

# Impact of Facebook Usage on the Political Participation among Women in Pakistan

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## Abstract

Social Media has become one of the effective forms of political communication in the contemporary age. Given this truism, this study intends to investigate the impact of Facebook usage on political participation among women in Pakistan. This study employed a cross-sectional research design vis-à-vis survey method to find the relationship between Facebook usage and women's political participation, using Pakistan as our focus. A sample of 563 females aged 18 to 60 was selected. The findings of the study indicated that online political participation influenced offline political involvement among Pakistani women. It was further found that the purpose of Facebook usage also correlated with online political participation. In addition, this study is of the view that online political participation influenced offline political participation. The study's findings can encourage the female population to actively participate in the electoral process of the country - to improve voters' turnout and make the electoral process more diverse and representative.

Keywords: Facebook, women, political participation, Pakistan, social media

## Introduction

This study investigates the impact of Facebook usage on the online and offline political participation of Pakistani women. This is in line with the fact that social media is the most emerging and penetrating platform in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Valenzuela et al., 2019). Social networking sites are very famous among people of all ages across societies (Governatori & Iannella, 2011). The extensive use of social networking sites such as weblog and instant messages provides

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opportunities to create personal and official pages (Johnston et al., 2013) that help establish societal communities (Ellison et al., 2007). These networking sites provide a platform for discussing political, social, and religious issues (Aksar et al., 2020); bring about increased social circles based on shared interests; help people connect with old and new friends (Mehmood et al., 2018; Steinfield & Lampe, 2011); create a bridge between people for better communication and social well-being (Boyd & Ellison, 2008), and to maintain social networks (Jin, 2013; Khamis & Vaughn, 2011). Over the last decade, computer and smartphone-based social communication has evolved into an extensive array of social networking sites (Hosseini et al., 2020), which ease and facilitate communication within societies (Howard, 2010). Such platforms help people stay in touch with others individually and in groups (Jackson & Lilleker, 2009). It is a truism that consumption of media content through social media platforms, mainly because of access and affordability, has a considerable impact on consumers' lives in different ways, including their political behavior. Thus it is rife to argue that the dissemination and consumption of political content in and from social media influence government performance (Raza, Emenyeonu, Yousaf & Iftikhar, 2021), political values manifested in advertisements (Raza et al., 2020), and apparel purchasing behavior of female consumers (Ikhlaq, Yousaf & Ans, in press). As a result, the participation of people in political activities may have implications in the structure of a government, selection of candidates, and the agenda of a political party (Himmelboim et al., 2012).

Facebook is a prevalent online social networking platform worldwide (Ross et al., 2009). It is believed that Facebook is significant investigative vicinity (Murthy, 2013). The Facebook groups support social networks and discuss political issues. These groups have networking capabilities that show the power of online participation through the formation of groups (Conroy et al., 2012). Facebook users create social networking groups to disseminate political news easily and quickly (Earl & Kimport., 2011; Ward, 2012).

As of January 2021, Facebook had 2.58 billion active users (Statista, 2021). In December 2019, Facebook reported that about 1.66 billion people actively use Facebook daily. Moreover, roughly 250 billion people were using Facebook every month all over the world. This makes Facebook the world's biggest networking platform (Statista, 2021). In September 2020 in Pakistan, 43 million monthly active Facebook users accounted for 20.3% of its entire population. Among these users, 78.4% of active users were male and 21.6% female aged 25-34 (Napoleon, 2020). In Pakistan, social media provides space to share political information, news and opinions. Pakistani youth, especially those educated with access to social media platforms, actively create new political cultures (Ahmad et al., 2016). This improved access results in promoting democracy and political awareness (Eijaz, 2013; Shaheen, 2008). It is assumed that voting decisions are based on past voting experience,

current attitudes, and various direct and arbitrary communication (Redlawsk, 2002). Put differently, the opinion about issues is a marriage between information and predisposition (Zaller, 1992). It is no gain saying that the media, including social media, play a crucial role in constructing reality and shaping opinion about issues (Yousaf, 2018a, 2018b); framing conflict (Yousaf, Rahman & Yousaf, 2020) and the image of the countries (Ji, Hu & Muhammad, 2016).

Social media usage also influences online and offline political engagement (Bode et al., 2014; Gel de Zuniga et al., 2014). In addition to online and offline political participation, it shapes civic engagement (Hargittai & Shaw, 2013) and Knowledge (Xenos & Moy, 2007). Further, studies indicate that the use of social media corresponds to persuasive behavior of people (Attia et al., 2011), young voters engagement (Bridges et al., 2012), individual expression within peer networks (Bennett et al., 2011). Despite the unprecedented research on social resources in various disciplines, women's participation was only used as a substitute and did not represent gender differences. While the online social resources literature remains largely genderless, gender is an essential cultural aspect for people with "biological sex" to determine different behaviors, attitudes, and principles (Inglehart & Norris, 2000). In this regard, Hargittai (2007) emphasized that including gender is a priority factor in using the media. This study assumes significance given that women's Facebook usage and political participation in Pakistan is an understudied area. To bridge this gap in the existing literature, this study sought to investigate whether Facebook usage enhances online political participation among Pakistani women and whether Facebook usage is associated with offline political participation among Pakistani women.

## Literature Review

### Online Political Participation

Facebook is a popular online platform that allows users to communicate with everyone in the virtual world (Kanter et al., 2012). Primarily, Facebook was developed for university students to contact friends and share information (Junco, 2013). Still, since then, it has grown tremendously from being a university students' network to be one of the most globally sought- after social networking sites (SNSs). In the process, it has also become a platform for a wide range of political activities (Earl & Kimport, 2011; Ward, 2012). In line with this, Pempek et al. (2009) identified Facebook as a platform that enables its users to talk about particular topics and exchange political news. Bronstein and Aharow (2015) contend that it is a robust platform used for political socialization. The introduction and use of mobile Internet provided an additional boost to the use of social media platforms, especially Facebook.

Organizations, including political parties, create and sustain social media accounts to keep up with the changing media environment (Effing et al., 2011). Political parties conscious of citizens' active participation in politics conversely utilize social media platforms to reach out to such citizens. It is on record that the political campaign that led to Barack Obama's emerging as the first African-American president was due to the highly successful election campaign that was, to a large extent, based systematically on social media (Effing et al., 2011). Concerning the rate of social media usage and its impact on political participation, Ahmad (2020) found that social media usage, time duration, and Internet connectivity significantly relate to online political participation. In a free-choice environment, theoretical participation intends to persuade the public and political persuasion to convince others to change their attitudes and behaviors towards political issues through messages (Perloff, 2003, p. 34). Facebook endorses online political participation among youth (Diehl et al., 2016); they also like Facebook political pages and support them (Miller et al., 2015).

Elsewhere, Balo and Shawon (2018) emphasized that social media usage corresponds to political awareness among the people of Bangladesh. This study indicates that increased social media usage resulted in political awareness, political rights, and voter power. This aligns with some research findings that there is a generally positive relationship between social media use and civic and political participation (e.g., Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012). Likewise, Balo and Shawon's (2018) study also showed that political leaders and voters through online political campaigns have strong linkage, which builds public confidence in politicians. Moreover, Facebook is a big platform for socialization and offers its users to upload and share text, pictures, and videos (Gould, 2015). In addition, it allows its users to create their pages for online socialization (Ellison, 2007).

The utilization of Facebook by political organizations as a vital tool for political communication cannot be divorced from the proliferation of Facebook as a very popular platform among people in the digital era. It is believed that 73% of users from the United States of America are aged 12-17 (Smith, 2014), whereas 44% of Facebook users within the age of 18-29 like or promote political material (Rainie et al., 2012). The increased Facebook usage is also associated with the increased voting turnout (Tolbert & McNeal, 2003) and provides a platform for online political discussions (Hardy & Scheufele, 2005). Relying on this, political candidates invest heavily in Facebook campaigns and use them for their political goals (Jacobs & Spierings, 2016). In another study, Conroy et al. (2012) explored the association between online political participation and groups and found a significant affiliation. They also found that online political involvement, discussion in private chat rooms, political emails, and online political exposure are assumed to be associated with the

increased voting turnout (Kasadha, 2019). Likewise, online information exchange on Facebook promotes the involvement of women's confidence and life satisfaction. At the same time, social entertainment on the Internet has a negative relationship with trust and fulfillment in life. Both studies shed light on the more deliberate Use of Facebook, especially in the development of political discourse (Shah et al., 2001). The accessible literature reveals that online Facebook networking and grouping enhance trust (Jennings & Stoker, 2004), democratic principles, and the expansion of significant political abilities (McFarland & Thomas, 2006).

Masiha et al. (2018) examined online and offline political participation by identifying the number of Facebook accounts, duration, weekly usage time, total & close Facebook friends. Their findings revealed that Pakistani youth shared party policies on their timeline instead of sharing political pictures. There is a significant correlation between political participation and usage of Facebook, whereas Facebook usage, duration, weekly time spend, and close friends' motivate youth to involve in political activities. Facebook has a central wall in user profiles to add fresh pictures, audio/visual stuff, text, and other content. Political workers and followers of any political party share their opinions, thoughts and criticize others on their walls (McCorkindale, 2010). It is a low cast new forum where users discuss political issues with others (Vissers & Stolle, 2014). People get the latest political news and participate in political discussions (Elin, 2003).

### Offline Political Participation

New media and technology have changed the way we interact and communicate socially and politically. Facebook is the largest, unique, and less expensive source of information used for political activities than offline political activity (Vissers & Stolle, 2014). It is a handy platform to disseminate political news, gatherings, and discussions, attract users and persuade them to participate in offline political engagement (Emruli & Beca, 2011). Conroy et al. (2012) investigated the link between online political group association and offline political engagement. The findings revealed a strong link between online political participation and offline political activity in various groups. To validate this finding, Effing et al. (2011) contend that Barack Obama used an online campaign to complement offline engagement. They wrote:

Next to his website, Obama used fifteen Social Media sites to run his campaign. He understood the power of complementing offline work with an online campaign. So he systematically linked the online community to offline activities such as fundraising.

Extending social media input in changing the game of politics, Effing et al., (2011) argued that in the 2007 French elections, Ségolène Royal, a French politician and former Socialist Party candidate for the Presidency of France, had a massive online following. This led to an increase of party

membership from 120,000 to 200,000. What is interesting in this narrative is that 90% of the increments were never members of any political parties before. This points to how much social media is extending political engagement to offline participants.

Studies have also found that social media pages' "political use" is assumed to associate with political involvement (Cao, 2008). This helps explain how online political group engagement affects people's offline political participation and traditional forms of political knowledge (Xenos & Moy, 2007). Political parties' groups are defined as social interactions that are shared by individuals and enable political debate. Political parties exist offline through informal conversations with group organizations and friends (Putnam, 2000). Facebook allows citizens to participate in political groups to engage in politics in ways that have never been seen. It is an essential element for political socialization that provides users with a great platform. People worldwide use it to promote relationships, share political views (Rainie et al., 2012), and promote their products (Bronstein & Aharony, 2015). The massive use of social media outlets and significant innovations in new media technologies does not rule out the need for physical intimacy to enhance and strengthen relationships. In this regard, Tang and Lee (2013) argued that those who are structurally and politically involved in various online networks are more likely to be involved in offline political engagement. In particular, the Internet uprising has introduced online groups that are functionally similar to offline groups, if not identical. While some researchers have opposed the decline in popularity of offline groups, others have upheld that social mediation has made a big difference in the behavior of offline groups and that online political groups also encourage offline political participation (Tang & Lee, 2013). From the preceding, it may be safe to argue that online political participation and traditional offline knowledge are essential elements of joint political engagement.

It has also been found in past studies that Facebook users were more likely to engage in political activities and participate in political debates. This substantiates the assertion that online political appearance and offline political participation have a close and robust relationship (Bode et al., 2014; Hsieh & Li, 2014). Thus active users of Facebook are politically more attentive than seasonal users (Hyun & Kim, 2015). Similarly, Facebook exposure leads to offline political participation (Vaccari et al., 2015; Zhang & Lin, 2014). Therefore, we argue that Facebook usage time, sharing of political news, social network structure, and direct connection with political actors provoke online and offline political participation among users.

In contemporary times, social media has become an essential tool for increasing political knowledge and education (Morisi, 2014). It is a lively place for people worldwide to interact and exchange their perspectives on culture, values, principles, religions, and politics. This motivates people to play a role or another in offline civic public and political movements (Schlozman

et al., 2010). The popularity of Facebook has attracted the attention of many researchers to investigate the participation of active youth in political activities (Smith, 2009). Young males and females play a vital role in the expansion and progress of a country. At large, youth get involved in offline political activities and share their views with the public. In addition, they share information and political news about selected political parties and leaders with their peers, family, and friends (Cohen & Kahne, 2011). The active involvement of young people in social media strengthens the democratic process (Dalton, 2008).

Haenschen (2016) investigated the increased voter turnout due to updated Facebook status. Their three experiments showed that voter turnout increased due to social networking sites and provoked people to participate in voting. Meanwhile, some researchers have investigated the reason for social media political campaigns in the UK (Jackson & Lillerker, 2009), in Germany (Marcinkowski & Metag, 2014), in Denmark (Hansen & Kosiara, 2014), in Norway (Kalnes, 2009) and in Nigeria (Paul, 2019). In the current age of communication, Facebook has transformed the process of political communication. Firstly, it raised people's interest and participation, and secondly, it reduced the direct and indirect communication gap between people and government (Balo & Shawon, 2018). People around the world use social networking applications such as Facebook to get the latest political news and information, which convert young voters into loyal voters (Somaiah, 2018), expanding access to social media increases political participation (Shehzad et al., 2021), active users of social networking sites are active participants of offline political activities, Political parties, candidates and political workers motivate voters to win elections, to enhance the legislative process and influence government policies (Aleyomi & Olanrewaju, 2014).

### Women Political Participation in Pakistan

Much of the literature on this theme focuses on top-down mechanisms for achieving essential expressions of a woman's particular preferences. This examines how women's participation as a leader can better represent women's preferences (Barnes, 2016). In developing countries such as Pakistan, the Constitution ensures political participation and protects other rights for women as well. Before independence, Pakistani Muslim women like Fatima Jinnah and others actively participated in Pakistan's movement for self-actualization, but after independence, women's role in the political system remained low (Awan, 2016). To ensure women's political participation, all the political parties have women's wings for active political participation (Elashi, 2014). The women population constitutes about 48% of the total population of Pakistan. However, still, women's participation in politics is marginalized. Benazir Bhutto was the first Muslim elected prime minister of Pakistan who held the Prime Minister Office twice.

Similarly, in 2008 Fehmida Mirza held the seat of lower house speaker and became first lady speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan (Rubab et al., 2020). However, one of the reasons for the proletarian women's participation in political activities is very low due to life threats from the society's opponents and religious extremist segments (Mahmood, 2018). For instance, the accusation of traditional violation and political participation led to the death of Zubaida Begum in the 2013 elections. She was accused of violating local traditions and norms. In addition, political leaders and religious scholars defame women political leaders and issue religious edicts that their participation is against Islamic laws (Mahmood, 2018).

## Theoretical Framework

The proliferation of the latest communication technologies affects communication in society and offers a wide range of options to meet communication needs. Today, millions of people engage in social media activities to search for their favorite topics (Papoola, 2014). The Uses and Gratification theory points how users gratify their needs (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Unlike traditional media, which gives users limited choices, this new media offers new options, and this theory helps define users' needs and achieve gratifications (Matei, 2010). Facebook is a two-way communication process where users gratify their needs and engage (Ko et al., 2005; Park et al., 2009). People use Facebook to get the latest news and information (Seldon, 2008), participation in political activities enables young people to use Facebook (Roy, 2009). The uses and gratification theory examines how and why people use media (Stafford et al., 2004). More specifically, the idea is not concerned with what the media do with the people; instead, it deals with what people do with the media. Through users' influence on the media, they have increasingly involved in understanding the function of social media in their lives and use it to gratify their needs (Anaeto et al., 2008). Keeping in view the nature of this study, this study utilizes it as a theoretical framework.

## Research Questions

- RQ1: Does the number of Facebook accounts influence online political participation among Pakistani women?
- RQ2: To what extent does the duration of Facebook accounts correlate with online political participation among Pakistani women?
- RQ3: Is there a correlation between Facebook usage and online political participation among Pakistani women?
- RQ4: Does weekly time spent on Facebook relate to online political participation among Pakistani women?
- RQ5: Is online political participation associated with offline political participation among Pakistani women?



## Research Design

This study utilized a cross-sectional design vis-à-vis survey method to examine the impact of Facebook usage and women's participation in politics. A sample of 563 females aged 18 to 60 was selected. The respondents were asked to fill an online survey questionnaire. The study used Masiha et al. (2018) scale to collect data. The questionnaire includes Likert scale items ranging from (5= strongly agree to 1= strongly disagree). It consisted of 3 parts: demographic variables, online participation, and offline participation. The demographic variables included the age, education, profession, and marital status of the respondents. In addition to this, the respondents were asked about the number of Facebook accounts, duration of Facebook usage, the purpose of Facebook usage, and weekly time spent on Facebook. To be specific, 7-items were about online political participation, and 5-items were related to offline political participation. Masiha et al. (2018) reported 0.95 reliability, whereas, in the Pakistani context, the scale's reliability was found to be 0.79.

## Results

The study was designed to find the impact of Facebook usage on women's political participation in the political process. 63.4% of respondents were aged 18-30, 19.4% belonged to 46-60 age, and 17.2% were between 31-45. The majority of the respondents (37.5%) had a metric, 34.5% of respondents had BA/MA degree, 16.2% had M. Phil or above degree, and 11.9% had an intermediate degree.

Most of the respondents, 41.1%, belong to an active community, 41% are students, and 17.6% are household professionals. The majority of the respondents 64.7% were single, 20.1% were married, 8.5% divorced and 6.7% were a widow. The statistics on the Use of Facebook show that 72.1% had one Facebook account, 14.4% had two Facebook accounts, 12.1% had three accounts, and 1.4% had four Facebook accounts. 37.7% of the respondents have been using Facebook accounts for 7-9 years, 31.6% were using the account for 4-6 years, 25.9% were using it for 10+ years, and 4.8% were using Facebook accounts for 1-3 years. On the other hand, 36.6% of the respondents use Facebook accounts for political information, 31.1% used it for socialization, 13.7% use Facebook for education, 9.6% for discussion, and 9.1% use Facebook for entertainment purposes. Moreover, 33.7% of the respondents use Facebook 5-6 hours weekly, 27.9% use 6+ hours, 20.1% use 1-2 hours, and 18.3% use Facebook 3-4 hours weekly.

We used the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to examine the relationship between the number of Facebook accounts, the purpose of using Facebook, time spent on Facebook, online political

Table 1. The demographic composition of the sample.

Demographic	Variables	Frequency (%)
Age	18-30	63.4%
	31-45	17.2%
	46-60	19.4%
Education	Metric	37.5%
	Intermediate	11.9%
	BA/MA	34.5%
	M.Phil or Above	16.2%
Profession	Working	41.1%
	Student	41.0%
	Household	17.6%
Marital Status	Single	64.7%
	Married	20.1%
	Widow	6.7%
	Divorced	8.5%
No of Facebook Accounts	One	406 (72.1)
	Two	81(14.4)
	Three	68(12.1)
	Four	8(1.4)
Duration of Facebook Accounts	1-3 Years	27(4.8)
	4-6 Years	178(31.6)
	7-9 Years	212(37.7)
	10+ Years	146(25.9)
Purpose of Facebook Usage	Political information	206(36.6)
	Entertainment	51(9.1)
	Discussion	54(9.6)
	Socialization	175(31.1)
	Education	77(13.7)
Weekly Time Spent on Facebook	1-2 hours	113(20.1)
	3-4 hours	103(18.3)
	5-6 hours	190(33.7)
	6+ hours	157(27.9)

participation, and offline political participation. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. There was a positive correlation between the duration of Facebook accounts and online political participation,  $r = .207$ ,  $n = 563$ ,  $p < .01$ . In other words, the duration of Facebook accounts and online political participation share a 4 percent variance. Likewise, there was a negative correlation between Facebook accounts and online political participation,

$r = -.20$ ,  $n=563$ ,  $p < .01$ , number of accounts and offline political participation,  $r = -.10$ ,  $n=563$ ,  $p < .05$ . There was a positive correlation between the purpose of Facebook use and online political participation,  $r = .17$ ,  $n=563$ ,  $p < .01$ . The purpose of Facebook use and online political participation shared a 3 percent variance. Moreover, There was a positive correlation between the purpose of Facebook use and offline political participation,  $r = .14$ ,  $n=563$ ,  $p < .01$ . In this case, the purpose of Facebook use and offline political participation shared a 2 percent variance. On the other hand, there was a strong positive correlation between online political participation and offline political participation,  $r = .56$ ,  $n=563$ ,  $p < .01$ . According to Cohen (1988, pp. 79-81) criteria  $r = .10$  to  $.29$  is small correlation;  $r = .30$  to  $.49$  is medium correlation, and  $r = .50$  to  $1.0$  is large correlation. In this case, online and offline political participation share 25 variances. This is an excellent variance when compared to a lot of the research conducted in social sciences. However, there was a positive correlation between the purpose of Facebook use and time spent on Facebook,  $r = .1$ ,  $n=564$ ,  $p < .05$ . Similarly, there was a negative correlation between Facebook accounts and online political participation,  $r = -.20$ ,  $n=563$ ,  $p < .01$ . At the same time, there was a negative correlation between the number of Facebook accounts and offline political participation,  $r = -.104$ ,  $n=563$ ,  $p < .05$ .

## Discussion

The study was conducted to determine the correlation between the number of Facebook accounts, duration of Facebook accounts, the purpose of using Facebook, time spent on Facebook, online political participation, and offline political participation. The findings of the study have supported the research questions: **RQ2**, **RQ3**, **RQ4**, and **RQ5**. However, the results of this study do not support the **RQ1**. Put it in another way, the findings of this study support the findings of the previous studies (Ahmad et al., 2016; Aksar et al., 2020; Eijaz, 2013; Pempek et al., 2009; Shaheen, 2008). Pakistan is a developing country where most of the population uses Facebook daily for socialization, information, knowledge, and political activities. Thus it serves as a platform for political discussion and sharing of social & religious issues (Aksar et al., 2020). It also acts as a 'virtual space' for sharing political information and exchange opinions regarding different topics. Moreover, Facebook usage among educated women in Pakistan creates vibrant political cultures corresponding to democratic and political values (Ahmad et al., 2016; Eijaz, 2013; Shaheen, 2008).

The findings of this study further show that unmarried females (64.7%) aged 18-30 years, with matriculation (37.5%), belonging to the active community (41.1%), actively use Facebook daily to gratify their needs.

Moreover, 44% of these women from 18-29 years use Facebook to share political content (Rainie et al., 2012), which led to an increased online political discussion (Hardy & Scheufele, 2005) which increased voting turnout.

In the current study, most females with one Facebook account used it 5-6 hours daily to seek political information. There was a negative correlation between Facebook accounts and online political participation,  $r = -.20$ ,  $n = 563$ ,  $p < .01$ , number of accounts and offline political participation,  $r = -.10$ ,  $n = 563$ ,  $p < .05$ . These findings are also consistent with the previous findings that maintain Facebook usage among various age groups across all world societies (Governatori & Iannella, 2011). On the other hand, there was a positive correlation between the duration of Facebook accounts and online political participation,  $r = .207$ ,  $n = 563$ ,  $p < .01$ . In other words, the duration of Facebook accounts and online political participation share a 4 percent variance. For instance, Facebook usage and time duration have a substantial impact on political participation (Ahmad, 2020), increased social circle activities (Steinfeld & Lampe, 2011; Jin, 2013). Likewise, Facebook as a virtual platform allows active users to create connections, exchange political views (Kanter et al., 2012), and youth actively participate in a variety of activities (Pempek et al., 2009). Facebook usage and online political participation ( $r = .17$ ,  $n = 563$ ,  $p < .01$ ) have significant relation with 3% shared variance. Facebook is a popular platform for online political participation and sharing of information (Kanter et al., 2012). Political participation tends to persuade the public and political persuasion to convince others to change their attitudes and behaviors towards political issues through messages in a free choice environment (Perloff, 2003, p. 34). Facebook endorses online political participation among youth (Diehl et al., 2016); they also like Facebook political pages and support political party candidates (Miller et al., 2015).

Facebook is said to be one of the largest, new, and cheap platforms used for political sharing and offline political participation (Vissers & Stolle, 2014). There is a strong positive association between the purpose of Facebook usage and offline political participation ( $r = .14$ ,  $n = 563$ ,  $p < .01$ ), which depicts a 2% variance. This validates that Facebook users are more likely to engage in political activities and participate in political debates. Thus, Facebook usage plays a pivotal role in disseminating political news and discussions and persuades users to actively participate in offline political activities (Emruli & Beca, 2011).

There was a positive correlation between the purpose of Facebook use and time spent on Facebook ( $r = .1$ ,  $n = 564$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Facebook usage time, sharing of political news, social network structure, and direct connection with young political workers provoke online and offline political participation among users. Facebook usage and political participation, whereas Facebook usage, duration, weekly time spend, total and close friends motivated youth to participate in the political process (Masiha et al., 2018).

Facebook plays an essential role in disseminating political news, gatherings, and discussions, attracting users, and persuading them to participate in online and offline political activities. It is the largest, new, and less expensive source of information used for political activities than offline political activity (Vissers & Stolle, 2014). There was a strong positive correlation between online political participation and offline political participation ( $r = .56$ ,  $n = 563$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Tang and Lee (2013) found that respondents who are structurally involved in various online networks were more likely to engage in offline political activities. The active users of Facebook are politically more attentive than seasonal users (Hyun & Kim, 2015). Similarly, Facebook exposure leads to offline political participation (Vaccari et al., 2015; Zhang & Lin, 2014).

In contemporary times, Facebook has become an essential tool for increasing political knowledge and education. It is a political agent and is very popular among females of Pakistan. It provides them with a dynamic space to interact and exchange their perspectives on culture, values, principles, religions, and politics, motivating people to participate in offline civic and political activities (Schlozman et al., 2010). Moreover, the participation of young men and women in all areas is essential to the growth and development of any country. Young people are increasingly involved in offline political activities and share their views with the public. They share information and political news about selected political parties and leaders with their peers, family, and friends (Cohen & Kahne, 2011). The active involvement of young people in social media strengthens the democratic process (Dalton, 2008). Facebook influences online and offline political engagement, shaping political activities (Bode et al., 2014; Gel de Zuniga et al., 2014; Hargittai & Shaw, 2013) and Knowledge (Xenos & Moy, 2007). Its usage corresponds to the persuasive behavior of people (Attia et al., 2011), young voters' engagement (Bridges et al., 2012), and individual expression within peer networks (Bennett et al., 2011).

## Conclusion

The Use of Facebook plays a vital role in promoting political participation by exchanging political views and posting comments on political issues. The exchange of opinions and information shows the tendency of young females to understand the political problems and participate in politics. Therefore, this study highlights an essential correlation between Facebook online and offline political participation amongst Pakistani females. Online active political participation persuades Pakistani females to participate in offline political activities, leading to a change in voting behavior. The findings suggest that proper education and awareness about social media usage such as Facebook develops a sense of responsibility, increases political knowledge and liberty among females that correspond to the strengthening of the democratic system in Pakistan.

## Implications for Women Literacy

The current study provides implications for improving literacy levels in Pakistan to cultivate political awareness among women and consequently motivate them to participate in political activities online and offline. The improved literacy level will develop critical abilities among the masses in general and women, mainly to better analyze the political information to reach informed decisions. To this end, the improved literacy level could help women analyze texts shared on social media platforms by putting them in a context. The improved media literacy develops critical abilities among the populace in general and women, mainly to reflect on the purpose of media content. By developing this critical ability, the individuals' media-use skills can be improved to make informed decisions vital for the democratic process.

*Limitations of the Study:* The survey data were collected from 563 females of Gujrat city through a cross-sectional design. Unfortunately, the survey was limited to only Gujrat city due to the limitations imposed by COVID-19. In the future, this study can be generalized to all other cities with a more representative sample.

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