

The Influence of Social Media Political Expression on Traditional Voting Behavior of University Students in Pakistan: Exploring the implications of Caste-based and Family pressure-based Voting

Fakhta Zeib

Phd Research Associate, Philipps Universitat Marburg, Germany

Received: 07th September 2021

Revised: 21st November 2021

Accepted: 03rd December 2021

Abstract: The use of online social networks have facilitated youngsters to express their political views and provided a forum of open discussions. Considering the key proposition of Dahl's (1989) theory of Democratic Processes, 'voting equality for democratic participation', the study investigates the role of social media political expression in changing the traditional norms of voting behavior of university students in Pakistan. Specifically, it explores the implications of caste-based voting and family pressure-based voting behaviors. Based on quantitative approach, a survey research method is used for data collection (N=750) from different universities in four provinces of Pakistan. The results of multiple regression analysis reveal that the use of social media (facebook and twitter) for political expression is changing the traditional voting behaviors of university students in Pakistan. However, there exists certain variations on the bases of demographics i.e. gender, province and study discipline-based variations. Social media political expression has more weakened the influence of caste-based voting than family pressure-based voting of university students.

Keywords: Social Media, Facebook Use, Twitter Use, Political Expression, Traditional Voting Behavior, Caste-based voting, Family pressure-based voting

Introduction

Elections are the manifestation of the democratic process as they represent the political choice of people. However, elections and voting behavior of the people should be analyzed not only in the context to political but social systems of the country also. Dahl (1989) specifies the requirements of the democratic process i.e. effective participation, voting equality, and enlightened understanding. He asserts that the citizens are an integral part of the decision-making process in democracy and they should have provided the equal opportunity to take part in the democratic process via the above-mentioned requirements of democracy. In collective decisions, all citizens should have equal participation to express their choice and equal weight to the choices of all citizens should be given. Voting behavior is also considered as an indicator of how

effectively the democratic process runs and has been a subject of discussion for many political scholars throughout the world (Dahlgren, 2012; Kamau, 2017; Liaqat et al., 2018; Sadiq et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, it is believed that the political and the social systems, to which an individual belongs, hold multiple factors that influence the voting decision of an individual member. These multifaceted influences are figured out by political scholars as caste, race, class, religion, ideology, family, opinion leaders, and many others (Campbell et al., 1960; Haider, 2017; Wilder, 1999). To know about the trends and effects on voting decisions of Pakistani voters, these influences have been under discussion for the evaluation of voting behavior (A. Ahmed, 2014; Haider, 2017; Usman et al., 2013). These studies suggest variable influence of these traditional factors on electoral behavior of an individual voter.

However, through social media's political expression, both citizens and political activists are now the part of the political process by expressing and sharing their political views. This culture of sharing has enabled them to equally participate in the political process through online social platforms (Castells, 2010, 2012; Jose van Dijck, 2013). Given that, this new culture of participation by young people in the political process is enhancing day by day, the role of social media in a move from parochialism to national political thinking is also getting research attention. Many media scholars have emphasized by hypothesizing that it has directly influenced the political mindset of people in Pakistan (Butt & Awang, 2017; Ohme et al., 2016; Sadiq et al., 2018). However, this study is designed to test the research question that whether political expression on social media (facebook and twitter) has influenced the traditional voting behaviors of university students to participate in the democratic electoral process of Pakistan.

Following is the discussion about the conceptual framework covering the determinants of voting behavior.

Conceptual Framework

Determinants of Voting Behavior: A Theoretical Approach

Theoretical perspective of the study is based on Columbia school of thought (Sociological Model) which has reference to the publications "The People's Choice" by Lazarsfeld et al. (1944), "Voting" by Berelson et al. (1954) and "Personal Influence" by Katz & Lazarsfeld (1955). The sociological model is built on the argument that voter's social neighborhood and group memberships have a strong influence over the voting behavior of an individual. Lazarfeld et al. (1944) studied in detail the political homogeneity of social groups i.e. the association between voter's electoral behavior and the social groups he belongs to, and reach the conclusion that social characteristics determine political preference.

Lazarsfeld et al. (1954) identified certain features of the political well-being of voters in a democratic socio-political system such as having political interest and knowledge, political discussion, and political motivation. However, their empirical investigations suggested voter's limited interest and motivation on political issues for voting decision. In today's social context, we should reevaluate the sociological determinants of electoral behavior because of many reasons. The parameters of the formation of social groups and individualistic characteristics are not the same as were in 1944. Second, because the patterns of information production and consumption by the members of social groups have changed i.e. today's empowered voter is involved in the process of consumption and production at the same time. Third, because the technological developments have made communication more complex technologically, but facilitated interactivity and flexibility in communication process among the members of social groups.

Forth, because in a high choice media environment, the members of the social groups have many alternative sources of information i.e. receive information from multiple sources, and they are more empowered than the voters of that time when the study (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944) was conducted.

Some sociological factors that define voting behavior of an individual are peer group, family members and social class. Gavin Stamp, a political reporter of BBC states that one-third of young adults claim that their voting decisions are influenced by their family members and peer groups¹. According to Kudrnáč & Lyons, (2017), the young voters who live with their parents, are influenced by their parents for voting. Gidengil et al., (2016) demonstrate that the turnout of the adult voting has a strong association with parental voting. The most influential social pressure is from within the household (Blais et al., 2019). Some other scholars argue that class based voting still exists in contemporary democracies (Evans, 2017). Following discussion explains the sociological determinants of voting behavior i.e. caste-based voting and family pressure-based voting in the social context of Pakistan.

Determinants of Voting Behavior in Pakistan

Standards of the political well-being of voters in a democratic socio-political setup identified by Lazarsfeld et al. (1954) are difficult to meet, also in traditional Pakistani voters. Many studies reinforce this argument and suggest that most of the voters in Pakistan do not cast their votes on the basis of these principles but on some other sociological factors as explained by Lazarsfeld et al. (1954) in the model (Akhtar, 2012; Jamil Ahmed et al., 2010). Family, friends, caste, and feudal pressures are considered as the traditional voting norms in Pakistan. In Pakistan's social setup, society is divided in social groups on the bases of caste, class, and religion. This social differentiation is important to look for the analysis of electoral behavior (Antunes, 2010, pp. 149-150). The true spirit of democracy can not be met if people are not free in their choices to elect electoral representatives i.e. people do vote but their choices are influenced by many social and political pressures imposed by politicians, landlords, tribal heads, and biradries (caste) (Mahmood et al., 2014). From the past literature, a great influence of caste, and family on voting decisions is revealed in the context of Pakistan).

Caste

Political researcher and analyst Rasul Bakhsh Rais discussing non-party elections of 1985 states that, in rural areas especially, campaigns are dominated by influences of candidates, caste/ biradri, ties to the clan, pressures of feudal setups (Rais, 1985). Though this argument was not supported by empirical evidence, but meanwhile and afterward many researchers analyzed the effects of caste/ biradri and feudal set up on voting behavior and found strong influences of these determinants on the voting behavior of non-urban voters (A. Ahmed, 2014; Jamil Ahmed et al., 2010; Haider, n.d.). Moreover, with a broader conceptualization of ethnicity i.e. tribes, races, caste, and nationalities, Butt & Awang (2017b) found the likelihood of voting of both urban and non-urban voters on the basis of above mentioned ethnic indicators.

The impact of caste system on voting behavior in Pakistan was investigated by many other scholars (Wildar, 1999; Ziring, 2000, mentioned in Akhtar, 2012; Haider, 2017; Akbar Leghari et al., 2020) and found a strong influence of 'Zat'(caste) on electoral and political process of the province of Punjab.

¹ Article can be accessed from Stamp, G., (2010). *BBC News - Election: How do friends and family influence votes?*

Moreover, the strong impact of biradriism is found also in the political alignment of the people of Punjab (Wildar, 1999, mentioned in Akhtar, 2012). However, national-level politics does not follow these trends as much as local politics does; regional and local politics and candidates use the favors of major biradries to win their constituencies (M. Ahmed, 2008; Sadiq et al., 2014). A study conducted in two major districts of Punjab revealed that voting behavior is found to be influenced by the sociological model coupled with the authoritarian rule. That is, the structure of society itself does not allow free will to be executed for casting vote rather strict guidelines are imposed by authoritarian personalities such as feudal lords to influence voting decisions (Jamil Ahmed et al., 2010). Caste system has been very influential in the rural politics of Pakistan, since 70% of the population of Pakistan lives in rural areas and the effects of caste-based voting cannot be ignored in the electoral process of Pakistan.

Family

Informal political discussions with family, peer acquaintances, neighbors and co-workers possibly influence the voting choices of individuals. In the socio-political tradition of Pakistan, It has been observed that the endorsements from family members have a greater influence on voting and voting decisions i.e. whom to vote. A family structure in Pakistani society is closed bounded; younger children stay with their parents and in most cases, married children and their parents also stay with each other, either at their parents' house or at the children's house. However, according to the viability of Kudrnáč & Lyons (2017)'s argument in the perspective of family structure in Pakistan, it seems quite logical that most of the adult children face influences from the family, as they used to stay with their parents. According to another study, family still hold a significant position in voting decision in Pakistan (Iqbal Y & Shabir, 2017). Another study concludes that women are more likely to vote on the direction of their male family members in Pakistan (Gine & Mansuri, 2018). Notwithstanding, analyzing the sociological determinants, A. Ahmad et al., (2020) 's findings also revealed that sociological pressures such as biradri and family pressures influence the voting decisions of the voters in the province of Punjab.

Social Media Political Expression and Electoral Behavior

From the above analysis of many pieces of research, we conclude that these determinants have been occupying a very significant place in the electoral process in Pakistan. But now it is expected that the situation is changing because of the changing established social order or dominance, weakening influence of feudal lords and caste heads, and because of the intervention and greater subversive power of mainstream media, in general, and social media, in particular, in creating awareness and undermining social evils.

Democratic political development is achieved in the presence of an unbiased and transparent flow of information, freedom of expression, and free open discussions. Social media, in comparison to other mass media, is a liberal platform that facilitates its users to communicate and discuss openly and freely. Hence, eventually develops a citizenry who are vigilant and, think and act rationally. For a voter, as a focal point, social media play a significant part in determining electoral behavior through campaign knowledge and intercommunity communication on social networks during elections (Drew & Weaver, 2004; Jamil, 2018; Munir, 2018). A plethora of studies explains the effects of the political use of social media on electoral behavior of voters in different parts of the world (Bode et al., 2014; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2014; Valenzuela et

al., 2012). However, previous literature less discusses the democratic and deliberative role of social media in explaining sociological determinants of voting behavior.

Social media in some cases, not all, can be taken as a predictor of election campaigns and election results and can provide a quantitative indication about voting trend and voting behavior of the people (DiGrazia et al., 2013; Riezebos et al., 2011). According to PEW statistics about US presidential elections 2012, social media have been an important part of the election process. Voters have been talking about candidate preferences, merits and demerits of political parties and encouraging others to vote for a particular political candidate (Rainie et al., 2012). DiGrazia et al., (2013) suggested that social media activity, such as public discussion, can be used as an indicator for political or electoral behavior. Moreover, voters' less turnout during elections has been an issue in Pakistan also. Many studies also show that social media can be effective in increasing voting turnout (Bond et al., 2012).

A positive aspect of one of the sociological determinants is the voting endorsements by friends' networks. Friends' motivations to other friends, to participate in elections and to influence voting decisions have been facilitated by social media use during US elections. 30% of the total registered voters have been encouraged by their friends and family on social media to vote (pewinternet.org, 2012). Fogg proposes theoretically, that individual voter's acquaintances may help voters to decide about which candidates are better or whom to vote for. Such an informal exchange of views and political discussions enable an individual to engage in deliberative process about voting decision. The exchange of information is more likely to be facilitated by social media users on their virtual spaces (Shmargad & Klar, 2020). Being part of one's social network increases the probability of casting a vote (Bond et al., 2017; McClurg, 2003; Nickerson, 2007), and even, casting a vote correctly (Sokhey & McClurg, 2012). Social media has become an awareness tool during election campaigns, which helps young voters to engage in a deliberative process. Nevertheless, this fulfils the demands of democratic discourse by making the right decision based upon available information. This is ultimately reflected in their voting decision (Biswas et al., 2014).

Political use of social media coupled with friends' endorsements enhances the likelihood of voting. Baek (2015) investigated the relationship of social media use and electoral behavior of Korean voters and past non-voters and figured out that previously non-voters who receive political messages from social media friends are more likely to vote. Political messages, delivered to 61 million facebook users during the 2010 U.S election, did not only influence receiving users but also the friends of users and friends of friends (Jones et al., 2017). Nonetheless, the political use of social media is expected to break the traditional norms of voting. In a democratic political setup, voting is considered as a non-partisan action, which is required to propagate with non-partisan voting messages for fair electoral participation. This is how it can generate more fruitful results. Non-partisan messages of electoral campaigns can influence more to the online friends and even friends of a friend because the friends with opposing political belief, when receiving a neutral message posted by their friends, pay more attention and are more influenced by it² (Markoff, 2012).

Through previous literature, the author concludes that sociological factors are regarded as the major cause, which influence the voting behavior of the majority of Pakistani voters. Previous research do not comprehensively delineate the proposition that social media political expression weakens the strength of sociological determinants. The current study anticipates filling this gap. However, this study tends to

² Article can be accessed from <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/us/politics/social-networks-affect-voter-turnout-study-finds.html>

explain that the political use of social media (facebook and twitter) has changed traditional voting trends in the voting decisions by changing the political behavior of individuals in recent years. This study is designed to test following hypotheses.

H1: There is an association between social media political expression and the change in traditional voting behavior of university students in Pakistan.

H2: There is an association between social media political expression and caste-based voting of university students in Pakistan.

H3: There is an association between social media political expression and family pressure-based voting of university students in Pakistan.

Methods and Materials

Quantitative research methods are used to conduct this study. Data is collected through the survey research method. For this purpose, different scales are adapted or developed through the operationalization of key concepts and converting them into measurable indicators. First, we have concluded the scales developed by Yang & DeHart (2016) and Valenzuela et al. (2009) and adapted their work to measure the 'political expression' among university students through the use of social media (facebook and twitter). Second, the measurement of traditional voting behavior includes numerous indicators. With the support of past literature, we have included the following indicators in the questionnaire to measure the change in traditional voting behavior. Respondents are asked to uncover the influences of family and caste on their voting. Caste-based voting pressure is measured by asking the respondents 'do you prefer to cast your vote on the bases of caste'. Family pressure is measured by asking the respondents 'do you intend to cast you vote on the directions of you family'. A scale is adapted from other studies (Jorikter veer, 2013; IPSOS Public Affair Voting Survey, 2018) and some are self-structured items based on the socio-political context of Pakistan. All questions are measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Moreover, the study also includes demographic questions to analyze the relationship between independent and dependent variables, e.g., age, gender, educational level, family income, academic discipline, and province.

The respondents from the universities of four provinces of Pakistan are sampled through cluster sampling. Initially, each province is declared as a 'cluster' and one university from each cluster is selected randomly. The universities are selected randomly, two from Punjab (University of the Punjab, Lahore and Government College University, Faisalabad), and one, from Sindh (University of Karachi), Balochistan (University of Balochistan, Quetta), and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (University of Peshawar). Further, six academic departments are randomly selected from each university and grouped into two disciplines i.e. 'physical science' and 'social science' for analysis. Finally, a survey of 750 university students of ages (18-25 years) has been conducted. A questionnaire is used as data collection tool. Given the financial and time limits of the field research, mediators from different departments of universities are arranged to collect data from farthest areas of Pakistan. They are guided about data collection procedure through online training sessions.

The Cronbach Alpha, calculated using SPSS, is 0.90, which indicates a high level of reliability for all scales. Multiple regression analysis is used to predict social media political expression and change in traditional voting behavior of university students with various predictors.

Results

Multiple Regression Analysis

Regression Table 1 Prediction of Change in Tradition Voting Behavior

Variable	Standardized Coefficients ^a (β)	Std. Error	t	Durbin-Watson
Constant		.398	25.220	
Social Media Political Expression	.489*	.026	15.316	1.715

a. Dependent Variable: Change in Traditional Voting Behavior.

Model Summary: Sample size=750. Adjusted R^2 =.338. Correlation is significant at * $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .05$.

Multiple regression analysis provides evidence that support the hypothesis H1. As predicted in hypothesis H1, social media political expression has a significant and positive association ($\beta = .489$, $p < .001$) with the change in traditional voting behavior. It indicates that if social media political expression among university students is increased by one standard deviation, the change in traditional voting behavior is increased by 0.489 standard deviations. Regression analysis also supported this model as 33.8% of variance (Adjusted R^2) in the change in traditional voting behavior through social media was explained by variables included in the analysis.

Regression Table 2 Prediction of Change in Traditional Voting Behavior with Control Variables

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients ^a (β)	Std. Error	t
Constant		1.516	1.944
Social Media Political Expression	.481*	.026	14.703
Student Age	.059**	.052	2.757
Gender of the Student	.049**	.198	2.346
Study Level of the student	-.025	.090	-1.173
Study Department of student	.027***	.056	2.316
Family Income	.014	.000	.684
Province of the student	-.027	.082	-1.328

a. Dependent Variable: Change in Traditional Voting Behavior.

Model Summary: Sample size=750. Adjusted R^2 =.332. Durbin Watson=1.728

Correlation is significant at * $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .05$.

The statistics also support the regression model that comprises more than one explanatory variable, with variance (33.2 %), for analysing the effects of other explanatory variables (control variables). Some of these control variables yielded a low but significant influence on the change in traditional voting behavior

The Influence of Social Media Political Expression...

of university students in Pakistan. Such as the associations between change in traditional voting behavior with age($\beta = .059$, $p < .01$), gender ($\beta = .049$, $p < .01$) and study department of the student($\beta = .027$, $p < .05$) are statistically significant. The statistical inferences point out that the focal independent variable (social media political expression) remains significant and associated ($\beta = .481$, $p < .001$) with the change in traditional voting behavior of the university students, when the effects of other control variables are also measured.

Regression Table 3 Prediction of Change in Traditional Voting Behavior Comparing Gender, Study Discipline, and Province

Variable	Response Categories	Adjusted R ²	Standardized Coefficients ^{a,b} (β)	Std. Error	t	Durbin-Watson
1-Gender	Male	.324*	.503*	.035	11.925	1.572
	Female	.289*	.444**	.039	8.950	1.888
2-Study Discipline	Social Science	.275*	.484*	.030	12.414	1.567
	Physical Science	.325*	.418*	.033	10.497	1.846
3-Province	Punjab	.375	.481*	.038	11.375	2.013
	Sindh	.312	.369*	.064	5.386	1.641
	Khyber Pakhtunkha	.319	.373*	.054	4.654	1.695
	Balochistan	.248	.304*	.062	4.073	1.582

a. Dependent Variable: Change in Traditional Voting Behavior.

b. Predictor: Social Media Political Expression, Gender, Study Discipline, Province

Model Summary: Sample size=750. Correlation is significant at * $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .05$

Table 3 presents the regression analysis of demographic variables with their individual response categories. First part of this table represents the standardized regression coefficients of the change in traditional voting behavior of male ($\beta = .503$, $p < .001$) and female ($\beta = .444$, $p < .01$). The statistics suggest that male respondents exhibited a higher level of change in traditional voting behaviour than female respondents. Similarly, the standardized regression coefficients of the change in traditional voting behavior of social science students ($\beta = .484$, $p < .001$) and for physical science students ($\beta = .418$, $p < .001$) are noted. It can be inferred that social science students exhibited a higher level of change in traditional voting behavior than physical science students. Statistical analysis showed that the students from the province of Punjab exhibit a highest level of change in traditional voting behavior ($\beta = .481$, $p < .001$), whereas the students from the province of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkha have almost the same level of the change in traditional voting behavior ($\beta = .369$, $p < .001$) and ($\beta = .373$, $p < .001$) respectively. The values of Durbin-Watson were within the range (1.5 - 2.5). The values of Adjusted R² give the overall explanation of the model against each category and the results can be well generalized on the population.

Regression Table 4 Prediction of Caste-based and Family pressure-based Voting Behavior

Variable	Standardized Coefficients ^a (β)	Std. Error	t	Durbin-Watson
Caste-based Voting Behavior				
Social Media Political Expression	-.308*	.034	-12.806	1.529
Family Pressure-based Voting Behavior				
Social Media Political Expression	-.348*	.031	-14.983	1.588

a. Dependent Variables: Caste-based Voting Behavior, Family pressure-based Voting Behavior.

Model Summary: N=750. Correlation is significant at * $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .05$. Adjusted $R^2 = .227$ (Caste-based Voting Behavior) and .251 (Family pressure-based Voting Behavior)

Multiple regression analysis provides evidence that support the hypothesis H2 and H3. Social media political expression has a significant but negative association with Caste-based voting behavior ($\beta = -.308$, $p < .001$) and Family pressure-based voting behavior ($\beta = -.348$, $p < .001$). It indicates that if social media political expression among university students is increased by one standard deviation, caste-based and family pressure-based voting behavior is decreased by 0.308 and 0.348 standard deviations respectively. Regression analysis supports this model as 22.7% of variance is explained by variables included in the analysis. When including other explanatory variables, age and gender appear to be significant in both, caste-based and family pressure-based, models.

Regression Table 5 Prediction of Caste-based and Family pressure-based Voting Behavior with Control Variables

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients ^a (β)	Std. Error	T
Prediction of Caste-based Voting Behavior			
Social Media Political Expression	-.301*	.015	-16.861
Age	-.029***	.063	-1.930
Gender	-.068***	.052	-3.764
Study Level	.039	.059	1.061
Study Department	.063	.053	2.941
Family Income	-.022	.001	-1.147
Province	.086	.060	2.891
Prediction of Family pressure-based Voting Behavior			
Social Media Political Expression	-.318*	.014	-16.981
Age	-.020***	.048	-1.030
Gender	.108***	.098	.016

The Influence of Social Media Political Expression...

Study Level	.087	.083	1.231
Study Department	.051	.042	2.470
Family Income	.120	.008	1.267
Province	.066	.061	1.899

a. Dependent Variable: Caste-based Voting Behavior, Family pressure-based Voting Behavior, Model Summary: N=750. Adjusted R²=.246 (Caste-based Voting Behavior) and .273 (Family pressure-based Voting Behavior). Correlation is significant at * p < .001; **p < .01; ***p < .05. Durbin Watson=1.558

Discussion

The study aimed at answering the research question “has political expression on social media (facebook and twitter) influenced the traditional voting behaviors of university students in Pakistan”. The inferential statistics revealed that there is a positive association between social media political expression and the change in traditional voting behavior of university students in Pakistan. Further, a detailed analysis aimed at measuring the role of intervening variables, such as gender, age, study level, study discipline, family income, and province.

Study is based on one of the important components of Dahl’s theory of democratic process i.e. equality in voting for the participation in the decision-making process. The implications of Dahl’s theory are analyzed by testing the factors that hinder fair and equal participation of youngsters in democratic process. Investigation of previous literature revealed that the voting behavior of an individual voter is influenced by certain sociological factors (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944, 1968; Lazarsfeld et al., 1954; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955), which the author summarizes as caste-based and family pressure-based voting decisions in Pakistani perspective. The overall model suggests medium level correlation between social media political expression and the change in traditional voting behavior as a cumulative index of family pressures and caste pressures on the voting decision. The second model which includes other explanatory variables also has high significance explaining (33.2 %) of variance, and has relatively the same correlation with the change in traditional voting behavior.

In all models of the change in traditional voting behavior whether social media political expression is used as the only predictor or along with other demographic variables, social media political expression has a significant and positive relationship with the change in traditional voting behavior. The study revealed significant and meaningful difference in the change in traditional voting behavior among male and female students. Although, there has been found a positive association in the change in traditional voting behavior of both male and female students, but male students exhibited more change in traditional voting behavior as compared to female university respondents. This is because of the global phenomenon of gender gap i.e. less political orientation of women as compared to men (Fraile & Sánchez-vitores, 2020) and gender-defined social and political differentiation (Ahmad et al., 2019; S. Ahmed et al., 2020). Further, the study also revealed that the change in traditional voting behavior of social science students due to social media political expression was not much different from that of physical science students.

However, province wise difference in the change in traditional voting behavior of students was meaningful. The students from the province of Punjab tend to have a highest change in traditional voting behavior due to social media political expression. The students from the provinces of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkha exhibited almost the same change in traditional voting behavior. The students from the

province of Balochistan exhibited the lowest level of change in traditional voting behavior. This is explained by Samad (2014) and Aman & Akram (2018), that strongly integrated tribal traditions coupled with local politics in Balochistan are preventing the people of Balochistan (non-urban population to a large extent and urban population to some extent) to be the part of the national political process.

Since the emergence of social media, many changes in communicative patterns and their effects on an individual's deliberation have been witnessed with every passing year. Present study revealed that 68.5% of respondents cast their votes thinking their vote can bring a good change in the country while 6.5% either do not think so or they cast their vote without having any particular thought in mind. Further, an individual's intention to participate in the democratic political process is assumed as an important indicator in predicting one's level of democratic engagement. Keeping in mind this assumption, the questions about 'students' voting in previous elections', which were held in 2018, and 'their intentions for voting in the next elections' were asked. Among 750 respondents, only 338 students registered for voting in the previous election, which, ideally, should have been 412 students (excluding the students who were of the age 18 and 19 at the time of the survey, might not be eligible for registering their vote in 2018.). Among 338 registered voters, only 261 cast their votes in national elections 2018. Further, 78% (585) of students showed an intention to cast their votes in the next national election. It implies that the students' willingness to participate in the democratic process has increased. These findings are very encouraging because there have always been a large majority of people who did not like to vote due to their mistrust on political parties (Yousaf, 2016). The current wave of the political use of social media has motivated them to vote.

The study was intended to evaluate two sociological determinants 'family pressures' and 'caste pressures' influencing the voting decision. 'Family pressures' prove an important social pressure on voting decisions, which highly contributed in the evaluation of the change in traditional voting behaviors. Social media political expression has a significant but negative association with family pressure-based voting behavior. Results suggested that 49% of students did not intend to cast their vote on the directions of family, whereas, 34% still believed they would cast vote following the direction of their family. Although, 34% of students, who abide by this social norm, are still challenging because they affect the virtue of democratic voting, but we should keep in mind that out of the traditional norms, 49% of students are breaking the traditional norms by voting independently without family directions. Hence, this change in traditional voting behavior is weakening the effects of some of sociological determinants explained by Lazarsfeld et al., (1944), which makes a big difference. Comparatively less effect of caste-based voting behavior was observed on university students. Statistics suggest a significant and negative association between social media political expression and caste-based voting behavior of university youngsters. Analyzing gender difference, female students take more family pressure on their voting decision as compared to male students, whereas in case of caste-based voting, male students are more likely to take more caste-based pressures on their voting as compared to female students. Family pressures still hold a significant position both in urban and non-urban social setups. However, the caste pressures are more dominant in non-urban social setups.

Conclusion

Through empirical findings, we conclude that sociological factors i.e. family pressure-based voting and caste-based voting put barrier to Dahl's propositions of the theory of democratic process i.e. equality in voting for democratic participation. However, political use of social media (facebook and twitter) has altered

the traditional mindset of university youngsters to some extent and shattered the impact of these social pressures. Through political discussions on social media and online political activities, youngsters are now learning to break these traditional norms and adopting the patterns of self-decision making. Social media political expression is fostering deliberate and thoughtful decision-making process in their minds, which helps them deciding what is right and what is wrong, avoiding caste and family pressures. Study also include demographic variations. Male students are more likely to exhibit the change in traditional voting behavior than female students are. Male students take more caste pressures and female students take more family pressures in their voting decisions. Social media encourage democratic political discussions among youth and contribute in democratic process, especially in the countries like Pakistan.

Limitations

Study tested the determinants of sociological model. The limitation of the study was that it could not consider other models of voting behavior. Further research should also focus on psychological model and rational choice model to make a comparison of voting determinants.

References

- Ahmad, A., Bhatti, M., I., & Yousaf, F., F. (2020). Whom to Vote? Socio-Psychological Factors Influencing Voting Behavior in Rural Punjab, Pakistan. *Sir Syed Journal of Education & Social Research*, 3(2), 9-15.
- Ahmad, A., Mahmood, Q. K., Saud, M., Airlangga, U., Territory, I. C., Dalam, J. D., & Java, E. (2019). Women in Democracy : The political participation of women Perempuan dalam Demokrasi : Partisipasi politik perempuan. *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan, Dan Politik*, 32(2), 114-122.
- Ahmed, A. (2014). *Gender and Voting Behavior : A Study of Biradari Based Politics of Punjab. II*(8), 10187-10195.
- Ahmed, M. (2008). Voting behaviour in rural and urban areas of Punjab. *Journal of Political Studies*, 14(Winter), 45-56.
- Ahmed, S., Ara, M., Khatun, M. T., & Islam, T. (2020). *Gender Gap in Political Participation : A Study from Khulna District of Gender Gap in Political Participation : A Study from Khulna District of Bangladesh Abstract :August*. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2508042330>
- Akbar Leghari, M. F., Gillani, A. H., & Abbas, M. W. (2020). Modern Trends and Voting Behaviours in Politics of District Dera Ghazi Khan, Pakistan. *Global Regional Review*, V(I), 323-331. [https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020\(v-i\).35](https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020(v-i).35)
- Akhtar, M. J. (2012). Elections of Pakistan and Response of Social Scientists: A Historiographical Survey of Theoretical Perceptions. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)*, 32(2), 283-295. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5c30/ded41a39823dea220fc5abf4e866f3dede04.pdf>
- Aman, J., & Akram, M. B. (2018). *Socio-Political Unrest in Pakistan: A Perception of University Students in The Province of Balochistan, Pakistan. July*. <https://doi.org/10.21787/mp.2.2.2018.97-109>
- Antunes, R. (2010). Theoretical models of voting behaviour. *Exedra*, 4(June), 145-170.
- Baek, Y. M. (2015). Political mobilization through social network sites: The mobilizing power of political messages received from SNS friends. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 44, 12-19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.11.021>
- Berelson, B. R., Lazarsfeld, P. F., & McPhee, W. N. (1954). *Voting: A Study Of Opinion Formation In A Presidential Campaign*. University of Chicago Press.

- Biswas, A., Ingle, N., & Roy, M. (2014). Influence of social media on voting behavior. *Journal of Power*, 2(2), 127–155.
- Blais, A., Galais, C., & Coulombe, M. (2019). The effect of social pressure from family and friends on turnout. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 36(9), 2824–2841. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407518802463>
- Bode, L., Vraga, E. K., Borah, P., & Shah, D. V. (2014). A new space for political behavior: Political social networking and its democratic consequences. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19(3), 414–429. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12048>
- Bond, R. M., Fariss, C. J., Jones, J. J., Kramer, A. D. I., Marlow, C., Settle, J. E., & Fowler, J. H. (2012). A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization. *Nature*, 489(7415), 295–298. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature11421>
- Bond, R. M., Settle, J. E., Fariss, C. J., Jones, J. J., & Fowler, J. H. (2017). Social Endorsement Cues and Political Participation. *Political Communication*, 34(2), 261–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2016.1226223>
- Butt, J., & Awang, M. (2017a). Intention for Voting IN PAKISTAN: THE role of Social Media, Ethnicity, and Religiosity. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 4(5), 1. <https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v4i5.88>
- Butt, J., & Awang, M. (2017b). *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding Intention for Voting in Pakistan : the Role of Social Media , Ethnicity , and Religiosity*. 1–15.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., Miller, W. E., & Stokes, D. E. (1960). *The American voter*. John Wiley.
- Castells, M. (2010). Communal Heavens: Identity and Meaning in the Network Society. In *The Power of Identity*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444318234.ch1>
- Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope – social movements in the Internet age*. Polity Press; 2nd edition.
- Dahlgren, P. (2012). Social media and counter-democracy: The contingences of participation. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science (Including Subseries Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence and Lecture Notes in Bioinformatics)*, 7444 LNCS, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-33250-0_1
- DiGrazia, J., McKelvey, K., Bollen, J., & Rojas, F. (2013). More tweets, more votes: Social media as a quantitative indicator of political behavior. *PLoS ONE*, 8(11), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0079449>
- Drew, B. D., & Weaver, D. (2004). *Learning in T H E 2004 Presidential Election : Did the Media*. 1.
- Evans, G. (2017). Social Class and Voting. In Arzheimer et al (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Electoral Behavior*. London: Sage. (Vol. 03, pp. 1–25). SAGE Publications.
- Fraille, M., & Sánchez-vitores, I. (2020). *Tracing the Gender Gap in Political Interest Over the Life Span : A Panel Analysis*. 41(1), 89–106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12600>
- Gidengil, E., Wass, H., & Valaste, M. (2016). Political Socialization and Voting: The Parent–Child Link in Turnout. *Political Research Quarterly*, 69(2), 373–383. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912916640900>
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Molyneux, L., & Zheng, P. (2014). Social media, political expression, and political participation: Panel analysis of lagged and concurrent relationships. *Journal of Communication*, 64(4), 612–634. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12103>
- Gine, X., & Mansuri, G. (2018). Together We Will: Experiment Evidence on Female Voting Behavior in

- Pakistan. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 5692*, 10(June), 207–235.
- Haider, S. K. (2017). *Punjab Caste-System and Voting Behavior*.
- Iqbal Y, W., & Shabir, G. (2017). The Influence of Interpersonal Communication, Traditional Media, and New Media Sources on Youth's Voting Behavior; A Study of Pakistan General Election 2013 Campaign. *Journal of Mass Communication & Journalism*, 07(04). <https://doi.org/10.4172/2165-7912.1000343>
- Jamil Ahmed, S., Syeda, S., Shahid, B., & Riffat, N. (2010). Voting Behavior and Elections in Pakistan (A case Study of Pakistani Election Methods and Methodology). *The Explorer Islamabad: Journal of Social Sciences*, 0132(12), 449–456.
- Jamil, S. (2018). Politics in a Digital Age: The Impact of New Media Technologies on Public Participation and Political Campaign in Pakistan's 2018 Elections – A Case Study of Karachi. *Global Media Journal*.
- Jones, J. J., Bond, R. M., Bakshy, E., Eckles, D., & Fowler, J. H. (2017). Social influence and political mobilization: Further evidence from a randomized experiment in the 2012 U.S. presidential election. *PLoS ONE*, 12(4), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0173851>
- Jose van Dijck. (2013). *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* (p. 228). Oxford University Press.
- Kamau, S. C. (2017). Democratic engagement in the digital age: youth, social media and participatory politics in Kenya. *Communicatio*, 43(2), 128–146. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02500167.2017.1327874>
- Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1955). *Personal influence: the part played by people in the flow of mass communications*. Free Press.
- Kudrnáč, A., & Lyons, P. (2017). Parental Example as a Motivation for Turnout among Youths. *Political Studies*, 65(1_suppl), 43–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321716644614>
- Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B., & Hazel, G. (1944). *The People's Choice How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign*. Columbia University Press.
- Liaquat, A., Callen, M., Cheema, A., Naseer, F., & Shapiro, J. N. (2018). *Political Connections and Vote Choice* :
- Mahmood, B., Sohail, M. M., Mushtaq, S. K., & Rizvi, S. A. (2014). Social factors hindering political participation in pakistan: A review article. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(23), 1933–1939. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n23p1933>
- McClurg, S. D. (2003). Social Networks and Political Participation: The Role of Social Interaction in Explaining Political Participation. *Political Research Quarterly*, 56(4), 449–464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290305600407>
- Munir, S. (2018). Social Media and Shaping Voting Behavior of Youth: The Scottish Referendum 2014 Case. *The Journal of Social Media in Society Spring*, 7(1), 253–279.
- Nickerson, D. W. (2007). Does email boost turnout. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 2(4), 369–379. <https://doi.org/10.1561/100.00007032>
- Ohme, J., De Vreese, C., Andersen, K., Jensen, C., & Albaek, E. (2016). *Effects of first time voters' political social media use on electoral behavior - A smartphone-based measurement of media exposure to political information in an election campaign*. June, 1–27.
- Rainie, L., Smith, A., Schlozman, K. L., Brady, H., & Verba, S. (2012). Social Media and Political Engagement. *Pew Internet {&} American Life Project*, 1–13.
- Rais, R. B. (1985). Elections in Pakistan: Is Democracy Winning. *Asian Affairs*, 12 (3), 43–61.

- Riezebos, P., De Vries, S. A., De Vries, P. W., & De Zeeuw, E. (2011). The effects of social media on political party perception and voting behavior. *Proceedings of the IADIS Int. Conf. ICT, Society and Human Beings 2011, Proceedings of the IADIS International Conference e-Democracy, Equity and Social Justice 2011, Part of the IADIS, MCCSIS 2011*, 11-18.
- Sadiq, F., Karim, J., & Dildar, S. M. (2014). Biradism As Stronger Determinant Of Voting Behavior; Exploring The Voting Behavior Of People Towards Different Political Parties During Election 2013 In District Layyah. *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies*, 9(4), 1773-1777.
- Samad, Y. (2014). Understanding the insurgency in Balochistan. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 0(0), 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2014.894280>
- Shmargad, Y., & Klar, S. (2020). Sorting the News: How Ranking by Popularity Polarizes Our Politics. *Political Communication*, 37(3), 423-446.
- Sokhey, A. E., & McClurg, S. D. (2012). Social networks and correct voting. *Journal of Politics*, 74(3), 751-764. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381612000461>
- Usman, A., Munawar, R., & Amjad, A. (2013). Determinants of Effective Electoral Campaign. *South Asian Studies*, 28(1), 107.
- Valenzuela, S., Kim, Y., & Gil De Zúñiga, H. (2012). Social networks that matter: Exploring the role of political discussion for online political participation. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 24(2), 163-184. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edr037>
- Valenzuela, S., Park, N., & Kee, K. F. (2009). Is There social capital in a social network site?: Facebook use and college student's life satisfaction, trust, and participation1. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14(4), 875-901. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01474.x>
- Wilder, A. R. (1999). *The Pakistani Voter: Electoral Politics and Voting Behaviour in the Punjab*. Oxford University Press.
- Yang, H. "Chris," & DeHart, J. L. (2016). Social Media Use and Online Political Participation Among College Students During the US Election 2012. *Social Media and Society*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115623802>
- Yousaf, S. (2016). Political marketing in Pakistan: Exaggerated promises, delusive claims, marketable development projects and change advocacy. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 16(2), 140-155. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1562>