

**Digital Democracy in Pakistan: Exploring the Impact of Social Media on Political Awareness and Participation among Youth**

**Shabeer Ullah**

[shabeerullah10@gmail.com](mailto:shabeerullah10@gmail.com)

Lecturer, Department of Communication & Media Studies, Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak

**Dr. Mohammad Anwar Khan**

[anwar.mehsud@kkuk.edu.pk](mailto:anwar.mehsud@kkuk.edu.pk)

Lecturer, Department of Communication and Media Studies, Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak

**Nadir Saeed Sarhadi**

[nadir.masscom@gmail.com](mailto:nadir.masscom@gmail.com)

PhD Scholar Department of Media & Communication Studies, International Islamic University Islamabad

**Corresponding Author: Shabeer Ullah** [iramkamran07@gmail.com](mailto:iramkamran07@gmail.com)

**Received:** 13-12-2025 **Revised:** 27-12-2025 **Accepted:** 11-01-2026 **Published:** 25-01-2026

## ABSTRACT

*The role of social media has been rising in all social movements across various countries with high internet access rates. Due to its use by politicians and activists, social media has evolved into a free and powerful tool for mass political communication. Participating in online social networks is a trend that the younger generation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) eagerly adopts. The primary focus of this research is on the power of social media in increasing political awareness in Kohat Division, KP, aiming to understand its role in promoting political understanding. With the growing popularity of smartphones, the internet, and the mainstream media's perceived ignorance and bias toward political events, social media has become an alternative and accessible source of information for the public. The current quantitative study involved a questionnaire survey conducted among 100 male and 100 female participants aged 18 to 45 years from universities in Kohat Division, using purposive sampling. The data were analyzed with SPSS. The results indicate that many participants felt well-informed about political issues because of social media exposure. Most expressed confidence in their ability to take part in political discussions and activities. Additionally, they reported using social media to share political content, attend rallies, and participate in debates, showing a change in political engagement among youth in semi-urban areas. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, civil society actors, and educators to utilize digital tools for inclusive democratic development, especially in less urbanized areas like Kohat Division.*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Political Awareness, Youth, Political Socialization, Civic Engagement, Digital Democracy, Online Activism

## INTRODUCTION

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for exchanging information, communicating, engaging with the public, and building public discourse. Social media has had a significant influence on political processes worldwide due to its easy and instant access to people. It has played a key role in bringing about change, structuring political institutions, and socializing the public on various political aspects. In Pakistan, traditional media has long dominated the information landscape. However, social media platforms have also become influential in the country (Ullah & Iqbal, 2025). Social media has been significant in providing people with access to political information, enabling them to engage with issues and express their views independently. Unlike traditional media, which faces political pressures and

Kohat and Karak bans periodically subject to from the government, social media enjoys the freedom of information to a large extent (Muzaffar et al., 2019).

During the 2013 and 2018 elections, the use of social media was high among the country's youth. The vibrant and watchful social media were one of the factors that helped bring about peaceful and constitutional change in the political arena (Muzaffar et al., 2020). According to numbers provided by the Election Commission of Pakistan, voter turnout during the 2018 elections nationwide was 51.7 per cent. A drop from 2013, when turnout was the highest it's ever been at 55.02 per cent. In the 2008 general elections, voter turnout was 43.65%, while in 2013, it reached an all-time high of 55%, the highest turnout in general elections since 1970 (Election Commission of Pakistan). While in the 2018 general election, a marginal decrease was observed in the total number of votes in 2018 general election because of registration issues, but still, the social media sites in Pakistan have become important sources of political news and information (Bilal et al., 2018).

Various factors shape political attitudes and behaviors. One of the main factors in the media that influences political attitudes and behaviors to a significant extent. Social media is one of the primary forms of media that also influences the development of specific attitudes in people (Akram et al., 2021; Ullah, 2025). According to the political awareness theory, political attitudes and behaviors are formed in late childhood; however, to a small extent, during adolescence. Research studies on the effects of social media highlight the need to investigate attitude formation at an early age. Social media research shows that social media exposure has a significant impact on people's attitudes. Most users of social media utilize these platforms to reinforce their existing ideas. They avoid content that does not match their ideas or attitudes. To avoid psychological stress, they select those contents which are already idealized by them (Batista et al., 2019).

These developments demonstrate that social media sites are playing a crucial role in promoting democratic values and enhancing the country's political culture. This, however, needs to be investigated on an empirical basis to know the extent social media influences the process of political awareness in the country. Questions persist about whether social media fosters democratic values and critical thinking, or simply reinforces echo chambers and disinformation. Additionally, the usage patterns of social media across various demographics, including age, education, and socio-economic background, have yet to be explored in many contexts.

### **Problem Statement**

The research aimed to explore media users' perceptions and experiences regarding the role of social media in the process of political awareness, which was measured in terms of electoral and non-electoral participation, such as casting a vote in the previous election. The study examines whether using social media has any significant influence on viewers' perceptions of the norms and values within the political system, particularly in terms of the roles and responsibilities of politically elected officials who hold key positions in the government. The framework of political awareness has been replicated for almost 60 years. However, the Kohat Division was still unexplored; therefore, this research work is particular focused on this region in order to investigate whether the theory of political awareness could be applicable here or this ethnicity would be an exception for the political awareness.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the role of social media in enhancing political awareness and self-perceived political competence among young adults.
2. To explore the relationship between social media usage and patterns of political engagement, both online and offline.

3. To analyze how exposure to political content on social media influences young users' understanding of government norms, values, and current affairs.

### **Research Questions**

**RQ1.** To what extent do social media platforms contribute to young adults' self-perceived political competence and awareness of national issues?

**RQ2.** What is the relationship between social media usage and young adults' confidence in their ability to participate in political activities?

**RQ3.** How does exposure to political content on social media influence young users' perception of being well-informed about governmental norms, values, and current affairs?

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the current analysis lies in its timely exploration of how social media contributes to political awareness among educated youth in the historical conservative regions of Kohat Division, KP. By applying the mention method, the research sheds light on a crucial intersection between civic consciousness and digital communication. The findings not only provide empirical evidence on the transformative role of social media in portraying political perception and engagement but also offer valuable insights for strategic makers, civil society actors and educators to harness digital tools for inclusive democratic development in less urbanized areas.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Social media is a way for people to share ideas and information. It works through a computer-based platform that lets the public linked and exchange messages based on shared interests. Today, social media is notable examples where users can post their thoughts, videos, and images to stay in touch with family and friends (Ullah & Iqbal, 2025). One of the main aims of social media is to provide the public with a space to find information, share their opinions, and take part in discussions. It also allows for greater freedom to share their views freely (Ghani, 2020).

In Pakistan, young people are utilizing social media outlets to educate themselves and become more aware of politics; they use these networks to share their political opinions and connect with others (Ullah, 2025). Nowadays, not only students but also ordinary citizens, political leaders, and parties are using social media to spread their views on both national and international problems and to gain people's support. The rise of the internet and digital technology has helped induce youth participation in social media (Herrada-Lores et al., 2025; Shifman et al., 2025). For the young generation, social media is too much fun; it helps them connect with love and also provides a space to express their political viewpoints. Social media works are playing a significant role in supporting youth by providing them with easy, basic political information (Shah et al., 2024). In the past, the government had a strong influence on newspapers and television. Only some non-government channels existed. The print media was often censored, and the public had limited access to sources of knowledge and entertainment (Muzaffar et al., 2019).

Social media is also seen as a source of information because it permits users to create and share content, making it an outlet for open discussion. These users generated discussion support public link intellectually and emotionally, which developed their ability to understand and judge political issues. Social media polls are often used to collect people's opinions on political events and movements (Akram et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2020). Social media has proliferated in recent years and has become a powerful source in the electoral process. It enables people to participate in political activities. The election plays a significance role in portraying government leadership and personal communication on social media can significantly affect people's engagement and awareness (Opeyemi, 2018).

According to Reuter and Szakonyi (2025), most researchers have spent a considerable amount of time studying how the public learns about politics through the media; most studies have focused on traditional media tools, such as newspapers, Radio, and Television. However, in recent years, more research has begun to emphasise how using the internet affects political awareness. But social media is the main root of all information, particularly about politics, because of easily access of the internet and mobile phones in mainly in the hand of every person.

Every political system needs active participation, access to government information strong belief in the process and awareness pf ongoing political issues. In the democratic countries. These strong beliefs and involvement in political activities help shape political socialization (Helberger, 2020). A political system is made up of many institutions that influence what is called political efficacy, which refer to hoe people view and understanding their political system (Helberger, 2020). Political efficacy depends on public attitudes and beliefs about how the political system works. People feel politically efficacy is of two types: internal efficacy, which related to people’s knowledge belief and ability to understand political matters and external efficacy, which refers to how the government responds to public opinion. Internal efficacy often supports external efficacy and sometime both works together (Yaseen et al., 2018). Social media plays a key role in strengthening both types involving users in political discussion and awareness (Ullah et al., 2020). Over the past few decades, social media has become an influential platform for political engagement in Pakistan (Batool et al., 2020).

The role of media in political awareness can be traced back to the writings of political scientist Charles Merriam who wrote that radio and film reach millions of people daily and influence them through its contents and interpretation. His study gave a new impetus to the study of media and political awareness and since then a phenomenal growth in the research on news media usage and political awareness has been witnessed (Abida, 2023).

According to Kahne and Bowyer (2018) the online activity is changing the way young people get engage in politics. Today, the internet plays a huge role in increasing campaign fund, sharing knowledge, discussing views, and encouraging people to take political action. Youth political engagement now consists a strong online presence as seen in movement such as Black Lives Matter and various forms of quick, online activism. However, it still not fully understood when hoe and why using social media actually leads to real political engagement.

In the article “Role of Social Media in Changing Value system in Pakistan” argued that during last decade social media has greatly reshaped the lifestyle of common masses and has promoted a global culture in Pakistan. Media in Pakistan” is a comprehensive report on the role, responsibilities and challenges posed to Pakistani media in the wake of Pakistan’s transition to democracy in 2008. This report is prepared by Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies which primarily aims at investigation of functioning of Pakistani media under conflict situation and its role as a watchdog of democratic system (Ali et al., 2013).

The young people’s engagement in politics within Western democracy has attracted important attention in recent phase of time. The extensive focus on this problem is in academic research, editorial and institutional discussions shows abroad concern regarding the ways in which young people interact with democratic institutions. For example, the European Union has declared its commitment to fostering active citizenship and has urged member states to incorporate civic education into school curricula. Furthermore, numerous initiatives have been launched by national electoral commissions, governmental organization and political parties (Sahr Suleman, 2025; Svensson, 2025).

Digital media using does not always lead to Kohat Division, KP changes in behavior, it still performs a significance character in political communication and democratic participation. According to media participation perspective, new media supported make the political setting often seen as difficult and exclusive more open and accessible to ordinary people. This platform can give citizen a sense of power and engagement by permitting them to communicate Kohat and Karak with political members through

tow way communications, even if this relation is not only fully real but just perceived, it can still induce public confidence in their political information and their belief that their voices issue to government. In this way media can be empowering and mentally satisfaction, helping people feel more linking and active in polices (Dimitrova et al., 2014). Despite these few works on media effects there is still a wide range of areas yet to be explored. This study is an attempt to fill this vacuum.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Political Socialization Theory is highly applicable on the current analysis as it provides theatrical foundation for understanding how individuals in district Kohat and Karak improve political awareness through exposure to social media. This theory focus that political behaviors and beliefs are acquired through different of socialization, with media especially social media emerging as dominant force in modern contexts. In regions such as Kohat and Karak, where old political education may be limited, platforms like You Tube, Facebook, and Twitter serve as critical tools for disseminating political education, portraying public opinions and effecting civic participation. The research findings, which focused increased political engagement and awareness among social media users, align with the theory's assertion that media plays key role in the transmission of political awareness, making it a fitting and perceptive lens for analyzing the transformative role of digital platform in political socialization.

Additionally, Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) is also relevant to the analysis. It explains how individual actively select particular media platforms based on their personal needs, like seeking political information, engaging in debates, or staying educate about local and national affaire. In the context of current analysis UGT is related because it focused why citizen and students in Kohat and Karak turn to social media platforms for their satisfaction, connect with their related sphere and participate in political discourse in ways old media often fails to provide

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the influence of social media on political awareness among young adults in the Kohat Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. The objective was to determine how exposure to political content on digital platforms affects the knowledge, attitudes, and participation of youth in political processes.

#### **Population and Sample of the Study**

The target population included male and female individuals aged between 18 and 45 years, representing diverse educational backgrounds and life experiences. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure the inclusion of individuals who were actively using social media and capable of engaging with political content online. The sample consisted of 200 respondents, with 100 male and 100 female participants, selected from two major public universities in the Kohat Division:

- Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST)
- Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak (KKKU, K)

These institutions were chosen due to their accessibility, academic diversity, and ability to represent youth from different districts in southern KP. Including participants from various age groups, educational levels, and socio-economic backgrounds ensured a broader understanding of how social media influences political awareness in semi-urban settings.

### **Data Collection Tool and Procedure**

Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire designed to assess various aspects of political awareness. The questionnaire featured Likert-scale statements and multiple-choice questions, addressing different themes.

- Exposure to political content (e.g., posts, videos, discussions)
- Self-perceived political awareness and knowledge
- Attitudes towards political participation
- Involvement in offline political activities (e.g., rallies, discussions, voting)

Participants were approached on campus, briefed about the objectives of the study, and assured of confidentiality. The survey was administered in both English and Urdu, ensuring clarity and ease of understanding for respondents from different educational backgrounds.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected from the 200 valid responses were entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations, were generated to interpret trends in social media usage and political awareness. The analytical process assisted in identifying statistically significant trends and differences between demographic groups (such as gender and age) concerning their political engagement and reliance on social media.

### **Demographic Profile of Respondents**

**Table 1: Age Distribution**

<b>Respondents' Ages</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
18 -24	62	31.0	31.0	31.0
25-30	66	33.0	33.0	64.0
31-36	44	22.0	22.0	86.0
37-45	28	14.0	14.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0	100.0	

In Table 1, the distribution of respondents varied significantly by age. The researcher was particularly interested in ensuring equal participation among different age groups, but unfortunately, the 25-30 age group was relatively larger, accounting for almost 33% of the total population. The 18-24 age group was the second largest, making up nearly 31% of the total population. The remaining three groups were smaller in number, but still more than enough to meet the needs of the study.

**Table 2: Educational Qualification**

Qualifications	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
BS	129	64.5	64.5	64.5
M. Phil	40	20.0	20.0	84
Ph. D	31	15.5	15.5	99.5
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0	100.0	

Table No 2 shows that the number of respondents was notably higher among BS students, representing approximately 64.5% of the total sample. The smallest group was from PhD students, making up 15.5% of the population. The remaining students from the M.Phil program constitute about 20% of the total.

**Table 3: Weekly Exposure to Political Talk Shows on Social Media**

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than an hour	6	3.0	3.0	3.0
2 - 4 hours	18	9.0	9.0	12.0
5-6 hours	53	26.5	26.5	38.5
7-10 hours	88	44.0	44.0	82.5
More than 10 hours a week	35	17.5	17.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0	100.0	

Table No 3 clearly demonstrates the growing trend of watching talk shows among Pakistani young adults. The data presented in the above table indicated that almost 100% of our young adults watch talk shows on social media sets across the country. Almost 44% of the young adults consume 7 to 10 hours on watching social media in a typical week while there is another greatest number of viewers between 5 to 6 hours' usage who are contributed for 26% of the total consumption of time among young adults. It means most of our young adults will be much more susceptible in a number of different ways such as their awareness about current issues and their non-electoral and electoral participation will be proportionally greater than those who do not watch political talk shows.

**Table 4: Participation in 2018 General Elections**

Political Participation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	135	67.5	67.5	67.5
No	65	32.5	32.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0	100.0	

Table No. 4 shows that 67.5% of the respondents say they a voted in previous general elections, while the remaining 32.5% say they did not participate in the 2018 general elections of the country. As expected, more than half of the participants took part in the last general elections of the country.

**Table 5: Level of Political Interest**

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very interested	91	45.5	45.5	45.5
Quite interested	88	44.0	44.0	89.5
Hardly interested	7	3.5	3.5	93.0
Not all interested	9	4.5	4.5	97.5
Don't know	5	2.5	2.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0	100.0	

Table No. 5 illustrates that 45.5% of the respondents say they are very interested in politics, which is the largest figure in this table. The second largest number of respondents, who account for 44% of the total population of this study, say they are quite interested in politics. While the rest of the choices, such as hardly interested, not at all interested, and don't know, were almost not noticeable in the data, they collectively contributed to 10.5% of this research study.

**Table 6: Political Party Support in 2018 Elections**

**Which political party did you vote for in the last general elections 2018?**

Political Parties	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
PTI	44	22.0	22.0	22.0
JUI	33	16.5	16.5	38.5
PPP	14	7.0	7.0	45.5
ANP	23	11.5	11.5	57.0
PMLN	16	8.0	8.0	65.0
Any other	5	2.5	2.5	67.5
Did not vote	65	32.5	32.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	—

Data in the above table No. 6 shows that 22% of respondents say they voted for PTI, making it the largest group of participants who took part in previous general elections. The second highest figure is 16.5%, mainly representing those who participated in the last general elections and support JUI. The table also indicates that 11% of respondents voted for ANP in the 2018 general elections. Meanwhile, PMLN, PPP,

and other options collectively accounted for 17.5%. The largest portion of participants 32.5%, claimed they did not participate in the last general elections.

**Table 7: Motivation Behind Voting Choice**

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Party manifesto	47	23.5	23.5	23.5
Better future	54	27.0	27.0	50.5
Longstanding affiliation	34	17.0	17.0	67.5
Did not vote	32	16.0	16.0	83.5
Unregistered	33	16.5	16.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	—

Table No 7 shows that 27% of respondents say they voted for their respective party because they expect a better future from that party, which is the most significant figure in the table above. Meanwhile, 23.5% of participants state that they voted for their party because they were impressed by their party's manifesto. Although 16% of respondents say they did not vote in the last general elections held in 2018, 17% claim they have a longstanding affiliation with their party, which is why they voted for that political party. In the last option, 16.5% of respondents say they were not registered, which is why they did not participate in the last general elections.

**Table 8. Perceived Political Competence and Awareness among Respondents**

Political Competence and Awareness	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
I feel myself to be well qualified to take part in political activities in the country.	58 (29%)	125 (62.5%)	7 (3.5%)	6 (3%)	4 (4%)	200 (100%)
I reckon that I am better up-to-date with the government and political affairs than most people are.	108 (54%)	63 (31.5%)	21 (10%)	6 (3%)	2 (1%)	200 (100%)

The data in the Table 8, shows that a large majority of young respondents feel confident about participating in political activities. Around **91.5%** either strongly or somewhat agree that they are well-qualified to take part in politics, indicating a strong sense of political efficacy. Only a small fraction expressed doubt about their capabilities. Similarly, **85.5%** of participants believe they are more up-to-date with government and political affairs than most people. This reflects a high level of political awareness and self-assurance among youth, likely influenced by their regular engagement with news and social media platforms. These findings suggest a politically conscious generation that feels both informed and empowered to take part in civic matters.

**Political Engagement Metrics**

**Table 9. The study examined both electoral and non-electoral forms of participation.**

These results demonstrate that social media not only influences awareness but also contributes to active political engagement across both digital and physical spaces.

<b>Political Activity</b>	<b>Most of the Time</b>	<b>Some of the Time</b>	<b>Only Now and Then</b>	<b>Hardly at All</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Total (N)</b>
Political Campaigning	31.5% (63)	43.5% (87)	12.0% (24)	10.5% (21)	2.5% (5)	200
Political Discussions with Friends	1.5% (3)	36.9% (75)	34.5% (70)	15.8% (32)	11.3% (23)	203
Contacting Politicians (Online/Offline)	28.0% (56)	37.5% (75)	14.5% (29)	12.0% (24)	8.0% (16)	200
Participation in Protests	29.0% (58)	39.5% (79)	12.5% (25)	11.0% (22)	8.0% (16)	200
Signing Petitions (Paper-based)	21.0% (42)	40.5% (81)	21.0% (42)	11.5% (23)	6.0% (12)	200
Donating Money to Political Causes	22.5% (45)	40.0% (80)	17.0% (34)	14.5% (29)	6.0% (12)	200
Boycotting Products for Political Reasons	22.0% (44)	52.0% (104)	8.5% (17)	10.0% (20)	7.5% (15)	200
Writing to Newspapers about Political Issues	16.5% (33)	30.5% (61)	20.5% (41)	19.5% (39)	13.0% (26)	200
Attending Political Rallies, Meetings, Speeches, etc.	29.5% (59)	36.5% (73)	11.5% (23)	13.5% (27)	9.0% (18)	200

Table 9 provides a detail picture of how young Pakistani adults participate in political life, highlighting a multifaceted engagement that spans both digital and physical spaces. A significant 75% of respondents reported involvement in political campaigning to some or a large extent. This suggests that a majority of youth are not passive observers but are actively supporting political parties, candidates, or causes, either through social media advocacy, distributing campaign material, or volunteering during election seasons. Their willingness to participate in campaign activities reflects a more profound political commitment and the influence of social media platforms in mobilizing and organizing political outreach.

Furthermore, 71.4% of respondents said they engage in political discussions with peers at least occasionally. This indicates that political issues are a recurring topic in their social environments, both online and offline. Such discussions play a critical role in shaping political opinions, challenging perspectives, and spreading awareness, especially in a country where political ideologies often intersect with social, religious, and regional identities.

In terms of direct interaction with political leadership, 65.5% reported that they had contacted politicians through online or in-person means. This level of engagement suggests that youth are not only informed but also expect responsiveness and transparency from their leaders. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have made it easier for young citizens to voice their concerns, ask questions, or offer support to politicians, breaking traditional barriers to political access.

Participation in protests is also notably high, with 68.5% saying they have taken part in demonstrations. This reflects an empowered generation willing to take to the streets to demand justice, express dissent, or support social causes. Whether it's for economic reforms, human rights, education, or environmental issues, young people are using both online mobilization and physical presence to influence policy and public opinion.

The act of signing petitions, reported by 61.5% of respondents, is another form of digital civic activism. Online petitions enable individuals to support causes quickly and easily, often going viral on social media and drawing international attention. This type of engagement shows how digital tools are changing traditional ways of political participation.

A notable 62.5% of respondents reported donating money to political causes. This financial contribution demonstrates a tangible commitment to political change, showing that youth are willing to support movements or parties not just with their voices but also with their resources, something that has been more common among older demographics.

Consumer-based activism is also common, with 74% saying they have boycotted products for political reasons. This shows an ideological awareness where buying habits serve as a form of protest or support. For example, boycotts based on national, religious, or ethical reasons have become more frequent and widely talked about on social platforms, often driven by viral campaigns or political stories.

When it comes to traditional forms of expression, 47% of respondents reported writing to newspapers or submitting opinion articles. This shows that, despite the shift to digital, many young people still value print media as a platform for civic voice and intellectual engagement. It also highlights the role of educated youth in contributing to public discourse through formal and structured channels.

Finally, 66% reported attending political rallies, speeches, or public meetings. This physical presence at political events demonstrates a strong sense of belonging and engagement in the democratic process. Whether it's supporting a candidate, protesting a policy, or participating in public debates, this level of involvement indicates political maturity and an interest in direct action.

Figure 1. Respondents feel about the term democracy

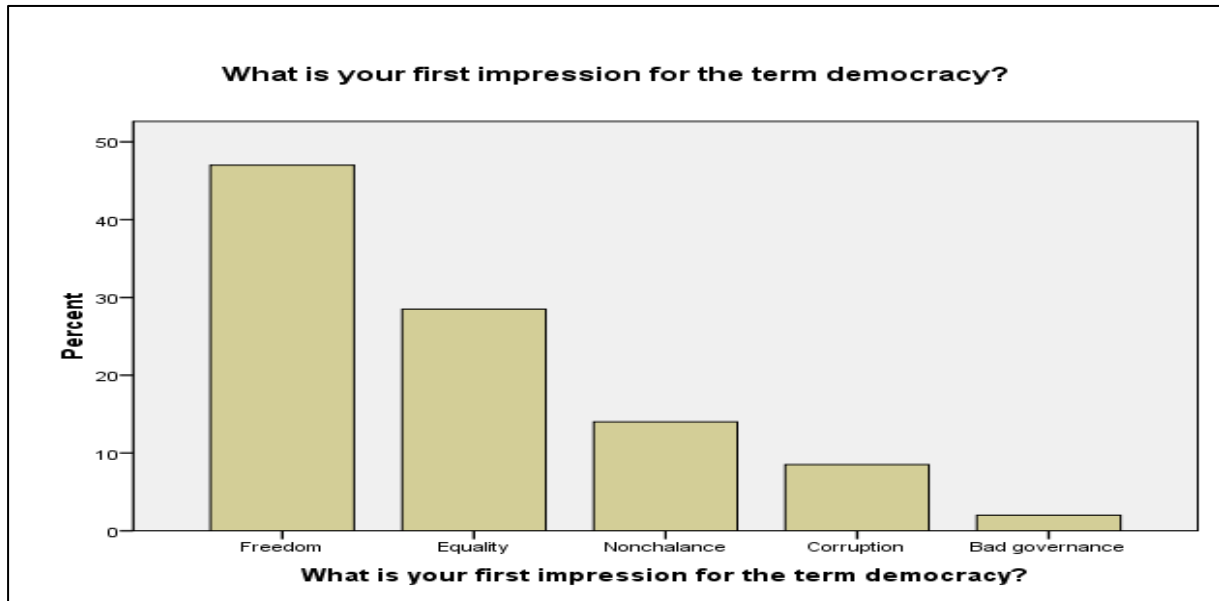
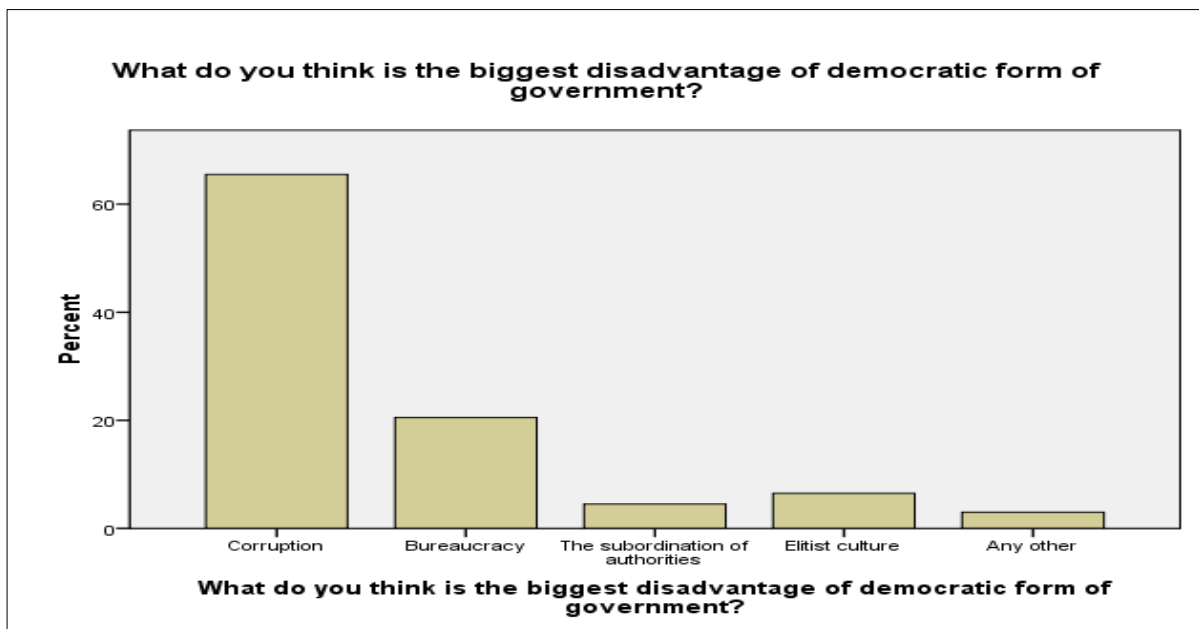


Figure 1 illustrates that 47% of participants say their first impression of the term democracy is 'freedom,' while 28.5% claim their first impression is 'plurality.' Furthermore, the data show that 14% of participants feel neutral about the term democracy. However, the remaining 10.5% of participants believe their first impressions of democracy are 'corruption' and 'bad governance.'

Figure 2 viewer's think is the biggest drawback of democracy



The figure shows in percentage that 65.5% of the participants believe the biggest drawback of democracy is corruption. The figure for the choice corruption is the greatest among all the rest of the choices. While the second largest number stands at 20.5% of the total population of this study, they say that bureaucracy is the biggest disadvantage of democracy, however the rest of three groups went for other options such

as the subordination of authorities, elitist culture and any other thus they are contributed for 14% of the total population of this research work.

**Table 10. What is the greatest benefit of democratic form of government?**

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Equality among all races	86	43.0	43.0	43.0
Justice	15	7.5	7.5	50.5
Transparency	14	7.0	7.0	57.5
Equal opportunities for all	18	9.0	9.0	66.5
Freedom of expressions	67	33.5	33.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0	100.0	

Table No 10 shows that 43% of respondents believe that equality among all races is the biggest advantage of democracy. Meanwhile, the second largest group, representing 33.5%, states that freedom of expression is the greatest benefit. However, justice, transparency, and equal opportunities for everyone were less prominent in the data, collectively accounting for 23.5% of the total population in this study.

**Table 11: plurality mean in democracy**

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Acceptance of diversity	132	66.0	66.0	66.0
Equality	21	10.5	10.5	76.5
Freedom of expression	17	8.5	8.5	85.0
Social peace	20	10.0	10.0	95.0
Any other	10	5.0	5.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0	100.0	

Table No 11 shows that the largest number of participants believe the term plurality in democracy means acceptance of diversity, accounting for 66% of the total population of this study. Meanwhile, 10.5% of the respondents think the term plurality means equality in democracy. The remaining three choices together account for 23.5% of the total population.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This paper exploring the influence of social media on political awareness and participation among youth in the Kohat Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Drawing from survey data of 200 respondents and guided by Political Socialization Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), the study examines how platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube serve not only as tools of political information but also as mediums of civic engagement, identity formation, and participatory behaviour. The results confirm the transformative power of digital media in shaping political attitudes and behaviours among the youth, especially in politically evolving societies like Pakistan.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

The findings indicate a strong correlation between social media use and increased political awareness among young adults. The majority of respondents expressed confidence in their understanding of political issues, with 91.5% agreeing (either strongly or somewhat) that they feel qualified to engage in political activities. Furthermore, 85.5% reported feeling more up-to-date with political and governmental affairs than most people.

Political participation was also significantly high, with most respondents reporting their involvement in discussions, protests, campaigns, donations, and even writing opinion pieces or letters to newspapers. For instance, 75% were involved in political campaigns, 68.5% had joined protests, and 66% had attended political rallies or speeches. Notably, 74% admitted to practicing consumer activism by boycotting products for political reasons.

These findings provide empirical support to the idea that social media acts as both an informer and enabler of political behaviour, contributing to the evolving democratic participation among youth in Pakistan's conservative yet politically sensitive regions.

### **Social Media as a Tool for Political Awareness**

Numerous scholars have argued that digital platforms have revolutionized the way youth engage with political content (Loader et al., 2014; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). This study supports these findings by demonstrating that a majority of respondents actively use social media to stay informed about current issues. The finding that 85.5% consider themselves more informed than the average citizen echoes what Chadwick (2013) described as a "hybrid media system", where citizens navigate and integrate traditional and new media sources to construct political knowledge.

Moreover, the results reflect what Shah et al. (2005) define as "civic engagement through information access." As youth scroll through political memes, live updates, and opinion posts on social media, they engage in a passive form of political learning, which gradually builds their awareness and political efficacy.

### **Political Socialization and Identity Formation**

Political Socialization Theory posits that individuals form their political attitudes through interaction with agents such as family, peers, educational institutions, and media (Greenstein, 1965). In the context of this study, social media has emerged as a dominant agent of political socialization, particularly for university-going youth in Kohat and Karak. The fact that 71.4% of the participants regularly engage in political conversations indicates that these platforms serve as modern "public spheres" (Habermas, 1989), where political identities are shaped and reinforced.

Additionally, findings that 66% have physically participated in rallies, and 61.5% signed petitions, support the argument made by Bennett (2008) that youth today prefer "connective action", activism that is personalized, digitally organized, and less reliant on traditional institutional politics.

### **Gratification through Political Engagement**

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) highlights the purposeful and goal-oriented nature of media consumption (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). This research confirms that young users not only seek entertainment or communication through social media but also pursue cognitive and affective gratifications through political content. Respondents' participation in online petitions, political donations (62.5%), and even writing to newspapers (47%) shows that their digital engagement satisfies needs for identity, social integration, and influence.

In particular, the high rate of consumer activism and political donations suggests a transition from awareness to action. These acts fulfil what Papacharissi (2010) describes as the "self-actualizing citizen", individuals who use digital spaces not just for information but for personalized, purposeful political expression.

### **The Role of Region, Culture, and Digital Literacy**

The socio-political landscape of Kohat division is characterized by a mix of traditional values and political sensitivity. Historically, youth in these areas had limited access to political discussions, held back by conservative norms and few public forums. The rise of social media has broken these barriers, providing a semi-anonymous and adaptable space for engagement. Even in areas where gender roles and cultural expectations restrict physical participation, digital spaces serve as a platform for expression, especially for women and young people reluctant to engage in conventional politics.

Furthermore, the ability to communicate with politicians, voice dissent, and find alternative narratives through social media fills a previous gap in political communication. While 65.5% of participants reached out to political representatives online, such interactions would have been unimaginable for earlier generations in these districts. This supports studies by Anduiza et al. (2009), which found that social media boosts political involvement, particularly among those who were previously excluded from political processes due to structural barriers.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study strengthens the relevance of Political Socialization Theory and UGT in explaining youth political behaviour in digital contexts. It shows that media is not merely an informative force but also a participatory and mobilizing one. The findings challenge the notion that Pakistani youth are politically apathetic and instead suggest that new media technologies are rechanneling their political energies. It also provides empirical support for the emerging field of "digital political socialization", the idea that online interaction is a legitimate and effective path to civic engagement.

### **Practical Implications**

The importance of youth participation in democratic development, policymakers, NGOs, and educational institutions should leverage social media as a civic education tool. Digital literacy programs can be designed not just to teach technical skills but also critical thinking, fact-checking, and constructive political dialogue. Politicians and media outlets must also recognize that engaging youth on social platforms is not optional, it is essential for inclusive governance and national development.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides strong evidence that social media platforms are not only increasing political awareness among Pakistani youth but also actively encouraging participation in both online and offline civic actions. Youth from Kohat Division, KP show significant engagement, whether through digital campaigns, protests, donations, or political discussions. This represents a major shift in the political culture of these regions, mainly driven by access to mobile technology and social networking sites. The findings confirm that social media is a transformative tool in the political socialization of young people. It empowers individuals, amplifies their voices, and enables participation in ways that were previously unavailable. It satisfies needs for information, belonging, and activism, demonstrating the relevance of UGT in today's political landscape. As Pakistan's democracy continues to develop, the political establishment, media, and educators must recognize the power of digital engagement. By embracing social media as a tool for youth empowerment and civic growth, we can foster a more informed, active, and democratic society.

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