



Impact of Social Media on Socio-Political Socialization of Youth in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study explores the intricate impact of social media on the social and political development of youth in Pakistan, providing a thorough examination of its diverse influence. This research meticulously examines the positive and negative effects of social media on youth, elucidating how these platforms act as both catalysts for empowerment and potential sources of harm. It investigates the role of social media in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of young individuals, particularly in the context of socio-political engagement. By exploring the extent to which social media fosters youth awareness, participation, and activism in political spheres, the study sheds light on the transformative potential of these digital platforms. Moreover, the research underscores the significance of social media in youth education and professional development, emphasizing its role as a facilitator of learning, skill acquisition, and networking opportunities. It explores how social media serves as a channel for disseminating knowledge and advancing careers, empowering youth to navigate the complexities of the modern world. This study utilizes a qualitative method, conducting desk review to collect data from secondary sources, to investigate how social media influences the socio-political lives of Pakistani youth. It employs an exploratory approach to delve into the subject matter. The conclusion of this research states that social media serves as a modern tool for communication and plays a significant role in social and political socialization, particularly among youth. While it offers numerous positive benefits such as guiding youth towards socio-political awareness and providing job opportunities, it also presents challenges like online bullying and privacy breaches. Policy makers need to address these negative aspects to ensure that youth derive maximum positive benefits from social media.

Keywords: Social Medial, Socio-Political, Socialization, Youth, Pakistan

1. Introduction

The modern world is witnessing rapid changes in the social and political aspects. With the induction of the modern tools of the technology, the modes of information are changing day by day. In the present era, social media has proved to be remarkable technological development which influenced every field of life (Shabir et al, 2014). In the past, there were limited modes of information sharing i.e., radio, television and newspaper but now induction of social media has taken over the roles of the above-mentioned sources of news. Now even the print media and television gain their news from the mouth of social media because social media is the fastest way of information in the contemporary period (Domingo & Heinoren, 2008).

The traditional media is facing problems in the current age because it did not change as quickly as the modern world does. The traditional media like television and print media is losing its audience because the invention of the new media is gaining more and more users. The newspaper industry is facing financial issues not only in the developing rather in the developed countries like US as well. The traditional sources of information i.e., television and radio has been replaced by smartphones in the modern era which is affecting every segment of society primarily youth (Dar & Nagrath, 2022).

Social media is shaping the social and political life trends of the youth. The youth is the largest audience of the social media attached through different social media applications. Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter and Snapchat etc. are the prominent social media applications through which the youth is connected with social media. The youth are gaining information about the civic, educational, professional and political life through social media applications and taking part in the social and political activities more attentively (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). The current study intends to see the impacts of social media on the social and political socialization of Youth in Pakistan. It also aims at exploring the importance of social/new media across the globe.

1.1. Research Objectives

- To see the importance of social media in modern world.
- To find out the positive and negative attributes of social media on youth.
- To examine the role of social media in shaping the socio-political attributes among youth in Pakistan

2. Methodology

The current research is purely in qualitative nature. This study is based on desk review where the researchers collected extensive data from different secondary sources including books, research articles, reports, and other online sources. This research is exploratory in nature because researchers tried to explore the impact of social media on the socio-political life of the youth in Pakistan.

2.1. Importance of Social Media

The emergence of social media introduced the new ways of social and political life. It has made the social and political life so adaptive through the flow of regular information. Social media is sharing the information mainly

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through Facebook and YouTube about every single event which is creating awareness among the people. The remarkable aspect of social media is to make the common community socio-politically aware that they may be able to understand the political and social developments in respective to their localities (Fischer & Reuber, 2021). According to Xenos et al (2007), there are two approaches of social media i.e., optimistic, and pessimistic. In the optimistic side, social media provides the hope of wellbeing, bright future and inter-connectivity among the different social segments. It provides knowledge about the civic, educational, political, and financial fields. It creates a sense of collaboration among the common people as well as they considered themselves in the mainstream of society through online connectivity which represents the positive aspects of social media and online collaboration.

But on the other hand, the pessimistic approach is more negative in its outlook because it generates social inequality and segregation in a society. On the optimistic side, social media generates a sense of social cohesion, but the pessimistic approach reveals that social media is based on class differences based on social categories. All the members of society are not equal because just sharing of information is not sufficient and similarly social media is also segregating the elite class from the common class. The online facilities are not equal to all rather again based on socio-economic status (Karamat & Farooq, 2016). Likewise, the pessimistic approach reports that social media is promoting the biased culture which generates social issues and disturbances in a society.

The online platform of social media is also helpful in mobilizing the social network at large level. It is almost impossible to gather the millions of the people on the same stage physically but social media has provided a platform to engage the millions of the social media users through online connectivity where they discuss about the social and political concerns and try to bring innovations in their routine lives (Visser, & Stolle, 2014). In the contemporary period, social media is playing key role political socialization of the users. Through different social media applications, the youth are gaining social and political knowledge covering the different aspects of these spheres. Through social media, they come to know about the political actions, policies, initiatives and resources available. By the same way, youth are also enriched with new ways of thinking because in the past, it was not easy to know about actions of the politicians and policy makers but now they are having the same information. This is what actually political socialization intends to inculcate among the people (Littlejohn et al., 2017).

Youth constitute the largest community of social media users because they are more enthusiastic than any other segment of the society. Social media provided them with innovative tools and ways which they employ in order to overcome their leisure time. Social media is unveiling the hidden abilities of the youth because through this online connectivity they are writing and reading articles and blogs related to education, entertainment, employment opportunities and others (Livingstone, 2002).

2.2. Positive and Negative Attributes

Social media has both positive and negative social and political attributes towards the youth. The youth take social media for granted and most of them use it for time pass and enjoyment. But it does not mean that all of the youngsters use it in negative ways only because there are also plenty of positive usages of social media. On the positive side, social media has engaged youngsters for social and political engagements. The socio-political understanding among the youth is enhancing with the help of social media because now youth are more aware about their social and civic rights with the help of social media. Social media is engaging the youth in the political activities because it has provided them a platform for discussion (Muzaffar et al, 2019). It has collaborated the members from different regions of the world which enabled them to share information about the different social and political setups. Social media is also imparting civic awareness among the youngsters which is they are now more active than the past. The youth are participating in the volunteer and civic activities and they want to use their potential for the betterment of the society. Another positive attribute of social media is pointing out the social and political issues. Through social media applications, the youngsters point out the issues of their respective localities and try to solve these issues through online campaigns (Subrahmanyam et al, 2008).

On the political side, social media is also taking many positive initiatives among the youth chiefly. The youth of the modern era are more curious about their political rights. They are not the political puppets as the previous generations were because now, they have started to question the political candidates and remind them their promises they had made during the election campaigns. Social media enhanced the turnout rate due to active participation of the future generation. Through social media, there have been created online groups through which youth discuss about the social and political issues and their solutions. It also developed strong collaboration between the voters and the elected candidates which continue to remind them about their developmental plans which they have promised during elections. All of this socio-political awareness among the youth is created with the help of social media and political socialization they are gaining from online sources (Muzaffar et al, 2019).

Likewise, social media also have many negative attributes as well. Social media is also providing the ways of negative activities. For example, it has developed an online culture of bullying where the social media users of different social and political groups bully to one another through different social media applications. The opposite political groups use even abusive language and promote the negative political culture which was not as much intense in the past as it is today (Subrahmanyam et al, 2008). Another negative aspect of the use of social media

is character assassination which is again ethically and morally inappropriate. Through social media youth are doing character assassination of the each other's political leadership which can be overcome through proper legislation so that social media may have more positive attributes. But the above commentary explains that social media has both positive and negative attributes (Muzaffar et al, 2019).

Social media is now a powerful tool to establish the future career and hunt the job opportunities. With the technological innovations and advancement of modern tools internet is being widely used by all spheres of life where the social media applications are being employed on the similar basis. The youngsters are gaining online technical training and learning different skills which are to the point of their professional career. Social media proved innovative arena of human resource management. The social media users are learning skills like teaching, report writing, logo making, virtual assistant and monetization etc. These skills are demanding in the current online job sectors where social media is assisting the users to learn the same skills (Abbas & Nawaz, 2014).

3. Socialization

Socialization is a lifelong process by which the individuals learn about their cultural practices and adopt them in their routine life. Culture is the most important part the human beings learn in order to lead their lives in an orderly form. It is a culture which tells them about the right and wrongs of the society and guides them in the right way. Socialization and culture are interlinked to each other because the process of socialization cannot compete without a proper system of rituals and traditions (Turner, 2006).

Socialization is both formal and informal as individuals learn about the ways of living from both means. In formal ways, the people are trained and educated through formally enacted institutions like schools, madrassahs and other educational institutes. Likewise, the rest of the socialization process is also learnt through informal ways where they learn from their family members, friends, society and others. Both of the formal and informal ways contribute for the completion of socialization process (Abrutyn, 2016).

Socialization is normally perceived in the socially approved cultural traits, norms and values. All of the agents of socialization strive to build socially acceptable attributes among the people so they may lead their lives according to prescribed standard. It teaches how to read, write, walk, dress up and behave with the other members of society. All of the components of the socialization are concerned with establishing variety of qualities among the members. Yet, the children which are brought up in negative culture or socially disapproved structure learn about the negative attributes which make deviants (Abrutyn, 2016). Likewise, the aim of political socialization is to inculcate the political attributes among the people. Political socialization intends to boost up the political information and ways of thinking through which they start thinking about the political system consciously.

3.1. Agents of Socialization

There are different sources the human beings employ for socialization process which may both formal and informal. Following are the major agents of socialization equally acceptable across the globe.

3.1.1. Family

Family is the most important agent of all because it is the place where a child is born and the child adopts the same social and cultural attributes which the family holds. Once a family inculcates the system of culture and socialization, it works for the rest of life. It is the most critical stage of the child which requires extensive attention of the parents and family members. It is family which initiates the civic values which walk for the rest of life in the personalities of the people. Family also plays a role in developing the ethical and moral attributes and teaches the children to behave with the other members in the right way (Holloway, 2014).

3.1.2. Educational Institutes

After family, the next important agent of socialization is educational institute where the children start to learn the norms and values in a formal way. Family is emotionally attached with the children so there should be a rational approach in socializing the children appropriately. At this stage, the children are sent to schools and madrassahs where they learn about the formal education system (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). The formal educational system is based on the socially approved ways and teaches the children in rational way which deviates them from the emotional feelings of the family and equip them to learn societal approach. These educational institutions are more important for the social and political developments because family sets up the base of socialization but the educational institutions adopt the next level. Through educational institute, the individuals learn about the dynamical approach including economics, history, social studies and political socialization (Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

3.1.3. Peer Group

Thirdly, peer group is another prominent agent of socialization. It teaches those values and norms missed by the other agents. It consists on the members of same age group where individuals gain the chance to share their age-related values and ethics. In the modern period although social media has eased the ways yet there is dire need of peer group (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). The peer group is also prominent source to inculcate the political values among the individuals because the peer fellows usually discuss about the political developments which provide them a way to choose the right way of political involvement. The educational institutions and the peer groups collectively establish the political attributes among the members because at the schooling and college-level they

start to take part in the political activities which later shape their personalities according to political practices (Campos et al, 2016).

3.1.4. Mass Media

Lastly, mass media is the key agent of socialization in the modern world. In the past, mass media was not as much important agent of socialization as it is today. Especially, with the induction of the social media, the modes of media have become so fast that the image of the rest of the agents look like fading (Khan et al, 2013). Social media has taken up the role of almost all agents because even the mothers getting help from social media that how to socialize the children in the right ways. Similarly, educational and peer groups' role are also being superseded by the social media (Dimitrova et al., 2014).

3.1.5. Political Socialization

Like socialization, political socialization is also concerned with the grooming the individuals regarding the political concerns. It aims at fostering the political understanding, behaviors, practices, customs and political principles. Normally, the common people are aware about general political trends but the political socialization guides the individuals thoroughly about different aspects of politics. In the advanced era, social media users are being politically socialized through social media. They learn about the political developments through the online available information (Ferris & Stein, 2018). This information enhances their capabilities about political matters because they read the blogs, stories and also gain information through social media specifically through Facebook, YouTube and twitter. Over the period of time, the social media users are enabled to have detailed discussions about the political topics which depicts that they are politically socialized. The youth are full of political information which is why they are raising questions about the flawed policies and bad governance. They also put pressure on the higher authorities to perform their tasks efficiently (Kezar & Eckel, 2002).



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Source: Prepared by Authors

Political and social aspects of socialization are inter-connected because the political concerns are also intended to improve the social system through good-governance. All of the habits, opinions, behaviors and manners are found in both political and social aspects. A properly socialized individual has proper grip on social habits which further help to politically socialize the individuals. Furthermore, social media is bridging the gap between social and political spheres. The youth are well-organized socially and politically just because of the help of social media. Political socialization is being performed by variety of the actors including family, state institutions and social media. Social media is no doubt taking the lead role in the technological era because it has audience of all ranges of the age groups and when it comes to the youth, they are highly influenced by social media. The youth are learning a lot of tricks and skills and social media is shaping their personalities through online material. The youth of the contemporary period are now aware about every political development of the country. It is social media which is motivating the youth to take part in the political activities and enhanced the voter turnout (Khan et al., 2013).

In the ordinary ways, the older generation perceives that youth are wasting time on social media because they are playing games and taking it just for enjoyment but it is reality the youth are being politically socialized through social media. The youth themselves are not aware that they are developing political inclination through social

media they just use social media for fun and in doing so they gain information about the local and national political trends (Abbas & Nawaz, 2014). The youth of urban areas are not only influenced by the social media rather the youngsters of backward areas are also being politically motivated through social media. The countries like Pakistan are also witnessing the same political awareness because the youth are standing against the feudalism which shows that youth are gaining political awareness through mobile phones and internet connectivity.

There have been conducting numerous studies on the topic of social media and its relation with youth which reveal that role of the social media is enhancing day by day. It is shaping the socio-political life of the youth. The new waves of socio-political rights are fluctuating in both developed and developing countries. In the developed countries, the youth are demanding more democratic and political rights like direct participation. Similarly, the youngsters of developing and poor countries are also striving to get rid of the traditional political practices where an authoritarian rule is being practiced in the form of democracy (Bimber, 2001).

Political socialization also motivates the social media users to unveil the corruption of the politicians and the officials working on their behalf. Prior to induction of social media, the corruption stories were hidden because these stories were beyond the access of the common people but not the platforms like Facebook, YouTube and twitter have disclosed the even the closed chapters of the corruption. It again shows that social media is promoting political socialization among the youth (Gerber et al., 2010).

4. Pakistan Perspective

The use of social media is popular in the developed and advanced countries rather the developing and under-developed countries are also engaged with social media of the same ratio. The youth in the advanced countries like US and UK are no doubt more engaged with social media and employing it as a tool to achieve their legal rights and demands. But it is not surprising that the youth of countries like Pakistan are also using the social media applications on the same streak. They are gaining plenty of advantages through social media i.e., hunting more educational, enjoyment and employment opportunities. At the same time, social media leading to create political awareness among the youth of Pakistan which is the reason that youth are the most active political community in Pakistan at present scenario (Michaelsen, 2011). Apart from the active role of youth, the political parties in Pakistan are also gaining benefits from social media. They have social media accounts to engage with public directly. Twitter is the prominent tool of social media which the politicians employ to remain in contact with general public. The political leaderships also share their speeches on social media which motivate the public to be engaged with political activities (Michaelsen, 2011).

Social media has more impact on the youth of the developed countries because they are more educated and have more awareness than the youth of developing countries. But it does not mean that developing and under-developed countries are cut-off from the new media. The youth of the third world countries are also using social media at large scale which is not only developing their socio-political potential but providing them different financial sources. Pakistani youth are gaining the same benefits from social media and it is proved the modern and fastest tool to earn money. The youth in Pakistan are selling their online services which is diminishing the headaches of youth's employment issues (Riaz, 2010).

Social media in Pakistan is guiding the youth in political aspects and leads them to different possible political directions. Now the youth do not have to rely on their parents and senior citizens to know that which political party is better rather they themselves are learning with the assistance of social media. The youngsters are gaining the guidance about political socialization through social media. It is social media which creating political habits, attitudes and practices among the youth in Pakistan. This is the reason that the political parties with traditional outlook are looking in some tension. This is the age of modern technology and political parties are changing their traditional outlook and trying to manage with the modern tools of communication (Khan & Shahbaz, 2015).

Social network sites have brought revolution like situation in Pakistan especially for the youth. The youth are so engaged with the social network sites that they are gaining every dimension of their routine activities through these networking sites. No doubt social media is providing different social and political opportunities to the youngsters but the policy makers should also consider the negative attributes as well. Social media in Pakistan is also providing the wrong directions to the future generation which should be tackled with iron hands (Karamat & Farooq, 2016).

But on the other sides, there are also many studies which report the advantages of social media. For instance, Arshad & Hassan (2014) explained that the students in Pakistan are actively using social media for their study purpose. They get online notes and solution of their queries through YouTube and Facebook. At the same time, the teachers upload their lectures on social media applications where the student can get the online facility of lectures.

In Pakistan Facebook and Twitter are two most prominent social media apps in developing the political attributes among the youth. Education on one side and social media on the other are assisting in the development of political awareness through online political campaigns among the youth in Pakistan. These social media platforms have provided them opportunity to share their ideas and discuss about different queries they have. The youth write online columns and blogs due to scarcity of opportunities and they have employed social media as a source to

express their intentions and feelings about the socio-political life. Social media is also helping to introduce new talents in civic and political sectors (Ittefaq & Iqbal, 2018). The concern of social media with youth is also important due to the ratio of youth. Pakistan is the second highest country of having largest ratio of youth after Yemen. The youth have to be consumed in the right direction because the future of the country is in the hands of the same youth and social media is playing its role to politically engage the youth in country. Although there are negative attributes attached with the usage of social media as well but these can be handled through proper management (Ittefaq & Iqbal, 2018).

The political dynamics of Pakistan are changing since 2008 due to induction of android technology and social media. Apart from the political biasness, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PATI) played key role in changing the political practices. It replaced the traditional political dynamics with the modern tools i.e., social media and it is reality that youth are being engaged with active politics after general elections of 2008 (Eijaz, 2013).

Social media provides an opportunity among the youngsters to discuss about an issue. The political culture of Pakistan is not encouraging because the political elite and feudalism have provided limited chances to the common people to take part in political matters. But with the initiation of social media, the political dynamics have been changed because now youth are actively participating in the political system through online sources. The elections' campaigns are also run through social media because it presents the personality figures and manifestos of political parties and people can judge them easily that which option is the most suitable. In the recent elections, the voters' turnout also increased due to social media campaign in Pakistan (Ahmad & Sheikh, 2013).

The university students are the prominent assets because they are ready to take on their professional roles soon after their pass out. The university students are also changing political attitudes and habits due to social media because it is presenting different shades of a picture and let them decide which option is the best. On the other side, social media is also fostering the civic engagements among the youth. Through social media awareness, the youth are taking part in the volunteer activities (Zaheer, 2016).

5. Conclusion

Social media is a modern tool of communication. It has taken over the role of social and political socialization of the people. Although all social segments are influenced by social media but youth are being affected on special concerns. Youth constitute the largest share of social media users as social media has provided them an online stage to perform according to their capabilities. Social media is equally socializing the youth in both developed and developing countries. In the perspective of Pakistan, social media has both negative and positive implications. On positive side, it is guiding the youth to the right social and political directions. It is providing the new ways of job opportunities and imparting technical skills among the youth. Social media is also motivating the youth to take active role in political participation through developing political inclination. On the other hand, social media also has some negative attributes as well because it is promoting the culture of online bullying, leaking the privacy and sharing the prohibited content in Pakistan. On a whole, social media is performing its role in shaping the socio-political attributes among the youth in Pakistan. It is need of the day that policy makers should take appropriate steps to hinder the negative usage of social media so that youth may gain maximum positive benefits from social media.

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