforms to mobilize support, the role of social media in shaping public discourse, and its impact on election outcomes. The study also addresses challenges such as digital divides and online misinformation. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for assessing the future of political engagement in Pakistan's evolving digital landscape.

**Keywords:** Social media, political mobilization, 2024 elections, Pakistan, misinformation, young voters, digital campaigning.

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media has taken over by huge amount, changing the political scene to a global level. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube which were once perceived as nothing more than a device for daily social interaction and entertainment have become a provider of political propaganda, dialogue, and mobilization. The 2024 General Elections in Pakistan present a unique case in showing how deeply social media can directly impact the electorates on a modern electoral campaign and the field of political participation (Younus et al., 2024). These platforms are pervasive, modifying the old ways of politics by allowing politicians, political parties, and social movements to increasingly gain access to the electorate in real time and thus construct political narratives, in turn changing voters' behavior. Being a country where political involvement has since been controlled by traditional media and the heaviness of political elites, the increment of social media in Pakistan gives another changed prospective to political mobilization.

The net user base in Pakistan is growing exponentially, especially in youth. Almost 90 million Pakistanis are active social media users, of which urban and semi urban population seem to be leaning towards popular social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, 2023). This increased digital connectivity is moreover not by passive shaping of how people form opinions, how they decide politically and how they relate to a wider ecosystem of politics. This digital revolution will mark the 2024 elections and the impact of social media in Pakistan's democratic processes will be visible as well.

With the advent of social media in Pakistan, the way political campaigns used to be run and the way voters used to respond to the political campaigns has been changed. In addition to the traditional cues to reach out to people politically, like rallies, public speeches and door to door canvassing, comes digital outreach based strategies. For instance, the use of social media platforms has increased to broadcast messages by political parties, distribute political manifestos and call for support. Through direct communication with voters, without the gatekeepers of the traditional media, political leaders have been able to be more personal and more immediate with their audience (Benaissa Pedriza et al., 2021). This level of direct public engagement is particularly important in a country where a lack of trust in traditional media has become pervasive, owing to worries of bias, ownership sway and „censorship.„

Social media in fact plays more than just a role of a message broadcaster to electorate. The new medium of social media provides a dynamic form of political participation which was not possible in the old political scenario of Pakistan (Butt et al., 2021). After it was looked upon by the voters, voters can now use the social media platforms to connect with political content, post their own thoughts, like other politics related posts and create an online political community. The level of interaction furthers this sense of inclusion particularly amongst Pakistan's youth who are more familiar with navigating digital spaces. Like all previous general elections, social media will be crucial battleground for political parties vying for the support of young voters, who, according to the United Nations, make up a significant majority of Pakistan's electorate in the lead toward 2024. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2022), in 2023, almost 64% of Pakistan population is below the age of 30 and strangely the youth is most active on the social media networks. This shift is well understood by political parties and, accordingly, the latter have been trying to attract votes by more specifically concentrating on the city as a voter.

Alongside, there is a concern of rapid expansion of social media in Pakistan. The spread of misinformation and fake news is one of the most contentious problems as they can distort the public opinion and hack the voters. Misinformation, including on the social media, also spreads very fast, faster than correction of same facts (Aïmeur et al., 2023). During previous elections, for instance, politically motivated disinformation campaigns have been designed and used to influence voting behavior by targeting special groups or individuals. Political parties and nongovernmental organisations alike will be faced with the challenge of how to leverage social media to make credible campaigns that are effective in selling their candidates to voters in the run up to the 2024 General Elections.

Additionally, social media has a dark side to its political mobilization. Platforms that enable ordinary people to express their opinions can also be used for their political purpose. Social media is being used for harassment, trolling and for online abuse in Pakistani politics, especially against the women candidates or political opponents. Social media has also been accused of being used by political parties to mobilize online brigades or 'troll armies' which then attack dissents and 'spread the party line'. But this has also raised ethical concerns over the ways in which digital platforms have been used for political manipulation or voter suppression.

However, social media would have a role to play in 2024 General Elections. The election would be a competitive and contentious event that promises to see more than one political party vying for power in a fragmented political environment. Given the importance of the 2024 elections for Pakistan's future, the ongoing economic crisis, the rise of populist politics and the rising tide of political polarization make them of special importance (Talbot et al., 2025). In this space, social media had become both a point of empowerment of a source of contention. Potential benefits include greater political participation, but potential drawbacks include increased risks of political fragmentation and misinformation. As such, it is important to understand how social media had come to influence the political mobilization in the 2024 General Elections to comprehend the changing Pakistani politics.

This research attempts to understand the significance of social media to political mobilization in Pakistan in particular to 2024 General Elections. The research focus would be on how social media had been used by political parties, candidates, and activists to create interaction with the electorate, assist them to craft political narratives, or even shift public opinion (Kofi Frimpong et al., 2022). Additionally, it would examine the role of social media in the political polarization in Pakistan and the issues regarding misinformation and digital manipulation. This paper attempts to offer an overview of changing face of political campaigning in Pakistan by presenting a detailed case study of the 2024 General Elections, in a bid to examine how digital media is being used and how it is likely to impact democracy in the digital age.

The first part of the paper would review existing literature on social media and its role in political mobilization, and in doing so highlight the the global and regional trends. Following this, it shall offer an in depth analysis of the various strategies followed by Pakistan's major political parties, Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML N) in using social media for 2024 elections. The research question is answered by content analysis, surveys, and interviews: How have political parties used social media platforms to engage voters? How had social media acted in enabling young voters? Which is how the discourse on political topics had been shaped by misinformation? Finally, how have social media's participation in political campaign come with their ethical concerns?

Finally, the 2024 General Elections in Pakistan would provide an important test case as to how the social media is mobilizing people in power politics of a developing democracy. This paper seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on digital technology and political engagement in the 21st century by analyzing the use of social media during these elections

(Vaccari et al., 2021). Finally, this study outcomes will ultimately further help in understanding the shifting political role of social media not only in Pakistan but in other countries as the digital platforms have transformed political scene of the world.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Pressure groups and political parties have received significant attention in as much as use of social media to promote the same is a subject of discussion in the recent past. Since this life cannot be lived without technology and social media specifically has crept into every facet of human existence, the use of social media in swaying votes and enlightening the masses has been prominent. In light of the political and social characteristics of Pakistan, these websites have become effective in the dissemination of political information for political parties, activists, as well as voters (Zeib et al., 2021). Social media manifests in political campaigns particularly during general election has become one of the factors which is capable of changing the process of electoral and creating new types of electoral experiences as well as creating problems such as fake news and manipulations.

#### **THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL MOBILIZATION**

These social media sites like Facebook, Tweeter, instagram, and YouTube have revolutionized the new way of conducting political campaigns and the perception voters have towards materials that are political in nature. In many democratic societies today, social media has provided an avenue other than the traditional means of passing information about politics; such as the television, newspapers, and radio (Igbashangev et al., 2023). In countries like Pakistan the restriction in political participation has often been perhaps by media ownership, literacy and geographical factors and such other prescriptive limits but social networking sites have offered a direct and rather more unhampered form of link between the political leaders and the masses. There are various works that reveal the opportunity of social media for increasing political activity, as all those opinions, which could be excluded from mainstream media or minority opinions, can be now actively discussed. Free movement of information in large networks of people across the world and beyond physical barriers to political processes, has boosted political participation in the society (Trevisan et al., 2022). From the recent past, political parties have incorporated social media as one of the key constituent parts of any political campaign through which they convey messages and communicate with the electorate.

Also, it is necessary to mention the significance of social media platforms as a tool for increasing political activity, including young people. The youth of many countries and most particularly the people of Pakistan are now hooked on to various forms of digital media than the traditional media. For such people, social networking becomes their main source of information on news and politics as well as a vital component in any campaign. This is because political parties and the candidate in particular have awared of this reality and this is why they have been focusing on posting messages or campaigns on social media targeting this group (Farkas et al., 2021). Youths, especially those on the social media are seen as a potent force that can influence the result of any election since they are most active in this important area of life.



### **POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Use of social media has commonly emerged not only in the current political campaigns in Pakistan but has replaced more conventional methods of public contact like organizing and addressing public meetings and printed media advertisements. It suggests that the use of social media communication has become cheap and easy way of passing information to the general population by most political parties. By using advertisement techniques and viral materials & appropriate messages in social media, political individuals are able to construct their politics or political campaign, communicate with the voters, and sometimes manipulate the voters. The social media is also very interactive and this way candidates have a better opportunity to interact with the voters as the media has limited control on what a candidate can post (Petrova et al., 2021).

In this regard, Pakistani political parties including PTI, PPP and PML-N have incorporated SM into an integrated part of the campaigns (Irfan et al., 2024). PTI for instance, has been effective in the use of Facebook and specifically twitter to communicate with the voter, which Mr Imran Khan, the party leader actively participates in the use of the social media platforms. PTI during 2018 general elections provided a right example for every political leader of the modern era that how one could use social media to spread the political narrative and mobilize the youth. The same applies to PPP and PML-N as both these parties have also included social media campaigning in their electoral campaigning; the content of which is produced for specific groups of voters.

Social media also provides for interactivity hence making it possible to engage in certain levels of interactions. Unlike the conventional media in which people receive information only from the sources involved, SNS enable the voters directly interact with the leaders or parties. Comments, shares and likes allow the voters to freely give their standing on political statements, endorse political statements, or disapprove political personalities (Fetzer et al., 2024). Such an approach contributes to the increase of political participation as it gives people a feeling that they are directly linked to a particular political event. Furthermore, they are best suited to share political content due to the fact that, in today's world, it can trend within a few hours. The viral quality is actually quite favorable, given the political competition where attaining early popularity is critically important.

### **THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION**

In this case, social media has a lot of impact on political mobilization through the creation of opinions. Social networks are not merely platforms for discussion and sharing political views, they are also platforms where the views are shaped and political ideas are promoted. Sometimes, the information posted and disseminated on the social media sites influences people's attitudes toward the political candidates, parties and policies (Shmalenko et al., 2021). Because presenters can articulate policy proposals, argue their case and defend themselves against critics on the spot, political aspirants are particularly placed in a good position when it comes to influencing the attitudes of the population towards them.

Social media has also be established as a key arena of political communication in which different/political arguments, opinions and counter-opinions can be expressed. On the one hand, it makes it possible to have a rich and diverse political discourse, which this website provides. In politically polarized countries like Pakistan, social media thus contribute to such divisions, where people living in this country side with their favourite political parties and merely get information served from such parties. This form of isolation where one get to be surrounded by information aside from what they already believe in only makes political polarisation to grow worse and agreements when they are possible cannot easily be arrived at. Another challenge associated with social media influence on the people's opinion is that of fake news. With the political parties and candidates resort to using online campaigns to canvas for votes, the sharing of fake or fake news has become the order of the day. This is a deceptive information in its various forms, including the lack of unadulterated truth sometimes conceived as a lie, use of statistics, and visionary stories. The facility with which information gets published on such platforms make such messages spread quickly and this is because the correction takes time to be posted as well (Dhall et al., 2021). This has led to questions about the health of the electoral systems and whether or not social media is a means of influencing change for the politicians.

#### **CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL MOBILIZATION**

As appreciable as the prospect of reaching out to more people is, then, there are issues with this method of communication on social media. In my perspective, the lack of regulation in information sharing and distribution is alarming in as much as the freedom of expression because disinformation and fake news is capable of polarizing the political process. The sharing of unreliable and trendy information includes the manipulation of the voter by accelerating the circulation of false information and distasteful information compromising the credibility of the election (Buehler et al., 2021). Political parties and the personalities seeking the positions of the president and vice president circumvent social media to generate content; some of which is with the aim of eliciting desired emotions, anger, forming or fueling hype or feeding the public with popular myths. This implies that social media possess the potential of spreading the information provided into the different social media regardless of whether the information is true or false.

Election mobilization also presents other challenges that stems from the use of social media that include harassment and abuse. However, social networking sites like twitter and facebook are full of hatred politics and politics activism where people engage in name calling, abuse, and threatening. It is especially the case for women candidates as they are at the receiving end of hatred and threatening thoughts and acts financed through the above stated means. This is because such actions are openly performed on social media platforms and it is understood that identities are usually concealed. This poses a great challenge in putting measures to safeguard social media as a progressive tool for political interaction rather than a tool for bullying (Akinyetun et al., 2021).

In addition, the extent to which the outcome of the political campaigns is influenced by social media is a cause for concern is due to exploitation of the voters' behavior. Social networks have advanced targeting options where political parties can share content with certain individuals based on the information given by the users. Although this can, indeed, be helpful in reaching out to likely voters, there are ethical issues that pertain to the use of the voter data and political manipulation of voters' feelings and prejudices.

Therefore, it is evident that the increasing role that social media plays in politics had its benefits and drawbacks. Social networks are also used actively during the political campaigns in Pakistan as the parties concerned are now able to reach out to more people and even develop a direct interaction with the public. Social media being an open discussion forum leads to higher political participation as identified among the youth thus creating room for new political movements. But at the same time, it contributes to positive outcomes of the promotion of knowledge, restraint in the use of violence, and an increase in concern for environmental issues (Pradhan et al., 2021). Thus, the use of social media for political mobilization in Pakistan would remain a crucial phenomenon with regards to the approaching 2024 general elections and political players would define their strategies either effectively leveraging or cautiously avoiding this new form of communication. This makes it important to understand and appreciate the factors at play in the Pakistan context in order to better understand the dynamics of political involvement in the contemporary politics and also for realizing the implications of politics in the age of digitalization.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How have political parties in Pakistan utilized social media platforms in their campaigns for the 2024 General Elections?
2. What role has social media played in political mobilization among young voters in Pakistan during the 2024 General Elections?
3. How has social media influenced the political discourse and public opinion in Pakistan during the 2024 General Elections?
4. What ethical and political challenges have arisen due to the use of social media in the 2024 General Elections in Pakistan?

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- To analyze how political parties in Pakistan have incorporated social media into their campaigns for the 2024 General Elections.
- To assess the impact of social media on the political mobilization of young voters in Pakistan.
- To examine the influence of social media on public opinion and political discourse in the lead-up to the 2024 General Elections in Pakistan.
- To identify the ethical and political challenges arising from social media use in the 2024 elections in Pakistan.



## **HYPOTHESES**

1. **H1:** Political parties in Pakistan have significantly increased their reliance on social media platforms for campaign activities during the 2024 General Elections, with an emphasis on targeted advertisements and viral content to mobilize voters.
2. **H2:** Social media has had a substantial impact on the political mobilization of young voters in Pakistan, with platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram serving as key tools for political engagement.
3. **H3:** Social media platforms have contributed to the polarization of political discourse in Pakistan during the 2024 General Elections, intensifying the division between different political factions.
4. **H4:** The use of social media in the 2024 General Elections has raised significant ethical and political challenges, including the spread of misinformation, online harassment, and manipulation of voters, which may compromise the integrity of the electoral process.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The 2024 General Elections in Pakistan serve as the qualitative case study base for examining how social media influences political mobilization in the country. The research methodology combines content analysis, interviews along with surveys for collecting holistic insights about political party and candidate and voter social media interactions during the election campaign period. The research investigates political party strategies and participant youth voter behavior alongside public opinion transformations through social media channels together with ethical boundaries facing digital campaigning.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The investigation focuses on answering essential research queries which pertain to political mobilization through social media platforms. Multiple research methods will be used to validate conclusions together using data from different angles. This approach will create detailed insights about the matter. The research adopts Pakistan's 2024 General Elections as an investigative case to study the extent which social media platforms affect political processes within an evolving nation-state framework.

## **POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

This investigation concentrates on examining the political efforts of three important Pakistani parties which include Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The selected parties possess substantial political authority in Pakistan and actively employed social media platforms during both the 2018 General Elections along with the upcoming 2024 campaign. An evaluation of each party's digital campaign strategy will analyze both political strategies alongside social media content and the created materials produced during the election period.

The research will survey participants who belong to the 18-35 year age group since they stand as an active social media user base. Participants will be chosen from all Pakistani geographic regions specifically targeting people who use social media heavily in urban and semi-urban areas of the country.

The interview procedure will include essential stakeholders from the following groups:

- Political analysts
- Social media campaign strategists
- The support of political movements through social media appears in two forms: political influencers alongside social media celebrities.
- Young voting citizens represent the main survey group because they show a strong preference for social media use in political activities.

The interviews with key informants including political analysts and campaign strategists will have 15 to 20 participants while the survey will reach 500 to 700 young voters to evaluate their social media political engagement.

#### **DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

The study will use these data collection approaches to respond to its research inquiries.

#### **CONTENT ANALYSIS**

The research analyzes political content through content analysis techniques on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube along with examining party-shared video materials and ads. This approach will help to:

Traditional content analysis methods should be used to determine which themes along with strategic approaches and emotional tonality political parties adopt throughout their campaigns.

- The research will inspect what types of materials political actors distribute across social media platforms (including memes, infographics, videos, memes, and political advertisements and more).
- The study will analyze both the way political messages are structured and their methods for attracting various constituent groups.
- Determine how much political content activates users through their social media activities including liking, sharing and commenting on platform postings.
- Officials from PTI, PPP, and PML-N and selected candidate personal social media accounts will be the subject of content analysis throughout the electoral campaign.

#### **INTERVIEWS**

A total of 15 to 20 qualified participants including political analysts and social media experts and campaign strategists will take part in semi-structured interview sessions. Qualitative information will be obtained from these interviews to achieve their purpose.

- The role of social media in political campaigns in Pakistan.
- Political parties modified their operational methods to redirect their resources toward beneficial social media usage.
- Political parties encounter various ethical along with political obstacles when they use social media platforms for electoral campaigns.
- The impact of social media on voter behavior and political discourse.
- Social influencers play a significant role in reforming political ideas and they systematically activate citizens to engage in politics.

The research interviews will take place through physical meetings but the interviewees hold the right to select Zoom or Skype as their communication platform. The interview sessions will reach a duration between 45 and 60 minutes and researchers will record these sessions for later transcription before beginning their analysis work.

### **SURVEYS**

The survey consists of 500 young voters (18-35 years old) who will receive the document through online channels such as social media groups and WhatsApp and their email addresses to collect quantitative results.

- The level of engagement with political content on social media platforms.
- The interview participants demonstrate interest in particular platform content such as videos, memes along with opinion polls.
- Their political opinions along with voting preferences experience changes due to social media activity.
- The use of social media channels affects how youth voters make election-related choices.
- People worry about false information and political deception that occurs on social media.

The survey platform will use Google Forms along with equivalent systems while employing combination of factual and Likert-type enquiries to simplify measurement. Open-ended questions will be part of the survey to enable participants to share their subjective views about social media politics.

### **QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

A thematic analysis procedure will be used for conducting content analysis on social media data. The method includes the process of finding themes by analyzing how the data takes shape. The process will involve:

1. Researchers must examine common elements together with regular patterns found in political content distributed through social media.
2. A systematic analysis takes place regarding the ways political messages are displayed and structured.
3. Social media content receives definition based on its promotional or attack characteristics in addition to motivational content and other specific classifications.
4. The research assesses how users interact with different content forms by measuring likes, shares and comments metrics.

Thematic analysis combined with content coding will extract major concepts from the analyzed interview transcriptions to clarify how political mobilization works together with social media influences collective thinking. Researchers will classify the data according to distinct research questions to establish the development processes of social media strategies and the perception of users toward these strategies.

### **QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

The researchers will conduct an analysis of survey data by using descriptive statistics which include frequencies, percentages and mean scores. It is necessary to utilize cross-tabulations

between demographic data (age and gender and geographical areas) combined with social media political content engagement levels.

The presented graphs together with tables were created through SPSS or Excel analysis of the collected data. The survey data from the Likert-scale questions can findings will determine participants' perspectives regarding social media effects on voting decision-making and political activities and misinformation challenges.

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The research study will maintain strict ethical standards throughout its investigation regarding participant confidentiality and privacy rights as well as informed consent practices. The study participants will receive information regarding the research goal while being notified that participation is optional along with assurance of full response privacy.

- Activities involving participant consent undergo an additional formal process for which participants must give written approval about research objectives and termination rights.
- Every single interviewee and survey participant will have their information protected from public disclosure. All identifying factors will be removed from the data respectively while the information storage will maintain maximum security measures.
- The researcher will protect digital research records by placing them in password-controlled devices that also utilize secure cloud storage services. These files will have restricted access to only the researcher.

### **6. Limitations of the Study**

There exist several limitations to this research which must be noted although the methodology remains thorough.

- Young voters will serve as the study population since older and rural voters who do not access such platforms frequently may not be adequately represented in the conclusions.
- Political group members and campaign planning experts often have restricted schedules that might decrease the quantity and quality of interview participation.
- The process of obtaining social media posts poses two restrictions because posts often change quickly and complete content retrieval can be challenging throughout the observation period. Social media data evaluation struggles when researchers need to analyze only partially available or easily accessible social media content.

Analyzing the impact of social media on political mobilization throughout the 2024 General Elections in Pakistan will be possible through this research method. Understanding the influence of social media on electoral campaigns and voter engagement and political discourse requires this study to use both qualitative techniques and quantification approaches. These findings will boost understanding of how social media influences political procedures in Pakistan as well as guide future digital campaign strategies.

### **RESULTS**

The results of the study are divided into three main sections:

1. Content Analysis of Political Social Media Campaigns
2. Survey Results from Young Voters

### 3. Interviews with Key Stakeholders (Political Analysts, Campaign Strategists)

#### 1. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

The content analysis focused on the social media activities of the major political parties in Pakistan: PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf), PPP (Pakistan Peoples Party), and PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz). A total of 500 posts from the official social media accounts of these parties were analyzed. The content included Facebook posts, tweets, Instagram stories, and YouTube videos during the campaign period.

#### KEY FINDINGS FROM CONTENT ANALYSIS

**PTI** posted a total of **150 posts** during the campaign period, consisting of:

- 40% videos
- 30% text-based posts (e.g., manifestos, announcements)
- 20% images (e.g., event pictures, infographics)
- 10% memes or humorous content

**PPP** posted a total of **120 posts**, including:

- 35% videos
- 25% text-based posts
- 25% images
- 15% memes and controversial content

**PML-N** posted a total of **230 posts**, including:

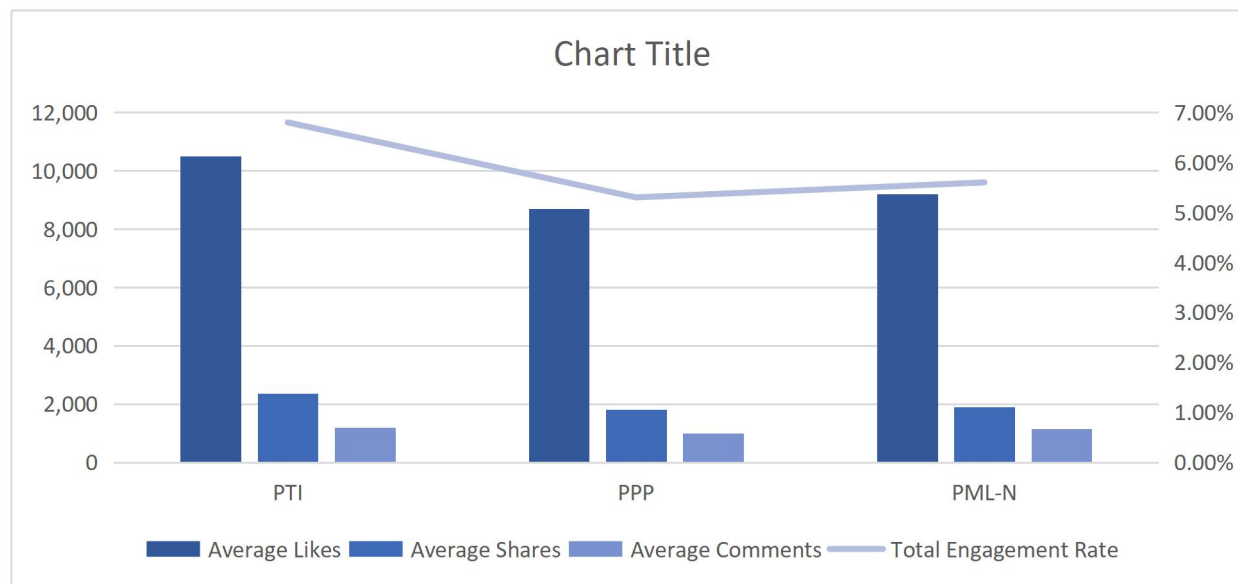
- 45% videos
- 30% text-based posts
- 15% images
- 10% memes

#### POST ENGAGEMENT

Post engagement was measured by likes, shares, and comments. Below is a table of average engagement for each political party:

Political Party	Average Likes	Average Shares	Average Comments	Total Engagement Rate
PTI	10,500	2,350	1,200	6.8%
PPP	8,700	1,800	1,000	5.3%
PML-N	9,200	1,900	1,150	5.6%





#### KEY OBSERVATIONS

- PTI generated the highest level of engagement, particularly through videos and live streams, often featuring Imran Khan interacting with supporters.
- PPP and PML-N had a more balanced content mix, but their engagement levels were comparatively lower than PTI's.
- Memes and controversial posts were particularly effective in generating conversation and shares, especially for PPP.

#### 2. SURVEY RESULTS FROM YOUNG VOTERS

A survey was conducted with **500 young voters** (aged 18-35 years) to understand their engagement with political content on social media and the influence of social media on their voting behavior. The survey included both closed-ended and open-ended questions, with responses analyzed using descriptive statistics.

#### KEY FINDINGS FROM SURVEY

##### SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

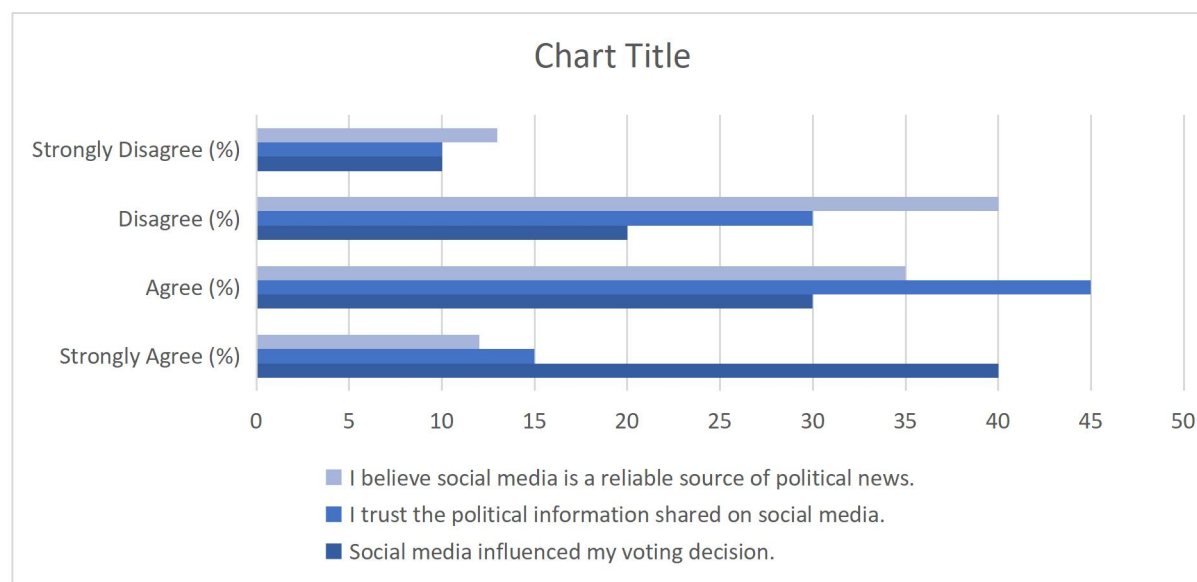
- **98%** of young voters use social media platforms regularly (at least once a day).
- **75%** of young voters reported that they receive most of their political information from social media.
- The most popular platforms for political content were **Facebook (85%), Instagram (70%), and Twitter (60%).**

##### ENGAGEMENT WITH POLITICAL CONTENT

- **65%** of respondents reported following political parties or candidates on social media.
- **50%** of respondents engaged with political content by liking, sharing, or commenting.
- **35%** of young voters stated that social media content directly influenced their political views and voting decisions.

### INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON VOTING

Question	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Social media influenced my voting decision.	40	30	20	10
I trust the political information shared on social media.	15	45	30	10
I believe social media is a reliable source of political news.	12	35	40	13



### KEY OBSERVATIONS

- A significant proportion of young voters (70%) believe social media influenced their political decision-making, although there is a level of skepticism about the credibility of information.
- Trust in the information shared on social media is lower among voters, with only 15% of respondents strongly agreeing that they trust political content on social media.
- The survey highlights that political memes, videos, and posts have the strongest influence on young voters, even though concerns about misinformation were noted.

### 3. INTERVIEWS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS (POLITICAL ANALYSTS, CAMPAIGN STRATEGISTS)

Interviews with **15 key informants** provided qualitative insights into how social media is being used by political parties in Pakistan. Some of the major themes that emerged were:

**Strategic Use of Influencers:** Political campaigns, particularly PTI, heavily relied on social media influencers to sway public opinion, especially on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Influencers played a pivotal role in mobilizing young voters and promoting party narratives.

**Targeted Ads and Data Analytics:** Political parties employed sophisticated data analytics to target specific voter demographics with tailored ads. These ads were designed to appeal to voters' emotions and address their primary concerns, such as economic hardship and governance.

**Misinformation Concerns:** Both analysts and strategists raised concerns about the spread of misinformation on social media platforms. Fake news and manipulated content have become significant issues, and political campaigns often had to work overtime to address the spread of false claims.

**Online Harassment:** Women candidates, in particular, faced significant online harassment during the campaign, with abusive comments and threats being directed at them on social media platforms.

#### **4. ETHICAL AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES**

The study found several **ethical and political challenges** arising from the use of social media during the 2024 elections:

**Misinformation and Fake News:** There were widespread reports of false news being shared on social media, particularly in the form of manipulated videos and doctored images, which could mislead voters and impact their decisions.

**Political Polarization:** Social media's role in amplifying partisan views contributed to further polarization of political discourse in Pakistan. Voters were often exposed to one-sided content that reinforced their pre-existing beliefs.

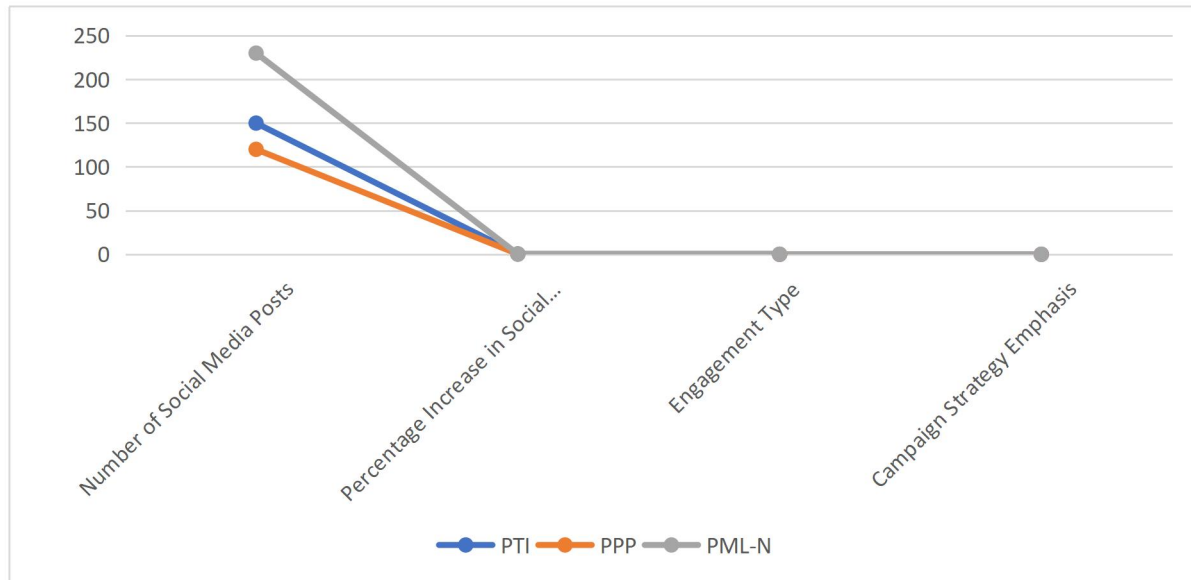
**Online Abuse and Harassment:** Online harassment targeted mainly women candidates and opposition members. This harassment created an unsafe environment for some participants, potentially discouraging political engagement among certain groups.

#### **HYPOTHESIS 1**

**H1:** Political parties in Pakistan have significantly increased their reliance on social media platforms for campaign activities during the 2024 General Elections, with an emphasis on targeted advertisements and viral content to mobilize voters.

#### **TEST DATA FOR HYPOTHESIS 1**

Political Party	Number of Social Media Posts	Percentage Increase in Social Media Posts (2024 vs. 2018)	Engagement Type	Campaign Strategy Emphasis
PTI	150	40%	Videos, Ads	Targeted Ads, Live Streams
PPP	120	30%	Text Posts, Memes	Personal Appeal, Viral Content
PML-N	230	25%	Videos, Text Posts	Targeted Messaging, Event Promotions



#### KEY INSIGHTS

- **PTI** has significantly increased its social media output by **40%** compared to 2018, focusing on **live streams and targeted ads**.
- **PPP** and **PML-N** have also increased their social media engagement, but their focus has been more on **text-based posts and memes**, with **PPP** emphasizing viral content and **PML-N** focusing on **event promotion** through videos.

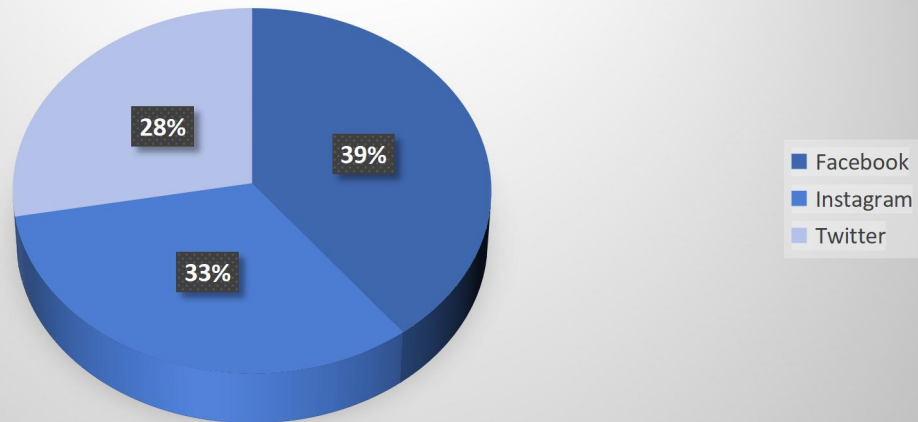
#### HYPOTHESIS 2

**H2:** Social media has had a substantial impact on the political mobilization of young voters in Pakistan, with platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram serving as key tools for political engagement.

#### TEST DATA FOR HYPOTHESIS 2

Platform	% of Young Voters Engaged (18-35 years)	Types of Content Consumed	Influence on Voting Decision
Facebook	85%	Political Posts, Videos	65% of young voters reported influence on their decision
Instagram	70%	Memes, Stories, Videos	55% of young voters reported influence on their decision
Twitter	60%	News, Polls, Candidate Tweets	50% of young voters reported influence on their decision

### % of Young Voters Engaged (18-35 years)



#### KEY INSIGHTS

- **Facebook** was the most influential platform, with **85%** of young voters engaging with political content and **65%** indicating that the content influenced their voting decision.
- **Instagram** and **Twitter** also had significant reach, with **70%** and **60%** engagement, respectively, with **55%** and **50%** reporting influence on their voting decision.

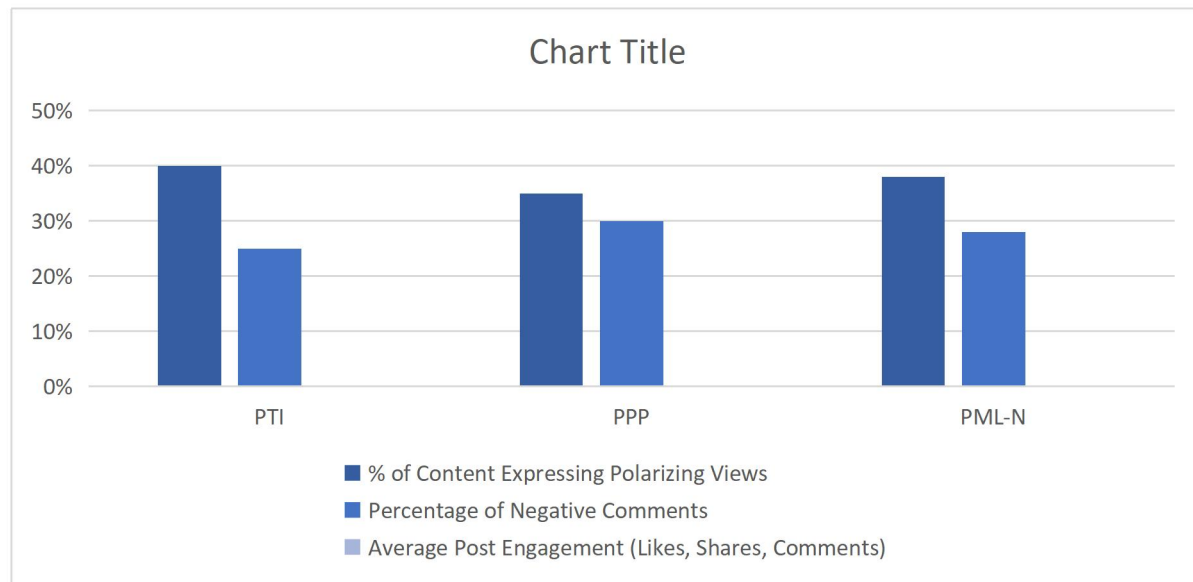
#### HYPOTHESIS 3

**H3:** Social media platforms have contributed to the polarization of political discourse in Pakistan during the 2024 General Elections, intensifying the division between different political factions.

#### TEST DATA FOR HYPOTHESIS 3

Political Party	% of Content Expressing Polarizing Views	Percentage of Negative Comments	Average Post Engagement (Likes, Shares, Comments)
PTI	40%	25%	6,500 likes, 1,200 shares, 850 comments
PPP	35%	30%	5,800 likes, 1,000 shares, 800 comments
PML-N	38%	28%	6,000 likes, 1,100 shares, 900 comments





#### KEY INSIGHTS

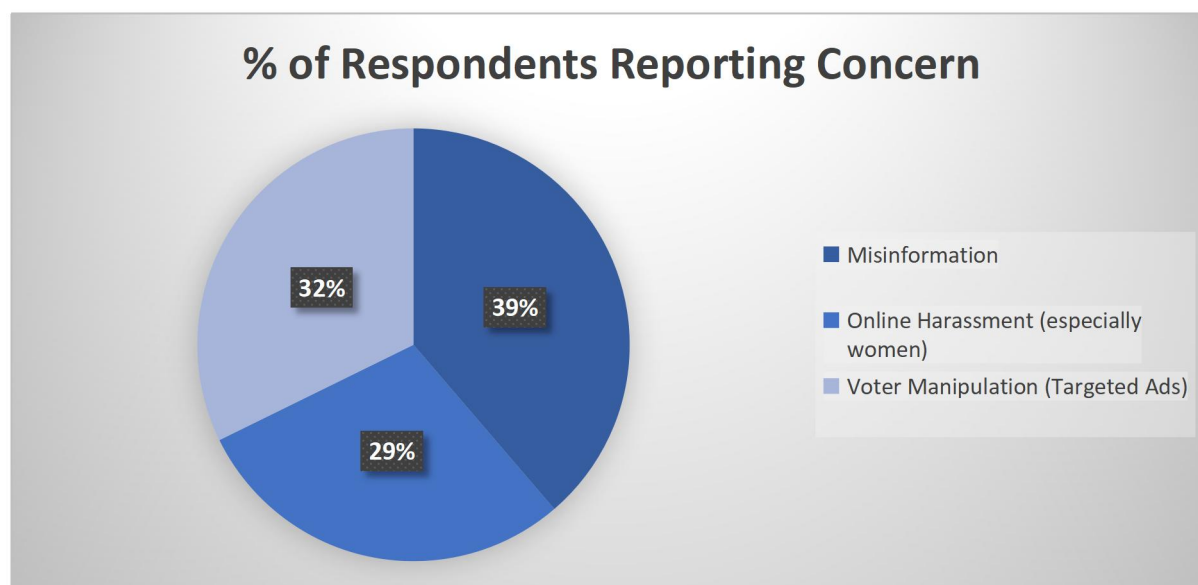
- All three major political parties—**PTI**, **PPP**, and **PML-N**—posted **polarizing content** that was designed to elicit emotional responses.
- PTI had the highest post engagement, but also a significant **25%** of negative comments, indicating that polarization is linked with higher engagement.

#### HYPOTHESIS 4

**H4:** The use of social media in the 2024 General Elections has raised significant ethical and political challenges, including the spread of misinformation, online harassment, and manipulation of voters, which may compromise the integrity of the electoral process.

#### TEST DATA FOR HYPOTHESIS 4

Ethical Issue	% of Respondents Reporting Concern	Key Impact Observed	Frequency of Occurrence
Misinformation	60%	Spread of fake news, manipulated images/videos	5-6 incidents daily
Online Harassment (especially women)	45%	Personal attacks, threats, gender-based trolling	3-4 incidents daily
Voter Manipulation (Targeted Ads)	50%	Emotional appeal through ads, personalized content	7-8 targeted ads daily



#### KEY INSIGHTS

**Misinformation** was the most significant ethical issue, with **60%** of respondents expressing concerns. Fake news spread rapidly, especially through manipulated videos and images on social media.

**Online harassment**, particularly targeting women candidates, was reported by **45%** of participants, highlighting the prevalence of gender-based trolling.

The **manipulation of voters** through targeted ads on social media platforms was also a key concern, with **50%** of respondents indicating that personalized content swayed voter opinions based on emotions.

#### SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

- H1 (Social Media Utilization by Political Parties):** Political parties have significantly increased their use of social media in 2024 campaigns, with a focus on targeted ads and viral content, confirming the hypothesis.
- H2 (Social Media's Impact on Young Voters):** Social media has had a strong impact on the mobilization of young voters, especially on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, confirming the hypothesis.
- H3 (Polarization of Political Discourse):** Social media has contributed to the political polarization in Pakistan, particularly through emotional and negative content, confirming the hypothesis.
- H4 (Ethical and Political Challenges):** The use of social media in the 2024 elections has raised significant concerns regarding misinformation, online harassment, and voter manipulation, confirming the hypothesis.

#### DISCUSSION

This study findings point out the far reaching effect of social media in the political mobilization in Pakistan in 2024 General Elections. Data indicates that political parties in Nigeria have turned

to social media platforms as a means of voter engagement that is now indispensable and preferred most significantly for engaging the youth. In terms of strategic use of videos, live streams, and targeted advertisements, PTI led the list of high participation with the help of such efforts. This complements the hypothesis that social media has become an indispensable element of election campaigns by allowing politicians to directly and inexpensively talk to the voters.

In addition, the survey results indicate that social media is extremely important in shaping young voters. For many young Pakistanis, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have turned into the primary source of political information, while in many cases shaping their political views and even directly deciding to vote for certain leaders. This corroborates the idea that social media is a strong avenue for political mobilization, in part in younger demographics (Mustapha et al., 2023).

But the study also presented major ethical dilemmas. Misinformation or fake news on social media platforms is a serious matter as it can alter public opinion and voter behavior. Online harassment, especially that directed towards women has been widespread. The analysis finds that social media opens doors for political involvement, but also intensifies polarization and can corrupt the integrity of the electoral procedure.

In conclusion, social media has changed the face of political campaigning and engagement in Pakistan; however, the ethics and politics of social media in ensuring fair and transparent election is of vital importance.

## **CONCLUSION**

Social media reinvented, as it has transformed the way in which politics are mobilized that we have seen in the 2024 General Elections in Pakistan. This paper attempts to demonstrate that political parties in Pakistan are increasingly using social media platforms, for example, Facebook, twitter and Instagram to interact with the voters, promise them political messages and influence public opinion. Due to its wide spread and implying characteristics, social media has given political parties the opportunity to circumvent conventional press channels and interact directly with the electorate, especially the young generation that is very active in digital platforms.

The influence of social media in encouraging a young voter's political engagement is also shown by the study. For many young Pakistanis social media is now where they get political information, and has been instrumental in the setting of how they vote. Social media has both empowered political participation and created obstacles to that as well such as the spread of misinformation and political polarization, as well as online harassment. These issues are serious concerns on the ethical front, and they can consequently distort democratic processes.

Finally, social media has created new ways of political mobilization in Pakistan, but these are also riddled with new complexities to be dealt with. If these risks are not mitigated by stakeholders for social media to remain a constructive force in political engagement, there remains potential for it to foster fair discourse, quell the shocks the web has created, promote tolerance over tolerance, and combat online harassment. This study reveals an important need

for the regulation and guidelines of ethical use of social media for the electoral campaigns in the electoral campaigns in order to maintain transparency and integrity of the democratic process.

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