



## Clicktivism to Activism: The Impact of Social Media on Pakistani Youth for Political Knowledge and Participation

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### ABSTRACT

*The communication world is becoming more and more complex and participatory, social media have developed as a stage with the potential to stimulate popular government and political engagement. Research paper was based on a of 600 university students between 18 and 26, to examine the relationship between social media utilize and political engagement among the youth in Pakistan. Participants were selected by using stratified random sampling, from students across different academic disciplines within the selected universities of Islamabad. Data collection was carried out through self-administered questionnaires; there were a total of 512 valid respondents. The study focused on the extent to which social media facilitates consumption of political information and its influencing political interest, knowledge and participation among the youth. The result found that reliance on social media is positively associated with political participation; but according to the result, the influence is limited, and though useful. The capacity of Social media to shaping the opinion and influencing political activity is limited but internet based political activities like posting and distributing campaign information and utilization of political substance have a bearing on political cooperation, According to the results that the social media do not have a strong and direct impact on political interest of youth and other campaign actors cannot ignore the opportunity provided by these platforms in the voter mobilization process.*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Politics, Performance, Impact, Awareness, Participation.

### 1. Background of Study

In today's digital era, different campaigns rely significantly on online communication platforms to build support. The digitalization of modern media has significantly transformed the lifestyles of young students, who have become prominent consumers of new media applications. . In today's connected world, media is very important for sharing information and keeping people updated about events happening around the world. Communication has strongly affected people's lives in many different ways throughout history. The Internet, digital communication, and social media have reached every part of the world today because of computers and networking technology. Communication is how people share new ideas with each other. Communication can be powerful and aims to get the reactions we want from what we say. The media is a key source of news, helps people understand politics, and can change how they vote. Today, the media's ability to influence people has grown rapidly in recent years because of new technology. Print, online, and social media influences the community and people's relationships with each other. The technologies used for social media came after computer-based communication. The word "technology" usually brings to mind the machines and tools used in different processes. Social media is a big part of our lives today. Technology will keep getting better every day. The world is moving to a new way of using media. Traditional media is being replaced by social media. These days, it's an important part of life; it helps people talk and connect with each other. Social media has a growing impact on people and society, affecting our daily lives, social standards, and social norms in many areas, including the economy. This study focuses specifically on how social media affects the public and political parties. The world feels smaller now, like a global village,

mainly because of social media's big impact on connecting people everywhere. The world is moving into a modern time with new types of digital media. Social media is very important and useful for people. Digital media began early in the 21st century and quickly became a popular way to communicate. Social media can have both good and bad effects on its users. This study looked specifically at how social networking sites impact the public and politicians in Pakistan. It explored how social media influences the public and democracy in the country. Social media plays an important role in promoting democracy in Pakistan and helps political parties share their ideas and plans. Social media allows users to connect quickly, and it has become very important for political parties. All parties actively use it to reach their goals. People have shifted from reading newspapers and watching TV to using digital media. Social media has different features like talking with sound and video, texting, sharing pictures, and sending live updates. Social media is a place online where people can talk to each other about news, information, learning, and entertainment. It depends on what people choose and like. This is a place where they can share their thoughts, opinions, and preferences freely. Social media is easy to use and quick to access. Signing up for social media is very simple, and you can agree to the terms with just one click. Young people can talk to others online using social media. They can send messages, chat with friends and family, share pictures, post ideas, make comments, and do other activities. Twitter and Facebook are two well-known social media sites that quickly share information. Many people think these sites are important for influencers, businesses, government organizations, political groups, and famous people. Twitter and Facebook have become places where people share political information and discuss politics. People tend to connect with others who share their beliefs. On Facebook, you can click the "like" button, which helps people and groups with similar ideas talk to each other. People who use social media can follow their politicians and get updates whenever they post something. Every day, more people are using Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. This helps students easily find information on almost any subject. When young people get involved in their communities today, it shows they will likely be active in the future. Young people are key to making society better. By including young people and helping them feel like they belong to their community, today's political efforts could make policy decisions clearer and more responsible to the younger generation. Young people are eager to learn new ideas and are involved in different activities. However, they haven't been fully acknowledged or included in making decisions and in politics. This limits their chances to develop important skills and gain confidence, like teamwork and communication. Young people's involvement in politics has greatly decreased worldwide in the last twenty years.

### 1.1 Rationale of the Study

This study looks at how young people in Pakistan use social media and how it affects them. The study was made to measure certain aspects of political activity on social media. This study is special because it looks at how social media shows that people are aware of politics, get involved in political activities, and change how they vote. This has caused more people to learn about politics, so they know more about political problems and events than ever. Today, anyone can join online talks about politics, keep up with political activists, and be part of online groups. People now find it easier to join political events like rallies, protests, and demonstrations due to the usage of social media.

Political campaigns are presently centering more on social media since these stages have gotten to be exceptionally popular. The impacts of utilizing social media have gotten to be exceptionally



vital to conversation around of late, particularly among youthful individuals in Pakistan. Social media has played a huge part in forming legislative issues in Pakistan, particularly among youth. Social media gives youthful individuals in Pakistan a quick way to urge political news, connect dialogs, and discover data that makes a difference them understand their country's legislative issues way better. This could result in more individuals knowing around legislative issues and getting included, which is imperative for the country's popular government. youth can share their political sees, connect talks issues, and talk to others who think like them on social media. This could make bunches and associations that influence how youth act in political issues and how they vote. This may offer assistance political parties and lawmakers make plans that utilize social media well and maintain a strategic distance from its terrible impacts, whereas moreover making a difference them get it how social media is changing legislative issues. Examining that how social media influences youth's political activities can offer assistance government pioneers and political parties make procedures to form the foremost of social media's focal points whereas diminishing its downsides.

### 1.2 Youth

Youth generally refers to people aged 17 to 26 who are going through a period of change from being a child to becoming an adult. Although meanings can differ in different places, young people are usually seen as energetic, flexible, and willing to try new things. University students are often seen as an important part of young people. They usually have access to gadgets like smartphones and laptops, as well as the internet, which help them get involved in politics today. Young people are becoming more important in politics. They are actively joining in discussions, protests, and campaigns. Their early participation shows they will be interested in politics later, which makes them important for political parties (K. Ahmad & Sheikh, 2013). Even though young people have a lot to offer, they are often not included in official political decisions. This makes it harder for them to develop skills and become leaders. Social media has become a strong place for young people to share their political views. In Pakistan's 2013 elections, politicians used social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to connect with young voters. Social media lets young people talk about politics, support leaders, and influence public conversations. It helps people express their opinions, but it also creates problems like false information and fake activism. So, even though digital tools create new opportunities for young people in politics, they also require young people to think carefully

Youth is a period of life that occurs between adulthood and childhood. In different places, the age that constitute youth have been defined differently, but they have all been linked to the attribute of being young. The term youth is also used to refer to young people. The age at which a person is termed "Youth" varies by area. The "youth" as "people between the ages of 17 and 26 years." The term "youth" refers to university students because the university students partly represent youth, have access to social media or the internet, and have a mobile or laptop. Youth participate in politics and take part in different political activities such as political gatherings, discussions about various political issues, and highlighting the leader's accomplishments

The youth are an important target population for political parties and politicians because of their political participation, which demonstrates a psychological proclivity, power, and attitude towards supporting and adopting new ideas since it demonstrates their interest when they are adults, youth participation from the outset is vital in determining whether people would participate in politics in the future. While previous studies have shown that youth are dynamic in accepting responsibility, they have not yet been properly documented and included in politics and decision-making to aid in relevant skill acquisition (Dr. K. Ahmad & Sheikh, 2020).

### 1.3 Social Media

Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Orkut, YouTube and Myspace are just a few examples of social media in the digital era. Before it became a technological communication tool, it was deeply embedded in socialization. The way people create, grow, and retain all kinds of community relationships from friendships to casual acquaintances is changing as a result of social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and Friendster (Khan & Shahbaz, 2015)

Social media is quickly becoming a vital platform for political activism and interaction. It is a contemporary type of communication and information technology that is currently developing quickly. Instant advances in new media technologies have enabled previously passive mass media customers to become active content producer on digital media platforms. The broad implications of this unmatched occasion for media credibility have resonated among researchers, media persons, and media consumers. As smartphones and tablets become more popular, many social media users rely on mobile apps to access their favourite social networking sites, and 300 million Facebook members used mobile devices in the previous year (DeSilver, 2014).

Millions of Pakistanis have profiles on different social media sites and the social media usage is fast expanding throughout Pakistan. Social media platforms are not just available in Pakistan; they also enable young Pakistanis to maintain social connections with people from other nations and to engage with young people around the world (Ahmed & Diesner, 2012).

All social media platforms have user-generated aspect, which is defined by openness and collaboration. Political views and opinions must be expressed clearly online if social media campaigns are to succeed. Social media users can interact with one another online by posting political criticism on blogs and social networking sites as well as sharing multimedia feedback. Facebook users expressed their political opinions during campaigns in a variety of ways, including by making donations online, encouraging friends to vote, and publishing images or status updates explaining their political views. Politicians and citizens have commented on socio political issues, shared information, and encouraged engagement via Twitter and blogs (K. N. Smith, 2011).

### 1.4 Research Question

The main objective of the study is to explore the influence of social media usage on Pakistani young people for political participation, awareness. The study addresses the following research questions.

**RQ1:** To what extent does social media facilitate the sharing or consumption of political information?

**RQ2:** Does social media usage by Pakistani youth have a significant relationship on their political engagement

**RQ3:** To what extent does social media have influence on political interest, awareness and participation?

### 1.5 Problem Statement

In the recent past, excessive usage of social media in youth has been an area of grave concern since it affects their performance in politics. Social media has become a program dominating the user's daily life. In Pakistan More than 50% of its active users are students who in turn abuse the site with heavy, frequent, and continuous usage. The addictive tendencies of social media make things worse since more students could not log off when they experience interference with the achievement of political targets. The aim of this study is to examine usage and intensity of social media and its correlation with the political activities of youth. Against the above problems, this research endeavors to contribute to the growing discourse of digital well-being and to formulate action strategies needed to overcome the negative impacts of overindulgence in social media consumption on youth political achievements.

### 2. Literature Review

A literature review is important because it helps to explain the main ideas of the research problem being studied. It also gives more guidance on the research problem and helps avoid wasting

effort on repeating work. Also, it's important to share useful information about research and other topics. Social media as the most used medium to promote political campaigns (Abdillah, Darma, & Yani, 2014). Social media portends to be the current and future media for political campaigns and reach the voters and supporters immediately. Social media has ability to establish a political party's image in the contemporary society. Today, almost all the political parties have social media platforms used in sharing information and ideas among their teaming supporters as well as to engage actively most online citizens (Abdillah, et al., 2014). Social networking, specifically through Facebook, has become a primary tool of modern communication for nearly all people, thereby influencing every student's interaction, access to information, and management of academic responsibilities. We need to know what communication tools the target audience likes to use to find information, and how well these channels can deliver the needed information.

Boyd and Ellison (2009) defined as Social media sites are online platforms where people can create profiles and connect with others. Users can see their friends and explore connections made by others in the network. Santoveña-Casal (2019) explored that how Facebook has many features that strongly affect young people. The main goal of the researcher was to study how using social media impacts school performance. Using social media in the classroom can help students get more involved. However, some reports say that the groups formed in this setting are not strong communities because students often stop using the social media site after school activities are done, and teachers also stop joining the conversations.

Batool & Akram, (2014) examined that how social media has become a big part of many students' lives. Social media can boost people's confidence, self-image, and ability to grow, as well as help society. However, it can harm their education, physical health, sense of individuality, and family bonds. Many people feel lonely and sad because of using social media. Some negative effects included more propaganda, a place for cyberbullying, and online information that makes identity theft more likely.

The results show that young people who use social media are more likely to get involved in politics in all three countries studied. The results also suggest that there is hope for new digital media to help reduce long-standing political unfairness (Xenos et al., 2014).

In other study Wang (2018) examined that how social media affects people's attitudes and participation in elections, considering their economic background and conversations with others about voting. He showed that political discussions on social media are linked to more people getting involved in their community and having strong political feelings.

Research shows that young people tend to show less interest in broader public issues and focus more on local community matters. However, social networking sites (SNSs) have a modest but positive impact on their political interest, awareness, and participation. While the effect is not transformative, SNSs do help increase political content exposure. Therefore, political actors should recognize the potential of these platforms in engaging and mobilizing young voters (Kamau, 2017).

Social media have transformed the way students share information, connect with their peers, and participate in collaborative activities. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), SNS refer to sites which are meant to be created and maintained social connections, primarily of the young user. Junco et al., 2021 argue that students sometimes use, such as Facebook to keep in touch with friends and update them on their lives, becoming integral parts of their routines. However, a study reveals overindulgence leads to adverse effects.

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework: Public Sphere Theory

Communication theories clarify the method of communication as well as the effect of communication on different portions of society. In this study the public sphere theory was used. Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere, first time introduced in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), offers a

foundational framework for analyzing democratic participation through collective discourse. In his later work (1989), Habermas emphasizes that the essence of a functioning democracy lies in its citizens' ability to participate in open, rational dialogue, free from censorship and external pressure. Such communicative processes are essential, he argues, for the formation of public opinion grounded in reason—a prerequisite for democratic legitimacy. This view has been reinforced by scholars like Dryzek (2000) and Young (2000), who similarly assert that sustained public deliberation is central to the health and resilience of democratic societies.

According to Habermas, the public sphere emerges as a communicative arena where individuals, acting as private citizens, collectively engage in discussions concerning issues of shared interest. Historically, these deliberative spaces have taken shape through various institutions and forums, including political clubs, parliaments, newspapers, literary journals, salons, and even coffeehouses. These venues enabled people to voice their concerns, exchange ideas, and critically reflect on public matters, thereby contributing to the gradual formation of informed public opinion (Habermas, 1962; 1988; Kellner, 1989).

This theory emphasizes citizen empowerment through dialogue, enabling them to hold authority accountable by shaping collective perspectives on governance and civic life.

While this ideal of a fully rational and inclusive public sphere has rarely, if ever, been wholly realized, many theorists—including Habermas's critics—acknowledge the model's utility as a normative framework for evaluating political communication. It provides a vision of rational, uncoerced discourse that is essential for navigating contemporary political challenges (Gestrich, 2006; Gimmler, 2001). The emphasis is not merely on the presence of communication, but rather on its discursive quality, shaped by argumentation, mutual respect, and critical reflection.

Habermas's theory was rooted in face-to-face communication, situated in the context of interpersonal social relations (Calhoun, 1992). This interpersonal dynamic was deemed essential for the formation of political will, achieved through public reasoning, deliberation, and consensus-building—what he termed deliberative democracy (Habermas, as cited in Kellner, 2000). The process thus centered not only on the content of discussions but also on the conditions under which those discussions take place.

In the contemporary context, digital communication, particularly through social media platforms, has introduced new forms and spaces for public discourse. Scholars such as Dewing (2010) and Westling (2007) have argued that social networking sites (SNSs) represent a modern instantiation of the public sphere, fulfilling many of the criteria envisioned by Habermas. These digital platforms allow citizens to engage in political conversations, challenge dominant narratives, and express views independent of state regulation. In doing so, they enable the emergence of a digitally mediated public sphere, where political opinions are formed, contested, and disseminated.

One of the most transformative aspects of social media is its capacity to facilitate political dialogue among diverse users, including those from marginalized and minority groups. Unlike traditional media, SNSs democratize access to political communication, offering a platform for voices that have historically been excluded from mainstream public discourse (Clarke, 2010; Zhang et al., 2010). This inclusivity enhances the pluralism of the public sphere and aligns closely with Habermas's normative vision, even though the mode of interaction has shifted from physical presence to virtual engagement.

Westling (2007) further expands on this perspective by asserting that SNSs have the potential to exceed Habermas's original expectations. They allow users particularly youth to access, interpret, and debate political content in real-time, fostering a more active and informed citizenry.

### 3. Research Design and Methodology

This study is based on a quantitative research design, which focuses more on measurable data to analyze the consumption of



social media and its resultant impact on youth. This design is helpful in assessing the relationship between the variables under study and testing. Data was gathered through surveys, thereby providing numerical insight into how frequently, intensely, and highly social usage has an influence on youth.

### 3.1 Population

The population for this research consists of university students in Islamabad, specifically those who are regular users of social media. This demographic is particularly significant as they represent a substantial proportion of active social media. The population includes students enrolled in public sector HEC recognized universities of Islamabad in various academic programs.

### 3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

Participants were selected by using stratified random sampling, ensuring representation from students across different academic disciplines within the selected institutions. A survey was conducted of 600 social media user's students selected from universities in Islamabad. The respondents were chosen through stratified sampling technique testing by focusing on understudies over diverse disciplines within the chosen colleges. Information was collected through self-reported surveys. Data collection was carried out through self-administered questionnaires; there were a total of 512 valid responses. Among the respondents, 52% were female and 48% male, indicating a relatively balanced gender representation. The sample size was deemed sufficient to provide statistically significant insights into social media usage and its influences on political activities.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The study aims to establish clear relationships between the social media usage leads to political activities of youth in Pakistan.

### 4.1 Political Activity on Social Media by Youth

Social media is an important source of political information for young people. The results presented in the table below provide information about the number of respondents who use social media, for political awareness based on the responses of the sample participants. According to the results social media is mostly used for political purposes in Pakistan.

Purpose of Social media Usages	Other Purpose %	Yes %	No %
I share political information on social media	3.8	89.7	6.5
I used social media to get updates of political situation	1.7	57.3	41.0
I use social media groups where members discuss politics	2.7	48.5	48.8
I use social media to post, comments, share, like political views	3.5	61.0	35.5
I enjoy politics more than any other topic shared on social media	4.9	52.2	42.9
I use social media to share political updates with my friends.	3.2	19.6	77.2
I Joined different political groups due to use of social media.	3.9	68.1	28.0
I invite people to participate in political activity on social media.	5.6	63.0	31.4
Social media motivates its users to engage in political activities.	5.5	59.4	35.1
There is significant content about politics on social media.	2.9	53.3	43.8
I prefer to watch a political video posted on social media	1.7	65.9	32.4
I feel out of touch with politics when I have not logged on social media	2.3	31.4	66.3
I feel that social media is a trustworthy platform of political information	3.6	62.3	34.1%
Total (Average)	3.87%	56.3%	47.1%

**Table:1 Usages of social media by youth.**

The result presented in the above table interprets the findings related to the use of social media by individuals for political purposes. Based on self-reported data collected through a structured questionnaire, the responses highlight various

dimensions of political interaction facilitated through online platforms.

The most dominant pattern showed that was the high percentage of respondents (89.7%) who reported that they actively share political information on social media. This indicates a strong proclivity among users to not just consume political content but to contribute to its circulation. With only 6.5% they do not, and 3.8% selecting 'Other Purpose' usages of social media, this shows that political discourse is a major communicative function of digital platforms. Another important aspect revealed is the use of social media to stay informed about political events. A significant 57.3% of participants acknowledged using these platforms for news consumption, which reinforces the increasingly pivotal role of digital media in shaping political awareness.

Around 48.5% of respondents reported their involvement in social media groups dedicated to political discussion, while 48.8% indicated they do not. Engagement through likes, comments, and shares is an interactive layer of political activity. According to the results 61.0% of the respondents used social media for updating different political information. Further, 52.2% of the participants responded that they find political content on social media. A majority (68.1%) stated they had joined political groups because of their exposure through social media. This finding illustrates how digital platforms act as a gateway to structured political communities, fostering more committed forms of involvement. According to the results 63.0% of respondents mentioned inviting others to political activities through social media.

53.3% respondents that political content is significantly present on their feeds. This is vital as algorithmic exposure to political information plays a major role in fostering engagement and shaping public opinion. It also raises questions of bias and echo chambers. 65.9% preferred watching political videos over other forms of media, indicating the dominance of audiovisual political communication. This trend is consistent with broader digital communication shifts, emphasizing immediacy, narrative appeal, and emotional engagement.

Only 31.4% agreed that they felt out of touch with politics without access to social media. A larger 66.3% disagreed, suggesting that while digital platforms are influential, many users still rely on traditional forms of political awareness or retain agency outside of algorithmic feeds. 62.3% considered social media to be a trustworthy source for political news, and political content. The average percentage of affirmative responses (Yes %) stands at 56.3%, indicating that more than half of the surveyed population engages with political content on social media in one way or another. The average for 'No %' responses is 47.1%, reflecting a sizeable group that either does not engage or is selectively involved. The average for 'Other Purpose %' is 3.87%, denoting minimal deviation or uncertainty. These findings suggest that social media is a significant, though not exclusive, tool for political engagement. It functions both as a forum for public expression and a mechanism for mobilization. However, the data also reveals notable hesitations, especially concerning trust, interpersonal political discussions, and reliance solely on digital platforms for political engagement. These mixed responses imply that while digital political engagement is rising, it is mediated by personal, cultural, and contextual factors that deserve further qualitative exploration.

Table: 2 Social media influence on political participation of youth

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Age	0.135	0.102	0.055	1.324	.186
Gender	0.258	0.110	0.093	2.347	.020*
Level of Education	-0.010	0.009	-0.039	-0.951	.341
Political Knowledge	-0.482	0.170	-0.115	-2.836	.005**
Political Efficacy	-0.134	0.056	-0.099	-2.389	.017*
Interest in Politics	-0.195	0.046	-0.193	-4.239	.000***
Interpersonal Discussion	0.273	0.051	0.248	5.372	.000***
Social media Dependence	0.225	0.021	0.405	10.312	.000***

$p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$ ,  $p < .001^{***}$ .

According to the results in table 2 the effect of age on political engagement through social media was positive but statistically non-significant ( $B = 0.135$ ,  $p = .186$ ). This suggests that while individuals may demonstrate a slight increase in political engagement, age does not play a meaningful or reliable role in predicting such engagement. Gender emerged as a statistically significant predictor ( $B = 0.258$ ,  $p = .020$ ). The positive coefficient indicates that male respondents are more likely than female respondents to engage in political activities on social media. This result aligns with prior findings that associate male users with higher levels of online political expression, possibly due to differing social roles or levels of digital confidence.

The level of formal education was not a statistically significant predictor ( $B = -0.010$ ,  $p = .341$ ). This implies that educational attainment, in this context, does not meaningfully influence the likelihood of political participation via social networking platforms. Political Knowledge:

A statistically significant negative relationship was observed between political knowledge and political engagement on social media ( $B = -0.482$ ,  $p = .005$ ). This result suggests that individuals with greater political knowledge may be less inclined to use social media as a medium for political activity, possibly due to skepticism about the reliability of online discourse or a preference for alternative, offline modes of participation. Interest in politics was found to be a strong negative predictor of political participation on social media ( $B = -0.195$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This result may seem counterintuitive; however, it can be interpreted in light of possible political fatigue, disillusionment, or a critical stance toward the quality of online political discussions. It is also plausible that individuals highly interested in politics prefer more formal or structured avenues for political involvement. The frequency of interpersonal political discussion was a strong positive predictor ( $B = 0.273$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that individuals who frequently engage in political conversations with peers are significantly more likely to express political views and participate politically on social media. This supports the idea that offline discussions reinforce online political behavior through social influence and peer encouragement. Social media dependence was the most powerful predictor in the model ( $B = 0.225$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with the highest standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta = 0.405$ ). This finding demonstrates that individuals who rely heavily on social networking platforms for information and communication are substantially more engaged in political activities within those same platforms. This result underscores the centrality of digital media in contemporary political participation, particularly among digitally embedded populations.

Table: 3 Correlation

Variable	SNS Reliance	Political Efficacy	Political Knowledge	Interest in Politics
SNS Reliance	1	.027	.009	.062
Political Efficacy	.027	1	—	—
Political Knowledge	.009	—	1	—
Interest in Politics	.062	—	—	1

No correlations were statistically significant ( $p > .05$ , 2-tailed).

The correlation matrix presented in Table 3 discusses the relationships between four key variables: SNS Reliance, Political Efficacy, Political Knowledge, and Interest in Politics. The purpose of this analysis was to examine whether social media dependence (SNS Reliance) is associated with individuals' cognitive and affective orientations towards political engagement. The results indicate that SNS Reliance is not significantly correlated with any of the three political variables under consideration. Specifically, the correlation between SNS Reliance and Political Efficacy was weak and positive ( $r = .027$ ,  $p = .598$ ), signifying a negligible association. Similarly, the correlation between SNS Reliance and Political Knowledge was virtually non-existent ( $r = .009$ ,  $p = .874$ ), implying that higher or lower usage of social networking sites bears no meaningful relationship with individuals' self-reported political knowledge. The correlation between SNS Reliance and Interest in Politics was modest but still statistically insignificant ( $r = .062$ ,  $p = .192$ ). Although this suggests a slight trend whereby individuals who rely more on social media may show a marginally greater interest in political content, the absence of statistical significance prevents drawing any firm conclusions.

Collectively, these findings underscore that reliance on social media platforms, as measured in this study, does not bear a significant linear relationship with respondents' levels of political efficacy, knowledge, or interest. This lack of correlation may reflect the complex and multifaceted nature of online political exposure, where information consumption does not necessarily translate into cognitive or motivational political engagement.

In methodological terms, the absence of strong correlations supports the assumption of low multicollinearity among the predictor variables, thereby validating their simultaneous inclusion in subsequent regression analyses.

**4.2 Discussion**

This study examines the predictors of political engagement on social media platforms, particularly exploring the role of socio-demographic characteristics, psychological predispositions, and social communication variables.

Firstly, gender had a statistically significant effect ( $B = 0.258$ ,  $p = .020$ ), indicating that male respondents, who comprised 48% of the sample, were more likely than females to participate politically on social media. Although the gender effect was relatively small in standardized terms ( $\beta = 0.093$ ).

Political knowledge negatively predicted online political activity ( $B = -0.482$ ,  $p = .005$ ). This inverse relationship is counterintuitive at first glance; however, it aligns with findings from previous research that suggest individuals with lower political knowledge may use social media as a substitute for traditional information sources. Social platforms, being accessible and engaging, may attract less politically informed individuals seeking easy-to-digest political content. The negative beta coefficient ( $\beta = -0.115$ ) underscores that higher levels of political knowledge are associated with slightly lower levels of online political activism.

Interest in politics, was a strong and statistically significant predictor of online political behavior ( $B = -0.195$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The negative coefficient, however, raises questions. A possible explanation lies in the negative coding or item phrasing in the original survey. Participants who discuss politics in person may also replicate these discussions online, extending their engagement across multiple spheres of interaction. The beta value ( $\beta = 0.248$ ) confirms the strength of this association and suggests



that political engagement is socially reinforced. The most potent predictor was SNS reliance, which showed a highly significant and strong positive relationship with political participation on social media platforms ( $B = 0.225$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Its standardized coefficient ( $\beta = 0.405$ ) indicates that individuals who rely more on social media for news, information, and interaction are considerably more likely to be politically active on those platforms. This finding reaffirms the transformative role of digital media in modern political communication. As SNSs become primary information sources, they not only expose users to political content but also invite participatory behavior such as sharing opinions, joining discussions, or promoting political causes.

The bivariate correlation analysis further clarified the relationships among the key political variables. Notably, SNS reliance was not significantly correlated with political efficacy ( $r = .027$ ,  $p = .598$ ), political knowledge ( $r = .009$ ,  $p = .874$ ), or interest in politics ( $r = .062$ ,  $p = .192$ ). These weak, non-significant relationships suggest that while SNS reliance strongly predicts online political activity (as seen in regression), it does not necessarily relate to deeper cognitive or motivational political factors.

This lack of significant correlation implies a degree of functional independence: individuals can be highly reliant on SNSs for various reasons (socializing, entertainment, casual news) without necessarily being politically knowledgeable, interested, or efficacious. In other words, social media may act more as a vehicle for exposure and performance rather than ideological conviction or informed engagement.

#### 4.3 Conclusion

This study explored the factors influencing political participation through social media, drawing upon a diverse set of predictors including demographic attributes, cognitive orientations, and social interaction variables. The analysis, conducted through multiple regression and Pearson correlation techniques. According to the analysis that role of interpersonal discussion and SNS reliance in predicting political engagement on digital platforms. These two variables emerged as the most robust and statistically significant predictors, suggesting that social interaction and habitual use of social media are primary facilitators of political expression online. Interest in politics, despite showing a strong statistical relationship, demonstrated a negative association in the model—likely due to the nuanced phrasing of items or alternative avenues of engagement adopted by politically interested individuals.

Political knowledge and political efficacy showed a negative influence on online political participation, indicating that individuals with higher cognitive engagement may not find social media a conducive or credible space for political discourse. Furthermore, variables like age and educational level were not found to significantly predict digital political engagement, reaffirming the inclusive nature of social media, where political action transcends traditional socio-demographic boundaries.

The correlation analysis further reinforced these findings by showing no significant relationships between SNS reliance and variables like political knowledge, efficacy, and interest. This suggests that frequent use of social media does not necessarily translate into informed or efficacious participation, pointing toward the potential superficiality or performative nature of digital political actions

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