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Media Role in Making People's Expectations and Political Activism in Pakistan

Abstract: *This research article aims to know the role of media in making people's expectations and to know how media is playing its role in political activism in Pakistan. The importance of media is growing every day because of the global connection that exists. Nowadays, the widespread media influence on society is easy to discern. Mass participation in politics has been bolstered by the rise of new communication technologies. While it is true that traditional and new media have a big impact on politics. We have applied qualitative research philosophy with an explanatory approach. This article concludes that media especially social media can influence opinions and can raise public expectations of the government. This article finds that social media has given people a forum to participate in politics. It is a most effective means to receive information and a key source of political activism.*

Key Words: Political Activism, New Media, Conventional Media, People's Expectations

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Introduction

A vibrant media is needed for democratic success (Hebermas, 1962). The media generate public opinion, which connects the state to societal demands (Castells, 1996). Role of both media and the state are vital for forming objective public opinion. Media stimulates the people raises expectations about government performance and influences political culture (Khan, 2014). Given the above, it is apparent that new media are radically altering how individuals participate in activism. Given that

individuals use new media not just every day, but extensively throughout the day, it stands to reason that they are more engaged in promoting social change via new media (Franklin, 2014).

Pakistan has one of the most dynamic media environments. Since the 2002 liberalisation, the number of media outlets in Pakistan has exploded. Increasing media activism has evolved together with the expansion of the number of media sources. The media revolution has made a major contribution to the development of political

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activism and political culture in Pakistan. While, political parties in Pakistan use media tools in their political campaigns, which ultimately results in the formation of expectations among the politically active population. The social environment influences the government policies, associated problems, and media of Pakistan, which in turn has an impact on the society. Media have formed expectations among people from their government (Karamat & Farooq, [2016](#)).

The administration of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) used the media as a vehicle for the manifestation of their manifestos, political campaigning and political activism. It is argued that the media is the source of political activism. People who do not utilise the media for the purpose of increasing their political knowledge are considered politically inactive. On the other hand, the masses that are more linked to the media (both conventional and new) for political reasons are politically involved and demand more from the government. Accordingly, the author uses an explanatory approach to explore the issue.

Media

The media, in its role as the fourth pillar of the state and an essential agent of society, serves the public interest by disseminating important information and knowledge on issues of national and international relevance. In the past, it was difficult to shape public opinion on certain topics via the media, and people in many cultures were ignorant of the globe and the societies with which they were concerned. The advent of the technology revolution and the growth of journalism, on the other hand, made it feasible to enlighten the broad public regardless of where they reside or who they are affiliated with regardless of who they are. Journalism has developed into an essential component of the media because of its ability to educate people on all levels of society and to assist them in formulating ideas. People are aware of everything that is going on in the globe because, in this age of the information revolution, the media has surpassed the geographical boundaries that separate the

countries of the world. The transformation of the globe into a global village makes it feasible for people to gain knowledge on any topic; yet, this is something that can only be accomplished via the media of the present day (Sadaf, [2011](#)).

Media may adjust its schema to create intended social or individual impacts. Whatever media portrays, it promotes and makes certain subjects relevant. According to McCombs, media (particularly the news media) is effective in informing us what to think and what to think about (McCombs, 2005). Similar to public perception, individuals create perceptions based on media. Perception plays a big part in making certain situations essential and others inconsequential, and it's impacted by numerous variables. Severin (2001) argues that prior experience, cultural expectations, motives, emotions, needs, and attitudes impact perceptions. In conceptualising "the media", theorists have used the phrase "consciousness industry" to suggest that the media forms our consciousness – what we think, how we think, and what we think about (Enzensberger, [1974](#)). If so, the media influences our lives greatly.

Traditional Media

Today, people are a click away from any online information. The media inform, educate, and amuse our society. Print media are newspapers, books, magazines, etc. Mass communication involves an electronic way of sharing information. With radio and TV, listeners and viewers are updated and better grasp current events. Radio has also helped foster creativity. This audio medium's influence extends beyond metropolitan regions to outlying parts of Pakistan. Rural Pakistanis gain more from audio mass communication. In terms of reach, TV is the second most popular media. TV is a big aspect of our lives nowadays (Anandan, [2018](#)). The print media in Pakistan dates to before independence. For years, newspapers were the only privately held media to be independent and critical of the state. Media publish in more than eleven languages.

Democracy is the most equitable form of governance that currently exists. It enables the populace to elect their people and then oversee their actions as public authorities. The media play a crucial part in this process. Journalists must attempt to reveal the truth about politicians' lives and portray them accurately. Thus, every citizen is able to judge politicians. According to his or her standards, s/he will vote for the candidate s/he deems to be the most trustworthy and competent. The media has a substantial influence on society. They provide individuals with information on ongoing occurrences. It exerts influence on individuals' lives by serving as a source of inspiration for the development of personal values and beliefs. Through this approach, the media effectively mobilizes the populace and engenders diverse social movements. Consequently, every individual within a given culture serves as an indicator of forthcoming changes (Hallin, [1992](#)).

Social Media

In the contemporary era, experts have investigated the effectiveness of social media in motivating and assisting political movements and revolutions. Social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook etc. give users various participatory settings with accessible and practical tools for communication and political activism. The rising prevalence of modern information and communication technologies in numerous aspects of our lives has greatly increased the importance of people's proficiency with these technologies (Choi et al., [2020](#)). Pierre Bourdieu, a prominent sociologist, suggested that people might acquire or establish expectations of the government that allow social and political mobility (Bourdieu, [1991](#); Ignatow & Robinson, [2017](#)).

Today, people no longer need to wait for the transmission process, as every social media user has become an independent source of information. The everyday news and opinions encountered by social media users span a broad variety of issues. Social media serve as

an umbrella that encompasses a number of intriguing and life-improving elements. Features like friend tagging, video calls, chatting, video uploading and friend searches have enriched our lives. In the new environment, issues are resolved by the court of public opinion after being battled out in the mass media. This process has been assisted by new media, which has provided the largest opportunities for people to participate in this shift (Nity & Singh, [2017](#)).

There are several uses for social media. It allows for identity work to be performed. When a person describes himself or herself in a profile, introspection is required. As people see the responses to their online social presence, they will view themselves from a new perspective and realise that online engagement makes them feel more open about their ideas, views, and questions - for better and for worse. Second, social media enables people to manage their connections in a variety of ways, including those between the average citizen and the government. Thirdly, social media enable people to collaborate with their political leaders on professional matters. Occasionally, social media is their occupation, such as a popular blog or a person with a huge social and political network circle who is recruited to promote events. People are able to seek information and exchange opinions via social media. This material might span from campaigns to local concerns to disaster aid. People may often provide political opinions or examine the views and pronouncements of the government via social media, sometimes in conjunction with the dissemination of information (Wright & Webb, [2011](#)). Therefore, social media is a forum through which people are inspired by their government and therefore build high expectations for it.

People's Expectations from Government

Confidence and faith in the government/influence citizens over the political process. People's expectations are mostly based on the performance of the government and their conviction that they can comprehend and affect political issues.

Political activism is an individual's perception of how influential their vote will be on the political culture. Simply said, activism is connected to the response to the question, Does your vote matter? People with a strong sense of political activism feel that their vote will affect the political process. Media has a significant role in fostering political activism and altering the expectations of the public about the performance of the government so that they think their vote may bring about change (Sarfaraz & Ahmed, [2012](#)).

Thus, media-induced mind control is most effective when the target media isn't conscious of the influence being exerted and changes its viewpoints of its own will, as is the case when people believe news reports and journalistic opinions to be real. Social and political perspectives on power must be transcended in this investigation of social and symbolic power. Findings on the media's impact may be aided if we can establish a direct link between the mental representations and their variations and the elements of news items. Then, well-known but ambiguous notions such as influence and manipulation may be given a concrete meaning (Singh & Pandey, [2017](#)). It has been noticed that people have a lack of trust in the government. This differs from a distaste for politicians. In this instance, the problem is a lack of confidence in and incentive to improve the regulating mechanism. The majority of individuals have also lost hope in a better government, which explains their indifference toward politics. The media and society have a strong relationship. Today, the widespread influence of media on society is readily apparent. The media represent our society, how it functions, and what it entails. With the progress of technology, Pakistani society has seen the spread of people's opinions and ideas (Khalid et al., [2014](#)).

The rise of the PTI and Imran Khan has produced a new surge of reform-related expectations. His words highlighting stronger governance and rule of law, giving access to core public services for disadvantaged elements of society, overcoming the economic

crisis, fostering human development, and eliminating poverty have aroused a tremendous deal of enthusiasm. It is remarkable that thirty million people who were not previously registered to vote used their right. Most of them are from affluent families that live in or are moving to metropolitan areas, and they're well-versed in media from both the new and the old worlds. Their peers who did not have an education followed in their footsteps. People have a better awareness of the rights and responsibilities that come along with being a citizen of the state as a direct result of the increased availability of information via electronic and social media. In order for the economy to live up to the standards set by these young people, it has to be able to take in between 1 and 1.5 million of the newly employed each year (Hussain, [2018](#)). The utilisation of the Internet and all other e-activities promotes online users' political awareness and stimulates political engagement and participation.

Politics in the era of social media is accompanied by increased public accountability. The biggest voter turnout in Pakistan's history occurred in 2013 as a result of election campaigns using internet activism. According to Pakistan's social media demographics, youngsters make up fifty per cent of the overall social media population (Jahangir, [2017](#)). Facebook is the most popular social network for political information among young people in Pakistan, surpassing Twitter. According to recent research, Pakistan has the second largest young population in the world, behind Yemen, which has had a profound effect on the political dynamics of Pakistan (Ittefaq & Iqbal, [2018](#)). Since 2008, Pakistan's political parties have aggressively used social media, which has altered the political landscape of Pakistan (Eijaz, 2013).

Political Activism

Political activism is defined by Pippa Norris ([2009](#)) as "the methods in which people engage, the processes that drive them to do so, and the repercussions of these activities". It is

suggested that citizens, especially young people, are “politically apathetic” and in need of “rejuvenation” as a result of politicians being “less representational and attentive to public concerns” (Vukelic & Stanojevic, 2012). On the other hand, post-industrial economies have experienced a redirection of political activity outside of the legislative and political party structure, resulting in the formation of “new politics”. (Dahlgren & Gurevitch, 2005).

In general, democracy theorists agree that political engagement is a necessary prerequisite for the growth of democracy, with the belief that more participation is correlated with greater democracy. However, there has never been unanimity among proponents of participatory democracy and democratic realism on the level of engagement required for the unimpeded development of democracy. According to proponents of participatory democracy, the participation of people in the political process may strengthen democratic legitimacy. They believe it reduces the distance between the people and the government, enhances the problem-solving abilities of society, and garners public support, so ensuring better judgments and the capacity to execute them more efficiently. Democratic realists, on the other hand, believe that democratic life is contingent upon traditional political engagement, and thus concentrate their studies on election behaviour. Political activism as a form of involvement may be characterised generally as a collection of diverse activities that impact political decision-making and the conduct of people in power. The concept of political activism proposed by Sidney Verba and Norman Nie in the 1970s remains one of the most often used definitions to this day. According to Verba and Nie, “political engagement” refers to the activities of private persons that are intended to influence the selection of government employees and/or their behaviour (Wasserman, 2016).

Over a decade ago, ICTs revolutionised the world. New media and technology have transformed social and political conversations, for example. First, political parties used the

Internet as a means to educate the general public via the utilization of their websites. The advent of new media and technology has significantly altered the dynamics of two-way communication. Online political activities increase young participation. Internet, political knowledge, and involvement are linked. This tendency affects elections, notably in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh (Ahmad, 2019). The 2018 elections occur when social media's involvement in politics and elections is significantly higher than it was five years ago. Social media has become the main source of political knowledge for a generation of young voters. The vote of young people is substantial; 64% of the population is under 30. 27% of Pakistanis utilise mobile internet, or 56 million people. According to PTA statistics, most use social media. The importance of social media on their voting choices cannot be overstated given the massive following political personalities and parties generated online in the lack of alternative political places for the young since the prohibition of on-campus student unions (Khilji, 2018).

Conclusions

Social media's popularity and dependency have doubled in the age of technological innovation. Digital media's impact on society and political engagement has increased from its inception as a respectable but seldom-used mode of communication. For knowledge, communication, and socialising, people rely on the media, especially social media. This article concludes that conventional and social media can influence the opinions and temperaments of discussion participants. Media helps raise public expectations of the government. Social media has given people a forum to participate in politics. Traditional and social media are the most effective means to receive information and a key source of political activism. Today, political parties utilise media to generate expectations. Political activism awakens people to their political engagement. It can strengthen the state's democracy. Media, including conventional and new media, has played a crucial role in

growing political activism. Now politicians may excite their vote bank with little time and inexpensive costs. Every administration creates expectations for people's empowerment, and so does the PTI in Pakistan.

In 2018, Pakistan had its highest voting participation due to digital activism. The young make up 50% of the social media

population in the nation. The Pakistani youth uses social media to learn about political parties' leaders, manifestos, pledges, performances, and other activities, leading to radical political change. Elections in 2018 have shown how social media has changed Pakistan's political scene. The days of door-to-door campaigning are numbered. This "trend" is likely to last: social media is the next major thing in politics.

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