

Impact of Social Media on Political Efficacy and Vote Intention: A Case of Educated Youth

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the impact of social media on political efficacy and vote intention in university of Gujrat. In this study, a structured questionnaire was used to collect the data by targeting those 320 Master and B.S students who have maintained at least one personal profile on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogs, MySpace or any other social networking sites. These respondents were taken through using purposive sampling technique. In analytical portion, independent sample t-test, Pearson correlation, and Kendall's tau b-c were used to test the hypothesis of current study. It is found that the majority of the respondents agreed that social media has a very strong impact in developing, modifying and changing the political affiliation and ultimately vote casting intention. Results of the present study have also highlighted that males have more political efficacy as compared to females (male=56.39 and female=52.84). However, there is no or very little impact of the family system (nucleus =55.21 and joint=54.82) and area of residence (urban=55.49 and rural=54.50) upon the political efficacy and vote casting. Moreover, it is investigated that the majority of the respondents (mean vaule is 55.56) have used their right and cast their vote in the recent elections 2013. According to Pearson Correlation and Kendall tau b-c's results, political efficacy (p-value: 0.00) is affecting vote casting status of the respondents.

Keywords: Political Efficacy, social media, personal profile, vote casting intention

INTRODUCTION

Communication and way of communication is an important element to convey people's ideas and thoughts, and it helps as well built societies. It allows them to transfer the information through a medium. Now a days, it has become the source of building relations and community development. Moreover, communication also refers to the point by which people are making relations and they are moving into a social world. In contemporary world, the medium of communication has been changed from traditional (letters, radio, television, newspaper and telephones) to new media (social networking sites, mobile phones) (Flew, 2002). Now, people prefer to use social media to facilitate their lives and fulfill the communication needs rather than any other communication.

By the first few years of the current millennium, the world has viewed tremendous increase in the usage of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in developing countries. As a result of rapid development in ICT, youth in both developing and developed countries

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have got equal access to use this technology and getting information also. It is also measured that there are 1.4 billion of the internet users by the year 2008. Now individuals and countries can share their ideas with other minds as well as they decrease the physical restrictions and boundaries of their countries (Ali, 2010).

The term social media is defined as, *"the site indicates social media are the creation of platforms that connect people together, provide an opportunity to produce and share content with others, extract and process community knowledge and share it back"* (Lewis, 2010). The term Social is a phenomenon in the society through which people interact with each other and make connections whereas, media is a medium by which people transfer the information, connect with different people and have so many links in the information. So, the term called as social media. Social media focused on social networking sites and also community sites which allow users to create profiles and accounts, connect with friends and share a different type of information (Kushin, & Yamamoto, 2010).

Furthermore, University of the California and Southern California, Berkeley conducted a research to explore digital media usage patterns among youth. The results of this study exhibited that youth is mostly using social media to endorse relationships of family and friends because of particular interests, individual autonomy and socialize by constantly using social and online media (Ito et al., 2008). It is considered a main institution or a pillar of society which play a vital role in the individual's personality and socialization.

Social networking sites, email services, instant messaging, video and photo sharing sites and comment posting are all tools that support and help people to connect and socialize with family, peers and other community members (Mooney, 2009). All over the world, starting from 1997 to 2010 there were some 1.5 billion users of social networking websites (Alia, 2010). The number of social media users has clearly been increased from the year 2008. A lot of people especially youth have been engaged in social media (Baruah & Dowerah, 2012).

Currently, popularity of social media is increasing in Pakistan specifically amongst youth. According to Kugelman (2012), social media is considered as a networking and communication instrument which is used in five different ways; helping and organizing philanthropic aspects of issues and problems; innovative for social causes; contravention stories ignored by outdated media; activating people for social, political and other related campaigns; and faster communication between publics and their politicians. In the modern era, there are different and multiple television channels and faster electronic media have been developed. That's why people enjoy a great degree of freedom because of these rapid changes as well as audiences usually satisfying their instructional needs from these private channels. Social media is mainly used to socialize generations, but patterns and usage of media depends on individuals and nations which may be positive or negative.

It also has an impact on politics due to easy ways of communicating on an event, making donations, motivating voters and getting information about politics (Eijaz, 2013). This connection with the people and absorption of information through the usage of social media enhances the political efficacy among individuals. In 1952, Angus Campbell used the concept of political efficacy in US National Election (Coleman, Morrison & Svennevig, 2008). He focused on social change in politics through social media. The political efficacy plays a vital role on political socialization and its behavior that is *"Feeling that political and social change*

is possible and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change". Political efficacy performs the fundamental role in learning process of youth rights from their childhood. Political efficacy also helps them to become active citizens in future (Schulz, 2005).

Political efficacy has two dimensions: internal efficacy and external efficacy. Sullivan and Riedel (2001) gave definition of these concepts which is *"internal political efficacy as an individual's beliefs about the impact (he or she) may have on the political process as a result of (his or her) own skills and confidence or the skills and confidence of similar individuals".* External efficacy is *"the belief that political institutions will be responsive to a citizen's action in the political process or the belief that one is effective when participating in political life".*

Furthermore, social networks significantly impact on social life as well as political relationships with each other. The internet and social media can bring an abrupt change in political and social life. Moreover, Social networks also increased political participation and political efficacy in Egypt, Japan and Canada (Attia, 2011; Conroy et al., 2012; Ikeda & Richey, 2005; Lee, 2006;).

In 2009, Twitter revolution was successfully used in Moldova after the situation of fake elections. The campaigners used Twitter, Facebook, text messaging, and Live Journal to support and interconnect with each other for the purpose of sharing information on political events. (Hodge, 2010). In similar manner, Facebook and Twitter played a vital role in the current upheaval and revolutions in Yemen, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Egypt and Bahrain (Attia & Friedman, 2012).

New forms of media help to promote freedom accelerate the practice to empower activists and democratization to contest against the repressive rules. The Blogs, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have introduced as new social media forms which plays a vital role in dogmatic propagandas and clashes especially with reference to Middle East government (Aday et al., 2010). The data of WIUPS (World Internet Users and Population Stats) explain that Egypt is considered to have the highest number of internet user's in country and it is included in top twenty countries of the world.

It is also observed on Facebook that youth is mostly talking about the politics whenever the elections are nearby. They talk about their interests and discussion about political parties to use this technology. The youth is now participating more in the politics of the country. Youths have started doing and running campaigns for the political figures and the parties. The political campaigns can have a profound effect on internal and external political efficacy of individuals and ultimately can affect their voting behavior.

Social Media Usage and Political Efficacy in Pakistan

The effect of social media and the internet is 'incremental, contextual, and amplifying' for party-political developments in Pakistan (Ejaz, 2013). According to Facebook statistics of 2013, Pakistan's data show that the total number of Facebook users in Pakistan is reaching 8,055,680. This digit distributed in 70% male users and 30% female users in Pakistan and data also depicts that the largest age group is youth who are 18-24 years in age. In Pakistan,

Political parties and leaders use social media to interact and involve people. Especially, they focus on youth and this age group is increasing tremendously on social media. In our country, many political parties like PTI, PPP, PML-N, and others are working. Now, politicians and their parties use social media and operate their own accounts and networks on Facebook, Twitter, Skype and etc. to interconnect and organize people to participate in political process. PTI and PML-N are among the favorite political parties on Facebook, Twitter and Blogs (Kugelman, 2012).

Social Media and Vote Intention

The internet is emerging as a new political combat zone where different online news websites are shaping the opinions of youth who are gradually getting more involved in social media to gather information on political parties before they go out to vote. (Smith, 2011). The study of Hansen & Benoit (2005) has investigated the abrupt impact on voters and election campaign. The presidential candidates World Wide Web (WWW) sites of George W. Bush and Al Gore in the 2000 used in general party elections and recorded that these sites have immediate effect on voters as well as selection of political party. Social media usage and Information Technology have immensely facilitated the communication phenomenon. Simba (2009) concluded in his study which was related to Obama's political campaign. He determined that Obama successfully used social media in elections and involved new voters by using the internet that raised high support. So, it can be inferred that social media can affect the voting intention of individuals because it can ease the communication between individuals and groups. People can exchange information and talk freely on political matters of the country (Janda, 2012; Wong, 2006; Kim, 2008).

The objectives of this research study are:

To find out the intensity of usage of online social media among educated youth; to explore the level of awareness of political efficacy among educated youth; to see the vote intentions among online social media users

The present study investigated the impact of social media on political efficacy and vote intention among educated youth of university of Gujrat. The study provides information on intensity of usage of online social media, level of awareness of political efficacy and vote intention among educated youth. The findings of the present study can help to enhance awareness among youth population and the rest of the community about the impact of social media usage on political efficacy and vote intention. As well as, it is a valuable contribution to the scientific community and provides an insight into the phenomenon of social media, political efficacy and vote intention among educated youth. The findings can also help Governmental planners and policy makers to make strategies and target the population to disseminate the important information through social media. It provides baseline data and indications to conduct more comprehensive studies on different issues related to the usage of social media, its impact on political efficacy and vote intention.

The Hypothesis are:

Political efficacy and voting intentions among youth is positively correlated; intensity of social media usage is positively correlated with political efficacy; usage of online social media ; political efficacy and voting intention is positively correlated

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Uses and Gratifications Theory is a popular approach to understand mass communication. The theory places more focus on the consumer; or audience, instead of the actual message itself by asking "what people do with media" rather than "what media does to people" (Blumler and Katz, 1974).

This theory describes how people use media for their need and gratification. This is very helpful to fulfill the need of human being. According to uses and gratification theory, people make use of the media for their specific needs. This theory can be said to have a user/audience-centered approach. This theory explains different needs such as, cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs, tension free needs.

All the categories are helpful in the present study but social/personal integrative need is directly meet with this study. It focuses on the need to socialize with family, friends and relations in the society. For social interaction, now a day's people do not seem to have a social gathering in weekend instead, they do such social interaction using media like the social networking sites like my space, Facebook, Orkut etc. to satisfy their needs. Assumptions of the theory and objectives of the present study create a new model.

Communication behavior such as media use is goal directed,

- ⁿ People select and use communication sources which satisfy their felt needs
- ⁿ Vote selection is a potential felt need to use media

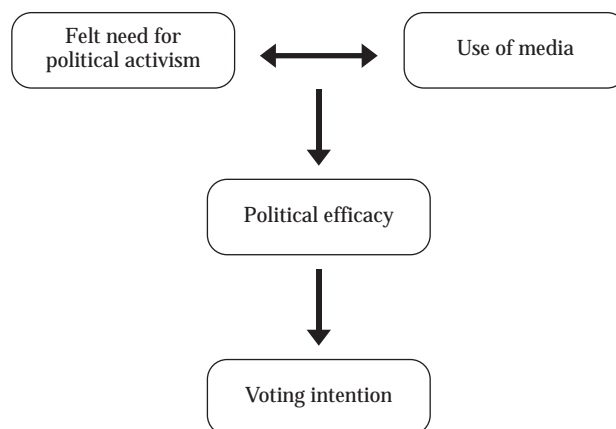


Figure: 1 Conceptual Model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The section is divided into subsections of choice of respondents, sampling techniques, sample size, procedures and measurements involved in the research. In this study, data was collected from university students. Those students who have at least one profile account on any social network site were the target population. The students of University of Gujrat were the sample population. Purposive sampling technique was used because only those students who were using any social network site were selected. It was just due to non availability of sampling frame of these ultimate respondents in the university. The sample size showed that 70% data were taken from male students and 30% for female. Due to non-availability of sampling frame, it was very difficult to find out the appropriate sample size. So, it was assumed in the statistics that sample size should be at least 10 times the number of questions or variables. The 32 main questions were included in the questionnaire so sample of 320 was drawn, but 5% respondents did not fill questionnaire and 95% was response rate. The final sample size of this study was 305.

The first was related to Demographic information, second was about online social media usage, third was constructed for internal political efficacy, fourth was about external political efficacy and the last section was depended on voting intention. The procedure of pre-testing is helpful to check the validity of questionnaire and responses of respondents many questions and response categories were added, deleted and edited after pre-testing. Generally, students tend to have a good attitude towards studies that investigates phenomena which is part of their social lives. It was found that the response rate was good among the students and they agreed to fill the pre-coded questionnaire without hesitation. The field experience revealed that one of the items in the political efficacy scale was not out rightly understood by the respondents; hence, this item was not used in the final analysis of data and construction of scale. After the collection of data, the basic information was proposed and calculated the frequencies and percentages through the SPSS program. A maximum number of the items of the questionnaire were close ended and some of them were an open ended questions included the questionnaire which were entered with the help of SPSS for more appropriate analysis. Moreover, education plays a vital role in this study because this is about educated youth. So, the researchers categorized it in programs such as, BS, Masters and M. Phil.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Reliability Statistics

The reliability score by using cronbach alpha of 25 items is found to be .759 Usually, researches draw the conclusion on the basis of sample information for the whole population. So, it is very important that the data should be reliable to validate results that can be drawn and generalized to the whole population. Cronbach's Alpha test has highlighted that this data is reliable and can be used for further analysis and statistical procedure. Its recommended value is 0.7 so this study has a higher level of reliability than recommended value.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age (in years)	18	25	21.12	1.705
Father's education	0	20	11.08	5.109
Mother's education	0	20	8.67	5.500
Monthly family income	10000	240000	53797.95	34621.025
For how long have you been on Social Networking Sites	.01	11.00	2.8067	1.67448
How many hours do you spend online per week	1	80	12.41	13.340
How many friends do you have on your social network	1	2000	167.43	239.854

Total number of observations is 305.

Descriptive results show that 18 is a minimum age of respondents and 25 year is maximum age. Age of respondents has 21.12 years mean and 1.705 years standard deviation. As well as, table tells about the level of father's education which is that minimum respondent's father have 0 years of education but maximum years of education is 20. The mean of father's education level is 11.08 and the standard deviation is 5.109. The level of mother's education which is that minimum respondent's mother have 0 years of education but maximum years of education is 20. The mean of mother's education level is 8.67 and the standard deviation is 5.500.

According to the above table respondent's family income is minimum 10000 rupees and maximum 240000 rupees. The average monthly income is 53797.95 rupees and 34621.025 is a standard deviation. The table further shows that respondents are using SNS almost for 11 years and minimum value is 1 year. Mean value of period is 2.8067 and standard deviation is 1.67448. This information is about the time duration which users spend on SNS. Time duration has 12.41 mean values as well as 13.340 is the standard deviation and this describes that respondents have 1 to 2000 friends in their personal profiles. This measurement has 167.43 men and 239.854 is standard deviation value.

Table 2: Political Efficacy and Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Political efficacy	Male	189	56.39	8.28	.60191
	Female	116	52.84	8.92	.82798

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	
Political efficacy	Equal variances assumed	.568	.452	3.527	303	.000	3.54671
	Equal variances not assumed			3.465	229.465	.001	3.54671

It was assumed on the basis of literature that male and females have different political efficacy or political awareness. It is important to mention here that political efficacy has been dealt as combination of internal and external political efficacy. To test this hypothesis, independent sample t-test was performed and results were drawn. The results of this test have highlighted that males have more political efficacy as compared to females. First table is about the description of the sample and its basic characteristics. Second table has shown that males have significantly (p-value 0.000) higher score of political efficacy.

Table 3: Political Efficacy and Area of Residence

	Area of Residence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Mean
Political Efficacy	Urban	174	55.49	9.14		.69555
	Rural	131	54.50	7.99		.69782
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	1.262	.262	.940	303	.348	.94446
Equal variances not assumed			.959	296.621	.339	.94446

In the past literature, it was under discussion that area of residence of the respondents can change the political efficacy level. This study was about the educated youth of university level students. Results of rural and urban comparison about the political efficacy show that there is very minute difference between rural and urban settings with respect to political efficacy. But this difference is not significant at 0.05 % level. The observed level of significance (0.348) is greater than the hypothesized level of significance; so' H0 will be accepted and concluded that there is no difference between rural and urban educated youth with respect to political efficacy. It might be due to fact that this study was about the educated youth of university and education has more influence rather residential area.

Table 4: Political Efficacy and Type of Family

	Type of Family	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Mean
Political efficacy	Nuclear	175	55.21	9.97		.67788
	Joint	130	54.82	7.32		.72927
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	.163	.687	.380	303	.704	.38264
Equal variances not assumed			.384	288.530	.701	.38264

Similar results have shown that there is no impact on the family system on political efficacy. The table shows that Majority students of university belong to the nuclear family system. It might be due to a large proportion of students who belong to urban area in this study. Again, here there is not a significant difference between nuclear and joint family system with respect to awareness about political efficacy. Results are insignificant at 0.05 % level.

Table 5: Did you cast your vote in this election

	Did you cast your vote in this election	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Political efficacy	Yes	239	55.56	8.36381	.54101
	No	66	53.17	9.58939	1.18037

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	1.019	.313	1.992	303	.047	2.39400
Equal variances not assumed			1.844	94.045	.068	2.39400

It was assumed in this study that status of casting vote in the election might affect the political efficacy or vice versa. So it was asked from respondents about their democratic right of casting vote in the elections of 2013. The majority of respondents have used their right and casted their vote. Results have highlighted that political efficacy can affect the vote casting status. The results are significant at 0.05 % level because p-value is 0.047. It means those persons who have cast their vote in the current election have a high level of political efficacy and vice versa.

Table 6: Chi-Square testing

	Social media in making or developing the minds of people about voting	Political affiliation can be changed by the use of social media	Political family background changes the voting intentions	Social Networking Sites (SNS) can change the voting intention
Chi-Square	123.836a	109.246a	106.852a	183.902a
Df	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 61.0.

There are different dimensions through which the research can assess that how much social media can influence the voting intention of people. All the tables show that majority respondents were agreed with social media had a very strong impact in developing, modifying and changing the political affiliation and ultimately vote casting intention. Multiple proportion tests for all these dimensions have highlighted that the proportion of people who agreed with the role of social media were significantly higher than other categories. These results are significant at .5 % level.

Table 7: Role of Social media in voting Intention * Level of Political Efficacy

Political Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	Political Efficacy	Voting intention
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.231**
	N	305	.000
Voting intention	Pearson Correlation		305
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.231**	1
	N	.000	305
		305	

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

Role of Social media in voting Intention	Level of Political Efficacy			
	Low	Medium	High	Total
Low	7	32	11	50
Medium	8	76	31	115
High	4	80	56	140
Total	19	188	98	305

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.179	.052	3.386
	Kendall's tau-c	.151	.045	3.386
N of Valid Cases		305		

It was studied in the literature that those persons who were using social media had higher political efficacy which shapes the vote casting intention among the educated youth. This study has reached at the same conclusion. Pearson correlations were applied which showed the positive and significant relationship between these concepts. This test was applied to the quantitative variables which are basically indexes of voting intentions and political efficacy. Afterwards, these indexes have been categorized into low, medium and high, and Kendall tau b and c test was applied on this cross table and draw the same conclusion as extracted from Pearson correlation table.

DISCUSSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The present study was conducted to investigate the impact of social media on political efficacy and vote casting intention of educated youth. As imitated by the countrywide users of SNS, 70 percent male and 30 percent female were selected for interview. The students who have at least one personal profile on any one or more of the SNS (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Blogs) were interviewed. Data was collected by using a well-structured and pre-tested questionnaire.

This study was conducted on a university level, that's why just three programs were included. Percentages explained the students according to their programs. The proportionate of gender division is based on 70% male and 30% female students as there are 70% male users and 30% female users in Pakistan (Eijaz, 2013). But due to some field problems and exam's days in university, 62% male users and 38% female users are included in the present study. Different types of social networking sites were incorporated in it while results tell that Facebook users were at the top of the list (Conroy et al., 2012).

The study deals with political efficacy as well as vote intentions. Researcher also explained the relationship between social media and vote intention and findings showed that the majority of the respondents cast their vote in 2013's election with their own will and inferential results indicates the strong relationship between them. The users' attitudes and needs towards getting information about rights play an effective role in creating awareness. It serves politics continuously and makes it entertaining. It also provides open-minded reach to a large number of people, enhance the capacity of users to indulge in public affairs and help voters to develop a civic identity and speak their own mind (Ali, 2011). Political efficacy and vote intentions are interrelated. Pearson correlations shows a positive and significant relationship between both concepts. It was found that online users that are facilitated through SNS platforms such as Facebook play similar functions with other social groups.

The literature showed that there is a significant relationship between social media usage, increasing political efficacy and changing vote casting intention. The results revealed that most of the students in university of Gujrat had a personal profile on atleast one of the social networking sites. Among the respondents majority of the students had no affiliation with any political family and cast their vote by their own will. So, it can be inferred that social media has a very strong impact in developing, modifying and changing the political efficacy and ultimately vote casting intention of the individuals.

Through the social media, specifically the social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Blogs), public can have an opportunity to communicate and impart information about various political events occurring in the country. Likewise, the political parties can also have the chance to inform the public about their political campaign. The present study suggests that these types of forums can have significant influence in creating political awareness and influencing the vote casting intention of youth. It can also help the planners and policy makers to develop strategies for the upcoming election. In the future, we can conduct research on online political group's influence feeling of efficacy and influence of membership of various political groups which bring changes in political opinions and attitudes.

CONCLUSION

In light of the general findings, it is concluded that social media has a strong and positive association with political efficacy and vote cast intention of educated youth. Males have more political efficacy that is political awareness than the females. The study also revealed that family system and area of residence have a minute impact on the political efficacy. According to the results, the majority of respondents (67.5%) do not have any affiliation with political families. Results show that majority of respondents has created their personal profile on Facebook (96.1%) and Twitter (25.5%). While, the majority of the respondents have not created any profile on MySpace (92.8%), LinkedIn (91.5%) and Blogs (95.4%). The findings also revealed that the majority of respondents agreed that social media can help in making or developing the minds of people. It can be supported by the fact that the majority of respondents had cast their vote in recent elections (PWF, 2013). Consequently, respondents agreed that social media provides sufficient information that can influence the voting intention of the citizens. Through social media, specifically the social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Blogs), public can have an opportunity to communicate and impart information about various political events occurring in the country. Likewise, the political parties can also have the chance to inform the public about their political campaign.

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