

Role of Social Media in Political Campaigns in Pakistan: A Case Study of 2018 Elections

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the two social networks: Facebook and Twitter and explores the role of social networks in political campaigns during general elections in Pakistan which were held on 25th of July, 2018. Through social media, all main parties focused to campaign with the use of social media and traditional campaigns. During the elections campaign, political parties had tried to get more coverage in news and advertisements for changing the mind of the voters. This research adopted a qualitative approach with the help of secondary sources. Notably Facebook and Twitter played an important role in 2018 elections. People used internet and observed campaign on regular basis. Social media showed first-class competitors or party aspects, not just a favorable part. By analyzing the data, it was revealed that mostly Facebook users were inclined towards PML-N; while, majority Twitter users were found more inclined towards PTI.

Keywords: *Social media, Political Campaigns, Facebook, Twitter, 2018 Elections, Pakistan.*

Introduction

Social media tools are being used among millions of people which are not popular among developed countries but also among developing countries. Social media accounts are actively used by political parties of Pakistan for spreading information to voters who use social media to get information about campaigns (Michaelsen, 2011). Not only in developing countries like Pakistan Social networks have enormous impact on political communication but also in developed countries, it has massive influence because of proliferation of internet (Riaz, 2010). For providing the relevant information to those people who use it to participate in political activities, internet plays a significant role to encourage them. For political participation and for discussing any issue regarding politics internet is considered very crucial. Primarily by the websites of political parties, internet was used as

communication to inform people about politics. But new trends of media and technology have changed the communication model (Emruli & Baca, 2011). Millennials are nearly all energetic users of the Internet and social networks. Online policy-related actions are helpful to promote young people to participate in political events (Quintelier & Vissers, 2008).

The improvement of Internet, mobile phones and communication process has speedily developed. Nevertheless, in last decade, the massive communication boom starts because of the appearance of social media tools like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and chat. Millions of people brought together through social media which provide platform to guide people freely about politics. In accordance to telecommunication ability, millions of people use social media tools and internet in 2018 elections of Pakistan. In past, politicians used to provide any information related to their desires by door to door campaigns; but now with the rise of social media tools this trend has totally changed for making the political comparisons. Politicians convey their manifesto directly to the people through Facebook and twitter so that the voting campaign of the main political parties like PTI and PML-N may lead a most important change (Riaz, 2010).

In Pakistan's 2018 general elections, social media played a very critical role through social media; all main parties were much focused to run their campaigns with the use of electronic media and traditional campaign. In these elections, three main political parties like Pakistan Muslim League, Tehreek-e-insaf and Pakistani People's Party used Facebook and twitter for their campaigns and impressed people through these tools and respectively voters also used internet and mobile phones to select their nominees (Islam et al, 2019).

For changing the political views of the people, Facebook and twitter played important role in 2018 elections of Pakistan and these networks were considered very essential for political communications. Twitter conveyed message of politicians about their campaigns rapidly in developed democracies but not also in developing democracies like Pakistan twitter changed the way of communication through eliminate the public's role. In this regard, Rao (2020) asserted that political actors hire the twitter companies for their campaigns but no matter the companies trust on fake advertisements this has a bad impact on any one party which is not in favor of another party. The illiterate people blindly trust on fake news and give vote to that party in favor of that account which is hired.

Social media today is a powerful tool in the hands of politicians and activists who are very active on this front under developing countries like Pakistan. Many problems rose on Facebook and twitter are also relevant to governance issues. Even the Supreme Court has taken his motorbike has many problems (such as honor killings, hospital problems or others) videos of beatings of the poor by the police) when they are raised on social networks. The use of social networks by a large amounts of Pakistanis in favor of their policies, the parties who are so active in front of social networks, got more votes and achieve better results in elections. According to an estimate, about 44 million Pakistanis have been using Facebook (Bilal et al., 2018).

There are thousands of fake documents in Pakistan that can be used in the election campaign against the opponent in a negative way. The uses of social media against other political leaders are very negative; defamation, false documentary evidence,

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false statements are in various ways so true and fake news is not recognizable. It is a pity that social networks are not social in the current situation, especially in elections (Emruli & Baca, 2011). It was first time in 2018 elections of Pakistan that public voters were facilitated to engage with parties to ask for vote in communications. Facebook and twitter both are used for choosing leader who run government honestly but many advertisements were fake and accounts were brought for parties own sake. Ordinary people especially who are illiterate use mobile phones and internet and easily change their opinions to see any news on social media quickly (Saud, 2018).

Literature Review

Islam et. al. (2019) states that it is the first time in the history of Pakistan that the political process continues during the past ten years with encouraging tendencies to believe in democracy. Two Democratic governments have completed their five-year terms; during this time two prime ministers were lost. Despite the high level of Allegations of fraud and injustice in the 2018 general election by political parties at all levels, even political parties have given an opportunity to The PTI to do so in order to make a government and continue the process of democracy in the country.

The role of social media has given impetus to political socialization at the grass root level in Pakistan. Other forms of media have too played important function within conscience of the masses of the country. Youth participation is the most important development in Pakistan. This will be institutional strength in the country. Only fair and transparent elections would strengthen the democratic process in Pakistan, otherwise people will lose trust in the process and democratic institutions.

Hassan, Nasir, Mirbahar and Raymond Serrato (2018) explained that during the elections of Pakistan the Pakistani Electoral Commission, political actors and citizens play a dynamic role for dispiriting the misuse of social media tools. Millions of Pakistanis about a quarter of total population use social media Facebook and twitter for political information and most of the Facebook pages are related to politics and during elections this process is up to rise in Pakistan and all the people who are attached to media get informed in every seconds. All the main political parties use Facebook as the approach but the main focus is how politicians and citizens use these types of social networks and what is good or bad in these tools. They wanted to discuss four topics related to social media requiring attention to honor of elections in Pakistan. These are: privacy of users, robots, news which are fake and the funding of campaign. In Pakistan political parties should must respect the privacies of users and also be sure about their hired companies to not acquire illegal data if they plan to use social media for political campaigns. There are number of people in Pakistan who are unaware of politics and advertisements because if they use Facebook for informing their profiles and numbers for matching the leaving voters. There is no any assurance about any incident or any information on Facebook that actually happens.

Ahmed et. al. (2019) said that Information and technologies change the whole world quickly before more than a decade and the interpersonal interaction and discussion about political change through new media and technology in Pakistan. Social media is playing significant role to provide information related to political events for encouraging the users then they participate in offline political activities. During

election in Pakistan, students also use the social media; actively use facebook and twitter to get information about politics to share their opinions and also discuss issues with each other and others who actively use these instruments. Young people mostly use Facebook in Pakistan for political information comparing with other social networks. Political parties in Pakistan actively use social media since 2008 that led to bring change in dynamics of political system. Political parties use Facebook to communicate with politicians and candidates.

Hussain and Qureshi (2018) said that Facebook and twitter are a standard move from conventional media; with the passage of time Facebook and twitter are becoming trendy among young people in Pakistan. In developing countries like Pakistan, Facebook and twitter both are used as properties that are unobserved by news broadcast agency and brought people together in favor of community protests as well as campaign highlights humankind question for global society for a community reason and close the space among society and rule (Muzaffar, et. al. 2019)

All over the world social media give information in just a few seconds about any incident as compare to other forms of media. On social media like Facebook and twitter people can share their views with others. Social media also give information on those actions which are not taken by other forms of media.

Although medium on social media are closing the gap between citizens and government officials. Social networks like Facebook and twitter both create a broad collision on politics in Pakistan and the government is putting its interest among citizens' needs through social networks, according to this study, social networks are not just having an impact on the phase to identify the problem, also add states of Agenda formulation and the basis of evaluation of the formulation of policies in social networks used by lots of cities that helps to identify issues which are not detected by other print and electronic media.

Rao M. F, (2020) explained that Facebook and Twitter play an imperative function in Pakistan's election of 2018 and the party leader himself led a campaign on social media which was beneficial for parties through Facebook and twitter which was followed by thousands of people who shared their views about politics but all the competitive parties were against to each other and hate speeches were made in their campaigns. Social networks create political space against each other for their own sake to win the elections; they motivate people and tell them to trust people, especially, who are not well educated vote for them, without thinking either it will be good for the whole country or not. Facebook and twitter played very important role during 2018 election of Pakistan because both instruments were used by politicians and people for changing the political system. All murders of private nature and instrument of lessoning are not in favor of each other on social networks to get the political goals in election.

Impact of Social Media on 2018 Elections

In Pakistan's 2018 general elections, social media played very critical role because through social media all main parties were much focused to run their campaigns with the use of other forms of media and traditional campaigns.

In these elections the three main political parties like Muslim League of Pakistan, Tehreek-e-insaf and Pakistani People's Party use Facebook and twitter for their campaigns and impress people through these tools and responsively voters also use

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internet and mobile phones to select their nominee. For changing the political views of the people, Facebook and twitter played important role in 2018 elections of Pakistan and these networks are considered very essential for political communications (Bilal, 2018).

Twitter conveys messages of politicians about their campaigns rapidly in developed democracies but not also in developing democracies like Pakistan. Twitter changes the way of communication through eliminating the public's role. Despite the high level of allegations of fraud and injustice in the 2018 general election by almost all political parties at all levels, even political parties have given the opportunity to PTI to form a government and continue the process of democracy in the country. Political actors hire the twitter companies for their campaigns but no matter the companies trust on fake advertisements that makes a bad impact on any party which is not in favor of other party (Ahmed & Ittefaq, 2019).

During election campaign all the political parties should ensure that they would respect the privacy of voters if they plan to use social networks for their benefits, they assure of their hire media companies, not to acquire data which are illegal or fake because all the fake advertisements disappoint the people and their trust on them also lesser by passing time. Millions of people use Facebook for information related to politics but all of them sometimes unaware of the real goals of political parties and real advertisement also not provide in fake Ids. Facebook does not assure that the events or incidents are real or fake. Women are considered the core sufferers of online aggravation. Women candidates and candidates from alternative religious groups may be mostly susceptible to annoyance by trolls for the elections in Pakistan (Bilal, 2018).

Pakistan Takhreek Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League Noon (PML-N) and Social media

Social media used by PTI and PML-N as an instrument for accumulation views; and mobilization during 2018 elections of Pakistan. Both PTI and PML-N have organized few conventions across the country on social media campaigns for motivating their voters. All the TV channels and social media accounts share the information only for their favorite parties; and if twitter is in favor of the PML-N then PTI is in favor of Facebook (Emruli & Baqa, 2011).

As the elections approach, the PTI becomes extra prearranged and enjoys the freedom of using social media. In disparity, PML (N) social media were in wreck after Maryam Nawaz's going away for London on June 14 and her consequent detention on July 13. During election, his social media campaign had been abridged to an irregular and rudderless society. The newly appointed chairman of the Central Media Committee, Mushahid Hussain Syed, has residential an anti-rigging system to interpret and stop the deception attempt on voting day. Before some weeks of election, PTI launched application related to database of millions of voters. By means of this app, PTI employees can goal their supporters, move towards them earlier than vote and direct them to the voting center on 25 July (Bilal, 2018).

PTI campaign conquered the social networks and other form of networks. Distributing television news screenshots was frequent perform. Some TV channels have campaigned for their most wanted parties and leaders. ARY News has openly

supported PTI and available news that PTI social media has immediately oppressed to take benefit of the "believable" benefit of its campaign. PTI's social media composed "latest news" and echo it on their platforms. This shows puzzlement, aggravation and annoyance among the employees and voters of the PML-N on the eve of the elections (Emruli & Baca, 2011).

Common People and Social Media

It was first time in 2018 elections of Pakistan that public voters facilitate to engage with parties which asked for vote in communication. Facebook and twitter both are used for choosing leader who run government honestly but many advertisements were fake and accounts were brought for parties own sake. Ordinary people specially who are illiterates use mobile phones and internet and easily change their opinion to see news on social media quickly (Saud, 2018).

The illiterate people blindly trust on fake news and give vote to that party which is in favor of that account which is hired. Social media gives huge treatment to common people. For expressing the opinion of ordinary people and who are not educated, the social media served as spokesperson that increased the awareness of rights allowing the disadvantaged voters. The society of Pakistan has developed more up to date and had participatory culture through electronic and social media. All the people no matter that they are educated or not have mobile phones and internet facilities for easily involved in politics; also took advantage of this opportunity. Once a video gets viral on social media, it will be exposed by other forms of media and authorities (Quintelier & Vissers, 2008).

With the increase of social media, the culture of communication between politicians and community has altered radically. The appearance of communal annoyance throughout social media in the 2018 elections refined a new picture of electorate in the eyes of Pakistani politicians. The creativity of normal people, superior attentiveness and their talent to publicly communicate their views has become a thought for political parties and individual candidate who can no longer pay for disregard (Saud, 2018).

Social Media like substitute Instrument for Political Phrase

Talat Hussain's channel was refuse to televise his treatment of Shehbaz Sharif rally on Geo TV on 13th July after that he chose Twitter for all advertisements. Similarly, Fahad Hussain who was television presenter selected facebook and twitter to manage organization of media and to start hostile attack during elections. The volatile speech of Judge Saeed Uz Zaman Siddiqui to Rawalpindi Bar association was concealed by television channel of Pakistan but viral on social media in some hours on 21st July. The videos of Judge Saeed Uz Zaman Siddiqui address were shared on social media through all active accounts of social media like lawyers, activists and political operators. Judge Saeed Uz Zaman Siddiqui had held that safety agencies were straightforwardly concerned in managing high profile political luggage. As predictably social media also facilitated offense campaigns against Judge Saeed Uz Zaman Siddiqui (Michaelsen, 2011).

Conclusion

Social media played an important role in Pakistan's general elections in 2018, specifically, Facebook and Twitter played an important role like people use internet

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and see regular advertisements. Especially in Facebook millions of people use it and enjoy all the relevant news of elections. The people see how parties play a role and conduct their political campaigns for vote that helps most of the people to impress from social media. The word of friends is not limited only to rivals, but in general also have become victims of this political attraction of the parties. Politicians and their followers in political parties were found promoting the murder of personal ATP personalities and in inciting violence among them.

Now the social media has changed the course of election campaign. It has become the ever-present resource of communication for candidates in election campaigns. In the past, if candidates wanted to reach voters during election campaigns, they used different techniques to fulfill their requirements for votes. For example, knocking on doors, holding corner meetings and moving around in vans with loudspeakers for campaigns. With the help of Facebook and Twitter, candidates are now directly reach out to voters, mobilize supporters, and influence the public agenda.

All over the world, social media provides information in just a few seconds about any incident as compared to other form of media. On social media like facebook and twitter, people can share their views with others. Social media also gives information on those actions which are not taken by other form of media.

Facebook and Twitter are used notably to promote biased participation by sharing your views and posting policy comments. The problems on Facebook that exchange views and information indicate an understanding of political problems and the tendency of young people to participate in politics, therefore the study explored the significant correlation between the exchange of political opinions on Facebook in different ways and its role in motivating young people for political participation in Pakistani society. In this regard, the government can launch awareness campaigns for young people who know the importance of using Facebook for democracy.

Discussion

Political parties and their supporters use social media tools as a prime cause in Pakistan's 2018 election. Few years back, electronic media and print media were just primary tools and sources for political communication and for the dissemination of the newsletter on the Internet and on fast-use mobile phones. The communication process has become fast. The tendency to carry out political campaigns has changed due to the emergence of technology and social networks. The role of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter is generally increased speedily in political communication and particularly during election but the bad use of Facebook and twitter also create negative impact on humanity. During 2018 elections of Pakistan, social media shows images and videos which are shared by political actors on Facebook and twitter that were the main sources of killing intolerance of religions and range of hate words against each other on twitter and Facebook (Husain & Qureshi, 2018 & Fareed. et. al, 2019).

Internet has allowed politicians and the public to separate the traumas of conflict and hatred against minority politicians connected to independence of appearance. For promoting the plan of political parties they start social media platform to control hatred speech against other party. Social media also makes influence on the minds

of innocent people through political campaigns that motivate them for vote. It is hard to manage the contents of social media, specially, during election campaign (Rao, 2020).

Accusation of social media posts has benefited political parties more from those citizens who are illiterate and have blind trust on social media posts, even they have no any idea regards literacy of media and its hatred. The former prime minister of Pakistan Raja Pervez Ashraf said that all the parties during elections were against each other's and formulate government on the basis of false accusation but in that process there is no any benefit for society but the accusations that deviate from hitting below nonprofit, moreover, could be true and would have a negative impact on the information of the PML and of farmers (Bilal, 2018). At the time of elections, the previous government also tries to motivate people about their power and promises to change in next government too but at the same time the new party also creates awareness among citizens that they make changes in Pakistan. All the parties during election campaign try to achieve people's trust through Facebook and twitter by posting videos and images against each other. The election of 2018 in Pakistan show more interest of citizens on social media rather than any other tool (Husain & Qureshi, 2018)

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