

Predictors of Online Political Participation among Youth in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT The present study aims to identify the significant predictors of online political participation among youth living in urban areas of Lahore in Pakistan. A survey was administrated among the adults between 18-30 years of age. A team of professional enumerators conducted fieldwork using face to face mode of data collection from 400 respondents. Data were analyzed using statistical package for social sciences for calculating adjusted odd ratios and significant predictors of online political participation were determined. The study found that age, income, social trust, self-efficacy, time spent on Facebook and group participation are the significant predictors of online political participation among youth. The study concludes that online political participation might be increased by controlling the key influential factors of online political participation for granting benefits to both the stakeholder that is, political parties and general population.

INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, political campaigns are run by traditional methods like processions and rallies etc. (Akhtar 2013; Scammell 2016). However, due to increasing penetration of internet and social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, the discourses of political participation have been witnessing a great deal of change (Alam 2011; Castells 2015; Nulty et al. 2016; Olorunisola and Martin 2013). Social networking sites facilitate political parties for sharing, discussing and advertising their manifestos (Ceron and d'Adda 2016; Lilleker and Jackson 2010). On the other hand, internet and social networking sites also facilitate voters by providing mass information related to politicians and political parties (Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2012; Halberstam and Knight 2016). Social networking sites provide a platform for the people to discuss their views about political affairs while chatting, posting, commenting, sharing, tweeting and re-tweeting (Mwadime 2015). This implies that social networking sites have potential to influence the minds of people regarding political affairs. Moreover, the online participation in political discussion might grant greater benefits to both political parties and general population (Chan 2016; Chan et al. 2016; Farrell 2012; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2012). Therefore, the focus of the current study is how on-

line participation has increased in Pakistani context for facilitating both the stakeholders of political affairs that is, political parties and voters.

Literature suggests that world has witnessed the increasing trends of using internet in both developing and developed countries of the world in the last decade. Park et al. (2009) claimed that the internet usage provides diverse benefits to the users, such as socialization, entertainment, self-status seeking and information (Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2012; Son 2017). These benefits are also achieved using various types of social media applications that is, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp etc. (Picazo-Vela et al. 2012; Wang et al. 2016). Moreover, social networking sites attract all the people regardless of their socio-demographic characteristics. Specifically, the trends of using social networking sites are found higher among the youth in both developed and developing economies (Greenberg et al. 2003; Kim et al. 2011; Pradeep and Sriram 2016).

Literature claims that the social networking sites are a major source of political information and knowledge in developed nations of the world (Johnson and Kaye 2003; Inglehart 2015). Online political participation and group discussions at social networking sites are found to be positively related to civic engagement and engagement in community related activities (Baek

2010; Ekström and Östman 2015; Feezell et al. 2009; Park et al. 2009; Valenzuela et al. 2009; Zhang et al. 2009). Researchers also highlight that the scope of online discussion is not limited; those who discuss political affairs online are found more likely to participate in offline political activities and social mobilization (Graham et al. 2016; Feezell et al. 2009). On the other hand, it is also found that offline political participation is not dependent upon the online political discussion (Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2015; Zhang et al. 2009).

Online Political Participation

Many scholars studied the online political participation (Park et al. 2009; Vitak et al. 2011; De Zúñiga et al. 2009; Baek 2010; Ostman 2012; Scammell 2016; Wang et al. 2016) in developed countries where the internet usage was high and the focus was to understand the difference among the predictors of online and offline political participation. Literature suggests that social and political factors affect the level of online political participation (Morales and Giugni 2016; Park et al. 2009). However, the factors of online political participation are not same as the factors of participation in political and community activities. The level of political participation is found to be affected by the gender and race of the users in developed countries of the world (Best and Krueger 2005; Inglehart 2015). Online political participation increases with increase in level of education among the users of social networking sites (Kaye and Johnson 2004; Reuter and Szakonyi 2015). The education of the parents of the users of social networking sites also positively affects online political participation (Boulianne 2015; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2010). Furthermore, researchers have found that internet skills initiate the opportunities to participate in online political activities and interest in politics sharpens the frequency of participation in online political debates (Best and Krueger 2005; McDevitt 2016). Online participation is found higher among the users who indicate higher trust in government (Kaye and Johnson 2004; Vaccari et al. 2015). Expanding the factors of online political participation, Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2010) claim that the online political participation is higher among the young users of social networking

sites. Moreover, family income also affects the level of political participation positively.

Besides the impacts of socio-demographic characteristics, patterns of using social networking sites also affect the behavior of the users to participate in online political discussions (Valeriani and Vaccari 2016). For example, Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2010) find that the level of online political participation is higher among the users who participate in online political debates. Moreover, political messaging also affects the level of online political participation positively. Online political participation is higher among the people who spend more time using Facebook. Higher exposure to political debates on Facebook and online political activities enhance online political participation (Bennett 2016; Vitak et al. 2011). Furthermore, political participation is also higher among the users who have higher level of political knowledge and are registered members of any political party. The purpose of using social networking sites also affects the level of online political participation. For instance, the users who use social networking sites for information seeking indicate higher level of online political participation (Kaye and Johnson 2002; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2010; Reuter and Szakonyi 2015). Kenski and Stroud (2006) claim that the political knowledge and political efficacy positively affect online political participation, however the initiation of this process was found to be dependent upon the access to internet and online exposure.

Political Self-efficacy

Literature suggests that online participation of people is motivated by their self-efficacy (Brunsting and Postmes 2002; Barak et al. 2016; Cheng et al. 2015). Various studies indicate that political self-efficacy is significant predictor of online political participation (Bode and Dalrymple 2016; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2010; Kaye and Johnson 2002). Vecchione and Caprara (2009) found that political self-efficacy is directly related with political participation among internet users. They claim that the level of political self-efficacy is explained by different variables that is, personalities of the individuals and socio-demographics characteristics. For example, extroverted and energetic personalities are found to have higher level of political self-efficacy.

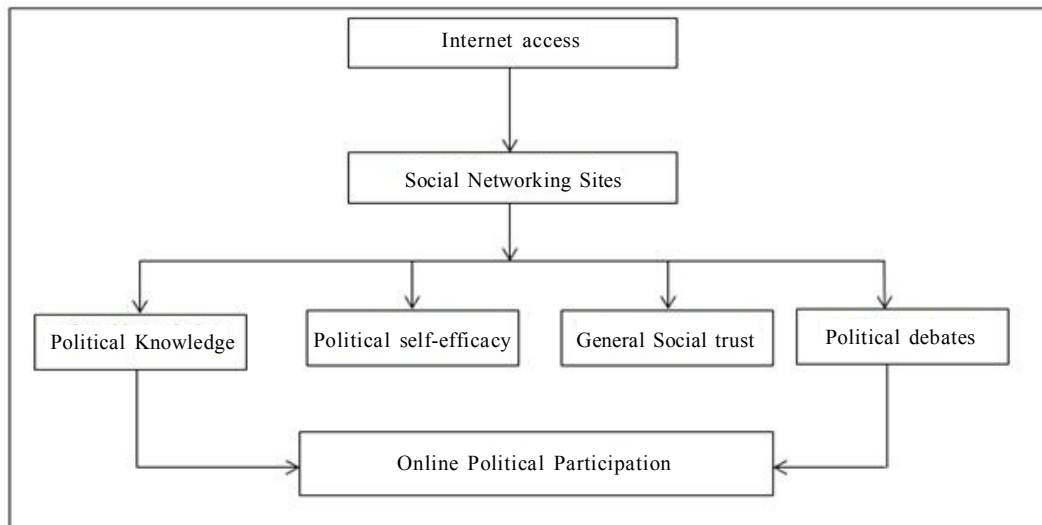


Fig 1.The process of internet access to online political participation

Source: Author

Both internal and external self-efficacy is found to be different among the people with different characteristics. Generally, the sex and education positively influence the level of self-efficacy but the students who use internet for the sake of information gathering and interactive contacts are found higher on the scale of internal self-efficacy. On the other hand, external political self-efficacy is found to be lower among the students who visit public sites for political information. It is furthermore highlighted that students are not satisfied with the quality of information at public sites which in turn decreases their external political self-efficacy. Dissatisfaction from public sites forces students to visit online networking sites for information and news (Vecchione and Caprara 2009; Yoo and Shin 2016). Lee (2006) and Hyun (2017), when talking about internal and external self-efficacy, emphasizes that the basic motives behind both internal and external self-efficacy are different. He claims that the discussion of political affairs at networking sites positively influences the level of self-efficacy.

Comprehensive review of the literature for understanding the phenomenon of online political participation claims that the numbers of factors, that is, social, political and psychological, influence the decision of online political participation in developed countries of the world. Very few studies have been conducted in developing

countries for understanding the phenomenon of online political participation (Fig. 1). The present study intends to understand the phenomenon of online political participation among Pakistani youth. More specifically, the study aims to test the following hypothesis:

1. H_1 Political participation is different among users of different socio-demographic characteristics.
2. H_1 More the use of social networking websites, higher the online political participation.
3. H_1 More the group participation on Facebook, higher the online political participation.
4. H_1 Higher the general social trust, higher the online political participation.
5. H_1 Higher the level of political self-efficacy, higher the online political participation.

METHODOLOGY

A survey was administrated among the adults who were 18 and above 18 years of age and not more than 30 years of age using structured questionnaire which was adapted from previous studies. The logic behind the selection of this age group was based on the fact of higher intensity of the usage of social networking sites among them that is, Facebook and Twitter (Learmonth 2009; Pew Research Center 2012).

Data were collected only from the residents of District Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. Rationale behind the selection of only urban dwellers is that the media penetration is higher among urban population in Pakistan rather than rural inhabitants (Rahman 2014). Furthermore, the trends of using social networking sites for political purposes is found higher among urban citizens as compared to rural citizens because of low internet access in rural areas (Westheimer and Kahne 2004; Grootaert 2001). Only those respondents were included in sample that had their Facebook and/or Twitter account. Facebook and Twitter were selected because both were the most used social networking sites by youth in Pakistan (Rahman 2014). Data were collected by face to face mode from 400 respondents. A team of professional enumerators was trained by the researchers including both male and female enumerators. Purpose and objectives of the study and the variables of questionnaire were fully explained to the team while conducting a training session. After one day field work, team was again briefed and their field work experiences were noted.

Tool for Data Collection

Researchers used structured questionnaire for collecting data from the respondents. The variables included in the tool were adapted from previous studies conducted on the topics of media and political participation. Moreover, variables were also rephrased as per the requirements and understanding of the respondents and enumerators. Variables of the study included socio-demographics characteristics, intensity of social networking sites usage, social capital on social media sites, intensity of participation on social networking sites, general social trust, political self-efficacy and political participation.

Independent Variables

Independent variables included socio-demographics characteristics, intensity of using social networking sites, social capital on social media sites, and intensity of participation on social networking sites, general social trust and political self-efficacy. Socio-demographic characteristics included the gender, age, marital status, qualification, employment status, profession

and family income of the respondents. For measuring the intensity of social networking sites, the researchers asked about the duration of using Facebook and Twitter and time spent on posting and reading messages on the profiles of Facebook groups. It was also asked from the respondents that how often profiles of joined groups were read and how often messages were posted in Facebook groups (DeHart 2016; Ellison et al. 2007). Social capital on both Facebook and Twitter were accessed by asking about their number of friends and groups joined on Facebook, number of political characters followed on Twitter, the profession of the Facebook friends and Twitter followers was also asked (DeHart 2016; Bode 2012; Rainie et al. 2012; Lin 2001).

For measuring the intensity of political participation, the researchers asked the respondents that how often they discussed any political topic on Facebook and how often they tweet and re-tweet about political work (DeHart 2016; Bode 2012; Rainie et al. 2012). Six questions were asked about the general social trust of the respondents that is, if people can be trusted, if people get chance, if people try to be fair, it is very hard to be careful with people, if people try to be helpful and if people are just looking for themselves only (DeHart 2016; Valenzuela et al. 2009). Political self-efficacy of the respondents was measured by asking such question as *I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics, I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues faced by the country, I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people, I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people, sometimes, politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on, people like me do not have any say about what the government is doing* (DeHart 2016).

Dependent Variable

Only one dependent variable was included in the study that is, online political participation. For measuring online political participation, researcher asked six questions that is, writing to politician online, making a campaign contribut-

ing online, subscribing to a political group signing up to volunteer for a campaign/issue online, sending a political message by email and writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper online (DeHart 2016; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2012).

Analysis

Group participation, general social trust, political self-efficacy and online political participation were measured at five point Likert scale. Negative indicators were coded reversed. For the intensity of using social networking sites, the researchers asked the duration of using social networking sites and converted the multiple categories into two categories. For converting multi-indicators variables into binary variables, indicators of the specific variable were computed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. Dependent variable was converted into binary variables for conducting binary logistic regression analysis. Literature suggests that the variation among the impact factors of online political participation is identified using logistics regression analysis (Kaye and Johnson 2004; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2010; Lee 2006; Östman 2012; Best and Krueger 2005). Therefore, the researchers applied binary logistic regression analysis at two steps to predict the variation in online political participation among youth in Pakistan. Odds ratios were calculated on first step and on second step, relative odds were calculated at (95%) confidence interval for those variables that were found significant at binary logistic regression analysis.

RESULTS

Results of univariate descriptive analysis of socio-demographics characteristics indicate that majority of the respondents are male (74.4%). Most of the respondents belong to age group 18-24 years. Moreover, the categories of respondents who are single (85%), who have sixteen years of education (42.8%), employed (56.5%), and family income above 50000 rupees (40.3%) are most prevailing categories in socio-demographics. Majority of the respondents indicated higher level of general trust (75.3%). The level of political self-efficacy was also higher (82.3%). Furthermore, only 39.4 percent reported online political participation (Table 1).

Table 1: Univariate descriptive analysis of socio-demographics characteristics of respondent (Base= 400)

<i>Categories</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Valid %</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	294	74.4
Female	101	25.6
<i>Age</i>		
18-24 years	277	69.3
25-30 years	123	30.8
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	340	85.0
Married	60	15.0
<i>Qualification</i>		
Bachelor	163	40.8
Intermediate	66	16.5
Master	171	42.8
<i>Employment Status</i>		
Employed	226	56.5
Unemployed	174	43.5
<i>Profession</i>		
Business	78	20.1
Employee	113	29.0
Manager	50	12.9
Services	73	18.8
Student	75	19.3
<i>Family Income</i>		
10000-30000	87	21.8
30001-50000	152	38.0
Above 50000	161	40.3
<i>General Social Trust</i>		
No	106	26.5
Yes	294	73.5
<i>Political Self-efficacy</i>		
Lower	71	17.8
Higher	329	82.3
<i>Online Political Participation</i>		
Lower	241	60.3
Higher	159	39.8

Majority of the respondents (39.8%) spend 1-30 minutes on Facebook while 33.5 percent spend above 60 minutes. About 42.8 percent respondents have above 300 Facebook friends. Those respondents who had joined 1-6 members are 34.8 percent while 19 percent had not joined any group at Facebook. Those respondents who spend 1-30 minutes on Facebook groups are about 30.5 percent. Moreover, majority of the respondents indicated higher level of group participation (52.8%). Data reveals that the majority of respondents (61%) are not using Twitter. On the other hand, majority (48.9%) of those who were using Twitter have 1-10 follows. Those who were using Twitter, the majority of them (59.6%) are also tweeting political tweets (Table 2).

Online political participation is slightly higher among males as compared to female respon-

Table 2: Univariate descriptive analysis of social networking websites that is Facebook and Twitter (Base=400)

<i>Categories</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Valid %</i>
<i>Time Spent on Facebook</i>		
1-30 minutes	159	39.8
31-60 minutes	107	26.8
Above 60 minutes	134	33.5
<i>Number of Facebook Friends</i>		
1-150	143	35.8
151-300	86	21.5
Above 300	171	42.8
<i>Number of Facebook Groups</i>		
No group	76	19.0
1-6 groups	139	34.8
7-12 groups	85	21.3
Above 12 groups	100	25.0
<i>Time Spent in Groups</i>		
No group participation	97	24.3
1-30 minutes	122	30.5
31-60 minutes	66	16.5
Above 60 minutes	115	28.8
<i>Group Participation</i>		
No	189	47.3
Yes	211	52.8
<i>Twitter Usage</i>		
No use	244	61.0
1-60 minutes	45	11.3
Above 60 minutes	111	27.8
<i>Number of Follows on Twitter</i>		
1-10	87	48.9
11-20	56	31.5
Above 20	35	19.7
<i>Political minutes</i>		
No	72	40.4
Yes	106	59.6

dents. There is also a difference of online political participation among both the categories of age groups that is, 18-24 and 25-30 years of age. In age group of 18-24 years, online political participation is higher (80.5%) (Table 3). Online political participation is higher among the respondents who are single as compared to married respondents. As the qualification of the respondents increases, their online political participation also increases. Online political participation is higher (58.5%) among employed respondents as compared to their unemployed counterparts. Online political participation is higher among employees (36.1%) in any sectors and managers (19%). Moreover, political participation is higher among those respondents with family income 50000 and above. Those respondents who reported higher level of general social trust and political self-efficacy also reported higher level of online political participation. Age, income, general social trust and political self-efficacy are

found to be statistically significant predictors of online political participation. Qualification and professions of respondents are partial significant predictors of online political participation. Age, marital status and employment status are not statistically significant predictor of online political participation.

Those respondents who spend above 60 minutes reported higher level of political participation online. As the number of Facebook friend increases, the level of online political participation also increases (Table 4). For the category of respondents having above 300 friends, online political participation is reported to be higher (48.4%) as compared to other categories that is, 1-150 friends and 151-300 friends. Similarly, those respondents who have joined above 12 groups on Facebook reported the highest level (44%) of online political participation. Moreover, those respondents who spend 31-60 minutes and above 60 minutes reported higher online political participation. Those respondents who participate in group discussion also indicated higher level of online political participation (77.4%). Respondents who are spending 1-60 minutes or above 60 minutes using Twitter indicate higher level of online political participation. Online political participation is higher among the respondents who usually do political tweets. Time spent on Facebook, number of joined Facebook groups, political use of Facebook, group participation and use of Twitter are significant predictors of online political participation. While number of Facebook friends and time spent in Facebook groups is partial significant predictor. Number of follows is only variable that is not either partially significant or significant predictor of online political participation.

Relative odds ratio were calculated for the variables that were found significant in binary logistic regression analysis. Results of multivariate regression analysis indicate that none of the variables that is, age, income, general social trust and political self-efficacy lost its significance. Moreover, age and general social trust were found strongest predictors of online political participation.

Multivariate logistic regression models indicated that only one variables that is, number of Facebook groups lost significance in Model 4 (Table 5a). Moreover, only two variables that is, number of Facebook groups and the time spent on using twitter lost the significance in

Table 3: Bivariate descriptive analysis of socio-demographics of respondents and online political participation

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Political participation</i>		<i>Odd ratio</i>	<i>Confidence interval (95%)</i>
	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>		
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	74.2%	74.8%	1.037	.653-1.646
Female	25.8%	25.2%	1	
<i>Age</i>				
18-24 years	61.8%	80.5%	2.549	1.592-4.082
25-30 years	38.2%	19.5%	1	
<i>Marital Status</i>				
Single	83.4%	87.4%	1.383	.775-2.467
Married	16.6%	12.6%	1	
<i>Qualification</i>				
Bachelor	36.1%	47.8%	1.323	.857-2.043
Intermediate	21.2%	9.4%	.446	.232-.855
Master	42.7%	42.8%	1	
<i>Employment Status</i>				
Employed	55.2%	58.5%	1.144	.763-1.715
Unemployed	44.8%	41.5%	1	
<i>Profession</i>				
Business	22.5%	16.5%	1.000	.510-1.959
Employee	24.2%	36.1%	2.036	1.111-3.729
Manager	8.7%	19.0%	3.000	1.428-6.301
Services	22.9%	12.7%	.755	.373-1.525
Student	21.6%	15.8%	1	
<i>Family Income</i>				
10000-30000	25.7%	15.7%	.361	.206-.630
30001-50000	42.7%	30.8%	.425	.269-.674
Above 50000	31.5%	53.5%	1	
<i>General Social Trust</i>				
Lower	35.7%	12.6%	.259	.151-.444
Higher	64.3%	87.4%	1	
<i>Political Self-efficacy</i>				
Lower	27.4%	3.1%	.086	.034-.219
Higher	72.6%	96.9%	1	

Model 5. Time spent on Facebook, group participation retained significance (Table 5b).

DISCUSSION

Availability of 3G services by cellular companies expanded the availability of internet and social networking sites (Gao and Rafiq 2009; Strauss 2016; Sultan et al. 2009). Online political participation on social networking sites that is, Facebook and Twitter had a great potential to influence the political affairs of political parties and voters because of the increasing penetration of internet and social networking sites in Pakistan in near future (Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2012; Halberstam and Knight 2016). The findings of the current study support the results of previous studies about online political participation by youth but also add new insights to understand the phenomenon of online political participation

(Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2010; Halberstam and Knight 2016; Hyun 2017; Lee 2006; Strauss 2016; Yoo and Shin 2016). Moreover, social networking sites are enhancing the level of online political participation among the youth by providing them political knowledge and majority of the youth discuss and participate in political discussion. Online political participation increases with increase in online activities at social networking sites.

In the present study, the online political participation is found to be influenced by number of socio-demographic characteristics of the users of social networking sites. This implies that by changing and controlling the socio-demographic characteristics, the online political participation can be controlled. For example, higher political participation was indicated by the young users of social networking sites (Cantijoch et al. 2016; Kim et al. 2016; Vecchione and Caprara

Table 4: Bivariate descriptive and binary logistic regression analysis of social networking websites usage of respondents and online political participation

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Political participation</i>		<i>Odd ratio</i>	<i>Confidence interval (95%)</i>
	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>		
<i>Time Spent on Facebook</i>				
1-30 minutes	44.8%	32.1%	.395	.245-.635
31-60 minutes	29.9%	22.0%	.406	.240-.689
Above 60 minutes	25.3%	45.9%	1	
<i>Number of Facebook Friends</i>				
1-150	41.9%	26.4%	.508	.318-.812
151-300	19.1%	25.2%	1.062	.631-1.785
Above 300	39.0%	48.4%	1	
<i>Number of Facebook Groups</i>				
No group	22.8%	13.2%	.164	.085-.317
1-6 groups	42.7%	22.6%	.150	.085-.265
7-12 groups	22.0%	20.1%	.259	.140-.478
Above 12 groups	12.4%	44.0%	1	
<i>Time Spent in Groups</i>				
No group participation	31.5%	13.2%	.198	.108-.364
1-30 minutes	34.0%	25.2%	.349	.206-.593
31-60 minutes	14.5%	19.5%	.635	.345-1.167
Above 60 minutes	19.9%	42.1%	1	
<i>Group Participation</i>				
No	63.5%	22.6%	.168	.107-.265
Yes	36.5%	77.4%	1	
<i>Twitter Usage</i>				
No use	77.2%	36.5%	.115	.069-.193
1-60 minutes	10.4%	12.6%	.296	.144-.610
Above 60 minutes	12.4%	50.9%	1	
<i>Number Follows on Twitter</i>				
1-10	58.3%	42.5%	.804	.364-1.772
11-20	20.8%	38.7%	2.050	.839-5.008
Above 20	20.8%	18.9%	1	
<i>Political Tweets</i>				
No	56.9%	29.2%	.168	.107-1.265
Yes	43.1%	70.8%	1	

Table 5a: Multivariate logistic regression models of significant socio-demographics predictor of online political participation

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
<i>Age</i>				
18-24 years	2.549 (1.592-4.082)	2.398(1.476-3.897)	2.923(1.755-4.867)	2.715(1.608-4.584)
25-30 years	1	1	1	1
<i>Family Income</i>				
10000-30000		.425(.240-.754)	.523(.287-.952)	.510(.274-.947)
30001-50000		.421(.264-.672)	.424(.260-.691)	.431(.259-.716)
Above 50000		1	1	1
<i>General Social Trust</i>				
Lower			.231(.131-.405)	.254(.142-.455)
Higher			1	1
<i>Political Self-efficacy</i>				
Lower				.104(.040-.272)
Higher				1

2009; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2010; Lee 2006; Correa et al. 2010). In contrast to previous literature, among Pakistani youth, their gender identity did not affect their decision to participate in online

political discussion (Best and Krueger 2005; Boulianne 2015; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Park et al. 2009; Correa et al. 2010; Hargittai 2007). Online political participation is higher among the

Table 5b: Multivariate logistic regression models of significant socio-demographics predictor of online political participation

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>
<i>Time Spent on Facebook</i>					
1-30 minutes	.395(.245-.635)	.340(.202-.571)	.467(.271-.805)	.448(.252-.796)	.364(.193-.687)
31-60 minutes	.406(.240-.689)	.366(.206-.652)	.400(.219-.728)	.320(.170-.603)	.244(.118-.502)
Above 60 minutes	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Number of Facebook Groups</i>					
No group		.161(.082-.319)	.431(.195-.956)	.874(.359-2.129)	1.717(.672-4.390)
1-6 groups		.131(.072-.239)	.170(.092-.315)	.187(.098-.356)	.246(.120-.501)
7-12 groups		.245(.130-.460)	.335(.173-.649)	.358(.180-.714)	.757(.349-1.644)
Above 12 groups		1	1	1	1
<i>Group Participation</i>					
No				.184(.095-.356)	.205(.101-.420)
Yes				1	1
<i>Twitter Usage</i>					
No use					.240(.129-.449)
1-60 minutes					2.420(.927-6.317)
Above 60 minutes					1

users who belong to prosperous families (Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2010; Scherman et al. 2015). While adding new insight in the body of knowledge, the current study claims that online political participation is higher among single users as compared to married users. Furthermore, increasing qualification of social networking sites increased the online political participation among Pakistani youth.

In consistence with previous studies, the current study further elaborates that the patterns of using social networking sites also inserts the variations in online political participation. Online political participation is higher among the users who spend more time using social networking sites (Fox and Moreland 2015; Johnson and Kaye 2003; Kaye and Johnson 2004; Klinger and Svensson 2015; Best and Krueger 2005; Park et al. 2009; Baek 2010; Feezell et al. 2009; Valenzuela et al. 2009; Zhang et al. 2009). Moreover, the users who participate more in social networking group discussions indicated higher level of online political participation (Barberá et al. 2015; Park et al. 2009; Correa et al. 2010; Feezell et al. 2009; Tumasjan et al. 2010). While expanding the explanation of the phenomenon of online political participation among youth, the current study claims that the users of Facebook participated more in online political discussions as compared to the users of Twitter.

In present study, the level of general social trust positively influenced the decision of the users of social networking sites about online

political participation. The effects of general social trust on online political participation are replicated by previous studies (Hauser and Schwarz 2016; Kaye and Johnson 2002; Price and Cappella 2002; Valenzuela et al. 2009). Studies suggest that political self-efficacy is positively correlated with online political participation. The results of the current study also state that online political participation was higher among the users with higher political self-efficacy (Jordan et al. 2015; Vecchione and Caprara 2009; Velasquez and LaRose 2015; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2010; Lee 2006). This implies that general social trust and political self-efficacy persist viable indicators of online political participation.

The current study has limitations in terms of generalization of the findings on the Pakistani population. Sampling limitation creates hurdles to generalize the findings on the whole population and the findings are only generalizable upon urban dwellers having Facebook and Twitter accounts. Furthermore, while current study is only a snapshot of current situation of online political participation, the penetration of online political participation is continuously towards increase in Pakistan. Low variations are recorded in the data due to the fact that the penetration of internet and social networking sites is higher among the current population. On the other hand, the current sample had strengths as well because of the potential contribution of the users of social networking sites in near future for changing the discourse of online political

participation. It is open for the future researchers to investigate the phenomenon among general population.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of online political participation is emerging concept of communication among Pakistani population. Keeping in mind the potential benefits of online political participation, the current study investigated the key factors of online political participation. The characteristics of the users and the social networking sites using behavior both predicted online political participation. In users' socio-demographics characteristics, results have found that age, income, general social trust and self-efficacy significantly predicted online political participation. Intensity of using social networking sites and group participation are significant predictor of online political participation. Researchers recommend that online political participation might be increased by controlling the key influential factors of online political participation for granting benefits to both the stakeholder that is, political parties and general population.

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