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ISTANBUL GELISIM UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Political Science and Public Administration

USE OF NEW MEDIA (TWITTER AND FACEBOOK) AS A TOOL FOR RAISING POLITICAL POLARIZATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN PAKISTAN AFTER THE 2018 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Master Thesis

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Supervisor

Doç.Dr. Annamaria CSISZER

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that in the preparation of this thesis, scientific ethical rules have been followed, the works of other persons have been referenced in accordance with the scientific norms if used, there is no falsification in the used data, any part of the thesis has not been submitted to this university or any other university as another thesis.

Muhammad Ramas FAROOZ

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<div align="right">Muhammad Ramas FAROOZ</div>

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how new media utilization is linked with political polarization among Pakistani university students by the analysis of the data collected through survey and semi-structured interviews. This study also provides extensive detail about how new media platforms are being used for political purposes, the patterns in which it is utilized politically and the way it is producing political polarization among university students in Pakistan.

This thesis finds that there is a strong relation between the use of New Media platforms and political polarization. The frequency of utilization new media platforms for political purposes, political discourse shared on new media platforms, political opinions shared on new media platforms, and political activity taking place on new media platforms were found to be key factors playing role in affecting the political behavior, online and offline political engagements and student's attention towards politics. Subsequently rising political polarization among the university students in Pakistan

The findings of this thesis highlight the need of responsible utilization of new media platforms, and the need for a check and balance on the content being shared so that new media platforms may prove beneficial instead of creating political polarization. These findings can also be instrumental for the policy maker to make such policies that can help minimize polarizing effects of new media platforms.

SUMMARY

This thesis objects to evaluate the effect of political utilization of new media on political polarization among Pakistani university students and to ascertain the connection between New media use and political polarization. The theoretical framework of the thesis mainly relies on uses and gratification theory. Both quantitative and qualitative research designs are used as a mixed methodology for this thesis.

Students at the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences of the University of Punjab were the population chosen to conduct survey and semi-structured interviews. To conduct the survey stratified random sampling was utilized and a sample of 354 students was drawn using Selvin's formula. While 5 students were selected randomly to conduct semi-structured interviews.

Descriptive analysis using SPSS software was done to analyze the quantitative data collected through the survey while the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis. The results of the study proved that the utilization of new media platforms for political purposes plays an important role in raising political polarization among university students in Pakistan.

ÖZET

Bu tez, Yeni medyanın siyasi kullanımının Pakistanlı üniversite öğrencileri arasındaki siyasi kutuplaşma üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmeyi ve Yeni medya kullanımı ile siyasi kutuplaşma arasındaki bağlantıyı tespit etmeyi amaçlıyor. Tezin teorik çerçevesi temel olarak kullanımlar ve doyumlar kuramına dayanmaktadır. Bu tez için hem nicel hem de nitel araştırma tasarımları karma bir metodoloji olarak kullanılmıştır.

Pencap Sosyal ve Davranış Bilimleri Fakültesi'ndeki öğrenciler, anket ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapmak üzere seçilen nüfustu. Anketi yürütmek için tabakalı rasgele örnekleme kullanıldı ve Selvin'in formülü kullanılarak 354 öğrenciden oluşan bir örneklem çekildi. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapmak için rastgele 5 öğrenci seçilirken.

Anket yoluyla toplanan nicel verilerin analizinde SPSS programı kullanılarak betimsel analiz, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden elde edilen nitel verilerin analizinde ise tematik analiz yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, Yeni Medya Platformlarının siyasi amaçlarla kullanılmasının Pakistan'daki üniversite öğrencileri arasında siyasi kutuplaşmanın artmasında önemli bir rol oynadığını kanıtladı.

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INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a country having rich cultural, traditional, and social diversity where people living in different geographical regions have distinct cultural, traditional, and social values. Pakistan has four provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, KPK, and Gilgit Baltistan. In a political scenario, Pakistan has several political parties but mainstream political parties include Pakistan Muslim League Noon, Pakistan Peoples Party, Pakistan Tahriek e Insaf, Muteahedaa Komi Movement, Jameeyat Ualma e Islam.

The concept, battle, and sacrifices committed to bringing about the creation of Pakistan were done to promote Muslim unity and bring people together regardless of caste, color, or faith. All went smoothly at first, but as time went on, fault lines began to show themselves in the shape of political animosity, resulting in the deadly societal sickness of excessive political polarization. Instead of using diplomatic techniques, the politicians have chosen to enact effective parliamentary democracy through street politics. Partisanship, populism, and division in the nation have ignored moral principles in favor of vested interests' agendas. New media algorithms have exacerbated political division since they expose people to the content, they are most interested in reading. The problem has worsened because of the mistrust between diverse groups in the age of fake news. People have abandoned the most fundamental morals amid harsh remarks made about one another on new media sites. (Shafiq, 2023).

The advent of the internet along with New Media applications gave rise to freedom of speech and freedom of expression a boundless and controlless boom. A growing concern is the technologies which ensured to liberate us are instead splitting government via New media tactics. It's also visible in Pakistan right now.

Everyone uses social media platforms to freely express or share whatever they are feeling. No doubt by the arrival of New media our lives are changed very progressively way but its misuse in Pakistan is also one of the factors enhancing the deepening of political polarization.

In our fast-changing, technically sophisticated, and globally networked world, today's doors open to the younger crowd have never been earlier. The number of activities accessible to young people as well as how they may participate in those pursuits has both risen thanks to the internet

and communication technologies. The top pastimes of young people include making unique social media accounts, forming identities, and promoting themselves. (Davis, 2014).

In this new century, youth usage of New media for both partisan and democratic conversations is rising quickly. Even among young folks who have little passion for politics, social media may bring their focus to political concerns and keep them engaged with various political parties and bodies because of its participatory and interactive aspects. (Farrell & Drezner, 2008).

In many nations throughout the world including Pakistan the new youngster politics have come to be defined by the usage of New media platforms. A large portion of this has stoked left-wing politics of outrage and change, and its repercussions have been unexpected and contagious. (Zia, 2012).

Today's new media users in Pakistan, in particular, participate in more than informal conversations; they also interact about politics. Because of its interactive and adaptive nature, New media is now widely used for political communication by the general public, leaders, and candidates for office. It is now utilized for social interaction and political communication. However, politicians ought to use care when using New media for campaigning purposes because it has both benefits and dangers, particularly for young people as well as new and seasoned politicians.

As virtual actions impact offline political beliefs and practices and likewise, among physical and web political engagement. New media has thus developed into a crucial weapon for publicity, and the administration, representatives, adversaries, and followers of radical groups openly utilize these platforms to create and shape radical narratives. (Zaheer, 2016).

Unfortunately, currently in Pakistan political polarization is touching a sky-high hazardous extent day by day. This extreme political polarization is now entering in social and domestic lives of people. Even if we say that political polarization has divided the nation into sects of different political parties that would not be wrong. This situation is getting so much worse that people having different political points of view are not ready to sit with each other. This worse social crisis is dividing the nation into a disjointed state.

Political polarization and divisiveness in Pakistan are at an all-time high, and as a result, party members frequently reply to opponents with nonsensical statements and caustic remarks. Relative and personal hostility is rising, and this divisive partisanship has emerged as the primary source of hate fuel because politicians feed the fires by disseminating hateful statements and pictures on new media (Neyazi, 2020)

This thesis will provide direction for nations like Pakistan whose political systems are still fighting for democracy by examining the link between new media consumption and political division among university students there. Furthermore, the thesis will focus on the devastating effects posed by the utilization of New Media platforms as a tool for raising political polarization and the impact among university students of Pakistan after the general elections of 2018

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. New Media

New media include platforms based on the internet that allow people to participate in spontaneous encounters with both big and small markets who appreciate consumer content and the appearance of interpersonal involvement. (Carr, & Hayes 2015).

"New media that goes beyond Web 2.0 and is frequently linked to more contemporary branded networks such as Facebook and Twitter." (Baym, 2015). The use of new media is societal in the broadest sense. (Jensen & Helles, 2017)

1.2. Political Communication

Political communication refers to the act of expressing one's personal political beliefs and opinions using a variety of media, including head-on and computer-based interaction. While scholastically political expression means partisan debate and political argument that is distinct from direct activism. (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010)

Digital participation on New media platforms involves individual users' perspectives, views, and criticism of other people's expressions, which can be expressed through texts, pictures, footage, and other media. Political speech on the internet is based on the distinguishing characteristics of content created by users, interpersonal contacts, and mass media all occurring at the exact same moment and on a single platform. (Velasquez & Rojas, 2017).

1.3. New Media and Political Communication

The historical analysis demonstrates that before the new media, individuals could not participate fully in political conversations and activities online. Nevertheless, the growth of new media platforms has made it possible for people to do so. Most individuals who don't read the news or watch news stations are increasingly reliant on these new media platforms to keep up with local,

national, and worldwide happenings. As a result, the stories and data streamed and disseminated via these affect people's knowledge, opinions, and actions. (Weeks et al., 2015).

The previous 10 years have been transformational in terms of exploiting technology, the World Wide Web, and New media Platforms. New media is an especially convenient channel for people on the internet to engage in partisan participation. (Jabari, 2019,)

new media now plays a bigger function in the spread of political news since online political activities are helpful and inspire youngsters to join in political activities. On the other hand, it also poses a challenge to developing democracies like Pakistan. Political organizations and individuals in Pakistan use new media to communicate with their supporters, who can amount anywhere from a few hundred to lakhs. (Khan, 2022).

Urban residents in developing nations now regularly engage in political activity on social media, which is at its apex among grownups in developed nations. This current democratic conduct has enhanced the development of partisan interaction by encouraging members to comment on and share political content. (Cherubini and Nielsen, 2016).

New media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter, give the public a forum for discussion and criticism. Even so, political officials frequently use Facebook to interact with the public at large to disseminate political statements, keep them involved in political arguments, and manipulate them. Twitter, with its millions of followers, is thought to publish awareness to the general public and democratic structures. (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2012).

Furthermore, the space and time limitations of offline political processes have made political speech through New media platforms a convenient and simple means to express political opinions. Citizens may now partake in political activities by voicing political views through social media. Both political party activists and followers do not rely on the constraints of time, place, or identity to express their political opinions. They are actively active in politics through online new media platforms as a result of this sharing culture. (Castells, 2010; Dijck, 2013; Manuel, 2012).

1.4. Facebook Usage in Pakista

After Google, Facebook is listed as the second most frequently visited site in Pakistan. Facebook has 92% of all web users as users, and the bulk of these users are young individuals. (Karamat & Farooq 2020).

Individuals, political groups, politicians, and political activists all utilize Facebook as a platform for political expression in several ways. Several research examined the connection between youngsters' usage of New media and partisan expression. (Yang & DeHart, 2016)

The upsurge in Facebook use across all age categories, but particularly among young people, demonstrates its widespread utilize in digital partisan happenings like conversations about partisan topics, the events of elected figures, critiquing the government's dysfunction regarding political and state matters, promotional events, charity for various general and partisan problems, raising awareness of voting matters, selection lobbying, endorsing certain partisan plans. (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018).

1.5. Twitter Usage in Pakistan

There is a huge interest worldwide in researching how politicians utilize Twitter for their political races. Several scholars have shifted the focus of their study toward Twitter since it emerged as a novel political public sphere. This is because it has been noted that most political players use Twitter extensively, not just during election campaigns but also regularly. Twitter is also seen as a potent freeing force that is challenging monarchical institutions throughout the world, not only as a political public realm. (Winder, 2014).

In recent times, Twitter has gained enormous study potential due to its unique and vivid nature as a medium for public communication. (Zhao & Rosson, 2009)

The Twitter platform is a powerful platform for interacting with the general public and linking public figures with celebrities, politicians, athletes, and showbiz icons. Twitter is the most used micro-blogging service in the world among all social media. (Parmelee & Bichard, 2011)

Nearly all major parties have official Twitter handles, and likewise, all elected elites have individual accounts. Hundreds of thousands of individuals follow these public officials on Twitter.

Imran Khan, the country's ex-prime minister, has been using Twitter since 2010 while Maryam Nawaz of Muslim League-N has been using it meanwhile 2012, and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari of the PPP is with it since 2011. (Twitter.com, n.d.).

Nearly all major parties have official Twitter handles, and likewise, all elected elites have individual accounts. Hundreds of thousands of individuals follow these public officials on Twitter. Imran Khan, the country's ex-prime minister, has been using Twitter since 2010 while Maryam Nawaz of Muslim League-N has been using it since 2012 and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari of the Pakistan Peoples' Party has been using it ever since 2011. (Twitter.com).

Tweets by political leaders in Pakistan are debated by journalists in mainstream media, much like other new media content. Although political officials do not actively shape their images for the general public, mainstream media continuously does so. (Yaqub et al., 2017)

1.6. Political Polarization

A situation known as polarization occurs when a society splits into two or more distinct factions at an extreme degree, with little chance of common ground between them. It may develop as a result of unfairness, prejudice, or deprived conditions. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is tragically experiencing the same pain as the rest of the globe, from Turkey to India, to Brazil, to the United States.

The term "polarization" refers to social and emotional differences within a society. For example, social polarization refers to the separation of society into different categories caused by economic and cultural factors such as income imbalance, ethnicity, faith, or an absence of job prospects (Iyengar, et al., 2012).

The splitting of people into distinct groups with opposing ideas and little chance of agreeing on a common agenda is known as political and social polarization. In the realm of social science, it has several different meanings. (Yousafzai,2022).

Theoretically, political polarizing is described as a process in which people are separated along ideological lines by their political leanings or actions. (DiMaggio, et al, 1996).

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An intimidating array of both internal and external obstacles are being faced by both emerging and well-established democracies, ranging from the waning public support for long-standing political parties and the rising popularity of totalitarian politicians to the expanding aggressiveness and influence of totalitarian powers and ideas internationally. Recent events in democracies throughout the world demonstrate that political polarization expressed in sharpening political divisions and shrinking common political ground is a key component of this unsettling picture. (Carothers, et al., 2019, p.60).

1.6.1. Political Polarization and New Media

When the general population is exposed to polarizing information on mass media platforms like new media, it causes the media consumers to become split due to their political party loyalties. After exposure to polarizing material, disagreements amongst media consumers are occasionally also linked to racial and economic factors. Consumption of polarized information results in political and societal division. (Tewksbury & Riles, 2015).

People become more politically polarized as a result of polarized content on media regarding any political issue. Polarized content on mass media outlets may set the standard for individuals' political ideologies citizens. (Prior, 2013). Sunstein (2001) and Hindman (2008) stated, The Internet seems to foster groups of people who have the same ideologies, where acquaintance with political variety and relationships across ideologies are uncommon.

According to empirical research on new media in polarizing opinions, it creates partisan people and favors partisan polarization over popular polarization. (Lee and Chan, 2016). Individuals are subjected to fake content and prejudiced data via new media platforms because they endorse the substance that sustains their post views and typically accepts information that is desirable to those views while evaluating the other side with a preferable approach. As a result, participants ingest more misleading information today than before when commons view polarizability might rely solely upon the correct info about partisan topics. (Taber and Lodge, 2006)

Internet forums such as new media platforms have the possibility of worsening political gridlock, which is the major source of forming personal beliefs, decrying various political parties,

and engaging in uncivil discourse. Political polarization, which is mostly the consequence of online political conversations, is said to be caused by new media in large part because it polarizes the public's perception of political problems. This study looked at people's political activity on Facebook and Twitter to provide light upon linkage among new media utilization and partisan divide. (Lelkes and Westwood, 2017)

particular political statements undergo ongoing adjustment and evolution as each network member distributes it with their friends' networks and adds their commentary. Following extensive editing, these particular phrases aid in developing or altering the beliefs of the individuals. (Price, et al., 2006). Consumers' reasoning progressions are impacted by new media content in a diverse way. It occasionally makes the audience unpleasant and combative regarding their ideas. A phenomenon linked with mass media outlets such as new media known as the hostile media effect (HME) concerns people's perceptions of media information as being skewed toward their pre-existing ideologies. (Matthes, 2013). Media experts and political watchers are concerned that the ideological polarization of the public caused by the media's fragmented content, which is made possible by mass media platforms such as new media, may cause people to become increasingly insulated from other ideas. (Arceneaux & Johnson 2010).

1.6.2. Political Polarization in Pakistan and New Media

Despite the fact that new media is bringing individuals from all over the world together, it furthermore produces discord and is enabling new media lobbying to split communication to the verge that individuals do verbal attacks against leaders without even doing their research. Social networking sites have shaken the world since they have lots of members that are increasing. However, because of the lack of adequate regulation, false news, bullying, radicalism, and violence have expanded to unprecedented levels. The relationships of endorsers with users of new media have polarized communal and partisan circles in Pakistan, which has resulted in the development of online groupthink. Politicians use this groupthink as a strategy to persuade users to support their plot regardless of the truth, but they are designed in such a way that they seem natural to the public, which alters their perspective and broadens their base of admirers. (Malik, 2021).

Ali (2010) wrote Fundamental social developments, such as media liberalization with the advent of new media and information technology is the major causes of political polarization in Pakistan. Polarized political views have emerged in Pakistan as a result of severe radicalization influenced by the advent of new media. Cyber-activism, a celebrated by-product of New media, enables Pakistanis living abroad to support pressure organizations and take part in domestic politics without having to take the same dangers as "live" activists. (Zia, 2012).

New media is giving individuals a free forum for unreasonable discussion, inciting hatred, and disinformation while acting as a megaphone with no restrictions, no system of checks and balances, and most importantly, no regulating body. The general public of Pakistan with different political opinions and different geographical belongings join organizations and sites related to their political ideas in such a lethally open setting. These organizations play up political animosity by encouraging it. Due to a lack of knowledge and discussion, many people become victims. (Mir, et al., 2022).

Political debates and free expression on numerous platforms have been made feasible by the increasing use of modern media outlets. Pakistan, like other nations, has experienced an increase in new media consumers throughout time. At the start of 2022, Pakistan had 36.5% internet penetration, or 82.90 million online users and 71.70 million active new media consumers. YouTube is the most popular online app in Pakistan, with 71.70 million consumers, next to Facebook, which has 43.55 million members. Twitter is used by 3.40 million individuals, or 1.5% of the population, which is significantly less than other new media sites. (Arif, 2022).

Political activists and party supporters engage in online social media platforms to participate in politics on an equal footing, transcending boundaries of time, place, and identification. People are being able to break free from their dependence on these restrictions thanks to new media networking services. (Ali & Fatima,2016).

1.7. Statement of the Problem

Current political happenings throughout the world have also demonstrated how technology may be used to directly influence politics. Russia's alleged, well publicized meddling in the 2016

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US presidential election emphasized the complexities of modern media and showed how readily financial models can be exploited to split people. (Neudert & Marchal, 2019).

This thesis looks at the impact of new media use on partisanship in politics. We focus on the effect on Pakistani university students especially. In this study, we are especially interested in the political utilization of Facebook and Twitter and how it may lead to the polarization of u versity students as a result of their impact on social media.

Influenced new media use exacerbates divisiveness among the general people. Because of the constantly conflicting viewpoints among politicians and the general public, utilizing it for political interaction supports the formation of groups inside a society that reflect ideologies and tastes. (Gans, et al., 2016).

That is primarily why persons who use new media to interact and build connections frequently do so with those who share similar political and ideological perspectives. For example, Facebook and Twitter have split Pakistanis into the opposition and the ruling party, the only two political parties that coexist in the country's political arenas. They typically connect on social media in the same political region and utilize the internet's power to denigrate one another and opposing factions. Yet, it is not clear if this method of public involvement is useful for elected officials in changing Pakistan's rivalry in politics, given that the country is severely fractured on the front lines of politics and that young people are vying for an equal number of political locations, leading to extremist strategies. This usually results in polarization among politicians and their followers.

By posing questions such as, what is the amount of new media usage amid Pakistani university students? This thesis will assist in analyzing the influence of political division among Pakistanis as a consequence of utilizing new media. What effects regarding political polarization do university students in Pakistan have by the use of new media?

1.8 Research Objectives

Examining how new media use affects political polarization among Pakistani university students is the major goal of this study. The particular goals are

1. to evaluate the effect of new media usage on political polarization among Pakistani university students

 2. to ascertain the connection between social media use and political polarization

1.9. Research Questions

1.   Is there a correlation between Pakistani university students' political polarization and the degree to which they utilize new media for political purposes?

2.   Does the political discourse on new media increase university students' awareness of politics (Attention, Awareness, Understanding)?

3.   Is Pakistani university students' utilization of new media for political purposes linked to their political polarization?

4.   Does political activity on new media encourage university students to participate in online and offline political engagement?

5.   Does political opinion on new media affect university students' political behavior?

1.10. Hypothesis

This study hypothesizes a connection between the use of New Media and political polarization. To examine the interactions among the independent variables utilizing new media for political purposes, Political discourse on new media, Political activity on new media, and political polarization as dependent variables to assess if these linkages exist.

The following hypothesis is suggested for the investigation:

H1: There is a positive correlation between the utilization of New Media for political purposes and political polarization among Pakistani university students

H2: There is a positive correlation between Political discourse on new media and political polarization among Pakistani university students

H3: There is a positive correlation between Political activity on new media and political polarization among Pakistani university students

1.11. Scope and Significance of the Study

The thesis will also help as an orientation for political office-bearers, political groups, and individuals utilizing new media to polarize public opinion. Exploring and highlighting the effects of political division on new media users will be crucial if people are to avoid hearing such skewed viewpoints from dishonest politicians who constantly want to divide the public. As a result, the research will educate the public on both the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing new media to further political division.

The current thesis could also contributory to proving the way political issues can be addressed on new media platforms without raising political polarization and it will help them in evolving progressive initiatives, that will aid in increasing healthy political online discussion rather than flaming divide in the society

A literature review is "a critical examination of the available literature. The present literature should be thoroughly examined in order to have a broad understanding. A literature review links noteworthy advances from seemingly unrelated studies and serves to contextualize the state of the literature. A historical context and key events are typically carefully examined, and unresolved issues are identified. (Goldsmith, 2018)

Writing a literature review helps the researcher in creating an ample baseline for the study to be conducted. It provides a roadmap to the previous research done in the relevant field of study which consequently gives the researcher idea about the lacking's left behind previously which needs to be addressed.

The researcher read and reviewed various publications, research articles, newspaper articles, and features and found the following studies related to this particular area of knowledge.

1.12. Political Polarization in Pakistan

From its founding, state incorporation, and national distinctiveness have permeated Pakistan's social order it has historically continued to be split along religious, ethnic, linguistic, and provincial lines. Politics over the past ten years, however, have polarized society along partisan fronts. The unsettling trend of the infiltration of fierceness into our political conduct and values is eroding the fundamentals of Pakistan. Our national ideals and identity have been damaged by a desire for power at any cost. (Ishaque, et al., 2022).

The lack of political agreement among the major national parties is the primary factor causing division in Pakistan. Even when it comes to matters of national security, negotiations between the administration and the opposition are impossible. Even the Parliament, one of the most significant state organs, cannot get political parties to agree on some crucial matters without being offensive. Since Imran Khan was removed as prime minister by a vote of no confidence, bigotry has only grown. The political elites typically endeavor to ensure national progress and development by promoting unity, order, and solidarity. The elites in Pakistan have quite different goals. They frequently create social divisions along religious, racial, and ideological lines. Political elites in a nation with a diverse population have promoted ideas that "run opposed to the nation and state development" due to the majority's feudal-tribal heritage. (Tariq,2022).

Pakistan's deficiency of democratic, monetary, and political growth is a result of its split political system. Military and civilian state elites alike have failed to advance a democratic political and governmental framework. The Constitution's principles have never been put into practice. Idealizing the nation-state paradigm is the primary cause of the majority of nation-building issues. What is required are legitimate politics and authority structures in which the government upholds financial, social, and partisan rights in exchange for the fulfillment of a new social compact and the acceptance of the institutional and territorial legitimacy of the state by its constituent groups. (Akhtar,2009).

Working for consistency, justice, national integration, unity, and continuity as well as assuring progress, social advancement, and economic growth is the typical and anticipated function of political leaders in every type of political arrangement. But it has the exact opposite

effect in Pakistan, splitting and separating people along racial, sacred, sociopolitical, and limited political fronts. There has always been divisiveness in Pakistan. The current conflict resembles political warfare with no holds barred and is only thinly disguised by a fig leaf of legitimacy. (Rais, 2022).

1.13. New Media

In Pakistan, new media outlets have been flooded with users belonging to all ages, and social and economic backgrounds. However, the question at large is what does new media mean? This category has an abundance of sources. Users set up their login and can send and receive correspondence, as well as produce and distribute content that takes the form of photographs and videos that other people see to inform feeds of news. On the contrary, numerous messages are sent and received, and people pass on their opinions in the form of status stories.

Because of the term's fascinating variety, it would always be difficult to describe it in a comprehensive manner. Boyd and Ellison (2007) stated new media as an interconnected system that allows individuals to communicate "to create a public or private profile within a confined system, articulate a list of people with whom they share a connection, and constantly access and browse their list of connections, as well as those produced by others, within the system" (p. 37)

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) gave a much similar definition as, "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p. 61). New media refers to applications that encourage partnership, exchange of data, involvement, and input from communities. People utilize new media to interact with and reach out to their friends, family, and communities. Firms utilize new media applications for recording consumer complaints as well as market and advertise their products. (Lutkevich, 2021).

1.14. New Media Penetration

How people around the world will become dependent on technology in this era has been the emphasis of literary and communal circles. particularly, new media with the ability to network and interact with others have become an indispensable part of people's lives. The emergence of

awkward new media use has been widely debated by academics, but it is largely restricted to the human level and lacks a broad view from the external world. (Zhang, et al.,2023).

The role of new media these days means the production and circulation of digital material in the shape of news and ideas to the individuals, companies, and businesses that create and consume information via new media. (Howard & Parks, 2012).

1.15. New Media Usage and Political Polarization

Global democracies are in danger as political polarization is escalating quickly. Researchers from a variety of fields are analyzing and modeling the causes, processes, and effects of polarization. (Kaufman, et al.,2022).

Elsewhere in the globe, the utilization of new media in voting drives and other political movements has increased. The internet has been widely used as a tool for digital campaigns for political and non-political causes by undergraduates, bloggers, vloggers, reporters, political personalities, parties, and their followers. (Shah et al., 2013)

The medium for disseminating political information nowadays is social media. People may readily obtain political info, and this info does not come from the media but rather is sent to the public straight from political leaders, their colleagues, and their families. With the utilization of new media, people may now debate various political events with both their friends and strangers. The phrase "echo chamber" refers to the internet, where users are exposed to viewpoints made by other users who share their views, however, this experiment showed that social media really give a variety of political information from both sides. (Amjad, et al., 2020).

Social media's increasing influence on modern life gave rise to a digital culture in which virtual spaces became crucial hubs for the creation of political debate. New media platforms were formerly used for fun. These days, internet users engage in political discourse on a variety of digital platforms. (Kenton, 2019).

People now have the ability to express their support for or dissatisfaction with any subject via social media. Social media algorithms produce ideological bubbles in which individuals are

inundated with information and propaganda that supports their viewpoints. This further polarizes society and breeds hatred for those who hold different opinions. (Adnan, 2022).

Political attitudes and behavior of an individual have become a hotly discussed topics among experts since the advent of new media. For a long time, academics have been attempting to comprehend the new transformation that resulted in a change in political conduct.(Ali, et al., 2021).

Berinsky (2017) determined that unlikely sources, who may end up becoming opponents of their personal and political objectives, are more effective at dispelling political rumors on social media than sources that are anticipated to be against that specific social media material and its political consequences. Regardless of the affiliation of the source and the recipient, material that highlights political divisions can deepen polarization. Yet, polarization, in both its cognitive and emotional dimensions, includes unfavorable sentiments against particular groups of individuals. Similar to how misinformation about specific groups of individuals may be strengthened by unfavorable impressions of certain groups of people

1.16. New Media Usage in Pakistan

In Pakistan there were 71.70 million active users of New media in January 2023. By the beginning of 2023, Pakistan had 30.1 percent of the populace utilizing New media. In the meantime, information found in the ad planning tools of the most popular new media stages shows that, as of the beginning of 2023, there were 53.20 million users in Pakistan who were 18 old or older which is 39.1 percent of the state's entire people.

In general, 82.1 percent of all web handlers in Pakistan in January 2023 (regardless of age) utilized at least one new media site. According to evidence in Meta's advertising resources, Pakistan had 37.30 million Facebook users at the beginning of 2023.

According to figures found in Twitter's advertising resources, Pakistan has 4.65 million Twitter handles by the beginning of 2023. This number specifies that Twitter's ad reach in Pakistan at the point was comparable to 2.0% of the entire populace. For background, at the start of the year, the reach of Twitter advertisements in Pakistan was equal to 5.3% of the overall internet populace of the nation. (KEMP,2023).

1.17. Political Communication on New Media in Pakistan

The 2008 polls marked the initial period in Pakistan's time when political rivals utilized the Web move their political schemas by using new media to circulate their strategies. (Riaz, n.d.). The establishment of new media (social media cells) by political parties in Pakistan before the 2013 general elections allowed them to promote their own goals and ideologies and malign rival parties. (Sadiq et al., 2018)

In Pakistan, major parties, in distinctive Pakistan Tahreik e Insaaf, Pakistan Peoples Party, and Muslim League Noon, have speedily increased their use of New media in recent years to increase their powerbase and entice and mobilize individuals to get involved in political matters, particularly the vast majority of the country's younger generation. (Eijaz, 2013).

earliest political party that use new media for various political reasons was Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf. (Jarral, 2018).During the 2013 general elections, PTI and Noon League were involved in online political contests in a desire to market themselves and denigrate one another, which persists today in a way of political divisiveness among Pakistan's young. (Sadiq et al., 2018)

Most of the time political parties used new media for announcing their plans, encourage people to attend their political rallies, encourage young people to vote, and denounce and condemn the previous government (Hussain & Shahzad, 2018)

Due to the polyvocality of new media, there was a significant increase in its use during the 2018 Pakistani elections. All major political parties, well-known and vigorous runners, political staffs, and even followers took advantage of this pervasive source of communication, particularly Facebook and Twitter, to further their agendas. In addition to promoting the platforms and platforms of their parties, they also led operations against the opposition by denouncing their political and own transgressions. (Jarral, 2018)

In Pakistan Twitter is more significant in political terms since almost all influential figures in national and international politics have a Twitter account, which increases its legitimacy and authenticity. Similarly, every major group retains an official Twitter handle for its outreach. As a

result, Twitter user engagement increased from 7.97% in February 2022 to 20.56% in March 2022. Twitter was inundated with more information in the form of posts, tweets, and memes. Moreover, many hashtags also were popular for several days in a row before evolving into social media campaigns. (Arif, 2022). Several local and national major parties entered the contest after seeing how new media and media websites focused on message distribution and initiative management. (Dunya News, 2018).

1.18. Political Polarization in Pakistan and New Media

Now new media platforms have become crucial means of political action and mobilization as Pakistani young furiously confront their political rivals while proudly displaying their political commitment, giving rise to a cardinal political role. Some of the recurrent issues in this digital culture that spark heated discussions on social media platforms include discourses on financial corruption, accountability, morality, development, and patriotism. (Bano, et al., 2021) Once social media became a weapon, it was used against the military, the judiciary, and other state institutions for intimidation and to achieve the desired objectives, purposefully blurring the borders between these very distinct organizations. Recent disrespectful comments on Army martyrs were simply careless and abhorrent, and there was no precedent for them anywhere else in the world. Simply put, our own people have unintentionally taken on the role of hostile agents in spreading misinformation, dividing society, and fomenting hostility. Notwithstanding political ascent through aggressive behaviors and heated narratives, this political expediency has come at the expense of our nation's growth, political stability, institutional sanctity, and national unity. (Shahzad, 2022). Both forms of polarization the one between politicians themselves and its spillover into the general public are present in Pakistan at the moment. On television, on jalsa stages, and on social media, politicians are always at each other's throats. Polarization between supporters of various parties appears to be more hazardous. Nowadays, social media is primarily an interchange of insults and competing trends. (Javed, 2022).

The political chessboard is terribly fragmented right now in Pakistan. Society is also forked in a similar way. One group hates the other more than the other. Mutual regard has diminished. Criticism is commonplace. Differentials encompass more than just unity. Both sharing and it's

absence are minimized. Teams from social media platforms also joined the conflict, escalating it further. To achieve a certain goal, users were inundated with photoshopped images, falsified information, and fake news. A group of volunteers seemed to disrespect any particular foe. Money was introduced to further taint the political campaigns. (Rashid, 2022). The use of new media for political gain points to concerning trends for the nation's democracy, with little sign of relief, as political polarization and jockeying continue to increase. Political tensions are likely to keep rising. The careless use of the new media is the most recent factor in increasing political polarization in Pakistan. (Khan, 2023).

1.19. Synthesis of Literature

From the above-mentioned studies, it is evident that with the advent and surge in the political utilization of new media Pakistan's society has become more politically polarized than ever before. It is thus important to conduct a study to evaluate the utilization of new media in raising polarization and determining its influence on university students in Pakistan.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Theories consists of thoughts and concepts that clarify diverse facts using scientific reasoning. Miller claims to have (2005:22) Theories assist us in explaining, forecasting, and comprehending events in our immediate social context. These might be thought of as our "nets" for capturing the surroundings or as ways for establishing a social life.

Theories include:

1.   Communal sphere analyses and illustrations.

2.   Connections between many phenomena.

3.   A hypothetical narrative describing how these connections are made

4.   The connections or ties between the plot and truth or facts.

5.   Thanks to theory, we have explanations for our queries and resolutions to our issues

The current study has connections to the uses and gratification theory, Agenda setting theory, and social identity theory.

2. 1. Agenda Setting Theory

Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, both college teachers who sought the North Carolina voter base throughout the 1968 U.S. presidential election and issued what they found in 1972, noticed that the topics that people thought were most important were also the ones that got the most criticism from the media. As a result, the agenda-setting hypothesis arose from the notion that the media sets the agenda for what people should be concerned about.

Two basic tenets underpin agenda-setting theory. The first is that the tab controls and affects what we see rather than just relaying stories to the audience. An example of this is when an interesting or alarming story is given first on a television program rather than one which is more contemporary or affects more people. The second assumption is that if the media covers an issue extensively, the public will be more likely to see it as relevant. Another way to look at it is that

broadcasting firms give us with certain themes or circumstances that people ought to think about more thoroughly rather than telling us what to think or how to respond to them. (Alvernia University, 2018).

The agenda-setting process is divided into two phases. These phases illustrate the phases that mass communication professionals take to understand how media outlets come to execute this concept. These two levels are observational analysis and presentation. Observation entails investigating the goals of the various media channels by scholars, figuring out how these platforms affect viewers and the ideas they have after being exposed to the material they present. The idea of "object salience" is also taken into account at this stage. Items or news items that catch the viewers' attention immediately have more attention than those that are seen as being of less significance. Media sources frequently opt to capitalize on these stories with higher object salience, which increases their saliency.

Presentation entails figuring out how various media channels present certain situations. This stage assists researchers in understanding how the media conveys certain messages to elevate the relevance of those messages since they are aware that the media seeks to focus our attention on particular topics and shape how we view them. They could think about how sensationalizing news items makes them more engaging for viewers and gives them a more serious air. how to broadcast organizations convey various concerns and how making a story go viral affects that. This level is interested in how people develop certain ways of thinking about problems. The first level investigates audience perception. (Indeed, 2022).

There are three other sorts of agenda-setting in addition to the two tiers. In a 1988 assessment of agenda-setting studies, Rogers and Dearing identified them as policy agenda-setting, media agenda-setting, and public agenda-setting.

In policy agenda setting the potential of the media to affect governmental policy is taken into account when developing policy agendas. Cobb and Elder noted in 1972 that to get a plan on the agenda, the problem must first be sparked by a triggering event of some kind before being further developed to win over the public. It is simpler to maintain public interest and support once the

problem has gained attention, which makes it easier to contribute to and have an impact on policy development. (Denham, 2010).

Media agenda-setting is the second sort of agenda-setting. When an agenda is created in this manner, who sets the agenda for the action? Gatekeepers are those who choose which stories are covered by news organizations and aired. Media professionals who work as gatekeepers include editors, journalists, and operations heads from prestigious national newspapers. (Griffin, 2009).

Public agenda-setting is the last kind of agenda-setting. This kind focuses on how the general population behaves in reaction to mainstream media. It gauges the public's real response to the problem once it has been brought up. To affect change, interest groups must not only put their issues on the agenda but also gauge public opinion once they are there. Denham (2010)

2.2. Social Identity Theory

Henri Tajfel, a British psychology educator, and his colleagues conducted multiple experiments in the early 1970s known as minimal-group investigations, which served as the cornerstone for social identity theory. The notion underlying social identity theory is that being part of a group allows people to value social interactions. Participating in groups allows people to get to know who they are and how they relate to others. Social identity theory was formed as an integrative theory because it sought to link mental processes with desired rewards. Its early focus was mostly on ethnic conflicts and general intergroup interactions. Because of this, the concept was first known as the social identity theory of intergroup connections. (Elleme, 2022).

Tajfel and Turner asserted that categorizing individuals as "us" or "them" (i.e., "in-group" or "out-group") includes three cognitive processes. They appear in a certain order.

The first stage is grouping. We categorize things in order to understand and recognize them. To understand the social environment, we categorize people in a way similar to this. We use group identities such as black, white, Australian, Christian, and Muslim, as well as student and bus driver, because they are useful. We can learn more about ourselves by learning the classes to which we belong. We define correct behavior in terms of the criteria of the groups we belong to, but you may do this if you know who belongs to your group. A person may belong to several groups.

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We take on the appearance of the group to which we have allocated ourselves in the second phase, known as social identification. If you identify as a student, for example, you are likely to begin acting like one and embrace the qualities associated with students. Your group identification will have emotional significance, and your ego will get intertwined with group activity.

Finally, there's sociability. After categorizing ourselves as members of a group and identifying with that group, we frequently compare that group to others. If we want to maintain our ego, our group must do well in comparison to other groups. This is critical for understanding prejudice because once two groups determine they are opponents, they are forced to compete so that individuals may maintain their confidence. (Mcleod, 2023)

The Social Identity Theory investigates whether our self-concepts are influenced by our reference group and how this influences how we see fellow participants, outsiders, and members of opposing groups. The concept has been extensively used in studies of in-group bias and out-group prejudice, but little attention has been placed on drug usage. It has been established, in particular, that social identity moderates the influence of other individuals on drug usage. (Miller, 2013).

Social identity theory provides a rationale for the reasons of in-group prejudice. For starters, it is thought that appraisals of one's group membership are linked to the outcomes of social comparisons between the in-group and relevant out-groups. Second, it is assumed that people desire to feel good about themselves and have a positive self-image.

Making the in-group identifiable from the out-group might help you have a positive image of oneself as a group participant. In order to distinguish the in-group favorably, group members regularly compete with out-groups in social circumstances. Although the theory does not suggest that material concerns are unimportant, it does assert that the symbolic meaning of a group's position in relation to other groups is a powerful motivator. (McNicoll, 2002).

2.3. The Uses and Gratifications Theory

The core premise of the uses and pleasures theory is about media managers' wants, ambitions, and gratifications. According to the theory, persons who consume media do not simply

passively receive mass communication; they all actively engage in it. The concept's creators are named as Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz. Their 1974 article, "The uses of mass communication: Current perspectives on gratifications study," detailed the idea in detail. Nonetheless, Harold Laswell's research was the motivation for the idea. Since the establishment of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, scientists have seen audiences as active viewers who seek out, rank, use, and receive media for a variety of reasons and purposes, and in a number of ways. The goal of modern audiences' media consumption is to meet one or more specific demands. (Gordon, 2002)**.**

The Uses and Gratification model investigates how media influences people's lives. It addresses how people use the media to promote their own desires and how they feel satisfied when those desires are accomplished. In other words, the approach focuses on what media consumers do with them rather than what media subjects them to. Furthermore, the Magic Bullet concept, which asserts that the audience is passive, contradicts this view. This theoretical concept is concentrated on the audience and the user. Even for interpersonal interactions, people look to the media for conversation starters. They use the media to broaden their comprehension and exposure to the surroundings outside their range of view. People have a wide range of demands and sources of fulfillment. They are classified into five types. Cognitive requirements: People use media to gain information, knowledge, and other things. Affective requirements include all human emotions, joys, and moods. People use media, such as television, to satisfy their emotional needs. Personal Integrative Needs: This category includes the desire for self-esteem. Individuals utilize media to increase their status, build credibility, and stabilize. It involves the desire to connect socially with one's family, friends, and other people in society. People no longer gather socially on weekends; alternatively, they participate in social activities on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and others. Finally, beings occasionally use the media as an escape from reality as well as a source of tension and stress alleviation. (Nandita,2022)

Media consumption is thought to be purposeful. We are fully aware of where to go for the info we require. The audience is in charge of relating the type of media to match their wants for mass communication even if it is well aware of the sort of media it seeks. Rather of searching out the media, the audience chooses the media types that best meet its needs. The media competes with other sources to meet consumer wants. There are several approaches to meeting the demands

of an audience. More traditional media compete with modern media. The audience is conscious of its demands and motivations, which enables it to share its media experiences as engaged media consumers. The last component discusses how the audience selects the information offered and investigates the material according to its preferences. Because each experience is distinct and meets a particular set of demands, only the audience has the authority to assign values to the medium. (Mithun,2022).

According to academics, new media has several characteristics that earlier media didn't have. Users have more options for material, more control over what they interact with, and more control over when they interact with it. This enlarges the variety of satisfactions that using new mediums might provide(Vinney,2019)

Scholars like Ruggiero (2000) have noticed that new media comprises several qualities that weren't present in earlier kinds of media when adding the uses and gratification theory into new media studies. Users now have more content options and more control over what they interact with when they do so. This expands the range of satisfactions that new media, and particularly social media, may provide.

Researchers (Park, et al., 2009) mentioned four possibilities for joining new media. They are socialization by keeping in touch and connecting with others, entertainment through the usage of Facebook for fun or relaxation and status-seeking.

Furthermore, Chen (2011) In his study on Twitter gratifications, he discovered that users utilized it to satisfy their desire for connection. Furthermore, the increased usage of the platform, as measured by both the amount of time devoted using it and the active time on Twitter, contributed to the satisfaction of the desire for connection.

From the above-mentioned studies, we can assume that the Uses and Gratification theory is the most suitable model for conducting this research, realizing that debate, opinion exchange, and communication are the uses and gratifications that have previously been investigated as a result of employing the uses and gratification theory as people and politician use new media stages as a tool for political debates, opinion sharing and political communication

2.4. Research Design

There are two main stages to a research project: planning and carrying it out. A study design or plan is established in the initial stage, and data collection and analysis are completed in the second step. (Sarantakoos, 2005).

This thesis explores the influence of political division among Pakistanis as a consequence of utilizing new media after the 2018 general election. The research methodology applied to this thesis is mixed methodology.

2.5. Mixed Research Method

In general, research using mixed methods refers to research that combines quantitative and qualitative data collection, analysis, and interpretation in a scientific study or in a number of studies that focus on the same root problem. (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009).

2.6. Quantitative Research Method

Quantitative research is the process of collecting and evaluating numerical data. It may be used to determine patterns and averages, establish hypotheses, investigate causation, and extrapolate results to bigger groups. Quantitative research is commonly used in the scientific and social sciences, such as psychology, economics, sociology, and marketing. (Bhandari, 2022).

2.7. Qualitative Research Method

For qualitative research, free communication is utilized to collect and evaluate qualitative data. The primary purpose of qualitative research is to comprehend people's thoughts, feelings, and perspectives, as well as the underlying reasons of these experiences.

It is used to compile extensive and rich ideas regarding a certain subject. Making sound research findings necessitates a thorough grasp of how your target feels about a certain issue. In contrast to quantitative research, which gathers numerical data for statistical analysis, qualitative research does not. This research method is commonly utilized in the humanities and social sciences (Cornell, 2022).

2.8. Research Tool

For the quantitative data collection, a detailed 5-scale Likert questionnaire is used to gather data for this thesis to highlight and generalize the new media usage patterns and their effects on attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and political polarization amongst university students in Pakistan.

This thesis utilizes a five-point Likert scale that ranges from, 1. "Strongly Disagree, 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree and 5. Strongly Agree"

For the semi-structured interviews, an interview questionnaire comprising five questions is utilized to conduct the interviews.

2.9. Population

Population is often a large collection of people or items that serve as the primary focus of a scientific investigation. The purpose of research is to help the broader public. However, due to the large size of the population, it is frequently impractical and costly for researchers to study every person of the community. As a result, researchers employ sampling methodologies. (Explorable.com, 2009). The students of the faculty of social sciences at University of Punjab are the population chosen for the study. As it is the largest and oldest higher educational seat in Pakistan.(TopUniversities,n.d.)

Additionally,in comparison to all other provinces, Punjab has over twice as many people, or 50% of Pakistan's total population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

2.10. Sample

In research, sampling is frequently employed to get insightful data about a population. (Lim & Ting, 2012).

To make sure the sample is representative of the population and can correctly portray the views and practices of university students, a Stratified random sampling approach was utilized. The population for the thesis is the students of the faculty of social sciences at the University of Punjab. The population was divided into strata of departments.

The Departments in the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences Namely are the Department of Political Science, Department of Social Work, Institute of Social & Cultural

Studies, Department of Gender Studies, Centre for Leadership and Decision Making, Centre for Clinical Psychology, Department of applied sciences, and Institute of communication studies. (University of the Punjab, n.d.).

2.11. Sampling Technique

The specific method utilized to sample the data in order to conduct the thesis is termed a sampling technique.

For this thesis, a sample consisting of 354 students is selected through stratified random sampling for conducting the survey from the 8 Departments in the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences and 5 five students were selected randomly for the semi-structured interviews.

2.12. Stratified Random Sampling

When stratified random sampling is used, a population group is divided into one or more discrete units known as strata based on comparable behaviors or attributes. Stratification is the division of the population's sample units into homogenous units. Any trait that describes variations in the attributes of relevance can serve as the foundation for stratification in stratified random sampling. (CFI,2022).

2.12.1. Rationale for Selecting Stratified Random Sampling

Stratified Random Sampling is the best sampling technique for this study because it made it possible to divide the chosen population of university students at the faculty of social sciences into smaller sub-groups based on the student departments, ensuring the equal representation of each group and resulting in a sample that is representative of the entire population and capable of producing valid and reliable results.

It is crucial to have a sample that is equally representative of all the different viewpoints of university students since this thesis explores how new media affect political polarization among students. In order to get findings that are legitimate and trustworthy, stratified random sampling is used to achieve this.

By dividing populations into subgroups or strata, stratified random sampling enables control over the potential variability of the population and eventually lowers sampling error. On the other

hand, another advantage of adopting a stratified random sample is that the categorization aids in exploring the comparative differences of polarization among the departmental students, improving the generalizability of the findings.

2.13. Data Collection

Data for the Quantitative research approach (Survey) was collected from 354 students in 8 different departments at the University of Punjab faculty of social and behavioral sciences, namely the Department of Political Science, Department of Social Work, Institute of Social & Cultural Studies, Department of Gender Studies, Centre for Leadership and Decision Making, Centre for Clinical Psychology, Department of applied sciences, and Institute of communication studies similarly, Data for the qualitative research approach was collected from five different students selected randomly from the faculty of social and behavioral sciences University of Punjab.

2.14. Data Analysis

SPSS (Statistical Program for the Social Sciences) is used to do the analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire. The data are summarized using descriptive statistics. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire are evaluated using statistical testing. Data is shown using frequency distributions, tables, charts, and graphs.

Data collected through semi-structured interviews were transcribed. A manual coding method was utilized to highlight and label significant concepts, ideas, and themes that emerge from the data. Similar codes were grouped together to form broader categories and similar categories were grouped together to form themes.

2.15. Conceptualization and Operationalization

2.15.1. Conceptualization

It is a strategy in which the implications of the variables or construct are examined in the context of earlier literature, particularly the notions that have been mentioned. The thesaurus or other trustworthy sources are used to study an idea's literal meaning.

Conceptualization is the effort of considering a construct's concepts. It is a procedure for creating conceptual definitions for abstract ideas or concepts that are clear, logical, and methodical.

the theoretical definition refers to a clear definition of a concept that follows a meticulous, systematic process. (Neuman, 2009).

2.15.2. Operationalization

The process of operationalization entails linking a definition of the concept to a specific set of measuring techniques.

Operationalization refers to the method of transferring a conceptual description of a construct to particular actions or metrics that enable empirical observation by researchers. While operational definition refers to a variable regarding defined actions to indicate it in the real world. (Neuman, 2009).

2.15.3. Conceptualization and Operationalization of Key Terms:

Key terms used in this thesis are as follows:

1. Political polarization

2. Utilization of new media for political purposes

3. Political discourse on new media

4. Students' awareness of politics

5. Political activity on new media

6. online political engagement

7. offline political engagement

8. political behavior

Table 1. Conceptualization and operationalization of variables

Sr No	Variable	Conceptualization	Operationalization
1	Political polarization	The degree to which people or factions have contrasting political attitudes, values, and beliefs. This can rise polarization of political discourse and can cause more political strife and lower collaboration (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015)	Effects of the utilization of New media (Facebook/Twitter) for political purposes on pre-existing political beliefs and opinions. Relation of New media usage for political purposes with reinforcing existing political beliefs and values. Impact of degree/extent of New Media usage for political purposes on Level/ degree of politically polarized beliefs
2	Utilization of new media for political purposes	The utilization of New Media stages such as Facebook and Twitter by students in such a way that influences political mobilization, outcomes, and communication. (Stieglitz et al., 2018)	Use of New media (Facebook/Twitter) to express political opinions. Use of New media (Facebook/Twitter) to interact with other people about politics. Use of New media (Facebook/Twitter) to follow political news and events. Use of New media (Facebook/Twitter) to interact with other people about politics.
3	Political discourse on new media	The text and nature of political communication on New media stages, including the tone, content, and level of respectfulness. (Papacharissi, 2010)	Political discussions on New media (Facebook/Twitter). Political content on New media (Facebook/Twitter). Political events, issues, and developments shared on New media (Facebook/Twitter).
4	Students' awareness of politics	The level of students' political attention, thoughtfulness, and information regarding politics. It involves students' knowledge of political organizations, public policies, and political values (Fornaciari & Francesconi, 2020)	Being informed regarding political events through the political content on New media (Facebook/Twitter). Having an understanding of political issues and institution through the use of New media (Facebook/Twitter).

5	Political activity on new media	Political activities carried out by students on New media stages such as Facebook and Twitter for political discussions or campaigns, including advocating, and mobilizing support. (Karpf, 2012)	Voicing political opinions and engagement in political activities on New media (Facebook/Twitter). Expressing political beliefs and values on New media (Facebook/Twitter).
6	Online political engagement	The way students individually or in form of groups participate in political practices such as participating in online political campaigns, sharing information, and expressing opinions. (Chadwick & Howard, 2009)	Participating in online political campaigns or discussions on New media (Facebook/Twitter). Engaging in political campaigns on New media (Facebook/Twitter).
7	Offline political engagement	The way students individually or in form of groups are involved in practical political practices that are not being held digitally. such as attending political rallies or protests. (Verba et al., 1995)	Involving in local politics and community activism. To attend more political rallies or protests.
8	Political behavior	The attitude of students formed by actions such as for whom they vote in elections or which political causes they support (Schattschneider, 1960)	Political beliefs and values. Voting for elections or supporting political causes. Involvement in politics and actions to support the causes or candidates.

Own resource

2.16. Limitations of the Study:

There are various limitations to any research study. The following list of restrictions applies to this thesis:

1. The generalization of the findings may be affected by the fact that the population will not reflect the full population of Pakistani university students.

2. Political biases may cause participants to withhold their genuine responses, or they may feel condemned or ashamed because of their political views, which might affect the statistics.

3. The researcher's opinions may impact the content analysis. It can compromise the accuracy of your findings.

4. Politically polarized students may be the only ones drawn to the thesis topic, which might have an impact on representativeness

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DATA

This thesis assesses how New media use affects political polarization amongst university students in Pakistan and determines whether there is a link between the two.

3.1. Quantitative Research Data

The quantitative research data for this thesis is collected through a thorough 5-scale Likert questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was distributed via google forms among the students of each department of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Punjab. In order to uphold the study ethics and to obtain the respondents' unvarnished perspectives, their names are kept confidential.

A sample size of a total of 354 students was drawn by Selvin's formula using stratified Random sampling. The sample was stratified into strata of eight departments, namely the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, Department of Political Science, Department of Social Work, Department of Gender Studies, Department of Clinical Psychology, Department of Leadership and Decision Making, Department of Applied Sciences, and Institute of Communication Studies.

3.2. Demographic Profile of the Participants

The demographic profile of the survey participants includes gender, age, department of the study, level of education, year of the study. The demographic profiles of the respondents have nothing to do with the results of study. The results of the study will be impartial of the demographic stats od the research conducted. Information regarding demographic profiles of the participants mentioned below is done just in order to maintain the validity and credibility of the survey conducted.

3.2.1. Gender Distribution

Table 2. Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	179	50.6
Female	174	49.2
Others	1	0.2
Total	354	100

Own resource

The survey successfully maintained almost equal participation by both male and female students having 49.2% female participants, 50.6% male participants, and 0.2% others.
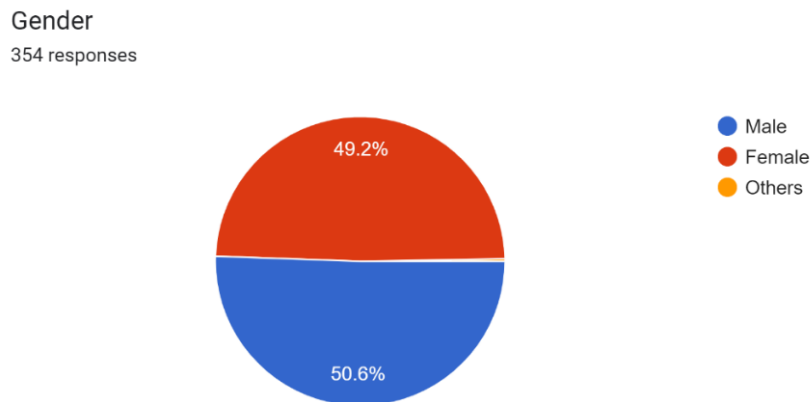
Figure 1. Gender distribution of students.
Own resource

3.2.2. Age Distribution

Table 3. Age distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage
15 to 18 Years	24	6.8
18 to 21 Years	75	21.2
21 to 25 Years	156	44.1
25 to 30 Years	67	18.9
30 to 35 Years	32	9
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students answered, 24 (6.8%) were between the ages of 15 to 18 years, 75(21.2%) were between the ages of 18 to 21 years, 156 (44.1%) were between the ages of 21 to 25 years, 67 (18.9%) were between the ages of 25 to 30 years, 32 (9%) were between the ages of 30 to 35 years.
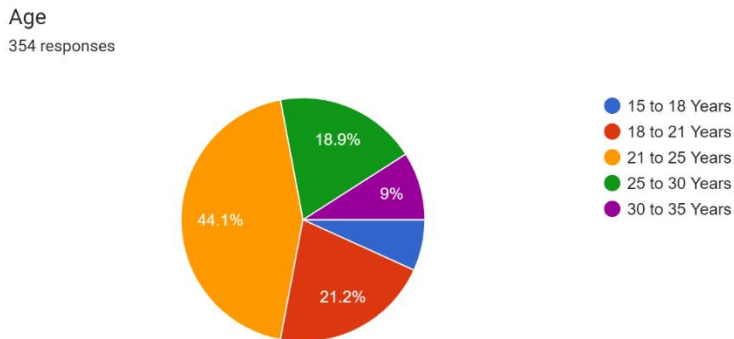
Figure 2. Age distribution of students.
Own resource

3.2.3. Department of the Study

Table 4. Department of study

Department of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Department of Political Science	45	12.67
Department of Social Work	35	9.98
Institute of Social & Cultural Studies	138	38.89
Department of Gender Studies	35	9.98
Centre for Leadership and Decision Making	8	2.27
Centre for Clinical Psychology	15	4.24
Department of Applied Sciences	25	7.06
Institute of Communication Studies	53	14.91
Total	354	100

Own resource

There were 354 answers 138 (38.89%) responses were taken from the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, 45 (12.67%) responses were taken from the Department of Political Science, 35 (9.98%) responses were taken from the Department of Social Work, 35 (9.98%) responses were taken from the Department of Gender Studies, 15 (4.24%) responses were taken from the Department of Clinical Psychology, 8 (2.27%) responses were taken from the Centre for Leadership and Decision Making, 25 (7.06%) responses were taken from the Department of Applied Sciences, 53 (14.91%) were taken from the Institute of Communication Studies.

Department of the Study
354 responses

- Department of Political Science
- Department of Social Work
- Institute of Social & Cultural Studies
- Department of Gender Studies
- Centre for Leadership and Decision Making
- Centre for Clinical Psychology
- Department of applied sciences
- Institute of communication studies
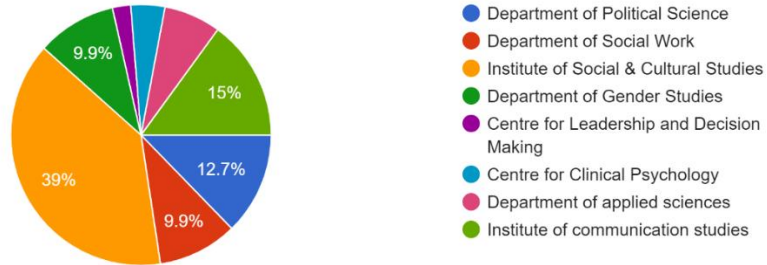
Figure 3. Department of study.
Own resource

3.2.4. Level of Education

Table 5. Level of education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelors	S204	57.6
Masters	117	33.1
PhD	10	2.8
Post Graduate	23	6.5
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students answered, 204 (57.6%) were bachelor's students, 117 (33.1%) were Masters's students, 10 (2.8%) were PhD students, and 23 (6.5) were postgraduate students.

Level of Education
354 responses
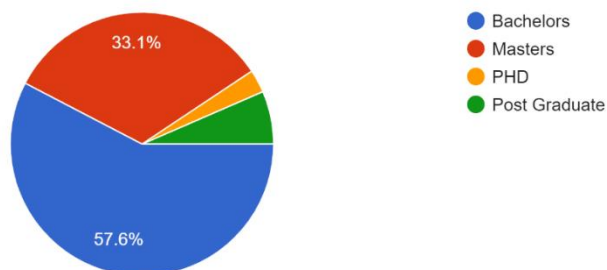
Figure 4. Level of education.
 Own resource

3.2.5 Year of the Study

Table 6. Year of the study

Year of the study	Frequency	Percentage
First Year	59	16.7
Second Year	68	19.2
Third Year	60	16.9
Fourth Year	167	47.2
Total	354	100

Own resource

Out of 354 students, 59 (16.7%) were first-year students, 68 (19.2%) were second-year students, 60 (16.9 %) were third-year students, and 167 (47.2%) were fourth-year students.
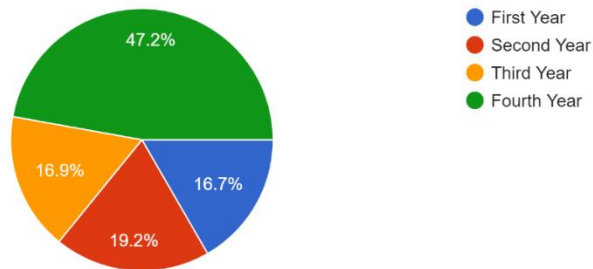
Figure 5. Year of the study**.**
Own resource

Following variables were operationalized and conceptualized:

1. Political polarization

2. Utilization of new media for political purposes

3. Political discourse on new media

4. Students' awareness of politics

5. Political activity on new media

6. online political engagement

7. offline political engagement

8. political behavior

3.3. Political Polarization

Following questions were asked to measure Political polarization.

I feel informed about politics when I use Facebook/Twitter.

Table 7. Responses to the question I feel informed about politics when I use Facebook/Twitter

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	19	5.4
Disagree	26	7.3
Neither Agree nor Disagree	46	13
Agree	202	57.1
Strongly Agree	61	17.2
Total	354	100

Own resource

A total of 354 students were asked I feel informed about politics when I use Facebook/Twitter. 19 (5.4%) answered strongly disagree, 26 (7.3%) answered disagree, 46 (13%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 202 (57.1%) answered agree, and 61 (17.2%) responded strongly agree

I feel informed about politics when I use Facebook/Twitter.
354 responses
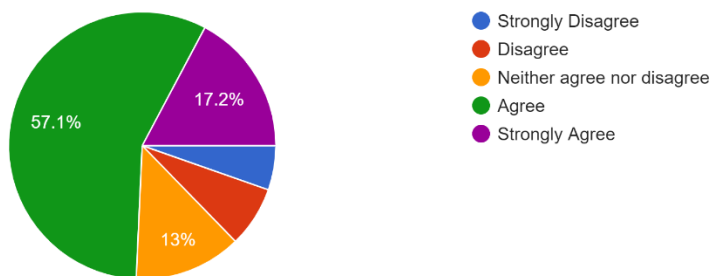
Figure 6. I feel informed about politics when I use Facebook/Twitter
Own resource

I believe that my use of social media for political purposes is driven by my pre-existing political beliefs and opinions

Table 8. Responses to the question I believe that my use of social media for political purposes is driven by my pre-existing political beliefs and opinions

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	22	6.2
Disagree	48	13.6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	84	23.7
Agree	162	45.8
Strongly Agree	38	10.7
Total	354	100

Own resource

On asking the students I believe that my use of social media for political purposes is driven by my pre-existing political beliefs and opinions. 17 (4.8%) answered strongly disagree, 54 (15.3%) answered disagree, 77 (21.8) answered neither agree nor disagree, 170 (48.2%) answered agree, and 35 (9.9%) answered strongly agree.

I believe that my use of social media for political purposes is driven by my pre-existing political beliefs and opinions
353 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

48.2% 9.9% 21.8% 15.3%
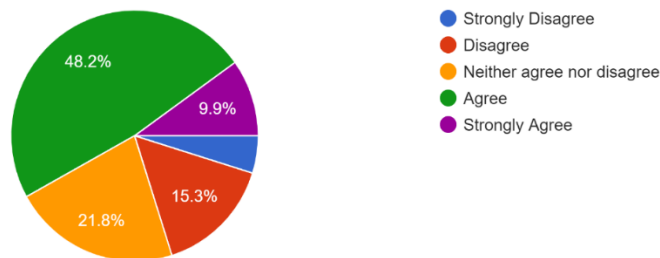
Figure 7. I believe that my use of social media for political purposes is driven by my pre-existing   political beliefs and opinions.
Own resource

I think that my social media use for political purposes has reinforced my existing political beliefs and values.

Table 9. Responses to the question I think that my social media use for political purposes has reinforced my existing political beliefs and values

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	22	6.2
Disagree	48	13.6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	84	23.7
Agree	162	45.8
Strongly Agree	38	10.7
Total	354	100

Own resource

A total of 354 students were prompted I think that my social media use for political purposes has reinforced my existing political beliefs and values. 22 (6.2%) answered strongly disagree, 48 (13.6%) answered disagree, 84 (23.7%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 162 (45.8%) answered agree, and 38 (10.7%) answered strongly agree
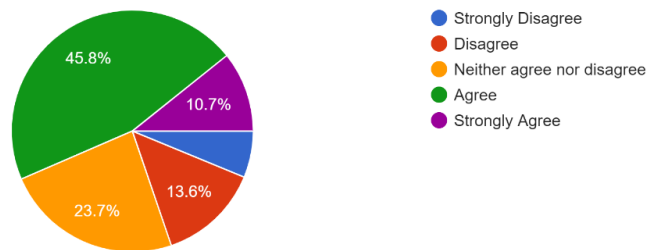
Figure 8. I think that my social media use for political purposes has reinforced my existing political beliefs and values**.**
Own resource

44

I think that the more I use social media for political purposes, the more polarized my political beliefs become.

Table 10. Responses to the question I think that the more I use social media for political purposes, the more polarized my political beliefs become

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	17	4.8
Disagree	51	14.4
Neither Agree nor Disagree	73	20.6
Agree	180	50.8
Strongly Agree	33	9.3
Total	354	100

Own resource

A total of 354 students were questioned I think that the more I use social media for political purposes, the more polarized my political beliefs become. 17 (4.8%) answered strongly disagree, 51 (14.4%) answered disagree, 73 (20.6%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 180 (50.8%) answered agree, and 33 (9.3%) answered strongly agree

I think that the more I use social media for political purposes, the more polarized my political beliefs become.
354 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

50.8%
9.3%
14.4%
20.6%
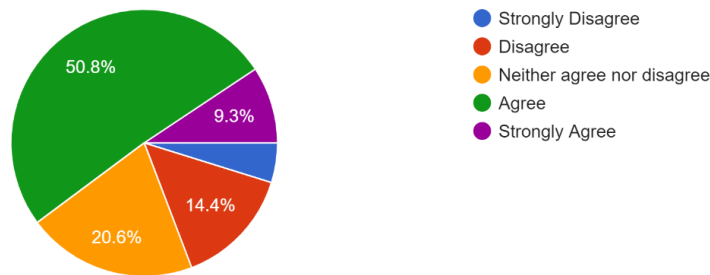
Figure 9. I think that the more I use social media for political purposes, the more polarized my political beliefs become. ***Own resource***

3.4. Utilization of New Media for Political Purposes,

Following questions were asked of the participants to gauge utilization of new media for political purposes.

I use Facebook/Twitter to follow political news and events.

Table 11. Responses to the question I use Facebook/Twitter to follow political news and events.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	30	8.5
Disagree	35	9.9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	59	16.7
Agree	187	52.8
Strongly Agree	43	12.1
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were prompted I use Facebook/Twitter to follow political news and events. 30 (8.5%) answered strongly disagree, 35 (9.9%) answered disagree, 59 (16.7%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 187 (52.8%) answered agree, and 43(12.1%) answered strongly agree.

Figure 10. I use Facebook/Twitter to follow political news and events.
Own resource

I use Facebook/Twitter to express my political opinions.

Table 12. Responses to the question I use Facebook/Twitter to express my political opinions.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	36	10.2
Disagree	66	18.6
Neither agree nor disagree	78	22
Agree	144	40.7
Strongly Agree	30	8.5
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were prompted I use Facebook/Twitter to express my political opinions. 36 (10.2%) answered strongly disagree, 66 (18.6%) answered disagree, 78 (22%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 144 (40.7%) answered agree, and 30 (8.5%) answered strongly agree

Figure 11. I use Facebook/Twitter to express my political opinions.
Own resource

I use Facebook/Twitter to interact with other people about politics.

Table 13. Responses to the question I use Facebook/Twitter to interact with other people about politics.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	37	10.5
Disagree	66	18.6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	68	19.2
Agree	148	41.8
Strongly Agree	35	9.9
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were questioned I use Facebook/Twitter to interact with other people about politics. 37 (10.5%) answered strongly disagree, 66 (18.6%) answered disagree, 68 (19.2%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 148 (41.8%) answered agree, and 35 (9.9%) answered strongly agree

I use Facebook/Twitter to interact with other people about politics.
354 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

41.8%
9.9%
10.5%
18.6%
19.2%
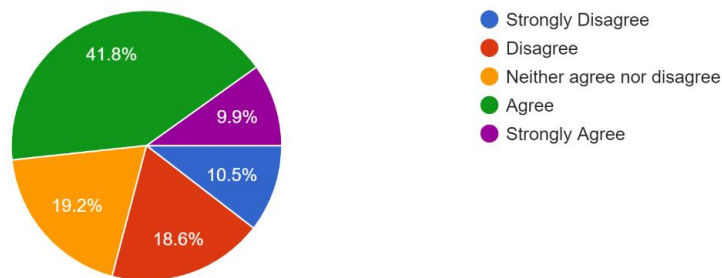
Figure 12. I use Facebook/Twitter to interact with other people about politics. ***Own resource***

I believe social media is an effective tool for political communication

Table 14. Responses to the question I believe social media is an effective tool for political communication

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	15	4.2
Disagree	29	8.2
Neither Agree nor Disagree	55	15.5
Agree	190	53.7
Strongly Agree	65	18.4
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were prompted I believe social media is an effective tool for political communication. 15 (4.2%) answered strongly disagree, 29 (8.2%) answered disagree, 55 (15.5%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 190 (53.7%) answered agree, and 65 (18.4%) answered strongly agree.

I believe social media is an effective tool for political communication.
354 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
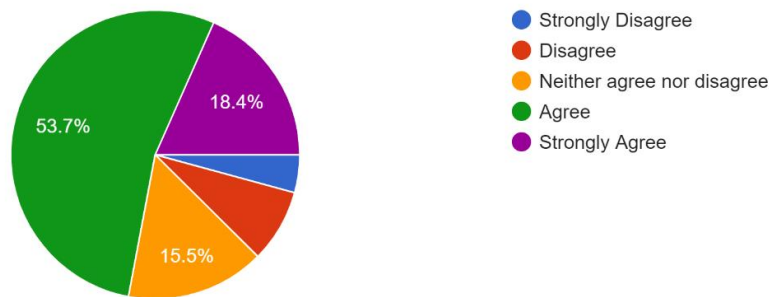
Figure 13. I believe social media is an effective tool for political communication.
Own resource

49

3.5. Political Discourse on New Media, Awareness of Politics

The following questions were asked to measure political discourse on New media and awareness of politics

I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter informative.

Table 15. Responses to the question I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter informative.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	12	3.4
Disagree	40	11.3
Neither Agree nor Disagree	71	20.1
Agre	188	53.1
Strongly Agree	43	12.1
Total	354	100

Own resource

A total of 354 students were questioned I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter informative. 12 (3.4%) answered strongly disagree, 40 (11.3%) answered disagree, 71 (20.1%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 188 (53.1%) answered agree, and 43 (12.1%) answered strongly agree.

Figure 14. I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter informative. ***Own resource**

I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter persuasive.

Table 16. Responses to the question I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter persuasive

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	13	3.7
Disagree	42	11.9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	90	25.4
Agree	173	48.9
Strongly Agree	36	10.2
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were prompted I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter persuasive. 13 (3.7%) answered strongly disagree, 42 (11.9%) answered disagree, 90 (25.4%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 173 (48.9%) answered agree, and 36 (10.2%) answered strongly agree

I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter persuasive.
354 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
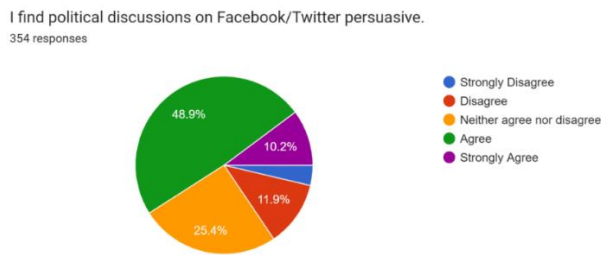
Figure 15. I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter persuasive.
Own resource

1.   I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter irrelevant

Table 17. Responses to the question I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter irrelevant

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	27	7.6
Disagree	78	22
Neither agree nor disagree	88	24.9
Agree	132	37.3
Strongly Agree	29	8.2
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were questioned I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter irrelevant 27 (7.6%) answered strongly disagree, 78 (22%) answered disagree, 88 (24.9%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 132 (37.3%) answered agree, and 29 (8.2%) answered strongly agree

Figure 16. I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter irrelevant.
Own resource

I feel informed about political issues in Pakistan through the political content on new media

Table 18. Responses to the question I feel informed about political issues in Pakistan through the political content on new media

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	**14**	**4**
Disagree	**19**	**5.4**
Neither Agree nor Disagree	**54**	**15.3**
Agree	**209**	**59**
Strongly Agree	**58**	**16.4**
Total	**354**	**100**

Own resource

354 students were enquired they feel informed about political issues in Pakistan through the political content on new media 14 (4%) answered strongly disagree, 19 (5.4%) answered disagree, 54 (15.3%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 209 (59%) answered agree, and 58 (16.4%) answered strongly agree
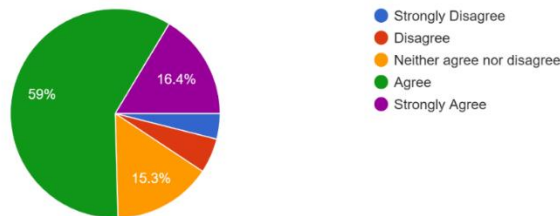
Figure 17. I feel informed about political issues in Pakistan through the political content on new media. ***Own resource***

I am aware of political events and developments in Pakistan through the political content on new media

Table 19. Responses to the question I am aware of political events and developments in Pakistan through the political content on new media

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	17	4.8
Disagree	20	5.6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	48	13.6
Agree	206	58.2
Strongly Agree	63	17.8
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were prompted I am aware of political events and developments in Pakistan through the political content on new media 17 (4.8%) answered strongly disagree, 20 (5.6%) answered disagree, 48 (13.6%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 206 (58.2%) answered agree, and 63 (17.8%) answered strongly agree
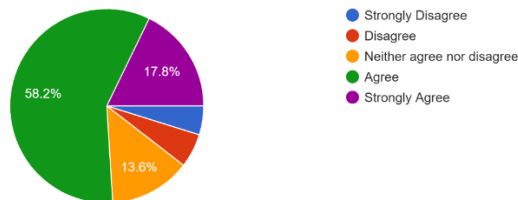
Figure 18. I am aware of political events and developments in Pakistan through the political content on new media.
Own resource

I have a good understanding of political issues in Pakistan through the political content on new media.

Table 20. Responses to the question I have a good understanding of political issues in Pakistan through the political content on new media.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	14	4
Disagree	31	8.8
Neither Agree nor Disagree	68	19.2
Agree	196	55.4
Strongly Agree	45	12.7
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were prompted to the question I have a good understanding of political issues in Pakistan through the political content on new media 14 (4%) answered strongly disagree, 31 (8.8%) answered disagree, 68 (19.2%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 196 (55.4%) answered agree, and 45 (12.7%) answered strongly agree

I have a good understanding of political issues in Pakistan through the political content on new media.
354 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

55.4%   12.7%   8.8%   19.2%
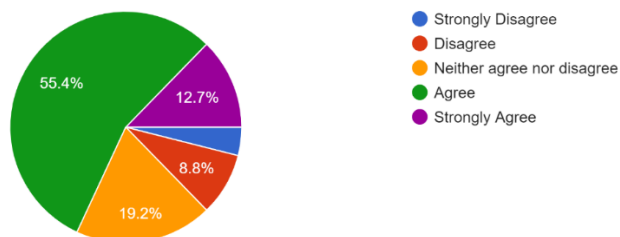
Figure 19. I have a good understanding of political issues in Pakistan through the political content on new media.
Own resource

I feel motivated to participate in political activities through the political content on new media.

Table 21. Responses to the question I feel motivated to participate in political activities through the political content on new media.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	29	8.2
Disagree	60	16.9
Neither Agree nor Disagree	75	21.2
Agree	149	42.1
Strongly Agree	41	11.6
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were questioned I feel motivated to participate in political activities through the political content on new media 29 (8.2%) answered strongly disagree, 60 (16.9%) answered disagree, 75 (21.2%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 149 (42.1%) answered agree, and 41 (11.6%) answered strongly agree

I feel motivated to participate in political activities through the political content on new media.
354 responses
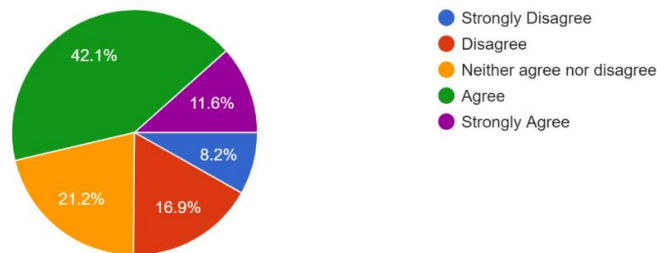
Figure 20. I feel motivated to participate in political activities through the political content on new media**.**
    Own resource*

I feel confident discussing politics with others through the political content on new media.

Table 22. Responses to the question I feel confident discussing politics with others through the political content on new media**.**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	**20**	**5.6**
Disagree	**51**	**14.4**
Neither Agree nor Disagree	**72**	**20.3**
Agree	**168**	**47.5**
Strongly Agree	**43**	**12.1**
Total	**354**	**100**

Own resource

A total of 354 students were prompted I feel confident discussing politics with others through the political content on new media. 20 (5.6%) answered strongly disagree, 51 (14.4%) answered disagree, 72 (20.3%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 168 (47.5%) answered agree, and 43 (12.1%) answered strongly agree

I feel confident discussing politics with others through the political content on new media.
354 responses
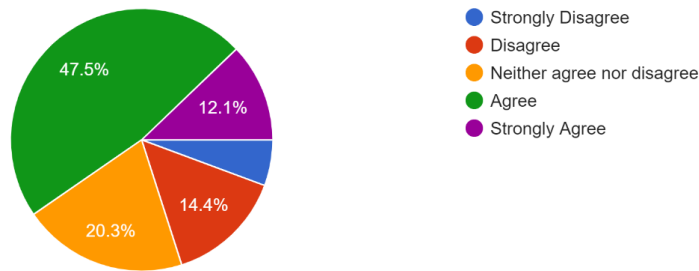
Figure 21. I feel confident discussing politics with others through the political content on new media.
Own resource

3.6. Political Activity on New Media, Online and Offline Political Engagement

The following questions were asked to measure Political activity on new media, online and offline political engagement

I think that social media platforms like Facebook/Twitter provide an effective platform for citizens to voice their political opinions and engage in political activities.

Table 23. Responses to the question I think that social media platforms like Facebook/Twitter provide an effective platform for citizens to voice their political opinions and engage in political activities**.**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	12	3.4
Disagree	31	8.8
Neither Agree nor Disagree	63	17.8
Agree	184	52
Strongly Agree	64	18.1
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were enquired I think that social media platforms like Facebook/Twitter provide an effective platform for citizens to voice their political opinions and engage in political activities 12 (3.4%) answered strongly disagree, 31 (8.8%) answered disagree, 63 (17.8%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 184 (52%) answered agree, and 64 (18.1%) answered strongly agree

I think that social media platforms like Facebook/Twitter provide an effective platform for citizens to voice their political opinions and engage in political activities.
354 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
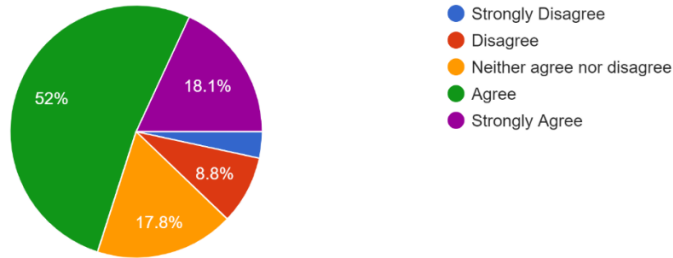
Figure 22. I think that social media platforms like Facebook/Twitter provide an effective platform for citizens to voice their political opinions and engage in political activities.
Own resource

I feel that engaging in political activity on social media is an important way to express my political beliefs and values

Table 24. Responses to the question I feel that engaging in political activity on social media is an important way to express my political beliefs and values

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	16	4.5
Disagree	41	11.6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	71	20.1
Agree	188	53.1
Strongly Agree	38	10.7
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were questioned that I feel that engaging in political activity on social media is an important way to express my political beliefs and values 16 (4.5%) answered strongly disagree, 41 (11.6%) answered disagree, 71 (20.1%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 188 (53.1%) answered agree, and 38 (10.7%) answered strongly agree

I feel that engaging in political activity on social media is an important way to express my political beliefs and values.
354 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

53.1%
10.7%
11.6%
20.1%
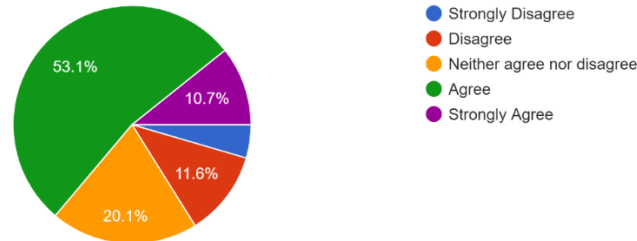
Figure 23. I feel that engaging in political activity on social media is an important way to express my political beliefs and values.
Own resource

I feel that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has encouraged me to become more involved in local politics and community activism.

Table 25. Responses to the question I feel that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has encouraged me to become more involved in local politics and community activism

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	22	6.2
Disagree	44	12.4
Neither Agree nor Disagree	85	24
Agree	173	48.9
Strongly Agree	30	8.5
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were prompted to the question that I feel that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has encouraged me to become more involved in local politics and community activism. 22 (6.2%) answered strongly disagree, 44 (12.4%) answered disagree, 85 (24%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 173 (48.9%) answered agree, and 30 (8.5%) answered strongly agree

I feel that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has encouraged me to become more involved in local politics and community activism.

354 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
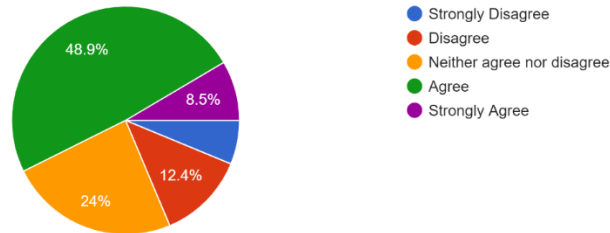
Figure 24. I feel that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has encouraged me to become more involved in local politics and community activism.
Own resource

I believe that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has motivated me to attend more political rallies or protests

Table 26. Responses to the question I believe that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has motivated me to attend more political rallies or protests

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	27	7.6
Disagree	62	17.5
Neither Agree nor Disagree	87	24.6
Agree	141	39.8
Strongly Agree	37	10.5
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were questioned that they believe that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has motivated me to attend more political rallies or protests 27 (7.6%) answered strongly disagree, 62 (17.5%) answered disagree, 87 (24.6%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 141 (39.8%) answered agree, and 37 (10.5%) answered strongly agree.

I believe that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has motivated me to attend more political rallies or protests.
354 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
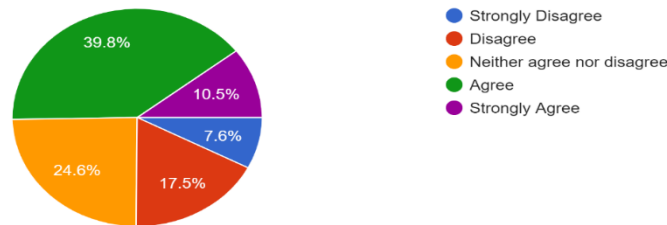
Figure 25. I believe that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has motivated me to attend more political rallies or protests**.**
Own resource

I think that social media has played an important role in increasing my political engagement and motivating me to become more politically active offline

Table 27. Responses to the question I think that social media has played an important role in increasing my political engagement and motivating me to become more politically active offline

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	20	5.6
Disagree	54	15.3
Neither Agree nor Disagree	83	23.4
Agree	161	45.5
Strongly Agree	36	10.2
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were prompted to the question that I think that social media has played an important role in increasing my political engagement and motivating me to become more politically active offline 20 (5.6%) answered strongly disagree, 54 (15.3%) answered disagree, 83 (23.4%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 161 (45.5%) answered agree, and 36 (10.2%) answered strongly agree

I think that social media has played an important role in increasing my political engagement and motivating me to become more politically active offline.
354 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

45.5%
10.2%
15.3%
23.4%
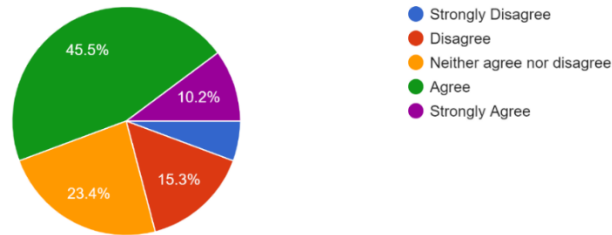
Figure 26. I think that social media has played an important role in increasing my political engagement and motivating me to become more politically active offline.
Own resource

I believe that participating in online political campaigns or discussions on social media can help bring about positive change

Table 28. Responses to the question I believe that participating in online political campaigns or discussions on social media can help bring about positive change

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	**16**	**4.5**
Disagree	**37**	**10.5**
Neither Agree nor Disagree	**87**	**24.6**
Agree	**163**	**46**
Strongly Agree	**51**	**14.4**
Total	**354**	**100**

Own resource

354 students were enquired I believe that participating in online political campaigns or discussions on social media can help bring about positive change 16 (4.5%) answered strongly disagree, 37 (10.5%) answered disagree, 87 (24.6%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 163 (46%) answered agree, and 51 (14.4%) answered strongly agree

I believe that participating in online political campaigns or discussions on social media can help bring about positive change.
354 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
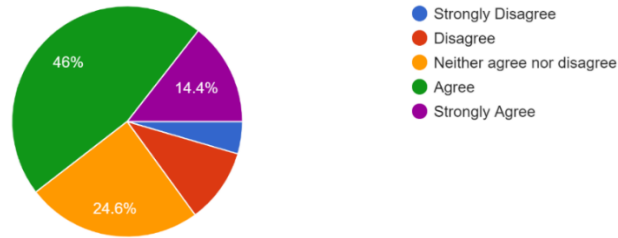
Figure 27. I believe that participating in online political campaigns or discussions on social media can help bring about positive change.
Own resource

3.7. Political Behavior

The following questions were asked to measure political behavior

I believe that the political opinions expressed on social media have influenced my political beliefs and values.

Table 29. Responses to the question I believe that the political opinions expressed on social media have influenced my political beliefs and values.

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	15	4.2
Disagree	45	12.7
Neither Agree nor Disagree	85	24
Agree	167	47.2
Strongly Agree	42	11.9
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were questioned I believe that the political opinions expressed on social media have influenced my political beliefs and values 15 (4.2%) answered strongly disagree, 45 (12.7%)

answered disagree, 85 (24%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 167 (47.2%) answered agree, and 42 (11.9%) answered strongly agree
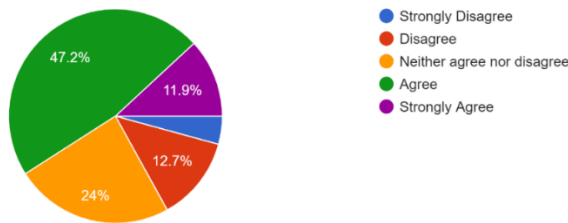
Figure 28. I believe that the political opinions expressed on social media have influenced my political beliefs and values.
Own resource

I think that social media has played an important role in shaping my political behavior and decisions, such as whom I vote for in elections or which political causes I support.

Table 30. Responses to the question I think that social media has played an important role in shaping my political behavior and decisions, such as whom I vote for in elections or which political causes I support.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	16	4.5
Disagree	47	13.3
Neither agree nor disagree	70	19.8
Agree	177	50
Strongly Agree	44	12.4
Total	354	100

Own resource

354 students were prompted I think that social media has played an important role in shaping my political behavior and decisions, such as whom I vote for in elections or which political causes

I support. 16 (4.5%) answered strongly disagree, 47 (13.3%) answered disagree, 70 (19.8%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 177 (50%) answered agree, and 44 (12.4%) answered strongly agree
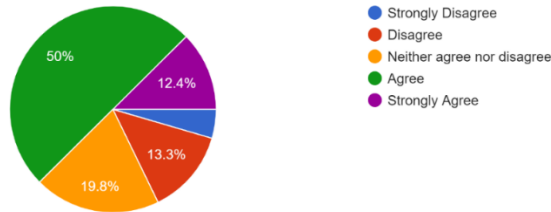
Figure 29. I think that social media has played an important role in shaping my political behavior and decisions, such as whom I vote for in elections or which political causes I support. ***Own resource***

I feel that the political opinions expressed on social media have encouraged me to become more involved in politics and take action to support the causes or candidates I believe in

Table 31. Responses to the question I feel that the political opinions expressed on social media have encouraged me to become more involved in politics and take action to support the causes or candidates I believe in

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	16	4.6
Disagree	49	14
Neither Agree nor Disagree	76	21.7
Agree	168	47.9
Strongly Agree	42	12
Total	354	100

Own resource

On asking the students I feel that the political opinions expressed on social media have encouraged me to become more involved in politics and take action to support the causes or candidates I believe in 16 (4.6%) answered strongly disagree, 49 (14%) answered disagree, 76

(21.7%) answered neither agree nor disagree, 168 (47.9%) answered agree, and 42 (12%) answered strongly agree

I feel that the political opinions expressed on social media have encouraged me to become more involved in politics and take action to support the causes or candidates I believe in.
351 responses

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
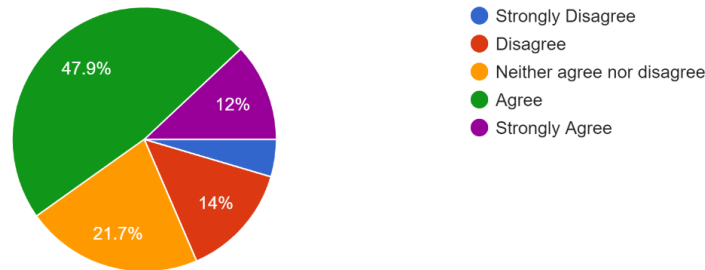
Figure 30. I feel that the political opinions expressed on social media have encouraged me to become more involved in politics and take action to support the causes or candidates I believe ***Own resource***

3.8. Qualitative Research Data

The qualitative research data for this thesis is collected through semi-structured interviews that were conducted online through google meet. Semi-structured interviews of 5 students from the different departments at the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences were conducted. Students interviewed were selected randomly from the sample. The identities of the interviewees are kept anonymous in order to maintain and fulfill the research ethics and to get their actual opinions without any hesitation.

3.9. Demographic Profile of the Students

The demographic profiles of the students interviewed are given below. 5 students were interviewed from the faculty of social and Behavioral Sciences. The demographic profiles of the respondents have nothing to do with the results of study. The results of the study will be impartial of the demographic stats of the research conducted. Information regarding demographic profiles

of the participants mentioned below is done just in order to main the validity and credibility of the interviews conducted.

Table 32. Demographic profile of students interviewed.

Gender	Age	Department of study	Level of education	Year of Study	Language
Female	26	Institute of Social and Cultural Studies	Bachelors	2nd Year	Urdu/English
Female	27	Institute of Communication studies	Bachelors	3rd Year	Urdu/English
Female	25	Department of Political Science	Bachelors	1st Year	Urdu/English
Male	30	Center for clinical psychology	Masters	2nd Year	Urdu/English
Male	30	Department of Gender Studies	Masters	2nd Year	Urdu/English

Own resource

The majority of the students interviewed were females only two were male while interviews conducted were between the ages of 25 to 30 years. Students were doing masters and bachelors between their 2nd and 4th years of study. Interviews were conducted online in both languages English and Urdu.

3.10. Semi-Structured Interviews of the Students

3.10.1. Interview 1

Gender: Female

Age: 26

Department: Institute of Social and Cultural Studies

Level of Education: Bachelor

Year of Study: 2nd Year

Q 1: Do you think your frequency of utilizing new media for political purposes is linked to your political polarization?

ANS: Through new media, I have achieved my political goals better, through this I have learned about different aspects of politics that I did not know before. And yes, the frequency of my social media usage has affected my level of political Polarization.

Q 2: How has engaging in political discourse on new media impacted your political attention, awareness, understanding, and ability to debate

ANS: Engaging in political discourse on new media has given me the ability to understand better the positive and negative aspects of different people's opinions, to understand ideas expressed in positive ways, and express my own views in a better way.

Q 3: Can you describe your experiences with utilizing new media for political purposes? How do you think your utilization of new media for political purposes may be linked to your political polarization?

ANS: Through new media, we can directly address the leader of the political parties and convey our message, which I use sometimes which is a good tool to use new media while on the other hand, I think it somehow has affected my own political thoughts more reinforced so in this way I believe it has affected my level of political polarization.

Q 4: How has political activity on new media impacted your participation in online and offline political engagement? Can you give examples?

ANS: my political activity on New Media has affected my Online and offline political activity in such a way that before the new media, I did not know anything about political activities. Through it, I gain awareness about political affairs. I will definitely participate in political activities and talk when I feel the need. But Based on my experiences with New Media, I sometimes feel motivated to engage in political activities.

Q 5: How has exposure to different political opinions on new media influenced your political behavior, if at all? In what ways have you been motivated to become more politically active or engaged as a result of your experiences on new media?

ANS: Due to various negative political opinions expressed on New Media my political behaviors also become polarized so I mostly try to cope with this situation.

3.10.2. Interview 2

Gender: Female

Age: 27

Department: Institute of Communication studies

Level of Education: Bachelor

Year of Study: 3rd Year

Q 1: Do you think your frequency of utilizing new media for political purposes is linked to your political polarization?

ANS: I believe that due to the level of political communication taking place on New Media platforms the more I use these platforms the more see political content and it affects my level of political polarization.

Q 2: How has engaging in political discourse on new media impacted your political attention, awareness, understanding, and ability to debate

ANS: No doubt due to the political content shared on New media I have become more politically aware of the political situation of the country, viewing different political opinions shared on New media has enabled me to better understand the political scenario and to build my own perspective.

Q 3: Can you describe your experiences with the utilization of new media for political purposes? How do you think your utilization of new media for political purposes may be linked to your political polarization?

ANS: My experience regarding the political use of New media is limited to just getting an insight into the political news happening in the country and as far as being politically polarized is concerned my use of New Media makes me polarized cause of the high frequency of political debate taking place.

Q 4: How has political activity on new media impacted your participation in online and offline political engagement? Can you give examples?

ANS: I believe political activity on New media persuades me to involve in political debates online as it is easily accessible and takes no time. Sometimes I share my political views online in form of comments or reactions.

Q 5: How has exposure to different political opinions on new media influenced your political behavior, if at all? In what ways have you been motivated to become more politically active or engaged as a result of your experiences on new media?

ANS: The way people and political party representatives express their opinions is really very aggressive sometimes, it provokes me to be aggressive as well that's why I have just kept my New Media political usage to the extent of just having political news insights.

3.10.3. Interview 3

Gender: Female

Age: 25

Department: Department of Political Science

Level of Education: Bachelors

Year of Study: 1st Year

Q 1: Do you think your frequency of utilizing new media for political purposes is linked to your political polarization?

ANS: The way nowadays New media is used by the media cells of the political parties I believe that it is making the youth politically polarized to a very high extent I personally have experienced that when I use Twitter more I become more politically indulged and polarized because there is a lot of irrational political debate taking place that makes me more polarized.

Q 2: How has engaging in political discourse on new media impacted your political attention, awareness, understanding, and ability to debate

ANS: Political debate taking place on Facebook is especially very irrational and absurd it has no credibility which is why I do not believe the news or content shared on Facebook. But Twitter is much more reliable in terms of political content or news and I read different political stories on Twitter that make me politically aware, enable me to better understand the political scenario and I feel informed to talk about politics easily.

Q 3: Can you describe your experiences with utilizing new media for political purposes? How do you think your utilization of new media for political purposes may be linked to your political polarization?

ANS I use New media for political purposes to see what is going on with candidates that I support or to check for any upcoming rally or protest and what's going on with opposition parties, and yes I think when I use New media and follow more political content my Political views become more rigid by consuming that content.

Q 4: How has political activity on new media impacted your participation in online and offline political engagement? Can you give examples?

ANS: Through the political activities going on social media sometimes I feel motivated to participate online and offline both by participating in online discussions or by joining the rallies.

Q 5: How has exposure to different political opinions on new media influenced your political behavior, if at all? In what ways have you been motivated to become more politically active or engaged as a result of your experiences on new media?

ANS: The different political opinion shared online by the political groups on Facebook or the statements made by a politician on Twitter helps me better shape an opinion about Political issue. It helps to have a better understanding of different political parties' agendas and to support which party.

3.10.4. Interview 4

Gender: Male

Age: 30

Department: Center for clinical psychology

Level of Education: Masters

Year of Study: 2nd Year

Q 1: Do you think your frequency of utilizing new media for political purposes is linked to your political polarization?

ANS: yes, when I use Facebook and Twitter and follow political content my political thinking increases, I start talking and discussing and debating political issues more frequently with my family members and friend circle.

Q 2: How has engaging in political discourse on new media impacted your political attention, awareness, understanding, and ability to debate?

ANS: sometimes it creates confusion for me as there is something going on the television and people are sharing something else on New media but overall, it provides vast information that increases my level of political awareness.

Q 3: Can you describe your experiences with utilizing new media for political purposes? How do you think your utilization of new media for political purposes may be linked to your political polarization?

ANS, I use new media for political purposes when I have to check updates on some ongoing political situation and the way it is shared by the political parties' media cells obviously creates a sense of being politically polarized for me.

Q 4: How has political activity on new media impacted your participation in online and offline political engagement? Can you give examples?

ANS: Basically, sometimes the political activity going on in New media motivates me in such a way that the slogans used and pitching lines forces me to participate like to comment my opinion or by sharing something or sometimes even by participating in some rally or protest

Q 5: How has exposure to different political opinions on new media influenced your political behavior, if at all? In what ways have you been motivated to become more politically active or engaged as a result of your experiences on new media?

ANS: I think it's a very important factor of New media in my opinion it gives a really very big diverse range of opinion and analysis and it really gives me a strong understanding of the political issues going on in the country it helps me a lot in building my own perspectives like which candidate or party is better than others.

3.10.5. Interview 5

Gender: Male

Age: 30

Department: Department of Gender Studies

Level of Education: Masters

Year of Study: 2nd Year

Q 1: Do you think your frequency of utilizing new media for political purposes is linked to your political polarization?

ANS: Yes, I do agree with this because the New media platform are flooding with politically polarized content and the more time I spend viewing this content I feel more politically motivated.

Q 2: How has engaging in political discourse on new media impacted your political attention, awareness, understanding, and ability to debate?

ANS: of course, the political content on New media is very informative sometimes, it provides very useful information sometimes that adds to my political attention, awareness and debating capability.

Q 3: Can you describe your experiences with utilizing new media for political purposes? How do you think your utilization of new media for political purposes may be linked to your political polarization?

ANS, I use Facebook or Twitter for political purposes when I follow the things shared by different politicians and journalists on politics, and to be honest I think it is because of political polarization that I follow the political figure on New media in this I can say it linked.

Q 4: How has political activity on new media impacted your participation in online and offline political engagement? Can you give examples?

ANS: it matters a lot the political activity going on at New media really plays an important role for me in deciding whether I am going to participate in any political thing online or offline.

Q 5: How has exposure to different political opinions on new media influenced your political behavior, if at all? In what ways have you been motivated to become more politically active or engaged as a result of your experiences on new media?

ANS: Again, I will say in the same opinions by different analysts and the general public influence my political behavior a lot based upon the opinion shared online my thinking and behavior varies.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Quantitative Research Data

A total of 354 participants were selected through stratified random sampling. 49.2% were female participants, 50.6% were male participants, and 0.2% were others. In this way, the survey successfully maintained almost equal participation by both males and females.

From the perspective of age Out of 354 participants, 24 (6.8%) were between the ages of 15 to 18 years, 75(21.2%) were between the ages of 18 to 21 years, 156 (44.1%) were between the ages of 21 to 25 years, 67 (18.9%) were between the ages of 25 to 30 years, 32 (9%) were between the ages of 30 to 35 years. The majority of age brackets are between 21 to 25 years.

As Survey participants were from the faculty of social and behavioral sciences Out of 354 participants, 138 (38.89%) responses were taken from the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, 45 (12.67%) responses were taken from the Department of Political Science, 35 (9.98%) responses were taken from the Department of Social Work, 35 (9.98%) responses were taken from the Department of Gender Studies, 15 (4.24%) responses were taken from the Department of Clinical Psychology, 8 (2.27%) responses were taken from the Centre for Leadership and Decision Making, 25 (7.06%) responses were taken from the Department of Applied Sciences, 53 (14.91%) were taken from the Institute of Communication Studies.

Talking about the level of education of the students Out of 354 participants, 204 (57.6%) were bachelor's students, 117 (33.1%) were Masters's students, 10 (2.8%) were PhD students, and 23 (6.5) were postgraduate students.

While considering the year of study of students Out of 354 participants, 59 (16.7%) were in their first year of study, 68 (19.2%) were in their second year of study, 60 (16.9 %) were in their third-year study, and 167 (47.2%) were in their fourth year of study.

4.1.1. Research Question 1

Is there a correlation between Pakistani university students' political polarization and the degree to which they utilize new media for political purposes?

A total of 354 respondents were asked: "I feel informed about politics when I use Facebook/Twitter." 19 (5.4%) responded as strongly disagree, 26 (7.3%) responded as disagree, 46 (13%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 202 (57.1%) responded as agree, and 61 (17.2%) responded as strongly agree

On asking the respondents "I believe that my use of social media for political purposes is driven by my pre-existing political beliefs and opinions" 17 (4.8%) responded as strongly disagree, 54 (15.3%) responded as disagree, 77 (21.8) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 170 (48.2%) responded as agree, and 35 (9.9%) responded strongly agree.

A total of 354 respondents were asked: "I think that my social media use for political purposes has reinforced my existing political beliefs and values." 22 (6.2%) responded as strongly disagree, 48 (13.6%) responded as disagree, 84 (23.7%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 162 (45.8%) responded as agree, and 38 (10.7%) responded as strongly agree

On asking 354 respondents: "I think that the more I use social media for political purposes, the more polarized my political beliefs become." 17 (4.8%) responded as strongly disagree, 51 (14.4%) responded as disagree, 73 (20.6%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 180 (50.8%) responded as agree, and 33 (9.3%) responded as strongly agree

Upon prompting the above four questions a clear majority of the participants agreed in their responses that they felt informed about politics by the use of New media platforms Facebook/Twitter, their use of new media platforms for political purposes is driven by their pre-existing political beliefs and opinions, their use of New media for political purposes has reinforced their existing political beliefs and values, and the frequency of their New media usage for political purposes affects their level of political polarization.

This thesis highlights the linkage between the use of new media platforms Facebook/Twitter and political polarization among the University students of Pakistan which is evident from the results and analysis of the survey question stated above that the frequency of political use of New media has an increasing effect on the level of political polarization among university students in Pakistan.

4.1.2. Research Question 2

Does the political discourse on new media increase university students' awareness of politics (Attention, Awareness, Understanding)?

A total of 354 respondents were asked: "I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter informative."12 (3.4%) responded as strongly disagree, 40 (11.3%) responded as disagree, 71 (20.1%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 188 (53.1%) responded as agree, and 43 (12.1%) responded as strongly agree

On prompting 354 respondents: "I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter persuasive." 13 (3.7%) responded as strongly disagree, 42 (11.9%) responded as disagree, 90 (25.4%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 173 (48.9%) responded as agree, and 36 (10.2%) responded as strongly agree

On asking 354 respondents: "I find political discussions on Facebook/Twitter irrelevant"27 (7.6%) responded as strongly disagree, 78 (22%) responded as disagree, 88 (24.9%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 132 (37.3%) responded as agree, and 29 (8.2%) responded as strongly agree

A total of 354 respondents were asked: "I feel informed about political issues in Pakistan through the political content on new media" 14 (4%) responded as strongly disagree, 19 (5.4%) responded as disagree, 54 (15.3%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 209 (59%) responded as agree, and 58 (16.4%) responded as strongly agree

On asking respondents: "I am aware of political events and developments in Pakistan through the political content on new media." 17 (4.8%) responded as strongly disagree, 20 (5.6%)

responded as disagree, 48 (13.6%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 206 (58.2%) responded as agree, and 63 (17.8%) responded as strongly agree

A total of 354 respondents were asked: "I have a good understanding of political issues in Pakistan through the political content on new media." 14 (4%) responded as strongly disagree, 31 (8.8%) responded as disagree, 68 (19.2%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 196 (55.4%) responded as agree, and 45 (12.7%) responded as strongly agree

On asking 354 respondents: "I feel motivated to participate in political activities through the political content on new media." 29 (8.2%) responded as strongly disagree, 60 (16.9%) responded as disagree, 75 (21.2%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 149 (42.1%) responded as agree, and 41 (11.6%) responded as strongly agree

On prompting respondents: "I feel confident discussing politics with others through the political content on new media." 20 (5.6%) responded as strongly disagree, 51 (14.4%) responded as disagree, 72 (20.3%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 168 (47.5%) responded as agree, and 43 (12.1%) responded as strongly agree

A clear majority of the participants marked agreed to the above-stated survey question. From it is manifest that political discourse on New media, political discussion, political content, political events, issues, and developments shared on New media increases political awareness attention, and understanding among university students in Pakistan.

4.1.3. Research Question 3

Is Pakistani university students' utilization of new media for political purposes linked to their political polarization?

A total of 354 respondents were asked: "I use Facebook/Twitter to follow political news and events." 30 (8.5%) responded as strongly disagree, 35 (9.9%) responded as disagree, 59 (16.7%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 187 (52.8%) responded as agree, and 43(12.1%) responded as strongly agree

On asking respondents: "I use Facebook/Twitter to express my political opinions" 36 (10.2%) responded as strongly disagree, 66 (18.6%) responded as disagree, 78 (22%) responded

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as neither agree nor disagree, 144 (40.7%) responded as agree, and 30 (8.5%) responded as strongly agree

A total of 354 respondents were prompted: "I use Facebook/Twitter to interact with other people about politics." 37 (10.5%) responded as strongly disagree, 66 (18.6%) responded as disagree, 68 (19.2%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 148 (41.8%) responded as agree, and 35 (9.9%) responded as strongly agree

On asking 354 respondents: "I believe social media is an effective tool for political communication" 15 (4.2%) responded as strongly disagree, 29 (8.2%) responded as disagree, 55 (15.5%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 190 (53.7%) responded as agree, and 65 (18.4%) responded as strongly agree

Upon asking the above-stated survey question majority of the participants marked their responses as agreed and it is clear from the results and analysis of the survey questions that university students' utilization of New media platforms Facebook/Twitter for political purposes in Pakistan is directly linked with their political polarization

4.1.4. Research Question 4

Does political activity on new media encourage university students to participate in online and offline political engagement?

A total of 354 respondents were asked: "I think that social media platforms like Facebook/Twitter provide an effective platform for citizens to voice their political opinions and engage in political activities." 12 (3.4%) responded as strongly disagree, 31 (8.8%) responded as disagree, 63 (17.8%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 184 (52%) responded as agree, and 64 (18.1%) responded as strongly agree

 354 respondents were asked: "I feel that engaging in political activity on social media is an important way to express my political beliefs and values" 16 (4.5%) responded as strongly disagree, 41 (11.6%) responded as disagree, 71 (20.1%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 188 (53.1%) responded as agree, and 38 (10.7%) responded as strongly agree

On asking 354 respondents: "I feel that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has encouraged me to become more involved in local politics and community activism." 22 (6.2%) responded as strongly disagree, 44 (12.4%) responded as disagree, 85 (24%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 173 (48.9%) responded as agree, and 30 (8.5%) responded as strongly agree

A total of 354 respondents were prompted: "I believe that engaging in political discussions or campaigns on social media has motivated me to attend more political rallies or protests." 27 (7.6%) responded as strongly disagree, 62 (17.5%) responded as disagree, 87 (24.6%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 141 (39.8%) responded as agree, and 37 (10.5%) responded as strongly agree

354 respondents were prompted: "I think that social media has played an important role in increasing my political engagement and motivating me to become more politically active offline." 20 (5.6%) responded as strongly disagree, 54 (15.3%) responded as disagree, 83 (23.4%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 161 (45.5%) responded as agree, and 36 (10.2%) responded as strongly agree

On asking respondents: "I believe that participating in online political campaigns or discussions on social media can help bring about positive change" 16 (4.5%) responded as strongly disagree, 37 (10.5%) responded as disagree, 87 (24.6%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 163 (46%) responded as agree, and 51 (14.4%) responded as strongly agree

In the light of the results and analysis of the survey questions stated above as the clear majority of the participants marked their responses as agreeing it is evident that political activity on New media platforms Facebook/Twitter is an important factor that encourages university students' online and offline political engagement.

4.1.5. Research Question 5

Does political opinion on new media affect university students' political behavior?

A total of 354 respondents were asked: "I believe that the political opinions expressed on social media have influenced my political beliefs and values." 15 (4.2%) responded as strongly disagree, 45 (12.7%) responded as disagree, 85 (24%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 167 (47.2%) responded as agree, and 42 (11.9%) responded as strongly agree

354 respondents were asked: "I think that social media has played an important role in shaping my political behavior and decisions, such as whom I vote for in elections or which political causes I support." 16 (4.5%) responded as strongly disagree, 47 (13.3%) responded as disagree, 70 (19.8%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 177 (50%) responded as agree, and 44 (12.4%) responded as strongly agree

On asking 354 respondents "I feel that the political opinions expressed on social media have encouraged me to become more involved in politics and take action to support the causes or candidates I believe in." 16 (4.6%) responded as strongly disagree, 49 (14%) responded as disagree, 76 (21.7%) responded as neither agree nor disagree, 168 (47.9%) responded as agree, and 42 (12%) responded as strongly agree.

The above-stated survey questions were prompted to the participants and the analysis shows that the majority of the participants marked agreed as their response which clearly indicates that political opinion on new media affects university students' political behavior.

4.2. Qualitative Research Data

Thematic analysis is used as the data analysis method. Findings are thematically discussed and reported. Analysis of the data is based on information gathered from interviews with selected participants and fully examines answers to interview question questions. The focus is on data exploration and analysis relevant to the thesis objectives.

4.3. Thematic Analysis

Following themes were generated by in-depth content analysis of the data collected.

1.   Frequency of utilizing new media for political purposes is linked with the level of university students' political polarization

2.   political discourse on new media affects university students' political attention, awareness, understanding, and ability to debate

3.   The utilization of new media for political purposes is associated with students' political polarization

4.   political activity on new media impacts Online and offline political engagement of university students

5.   political opinions on new media impacts the political behavior of students

4.3.1. Theme 1: The Frequency of Utilizing New Media for Political Purposes is Linked with the Level of University Students' Political Polarization

Table 33. Theme 1.

The Frequency of Utilizing New Media for Political Purposes is Linked with the Level of University Students' Political Polarization	Mentioned by Students	Percentage
Agreed	5	100
Disagreed	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Total	5	100

Own resource

According to the above-mentioned table when students were prompted about Do you think your frequency of utilizing new media for political purposes is linked to your political polarization? all five students from the faculty of social and behavioral sciences expressed their views in favor of the fact that the more, they use New media for political purposes the more they feel polarized. According to one of the interviewees: "The way nowadays New media is used by the media cells of the political parties I believe that it is making the youth politically polarized to a very high extent I personally have experienced that when I use Twitter more, I become more politically indulged and polarized because there is a lot of irrational political debate taking place that makes me more polarized."

Based on the views expressed by all five students interviewed it is evident that the more university students in Pakistan use new media for political purposes the more they become politically polarization polarized.

4.3.2. Theme 2: Political Discourse on New Media Affects University Students' Political Attention, Awareness, Understanding, and Ability to Debate

Table 34. Theme 2**.**

Political Discourse on New Media Affects University Students' Political Attention, Awareness, Understanding, and Ability to Debate	Mentioned by students	Percentage
Agreed	5	100
Disagreed	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Total	5	100

Own resource

According to Table no 2 when a total of 5 students were interviewed and prompted about How has engaging in political discourse on new media impacted your political attention, awareness, understanding, and ability to debate? All the students stated that they believe that political discourse on new media has increased their level of political attention, awareness, understanding, and ability to debate.

According to one of the students: "No doubt due to the political content shared on New media I have become more politically aware of the political situation of the country, viewing different political opinions shared on New media has enabled me to better understand the political scenario and to build my own perspective."

From the views expressed by the students interviewed it is clearly manifest that Political discourse on new media increases university students' political attention, awareness, understanding, and ability to debate in Pakistan.

4.3.3. Theme 3: Utilization of New Media for Political Purposes is Associated with Students' Political Polarization

Table 35. Theme 3.

Utilization of New Media for Political Purposes is associated with students' Political Polarization	Mentioned by Students	Percentage
Agreed	5	100
Disagreed	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Total	5	100

Own resource

When the students from the faculty of social and behavioral sciences were interviewed and were enquired Can you describe your experiences with utilizing new media for political purposes? How do you think your utilization of new media for political purposes may be linked to your political polarization? Every one of them responded they were certain that their use of new media for political purposes makes them politically polarization.According to one of them: "I use New media for political purposes to see what is going on with candidates that I support or to check for any upcoming rally or protest and what's going on with opposition parties, and yes I think when I use New media and follow more political content my political views become more rigid by consuming that content."From the information described above it is apparent that the use of new media for political purposes is strongly associated with university students' political polarization in Pakistan.

4.3.4. Theme 4: Political Activity on New Media Impact Online and Offline Political Engagement of University Students

Table 36. Theme 4.

Political Activity on New Media Impact Online and Offline Political Engagement of University Students	Mentioned by Students	Percentage
Agreed	5	100
Disagreed	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Total	5	100

Own resource

According to the above-described table when the five interviewed students from the faculty of social and behavioral studies were asked about How has political activity on new media impacted your participation in online and offline political engagement? Can you give examples? All of the interviewees expressed their views in line with the statement that Political activity on new media impact the Online and offline political engagement of university students.

One of the students stated that: "my political activity on New Media has affected my Online and offline political activity in such a way that before the new media, I did not know anything about political activities. Through it, I gain awareness about political affairs. I will definitely participate in political activities and talk when I feel the need. But Based on my experiences with New Media, I sometimes feel motivated to engage in political activities"

In light of the interviews given by the students, it is evident that political activity taking place on new media platforms encourages university students to engage in political activities online and offline.

4.3.5. Theme 5: Political Opinions on New Media Impact the Political Behavior of Students

Table 37. Theme 5.

Political Opinions on New Media Impact the Political Behavior of Students	Mentioned by Students	Percentage
Agreed	5	100
Disagreed	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Total	5	100

Own resource

Five students from the faculty of social and behavioral sciences were interviewed upon prompting about How has exposure to different political opinions on new media influenced your political behavior, if at all? In what ways have you been motivated to become more politically active or engaged as a result of your experiences on new media? Every student agreed that political opinions on new media impact the political behavior of students.

One of the interviewees stated that: "I think it's a very important factor of New media in my opinion it gives a really very big diverse range of opinion and analysis and it really gives me a strong understanding of the political issues going on in the country it helps me a lot in building my own perspectives like which candidate or party is better than others."

It is evident from the analysis above that political opinions shared on new media are an important factor that plays an important role in shaping the political behavior of university students in Pakistan.

4.4. Comparing Survey and Interview Findings

From the above given analysis of data collected from the survey and interviews conducted in line with this thesis research question and objectives, it is evident that the majority of participants both from the survey and semi-structured interviews were in view of and agreed that the frequency of political use of New media has an increasing effect on the level of political polarization among university students the more they use New media for political purposes the

more they become politically polarized, political discourse on New media i.e. political discussion, political content, political events, issues, and developments shared on New media increases awareness attention, and understanding of political issues among university students in Pakistan, university students' utilization of New media platforms Facebook/Twitter for political purposes in Pakistan is directly linked with their political polarization, political activity on New media platforms Facebook/Twitter is an important factor that moves university students' online and offline political engagement, political opinion on new media plays an important role in shaping university students' political behavior in Pakistan.based upon these findings and analysis it is evident that use of new media platforms plays a role of tool in raising political polarization among university students in Pakistan.

CHAPTER FIVE

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

This thesis is considering the following hypothesis in light of the survey responses and semi-structured interviews of the students at the faculty of Social and behavioral science university of Punjab.

5.1. Hypothesis 1

H0: There is not a positive correlation between the utilization of New Media for political purposes and political polarization among Pakistani university students

H1: There is a positive correlation between the utilization of New Media for political purposes and political polarization among Pakistani university students

Table 38. First hypothesis testing.

Correlations			
		AAvg_PP	**Avg_UNM**
Avg_PP	**Pearson Correlation**	1	.496[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	354	354
Avg_UNM	**Pearson Correlation**	.496[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	354	354
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

 Source: SPSS

To investigate the presence of a correlation between variables Pearson correlation coefficient test was applied. The correlation of Political Polarization as a dependent variable was studied with the Utilization of New Media for political purposes as an independent variable. The results showed that the correlation value between Political polarization and the Utilization of New Media for political purposes is.496 which shows a positive correlation between these variables. On the other

hand, the thematic analysis of the data collected through semi-structured interviews of the five students at the faculty of Social and Behavioral sciences supports the first hypothesis of this study Hence, it is proved that utilization of New Media for political purposes increases political polarization among Pakistani university students

5.2. Hypothesis 2

H0: There is not a positive correlation between Political discourse on new media and political polarization among Pakistani university students

H2: There is a positive correlation between Political discourse on new media and political polarization among Pakistani university students

Table 39. Second hypothesis testing.

	Correlations		
		AAvg_PP	Avg_PDNM
AAvg_PP	Pearson Correlation	1	.630**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	354	354
AAvg_PDNM	Pearson Correlation	.630**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	3 54	354
	**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

Source: SPSS

The correlation of Political Polarization as a dependent variable was studied with the Political discourse on new media as an independent variable. The results showed that the correlation value between Political polarization and the Utilization of New Media for political purposes is.630 which shows a positive correlation between these variables. While based upon the finding and thematic analysis of the data collected by semi-structured interviews of the students the second hypothesis of the study is evidenced correct. So, it is found that Political discourse on new media plays an important role in rising political polarization among Pakistani university students

5.3. Hypothesis 3

H0: There is not a positive correlation between Political activity on new media and political polarization among Pakistani university students

H3: There is a positive correlation between Political activity on new media and political polarization among Pakistani university students

Table 40. Third hypothesis testing.

		AAvg_PP	Avg_PANM
	Correlations		
AAvg_PP	**Pearson Correlation**	1	.536**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	354	354
AAvg_PANM	**Pearson Correlation**	.536**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	354	354
		**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).	

Source: SPSS

The correlation of Political Polarization as a dependent variable was studied with the Political activity on new media as an independent variable. The results showed that the correlation value between Political polarization and the Utilization of New Media for political purposes is.536 which shows a positive correlation between these variables. Whereas the thematic analysis of the data collected through semi-structured interviews also disclosed that the third hypothesis of the thesis is correct. Thus, it is proved that there is a positive correlation between Political activity on new media and political polarization among Pakistani university students

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis aims to explore the effects of using new media and political polarization among Pakistani university students and has discovered the use of New media platforms Facebook/Twitter plays the role of a tool in making university students politically polarized. This thesis used a mixed methodology for conducting the research which involved surveys and semi-structured interviews.

The theoretical framework implied for this involved the uses gratification theory, Agenda setting theory, and social identity theory that were in line with the research objectives of the thesis. Data was collected through mixed methodology using surveys and semi-structured interviews.

The quantitative data collected through the survey was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques by SPSS. While qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews were analyzed by employing thematic analysis. The literature of the thesis also shows that there is a huge surge in the political use of New media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) in Pakistan and it has a very important role in rising political polarization.

The results of the data analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data proved that the use of the new media platforms Twitter and Facebook play the role of a tool in raising political polarization among university students in Pakistan.

Recommendation

Political activity, Political discourse, and Political opinions shared on New media platforms Facebook and twitter are playing an important role in making the Pakistani university students Politically split to an extent that is dangerous for the upcoming future of Pakistan. It is a very crucial and sensitive matter for Pakistan's nation and state. The situation going on in Pakistan that is made evident with empirical research done in this thesis is really very alarming. It as an alarming situation.

There is a dire need for steps taken in order to neutralize this social ill of extreme political polarizations. The most dangerous aspect of this situation is that this phenomenon of extreme political polarization is affecting the youth of the country. The people who are going to be the face of the country, the people who are going to be the future of the state which means that if this situation continues and solid steps are not taken to make this situation better it will be just equivalent to just equivalent to putting the nation's future at stake.

Findings of this thesis provide ample empirical stats and literature facts regarding the effects of the use of New media platforms Facebook and Twitter that are being casted among the university students in Pakistan now it is the responsibility of political office bearer of Pakistan to take solid foot stepping in order to make the future of the country safe and sound.

Findings

1. This thesis has found a strong relation between Pakistani university students' level of political polarization and their utilization of New media for political so it is very important to manage the way political content is being shared on New media platforms so that we can minimize the effect of political polarization

2. It is found that Political discourse on New media is an important factor that provides awareness of politics to university students in Pakistan so there is a strong need that information shared on new media should be very responsibly shared.

3. This thesis also suggests that the political activity on new media encourages university students to participate in online and offline political engagement so it is very important to manage political activity taking place on the new media platform to be very credible and reasonably shared so that it may produce productive online and offline political engagement patterns for the university students in Pakistan.

4. This thesis also made evident that the political opinion shared on new media affects university students' political behavior, it is a very sensitive matter as it affects the political behavior of university students in Pakistan. It is strongly recommended that the way political opinion should be shared by the general public, journalists, and politicians should not be very aggressive, extremely polarized, and biased so that it may produce productive and positive political behavioral aspects among university students in Pakistan.

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