

Virtual Voices: The Role of Social Media in Shaping Civic Engagement Among Young Adults

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Abstract

This study uses Media System Dependency Theory and Uses and Gratification Theory as theoretical underpinnings to examine the intricate relationship between social media use and civic involvement among young adults in Pakistan. As digital platforms become more and more important for social contact and political discourse, this study investigates how several aspects of social media such as usage patterns, motivations, political discourse, and content consumption influence civic behavior in the digital age. Utilizing a quantitative approach, information was gathered from 500 young social media users between the ages of 18 and 34 via a structured online survey. The results show a statistically significant negative relationship between social media use and civic involvement, suggesting that excessive use may discourage active civic engagement and instead encourage passive behaviors. Civic participation did not significantly correlate with other factors, such as incentives, political discourse, or frequency of use. These results cast doubt on the idealistic notion that social media serves as an involuntary stimulant for political engagement and emphasize the necessity of distinguishing between petty online behavior and genuine civic citizenship. The study emphasizes how crucial it is to promote critical digital literacy and engagement tactics that go beyond "slacktivism" in order to develop more substantial kinds of active citizenship.

Keywords: Civic Engagement, Social Media, Young Adults, Virtual Voices, Political Discussions, and Citizenship.

Introduction

Social media has completely changed how people interact, communicate, and take part in societal concerns in the digital age. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have become essential parts of everyday life, particularly for young adults, providing forums for civic and political conversation in addition to entertainment and social connection. The widespread usage of digital platforms has changed conventional ideas of civic participation by making it possible for users to engage in community-building activities, voice their opinions, and organize for causes with never-before-seen ease and reach. Siddique and Singh (2016) define social media networks as computer-based platforms that enable the sharing of data, concepts, pictures, and videos among members of a larger network. According to Stieglitz et al. (2018), these platforms have developed over the last ten years into effective instruments for the spread of information in a variety of fields, such as politics, education, crisis management, and social action. As a result of

their expanding influence, civic engagement has changed, especially among young people who are increasingly using digital platforms to express their concerns, push for reform, and meet like-minded people. The dynamics of political communication have also changed as a result of the convergence of interactive digital platforms with traditional media. Social networking sites, which provide more individualized and interactive forms of engagement, have grown in popularity at the same time that mass media's power has diminished, as noted by McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase (2017). These platforms encourage more engaged and knowledgeable citizens by enabling users to produce and distribute material in addition to consuming it. Social media consists of interactive programs and user-generated content that allow people with similar interests to communicate in real time (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Civic engagement, which is the active involvement of citizens in endeavors to enhance community life, has on new dimensions in this context. Digital actions like signing online petitions, taking part in virtual town halls, and running social media campaigns have replaced more traditional civic engagement activities like volunteering, voting, and community service. The significance of civic involvement in promoting democratic values, social responsibility, and communal well-being is emphasized by scholars including Ehrlich (2000) and Diller (2001). Furthermore, social media's immediateness and accessibility have reduced obstacles to involvement, especially for young individuals who might otherwise feel cut off from traditional political processes. The scope of civic engagement has expanded beyond institutional boundaries thanks to platforms like Facebook and Twitter, which have allowed young people to participate in political discussions, exchange information, and rally support for causes (Tufekci, 2017; Chadwick, 2017). The development of civic identity and the promotion of active citizenship are significantly impacted by this democratization of participation. However, social media does not always have a favorable effect on civic engagement. Although there are chances to get involved on these platforms, there are drawbacks as well, such as false information, echo chambers, and shallow participation. Concerns over the breadth and genuineness of digital civic involvement are raised by the phenomena known as "slacktivism," in which individuals participate in low-effort online activities that could not result in significant offline activity. As such, it is important to look at the reasons, trends, and results related to social media use in addition to its prevalence.

These days, people use social media to share their thoughts and worries. According to Siddique and Singh (2016), social media networks are computer-based means of sharing and exchanging information, ideas, pictures, and videos within a larger network. Over the past decade, social media has become an increasingly important tool for the collection and sharing of information in a variety of fields, including business, science, entertainment, politics, and crisis management (Stieglitz et al., 2018). The past ten or so years have seen a tremendous socioeconomic and political impact on society from social media. While mass media's influence is waning, social networking sites' popularity is growing worldwide, demonstrating its uniqueness (McCay-Peet & Quan-Haase 2017). The importance of social media as a global source of news, entertainment, and conversation is growing. Even while specific motivations and usage patterns differ greatly, social media adoption is a clear trend that has increased annually over the last 10 years. As social networking sites are used more often, a variety of communication-related problems and communication patterns can now be investigated in novel ways. According to Golder and Macy (2011), social networking site data can be analyzed to learn more about issues, trends, significant individuals, and other types of information. Social media, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), is made up of user-generated content and interactive web and mobile applications that allow individuals with similar interests to make instant connections. Because social media enables people to organize, support, or mobilize for political and social change, Tufekci (2017) asserts that it is essential to contemporary politics. According to Chadwick (2017), social media platforms have transformed political communication by enabling real-time interactions, information sharing, and public discourse among politicians, political parties, and individuals. Additionally, people should

use social media to obtain political information so that they are politically involved or informed (Gil de Ziga et al., 2012). Highly engaged Twitter users who frequently consume political news on the platform are more politically conscious than their non-microblogging peers (Boulianne, 2015). According to Himelboim et al. (2013), digital platforms are evolving into venues for people to express their thoughts and participate in political discourse through various online platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Civic engagement is the process of attempting to enhance our communities' civic life and gaining the knowledge, skills, convictions, and motivation to do so, according to Ehrlich (2000). Civic engagement is defined by Diller (2001) as an individual's dedication to fulfilling civic duties and actively participating in volunteer activity that enhances a community, either alone or in partnership with others. Citing volunteerism and community support as key components, Saltmarsh et al. (2009) define civic engagement as a set of behaviors that take place in communities with the aim of addressing each individual's specific needs. Ginwright and Cammorata (2007) advocate for values such as community development, respect for others' rights, and the experiences of individuals and organizations. Both individually and collectively, these choices promote social justice. Civic engagement refers to the different ways a local person may actively participate in taking action that would enhance the lives of others or possibly influence the growth of the community (Adler & Goggin, 2005). A variety of actions aimed at creating public goods are referred to as civic involvement. Voting, volunteer work, community service, political advocacy, and involvement in civic associations are all examples of this (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Since civic engagement fosters social cohesion and citizen empowerment, it is commonly seen as a crucial component of a robust democracy (Putnam, 2000). Furthermore, the accessibility and connectivity offered by digital technologies have made it possible for people to engage in civic activities from anywhere, extending civic participation beyond traditional boundaries (Dahlberg, 2001). According to studies, social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter boost public participation (Backhouse & Canberra, 2008; Donath & Boyd, 2004).

However, according to Dumitrica (2016), there is general agreement that using social media platforms for political purposes specially to promote current events has aided in reducing the obstacles that prevent young people from participating in politics and expanding the range of informal activities. Comparably, the widespread use of Facebook, especially by younger people, has made it possible for politicians to publicly promote themselves, use their platforms to their full advantage, and engage with the public in essentially new ways. Facebook, in a similar vein, has made it possible for young people to converse and exchange viewpoints regarding political matters. Political engagement is positively impacted by online political involvement, per study on Facebook's influence in politics (Vitak et al., 2011). Political posting and commentary on the internet is positively correlated with political involvement in the offline world, claim Jung et al. (2011). According to Yamamoto and Kushin (2014), a favourable association exists between political information searching and online political activity as well as voting trends. This study examines the relationship between young individuals' civic involvement, online political activity, and social media use. By exploring the complexities of civic engagement, the study sheds light on the intricate relationships that influence young people's engagement with movements and issues. Understanding the complex relationship between civic engagement in the context of youth mobilization is essential, as the internet becomes an increasingly significant forum for social movement and political conversation.

Research Objectives

- To examine the influence of social media usage on civic engagement of young adults.
- To investigate the role of demographics in moderating the influence of social media usage on civic engagement.

Research hypotheses

H1: It is more likely that social media consumption negatively influences civic engagement of young adults

H2: It is more likely that traditional media use negatively influences civic engagement of young adults.

H3: It is more likely that social media use positively influences civic engagement of young adults.

H4: It is more likely that social media usage frequency positively influences civic engagement of young adults.

H5: It is more likely that political talk negatively influences civic engagement of young adults.

H6: It is more likely that social media usage motivations negatively influence civic engagement of young adults.

H7a: Males are more likely to show civic engagement behaviours than females.

H7b: Civic engagement likely to decrease with increase in the age.

Literature Review

In this chapter, the literature review is explained in detail. The themes covered in this chapter include political discourse, social media sharing of traditional media content, social media usage, frequency of use, and motivations for using social media. This chapter also covers the use of social media and online political participation, as well as the use of social media and civic engagement, misinformation, and disinformation.

Social Media Usage

Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook are the most popular social media platform. Zappavigna (2015) examines a way in which hashtags are employed as discourse markers in online communication, helping to shape meaning and identity. Bruns and Burgess (2012) highlight how hashtags influence public conversation and promote a culture of participation. Political and social movements have benefited greatly from hashtags, which have served as a platform for advocacy, awareness, and mobilization. Examples that come to mind include #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo (Freelon et al., 2016). It is being noted that politicians in contemporary democracies around the globe have quickly embraced social networking sites as a means of interacting with the public, having direct conversations with citizens, along fostering dynamic debate about politics. (Hong & Nadler, 2011). Politicians in the US are thought to have a significant influence; Barack Obama is one prominent example, having made good use of social media throughout his most recent election campaign (Wattal et al. 2010). Use of social media can be advantageous or disadvantageous, depending on the user's aims and ambitions. Notwithstanding, occasionally users become victims of uncontrollably unpleasant usage experiences, including but not limited to bullying, extortion, trolling, hacking, propaganda, and impersonation.

Social Media Consumption for Political Purpose

According to Ali and Fatima (2016), social media platforms will be utilised by Pakistani and Indonesian young for political purposes in the future. Though just half of these correlations were statistically significant, a meta-analysis of 36 research revealed a relationship between social media use and political activity (Boulianne, 2015). Prior social media research has demonstrated that the usage of social media increases Internet users' connecting as well as bridge social capital, which is commonly operationalised as online and offline social capital (Valenzuela et al., 2009). The public and those involved in Indonesian politics and elections have lately been exceeded in the use of social media due to its rapid growth (Saraswati, 2018). Social media in particular, and new media in general, have seen a sea change in their use for political objectives since the US election of 2008. Additionally, social networking platforms were seen as particularly important and inventive during the protracted primary race between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

Obama used social media extensively during the campaign, which contributed significantly to his eventual win in the presidential election (Owen et al, 2011). In their study, Lee, Chen, and Chan (2017) examined the relationship between social media use and participation in large-scale protest campaigns that offer several modes of engagement. The work develops a theoretical framework that distinguishes between behaviour activation effects and support generation, emphasises the distinctions between participation in digital, personalised, and collective actions, and proposes that the use of social media serves as a mediator within societal physiological indicators of the outrage behaviour as well as engagement in the action itself.

Social Media Usage Frequency

Pew Research Centre survey data analysis leads to the conclusion that a large number of people including those who are politically indifferent do participate in simple political acts such as appreciating and leaving comments on political information on social networking sites. There can be a rise in offline political activity when they do. However, the fact that people who participate in more difficult political behaviours are also more inclined to participate in simpler ones lends credence to the interest and activation hypothesis (Bode, 2017). Online political engagement has a major role in determining political efficacy. Furthermore, social media provides netizens with a crucial forum for engaging in offline political activities. The study's findings show a strong correlation between online political action and political awareness as well as offline political involvement. According to Ahmad et al. (2019), younger generations in Pakistan's rural areas are quite active on social media and use it as a platform to engage in political activities on the internet as well as offline. Research on the connection between social media use and political activity was conducted by Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, and Verba (2012). They found that 39% of Americans used social media, and that 1 in 8 of them did so for civic and political purposes. Social media usage influenced most respondents' decision on presidential candidates in the 2011 presidential election, as seen by the high mean value (1.5805) in the descriptive statistics data. According to respondents, the popularity of the two selected presidential candidates was also attributed to their usage of social networking sites throughout the elections (mean value of 1.5575). It was also revealed by the participants that their voting behaviour during the 2011 presidential contest was influenced by their utilisation of social networking sites. This was corroborated by a mean value of 1.6667. The results of the hypothesis test also showed that voters' choice of political candidates was influenced by political debate on social media (Okoro, & Santas, 2017).

Social Media Use Motivations

This study adds to existing research on the incentives and benefits of using political Instagram. A survey shows why people follow political personalities on social media and how those reasons relate to the followers' demographics and political views. According to the findings, the main motivation for following political personalities on Instagram is information/guidance, which is followed by social utility. Additionally, Instagram is used by men more often than by women for social usefulness, and having a fun motive is associated with youth. According to Paramelee and Roman (2017), the findings provide insight into how politically active individuals might increase their influence on Instagram. According to the study's findings, Saudis tend to be highly motivated to seek out information and utilize social media continuously for political and social reasons (Allothman, 2013). In their study, Kim and Lee (2016) examined the relationships between network heterogeneity, relative preferences for different types of social media, and social media motivation using data from a national survey conducted in the United States. By classifying social media into symmetrical and asymmetrical categories, they showed that relationship motivation was more likely to be linked to a preference for the symmetrical type, while information motivation was more likely to be linked to a preference for the asymmetrical type. It was discovered that relationship motivation outperformed information motivation as a predictor of network heterogeneity. In the end, it was found that a relative preference for the symmetrical form

moderated the relationship between the relationship motivator and network heterogeneity. The article by Jenson, Neumayer, and Rossi (2020) looks into why people share and create memes on the internet during times of crisis. For this purpose, they examine the kitten memes associated with the #Brusselslockdown hashtag on Twitter, which arose from the security lockdown in Brussels in November 2015 due to concerns about possible terrorist threats. Three user groups are identified through the use of social network analysis: producers of content, content shares, and talkers. They draw the conclusion that users' reasons for creating and disseminating memes vary from personal engagement in the time of crisis circumstances to acts of resistance to creative self-awareness based on interviews with users from these three groups.

Political Talk

Vaccari and Valeriani (2018) came to the conclusion that they investigated if and to what extent informal political discourse on digital media affects people's political engagement using original questionnaires utilising sampling representative of online users in seven European nations. They show a positive relationship between political discourse on mobile instant messaging apps and social networking sites and political involvement, both inside and outside of institutions. However, compared to "third wave" democracies (Greece, Poland, and Spain), established democratic systems (Denmark, France, the Kingdom of England, and the USA) show a significantly stronger correlation between social networking site discourse and both forms of engagement. However, there is no statistically significant difference in the intensity of the link between political debate and involvement on mobile instant messaging services when comparing more recent democracies to established ones. Schmitt-Beck and Lop (2013) proposed two hypotheses for why daily political conversation is likely to convert into political action. The first is about gaining useful political information during individual interactions, while the second is about a social influence process. Russo and Amna (2016) Concluded that It is normal to discuss politics in daily conversation, but it is unclear how this might inspire a desire to take up politics more actively. They contrasted two concepts: social influence, which is the belief that individuals take political conversation seriously when they believe their friends are politically engaged, and knowledge gain, which is the idea that people take political talk seriously when they learn about events and organizations. They discovered that when people believe their discussion partners are politically engaged, engaging in political talk gradually increases political participation. This effect is particularly strong for those who are amiable. The study's findings confirmed the hypothesis that political talk can result in political action when social influence is present and among people who are more likely to follow social norms.

This study looks at and discusses the influence of political speech as a social networking sites mediator of online political participation. The survey, which was completed by 1,050 college students in West Java, is intended to collect data about the candidates for the 2019 Indonesian presidential election. The results showed that political talk on the internet served as a mediator in contrast to face-to-face discussions. Furthermore, there was a positive correlation between social media use and politics and online political participation. The study's conclusions suggest that social media may be utilised to encourage political dialogue and increase youth involvement, especially among undergraduates (Intrastat & Fairuzza, 2023).

Traditional Media Content Shared On Social Media

In light of the results, an examination of the shift in media credibility in Korea is conducted. This study examines the patterns of conventional and digital media consumption among Malaysians who have access to the Internet. The results show that traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers and the Internet are used in tandem by the studied respondents to obtain political information. This survey indicates that while it is usual to get political information online, watching television and reading newspapers still have their role. Furthermore, data suggests that

Internet users participate in a limited scope of political activity on the network. However, it doesn't seem that respondents' online political knowledge influences their choices of political candidates in elections (Nor et al, 2011). In terms of political information, young adults use social networking sites more than conventional media. Compared to traditional media, social media seems to be a more important part of young people's daily lives and political lives (Lata, 2020).

Social Media and Civic Engagement

The term "civic engagement" describes a person's involvement in public life, including political, electoral, and civic activities. It usually seeks to alter or better society and is motivated by a feeling of duty and deference to power. (Lenzi et al., 2015). Reuben (2004) asserts that engagement occurs through civil or political acts as well as direct and indirect exchanges (Jugert et al., 2013). Civic engagement is any political or non-political activity that enhances the quality of life in a community. It is described as people's relationships with their communities (Ehrlich, 2012). The popularity of online (internet-based) civic involvement has increased in tandem with the growth of the internet (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). This includes publishing, leaving comments, voting, and even just clicking on links to show one's awareness of society issues (Liu, 2013; Guo, 2015). Social media has been lauded for its ability to facilitate civic engagement. At a time when declining public participation in politics is one of the most severe problems confronting Western democracy (Dahlgren, 2009). According to Greenhow and Li (2013), The phrase "offline civic engagement" refers to actions taken for civic purposes in the real globe, for example interacting with the government or volunteering for an environmental organization. People are probably less interested in civic issues when they spend the majority of their internet time shopping and entertaining (Camaerts, 2008). Higher levels of civic engagement, political awareness, and internal efficacy are exhibited by those who use the Internet for information (kenski, & Stroud, 2005). Traditional media news consumption did not significantly correlate with political engagement in person or online. Conversely, it was discovered that offline as well as online news consumption through social networking sites and the Internet was highly associated with political awareness as well as civic and political participation (Hao, Wen, & George, 2014). Warren, Sulaiman, and jaafar (2014) The findings imply that institutions must build social capital through online civic engagement and close the public-police disengagement gap in order to increase public trust in their efforts to support meaningful and trustworthy citizen engagement.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework of this study was based on following theories:

Media System Dependency Theory

Media system dependence theory not only proposes micro-level relationships between people and media, but also macro-level relationships between the media system and social, political, and cultural systems (Ball- Rokeach, 1985; Ball- Rokeach & De-fleur, 1976). Ball-Rokeach & De-fleur (1976) define "dependency" as "a relationship in which the accomplishment of one party's goals or the satisfaction of another's needs depends on the resources of another party." Individuals who find the media's resources useful in achieving their goals may grow dependent on it. Activities, introductions, and comprehension are the three primary goals of media use, according to the theory of media system dependency. Informational media is used by people to understand the world around them and make well-informed decisions. This exemplifies how people achieve comprehension objectives. In analyzing how social media use affects young adults' online political engagement, this method is useful. It is helpful to investigate how much the use of social media by young people influences their political discourse, usage patterns, and motivations. It's also helpful to investigate the kind of traditional media articles they share on social media. Examining the web-based interdependencies built by social media that influence this population's online dynamics of political participation is made easier by the concept.

Uses and Gratification Theory

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch are the authors of Uses and Gratification Theory (1974). But in reality, theories started to take shape in the early 1940s when researchers began looking into why people consistently read newspapers and tune in to well-known radio shows (McQuail, 2010). As a result, theories were developed in an effort to explain why people select certain media to consume and what they learn from it. To investigate, elucidate, and provide solutions for why people utilize specific media and what benefits or satisfaction they derive from doing so, mass communication scholars employ U&G Theory. According to Galan (2010), the central idea of the theory is that people use mass media for a variety of reasons and to meet a variety of needs. This study looks at how young individuals choose and interact with political social networking sites to meet their various requirements using UGT as a lens. For instance, they might use social networking sites to engage with others in online groups or to express their party identification (Katz et al., 1974). In order to fully understand how these gratifications affect young adults' online political participation and behaviors, the study will use UGT to uncover the motivations and satisfactions that young adults derive from their use of political social media.

Theoretical Model

Social Media Usage

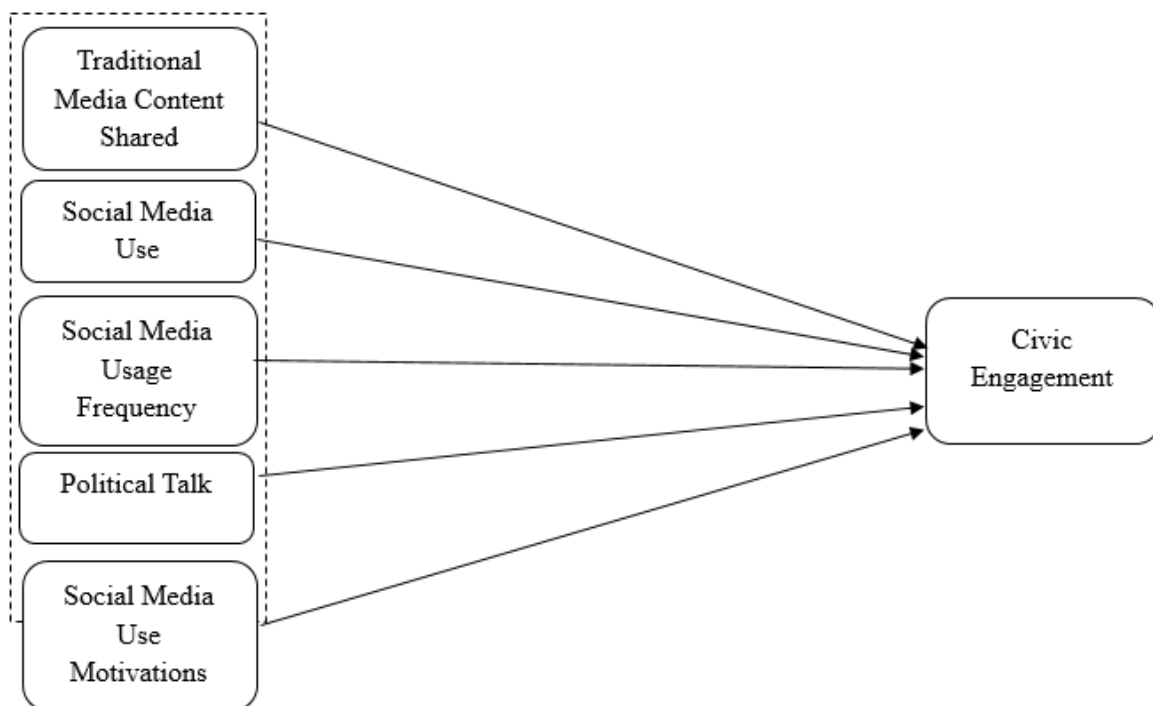


Figure 3.1 Theoretical Representation of Relationships

Methodology

The impact of social media use on civic engagement among Pakistani young adults was investigated in this study using a quantitative research methodology. The research tool was a structured questionnaire, and the approach was survey-based. The questionnaire looked at a number of categories, including conventional media content sharing on social media, political discourse, social media use, frequency of use, and motivation for using social media. People between the ages of 18 and 34 who regularly use social media comprised the population. Data were collected through purposive sampling from a total of 500 respondents. Through the inclusion criteria, participants were guaranteed to be exposed to political content on online media. This study

looked only one dependent variable, civic engagement. Numerous metrics related to social media use were included as independent variables. We looked into demographic parameters like age and gender as potential modifiers. Digitally active members of the population were reached through online data collection. Likert-scale items were included in the survey to gather data on attitudes and behaviors. After the data was gathered, hypothesized relationships were examined using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and Pearson correlation. Informed consent and confidentiality were two of the ethical issues that the study ensured. The methodological framework, which was informed by the theories of Uses and Gratification and Media System Dependency, offered a solid foundation for examining how social media influences political and civic behaviors in the digital age.

Findings

Table 5.1 *Pearson product moment between social media consumption and civic engagement*

		SMCC	CET
SMCC	Pearson Correlation	1	-.138**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.002
	N	500	500

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5.1 displays to investigate the association between social media consumption and civic engagement, a product moment correlation was carried out. Given that the p-value is less than 0.05, the results indicated a substantial but negative association between social media consumption and civic engagement.

Table 5.2 *Pearson product moment between Traditional media content shared on social media and civic engagement*

		TMC	CET
TMC	Pearson Correlation	1	.026
	Sig (2-tailed)		.561
	N	500	500

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5.2 displays the Pearson product moment results. The relationship between traditional media content shared on social media and civic engagement was investigated using the correlation test. The results demonstrated that, as the p-value is greater than 0.05, there is no statistically significant correlation between traditional media content shared on social media and civic engagement.

Table 5.3 *Pearson product moment between social media use and civic engagement*

		SMUC	CET
SMUC	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.34
	Sig (2-tailed)		.446
	N	500	500

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The Pearson product moment correlation test results, which were used to determine the correlation between social media use and civic engagement, are shown in Table 5.3. Given that the p-value is

more than 0.05, the results demonstrated that there is no statistically significant correlation between social media use and civic engagement.

Table 5.4 *Pearson product moment between social media usage frequency and civic engagement*

		SMFC	CET
SMFC	Pearson Correlation	1	.051
	Sig (2-tailed)		.254
	N	500	500

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson product moment correlation test results, which were used to look into the relationship between social media usage frequency and civic engagement, were displayed in Table 5.4. Given that the p-value is more than 0.05, the results demonstrated that there is no statistically significant correlation between the social media usage frequency and civic engagement.

Table 5.5 *Pearson product moment between political talk and civic engagement*

		PTC	CET
PTC	Pearson Correlation	1	-.076
	Sig(2-tailed)		.088
	N	500	500

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson product moment results were displayed in Table 5.5. A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between political talk and civic engagement. Given that the p-value is more than 0.05, the results demonstrated that there is no statistically significant correlation between political talk and civic engagement.

Table 5.6 *Pearson product moment between social media usage motivations and civic engagement*

		SMUMC	CET
SMUMC	Pearson Correlation	1	-.034
	Sig (2-2-tailed)		.453
	N	500	500

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson product moment correlation test results, which were used to determine the correlation between social media usage motivations and civic engagement, are shown in Table 5.6. Given that the p-value is greater than 0.05, the results indicate that there is no statistically significant correlation among social media usage motivations and civic engagement.

Table 5.7 *Difference between level of civic engagement on the basis of gender*

Measure	Male		Female		F (2, 497)	η^2	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD			
Civic Engagement	52.36	10.392	51.67	10.857	.316	0.00127	.729

Respondents were split into two groups according to gender (i.e., Group 1 = Males; Group 2 = Females) in order to determine the influence of gender on civic engagement. The findings for the

one-way analysis of variance between the groups are shown in table 5.7 above. Results of the test show that there is no discernible gender difference in the groups' levels of civic participation [$F(2, 497) = .316$ $p = .729$]. Nevertheless, because there were only two groups, post-hoc comparisons were not feasible, making it impossible to ascertain whether there were any differences between the groups.

Table 5.8 *Difference between level of civic engagement on the basis of age*

Measure	18-21		22-25		26-29		30-33		34 – above		F(4, 495)	η^2	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Civic Engagement	51.46	11.14	53.02	10.36	51.09	11.64	50.39	9.80	53.65	6.89	1.11	0.00	.348

The findings of a one-way analysis of variance between the groups to determine the influence of age on civic engagement are displayed in Table 5.6. Based on age, the respondents were split up into five categories. (i.e. Groups 1 through 5 are 18–21, 22–25, 26–29, 30–33, and 34 and above, respectively). The test results explain the notable age-based difference between the groups for civic engagement. [$F(4, 495) = 1.117$, $p = .348$]. Nevertheless, a post-hoc analysis revealed no statistically significant differences across the different age groups.

Discussion

H1: It is more likely that social media consumption negatively influences civic engagement of young adults (Approved)

The hypothesis that social media consumption negatively influences civic engagement among young adults finds support in the results shown in Table 5.2. A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis yielded a notable negative correlation between these variables with P-Value of less than 0.05. The outcome is reliable with recent researches which argue that heavy usage of social media may lead to passive instead of active civic engagement like for example by Boulianne (2017) and Skoric et al. (2021). These scholars suggest that despite offering opportunities for political and civil engagements, social media channels can also support shallow interactions which do not translate into substantial citizenship practices. This may be due to such a negative coefficient as just scrolling through feeds or consuming content without deeper involvement or reactions. Additionally, Theocharis and Van Deth (2018) observe in their research that while these platforms could allow initial enkindling about an issue as well as its discussion, offline civic responsibilities like donations or attending community gatherings are not necessarily involved yet. Consequently, this pattern of passivity and slacktivism may decrease real expressions of civic participation since they are associated with a significant range from engagement level according to the current study's findings – one more time they prove opposite view. Here too the passive nature of consuming goods in terms of scrolling down on various links posted online and consuming what we read is an alternative explanation for the observed negative relationship. Besides, citing another work by Theocharis and Van Deth (2018), it is worth mentioning that even though social media might help people get familiarized with certain issues; it does not mean that they will participate in any activities related to those subjects such as attending meetings or volunteer work. Thus, low levels of genuine citizen participation are enhanced during these instances characterized by passive involvement leading to a significant inverse relationship found from our investigation.

H2: It is more likely that traditional media content shared on social media negatively influence civic engagement of young adults (Disapproved)

The hypothesis suggested that traditional media content shared on social media negatively influences civic engagement among young adults. Therefore, findings from the Pearson product-moment correlation test as presented in table 5.8 contradict this hypothesis the test results indicated that no statistically significant correlation exists between traditional media content shared on social media and or civic engagement as p-value above than 0.05 this suggested that sharing of traditional media content on social media does not impact significantly on civic engagement among young adults. These findings are aligned with research, suggested that mere presence of traditional media content on social media does not necessarily translate to decreased or increased civic engagement for instance engagement with traditional media content may not be as influenced as user generated content or interactive discussion that more actively involve young individuals. Thus, while traditional media shared on social media remains accessible, its role in fostering civic engagement appears limited without additional interactive or motivational elements that encourage active participation (Loader et al., 2015). Similarly, Thorson et al. (2019) found social media news content could stimulate civic activities by informing users about local events and issues thus engendering civic engagement.

H3: It is more likely that social media use positively influences civic engagement of young adults (Disapproved)

The hypothesis suggested that social media use positively influences civic engagement among young adults. Therefore, the findings from the Pearson product-moment correlation test as presented in table 5.9 do not support hypothesis as findings indicated there is no statistically significant correlation exists among social media use or civic engagement as P-value above than 0.05 This indicates that young individuals' use of social media has no apparent impact on their degree of civic engagement. One study found that social media content consumption in a passive manner may not substantially boost civic engagement compared to active participation or content creation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012).

H4: It is more likely that social media usage frequency positively influences civic engagement of young adults (Disapproved)

The hypothesis that was proposed is that, among young adults, an increased frequency of social media usage is likely to positively influence civic engagement. A contrast to this expectation, we find out from Table 5.10 that employed the Pearson product moment correlation test that there isn't a statistically meaningful correlation among two variables. This is because of p-value being greater than .05. Several recent studies corroborate this finding as they argue against the efficacy of new media for promoting genuine citizen participation in politics; instead, they underscore the intricacies of e-interactions and their varying influences on different forms of citizenship which are always evolving (Theocharis & Van Deth, 2018). These findings imply that while social media remains pertinent among young adults, merely higher rates of social networking do not result into more active civic engagement. According to Boulianne (2015) consuming information passively on social media has less impact on civic engagement compared to active participation in discussions and sharing content. Lee et al. (2012) indicated that moderate social networking sites usage may contribute to a rise in civic engagement. while excessive use may distract people from real-world involvement and reduce time spent on offline civic participation

H5: It is more likely that political talk negatively influences civic engagement of young adults (Disapproved)

The hypothesis showed that political talk has negative influence on civic engagement for young adults besides the Pearson product-moment correlation test at table 5.11 counters this hypothesis in conclusion; Political talk and civic engagement do not statistically significantly correlate, as the p-value is higher than 0.05. This means that any kind of political talk either positive or negative cannot influence the extent to which youth engage in politics in any capacity. Results challenge prevailing assumptions about what talking does to promote active citizenship and show that merely engaging in political discussions need not necessarily be equated to being actively involved with one's community Political talk (Pew Research Centre, 2021). However, may be common among young people but it could also often be shallow or extreme, lacking such depth as would motivate actual civic action. It could be possible that most times when young adults engage in political talks, they are only interested in those issues without deeper meanings required for them to get committed towards real-life civic actions (Theocharis & Van Deth, 2018). Therefore, according to Kim et al. (1999), discussing political views with peers can boost the sense of responsibility towards the country as well as an individual's inclination for taking part in public affairs; which contradicts expectations that such conversations would be harmful or dampen participation in civic activities.

H6: It is more likely social media usage motivations negatively influence civic engagement of young adults (Disapprove).

The hypothesis that social media usage motivations negatively influence social media on civic engagement of young adults was evaluated using Pearson Correlation test. According to the data in Table 5.12, there is no statistically significant correlation between social media usage motivation and civic engagement if the p-value is greater than 0.05. This implies the reason behind youths' usage of social media. (for information, to make friends, etc.) does not significantly determine how much they get involved in politics and other forms of civic engagements. It corresponds with more recent studies revealing that influence social networking sites on civic engagement complex or involves several factors such as content consumed and the context in which it is used (Boulianne, 2020). One possible explanation for this apparent non-significance could be; while social media serves as a platform for various activities, the reasons behind its popularity may not always translate into involvement in public affairs. For instance, young people may primarily use sites like Facebook or Twitter for entertainment purposes or interacting with friends and not necessarily for purposes related to their active participation or involvement in public affairs or discussions. It emphasizes on the necessity of making distinction between those who merely take part as passive consumers and those individuals who are actively engaged when studying social media on civic engagement (Bossetta, 2018). Ellison et al., (2007) assert that utilising social media to maintain connections and create communities correlates favourably with civic engagement.

H7a: Males are more likely to show civic engagement behaviours than females (Disapproved)

The results of Table 5.14 do not support the hypothesis that males are more likely to be civically engaged than females. One-way ANOVA showed no significant difference between males and females on civic engagement; F-value of .316 and $p=.729$. The p – value is significantly higher than 0.05 indicating that gender has no statistically significant impact on civic engagement levels for respondents. These findings show that both groups are equally probable to participate in acts of citizenship, which contradicts other studies suggesting different patterns of male-female differences in civic activity (Verba et al., 1997). Burns et al. (2001) posit that women are often more involved in community-oriented activities, which represent an important form of civic engagement.

H7b: Civic engagement is likely to decrease with increase in age (Disapproved)

The hypothesis that civic engagement decreases with age was subjected to a ANOVA test examining variations across five age groups (18-21, 22-25, 26-29, 30-33 and 34-above). Results in Table 5.16 indicate that the ANOVA test did not exhibit any noteworthy difference in civic engagement among different age groups with an F-value of 1.117 and p-value of .348. This means that this lack of statistical significance implies that level of civic engagement is not necessarily influenced by age as shown by this F-value statistic as well as a p-value. Age does not significantly influence the levels of active citizenship due to lack of such indicators. In addition, post-hoc comparisons were done which confirmed no significant differences between all pairs of age categories with respect to civic engagement. Therefore, it would be expected that there will be variations in how much people participate depending on their stage in life rather than just being determined by how old they are (Bekkers, 2019). Therefore, Verba et al., (1995) also pointed out because senior individuals typically to be more involved in their local communities and public affairs as they have more time for this purpose and feel a greater sense of responsibility for their neighbourhoods, thus disputing the view that decreasing age always leads to lower civic involvement. The influence of social media usage on young adults' online political participation and civic engagement has been investigated in this study. One-way ANOVA and the Pearson product-moment correlation test were used to assess each of the sixteen hypotheses. The results demonstrated a moderately significant statistically significant association between online political participation and traditional media content shared on social media, as well as between social media use, frequency, political talk, and social media usage motivations. Furthermore, contrary to expectations and hypotheses social media use, social media usage frequency, political talk, social media usage motivations and traditional media content shared on social media didn't have statistically significant relationship with civic engagement. Additionally, there is a significant difference in the likelihood that men will participate in online politics compared to women, but there is no difference in civic engagement. Additionally, there is a significant difference in the likelihood that people will participate in online politics based on age, with those in the 22–24 or 34–plus age groups being more active than those in the 18–21 age group. but civic engagement didn't show significant difference.

Conclusion

In an ever-changing media landscape, this study aimed to investigate how social media use affects young adults' civic involvement in Pakistan and provide a detailed knowledge of the relationship between digital habits and democratic participation. Based on the theories of Media System Dependency and Uses and Gratification, the study examined a number of aspects of social media use, such as frequency, usage patterns, content consumption, political discourse, and motivational drivers. It also took into account the moderating influence of demographic variables like age and gender. The results present a complicated and even contradictory picture. The data indicate that increased social media usage is significantly but negatively associated with civic involvement, despite the fact that social media provides hitherto unheard-of options for information exchange, mobilization, and virtual activism. This implies that real offline civic activities like volunteering, community service, or political activism might not be correlated with passive consumption, such as scrolling or like information. Additionally, factors including motivations, political conversation, and frequency of use did not show statistically significant connections with civic engagement, suggesting that active citizenship is not always fostered by exposure to or participation in online political discourse. According to demographic study, age and gender had no apparent impact on levels of civic engagement, further debunking popular beliefs. This casts doubt on the notion that some demographic segments are innately more engaged in civic life than others in online settings.

Overall, the study emphasizes how important it is to reconsider social media's potential as a tool for civic change. Digital platforms can help people become more aware and interact with others, but they don't always ensure that people will actively participate in politics. The results support initiatives that foster more in-depth kinds of participation, like civic education, critical digital literacy, and online forums that support thoughtful discussion and community-focused projects. It is crucial for academics, educators, and policymakers to distinguish between symbolic online gestures and genuine democratic engagement as civic life migrates more and more to digital realms.

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