

Role of Social Media in Politics and Perception of Youth about Political Accountability

Majid Ul Ghafar^{*1}, Komal Zulfikar², Rooh- Ul-Amin³

^{1*} Associate Professor, Department of Communication & Media Studies, Hazara University, Mansehra, KP, Pakistan.

²Department of Media and Communication Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

³PhD Scholar, Department of International Relations, Qurtaba University of Science and Technology, Peshawar, KP, Pakistan.

Corresponding author: drmajidghafar@hu.edu.pk

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The present study was conducted to explore and examine role of social media and social media applications about politics and perception of youth about political accountability among the youth of District Mansehra. This research design for this specific research study was cross sectional and survey technique was to record response of the selected sample youth of District Mansehra. 400 respondents were selected as sample and comprising of 224 females and 176 males having the age between 18 to 24 i.e. voting age and using social media had been selected from city of Mansehra. The researcher used purposive sampling technique. The demographic variables of the respondents were age, sex, and educational level. A well-planned questionnaire was distributed having close end questions for convenience of the respondents. There were so many theories of media effects relevant to this research work, but KAP model was very much relevant to this study. Data tabulation and subsequent analysis revealed that there was very little level of knowledge and understanding about politics and political accountability amongst the young of Mansehra city, followed by different levels of knowledge. The findings also revealed that overall majority of the youth had negative perception about politics and political accountability in Pakistan followed by respondents that positively perceived political accountability. It was also revealed that there was no significant influence of social media on perception about politics and political accountability.

1. Introduction

History reveals that politics, and political accountability is one of the burning issues to discuss and investigate around the globe. People around the world used social media for different purposes in which politics is one of the main purposes. According to a study conducted in Pakistan reveals that the data of 28th February 2020 shows that more than 37 million people use social media which is 17% of the country's population. This number is increasing day by day (Ahmed, Aleem, & Khan, 2021). Social media is no doubt a revolution in media industry which captured the attention of each individual and recently it is considered as a significant political instrument around the global village. Social media and social media applications enable the people how to interact and participate in politics. Politicians (candidates and political parties) now use social media where they may establish a presence and started political engagement through social media. These political parties considered social media as quickest channel to share the information and persuade (Sadiq et al., 2018; Butt et al., 2021).

Social media platforms enable people and political parties to communicate, produce, shared and edit the information computer generated contents. Smartphone or mobile is the best technology they must use social media. Social media platforms enable the users to use variety of facilities like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc to capture large audience. Similarly, photo, audio files and videos are the major tool of sites like YouTube, WhatsApp, and others, during late 90's vlogs and blogs gained added importance and popularity due to ease in use and compatibility. Social media is currently spreading very rapidly and every single individual can produce his/her own blog to shape public opinion towards certain issue or event and thus the need and demand of corporate communication has become more vital in the perspective of politics. There are seven block of social media which are very much important to understand and use these blocks for different purposes and utilize it according to need. These blocks enable the users to connect with each other, visual and audio presence in the social media society, sharding thoughts and ideas without any restriction, communication in different forms and the most importance among them is enhance identity (Silvestre et al, 2011; Butt et al., 2021).

Accountability is defined in different ways by different researchers, scholars and academicians of political science and social sciences, "it is act of such things which is not acceptable in the society which can result in punishment or reward. Political persons which handle or tackle public funds like and defending their policy matters and issues to the broader public interest. People who pay taxes demand for government to held responsible by using these taxes in a proper way (Han & Demircioglu, 2016; Shil & Chowdhury, 2023). According to a study conducted in the past reveals that "It is not necessary that the accountability wielders are cognizant of what to ask about and power-brandisher is not compelled to deliver all the information that accountability wielders ask for, but the retributions can be helpful to influence the behaviour of power-brandisher (Keohane, 2003; Jankelová et al., 2024)". The objective of the accountability is to keep on eye on the negative use of authority. Many fields like political science and accounting used in finance have explained the term accountability

far before but this term was used by international development and public administration recently (Lindberg, 2013; Yildiz et al., 2023).

1.1 Problem Statement

Several studies conducted in the past regarding the use and understanding of electronic media especially the social media. However, very few research studies conducted on the comparative analysis on type of media users and their understanding regarding political accountability. Moreover, users' perception, knowledge about political accountability is conducted not very frequently in the city of District Mansehra. This research study focusses on the knowledge of youth regarding political accountability and perception about political accountability among the youth of Mansehra city. Further this research study explored the understating of the youth about different political cases based on political accountability.

1.2 Significance of the Study

In Pakistan, the effects of the media were seen as being more direct, proactive, and open than in years past. It highlighted the political blunders and wrong turns the government has made. Periodically, it informed the public of how the government is performing. Social media in Pakistan taught the fundamentals of politics to people from all walks of life. Social media therefore played a crucial role in shaping how people viewed politics (Saboor et al., 2022).

So Political accountability is also a pressing concern in Pakistan and is essential to the betterment of society overall. Through shaping public perception and knowledge, traditional and digital media played a critical role in advancing political accountability. Therefore, this study is very helpful in revealing the public's understanding and perception of political accountability in Mansehra city as well as the impact of the media on that perception. Furthermore, the study may aid in strengthening the media's role in Mansehra city's development of a more open and accountable political culture.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

- To explore frequency of using social media by the youth of Mansehra
- To document source of news used by the respondents for political information
- To investigate knowledge about political accountability of the respondents
- To investigate different barriers in political accountability in Pakistan
- To explore opinion of the respondents on different political accountability cases

2. Literature Review

Additional better-informed Latin Americans can better hold politicians accountable. Citizens need to be politically aware providing them with the correct perceptions of reality for monitoring corruption (Arnold, 2012). It was cleared from the study that the automobile crisis received more press attention than the shipbuilding issue because the press viewed the automobile crisis as important political news, but there was a reduction in news items where actors were held accountable. The study also found that the mediatization of political accountability was conditioned by structural factors and changes in political life, and that this mediatization process was not a straightforward one with definite outcomes (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2014).

The study also showed that in China, media coverage has a certain degree of legitimacy, and the government responds to some of the issues revealed by the media by punishing state agents. It was also clear that the government's response to media coverage was conditional because it could be motivated by priorities, publicity, or even both. As a result of public pressure, the popularity of any uncovered issue affects the government's response (Zhou & Cai, 2020). According to the findings, voter political preferences were not the only thing that media coverage had an impact on; it also had a significant impact on voter intentions. Media therefore had a special responsibility in a democracy (Dewenter, Linder, & Thomas, 2019). Quantitative and qualitative investigation had been carried out in Dutch public sector organizations to examine the responsibilities of the media. Findings showed that the media played an indirect role in public accountability, either by encouraging proactive self-criticism in government agencies or by calling up the formal accountability demands from MPs (Jacobs & Schillemans, 2016).

The interaction between interactive media and public opinion in Kenya was taken into consideration in the third and final segment. The Endeavor's findings suggested that the rise and convergence of various digital communication channels, coupled with the development of electronic media, facilitated popular participation in political discourse (Mitullah, Mudhai, & Mwangi, 2015). Promoting good governance and accountability in government greatly depended on the media abiding by the universal principles of the profession. It was also suggested that the media was a key component of democracy and that citizens played a significant role as stakeholders in the democratic process (Msughter, 2019).

Social media bridged the communication gap between politicians and the general public, expanding the scope of political accountability beyond just elections. Study results clearly showed that social media is an effective instrument for promoting accountability and openness. It sped up the political accountability procedure, transforming Nigeria's accountability norms in the process (Usman, Bashir, & Bello, 2020). The study's findings showed that social media had a strong, beneficial impact on the interactions between politicians and the public as well as on the relationship between social media and politics (Fatema et al., 2022).

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 KAP Model

The learning theory by Bandura (1976) and the diffusion of innovation theory by Roger (1995) were the two theories that gave rise to the KAP model. In any social system, according to Roger, a person's adoption of innovation must pass through four stages: knowledge acquisition, persuasion, decision-making, and confirmation. Prior research had discovered a relationship between knowledge, attitude, and practice. Knowledge and skills were required for behavioral change, according to research on the knowledge-practice relationship. The KAP Model is useful for identifying knowledge gaps, attitude obstacles, and patterns of practice that could improve comprehension and behaviour related to a problem of interest (Liao et al., 2022).

For the purpose of study KAP model was developed for political accountability where ontology designated the knowledge of public/citizens on political accountability, the knowledge that is shaped or shaped by certain value denoted as axiology and the way concept of political accountability was known through practice and behavior is denoted as epistemology. The dimensions of KAP were elucidated as follows:

- Knowledge (Understanding): It referred to Mansehra city citizen's knowledge and understanding of political accountability as represented by media.
- Attitude (Value): It dealt with willingness and awareness aspect of citizens on political accountability whether they were concerned or not concerned.
- Practice (Behavior): it dealt with the action part of the citizens i.e. whether they followed the media narrative on political accountability.
 - **Hypothesis of the study:**
 - **H¹.** It is more likely youth of Mansehra frequently use social media
 - **H².** It is more likely youth use social media as a source of news
 - **H³.** It is more likely youth consider political accountability as equal rights and obligations
 - **H⁴.** It is more likely lack of independent judiciary is the major barrier in political accountability
 - **H⁵.** It is more likely political accountability has taken place in Toshakhana case

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study followed and cross-sectional research design and was quantitative in nature. Furthermore, this study employed survey method.

3.2 Population

Citizens of Mansehra city came under the population of the work. As per 2017 census done by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics the total population of Mansehra city was 978157. Mansehra city was selected for the study primarily because it is the hometown of the researcher, and it made data collection easier. Moreover, in Mansehra city political scenarios have also shifted because of social media's explosive growth; PTI won the election and the PMLN lost.

3.3 Sampling

Due to limited budgetary and administrative resources, study used the purposive sampling approach. Purposive sampling selects respondents that are grouped according to the research goal. Using Taro Yamane calculator, the sample size of population was 399.8364 (rounded off to 400) including both males and females of voting age i.e. above 18 years and they had presence on social media. News and current affairs were part of the media content being studied.

3.4 Tool of Data Collection

Instrument of this work was questionnaire. Questionnaire included three sections. First section of it will be dealt with measuring the levels of knowledge about political accountability amongst the citizens of Mansehra city and second section of questionnaire dealt with accessing the understanding of people on political accountability and their opinion about political accountability in Pakistan. Third section of questionnaire evaluated the influence of both traditional and social media usage on perception of political accountability.

4. Data Tabulation and Analysis

Table No 1: Demographics of the Respondents

Category	Values	Responses	%age	Cumulative Percentage
Gender				
	Male	176	44	56
	Female	244	56	100
Age				
	18-22	268	67	67
	23-27	74	18.5	85.5
	28-32	22	5.5	91
	33-37	16	4	95
	38-42	8	2	97
	more than 43	12	3	100
Education Level				
	Under Metric	6	1.5	1.5
	Metric/O levels	20	5	6.5
	FA/FSC/A levels	53	13.2	19.8
	Undergraduate	201	50.2	70.2
	Graduate	83	20.8	91
	Postgraduate	36	9	100

N=400

Table one indicates the demographics of the respondents which includes 56% females, and 44% males attempted the questionnaire. The above table also reveals that 67% respondents have the age between 18 to 22 followed by 18.5% have the age between 23 to 27, 5.5% have the age between 28 to 32 while 4% respondents have the age between 33 to 37 while 3% respondents have the age more than 43. As for as education of the respondents is concern the above table shows that 50.2% respondents have the undergraduate educational level followed by 20.8% respondents have the graduate educational level while 31.2% respondents have the FA/FSc. Educational level and 5% respondents have the Metric level of education only 1.5% respondents are under Metric.

Table No 2: Usage of Media as News Source of Political Information

Category	Values	Responses	%age	Cumulative Percentage
Which Media do you use most				
	TV	55	13.9	13.9
	Radio	8	2	15.9

Newspaper	24	6.1	22
Online Newspaper	11	2.8	24.8
Social media	297	75.2	100
What is your primary source of news?			
TV	75	19.1	19.1
Radio	11	2.8	21.9
Newspaper	32	8.1	30
Online Newspaper	25	6.4	36.4
Social media	250	63.6	100
Time do you spend using your primary source of news per day?			
Less than 1 hour	158	40.1	40.1
1-2 hours	125	31.7	71.8
3-4 hours	62	15.7	87.6
5-6 hours	22	5.6	93.1
more than 6 hours	27	6.9	100
N=400			

Table No 3: Opinion of the Respondents on Political Accountability

Category	Values	Responses	%age	Cumulative Percentage
political accountability assures				
Moral Obligations		26	6.6	6.6
Legal Obligations		122	31	37.6
Ethical Obligations		29	7.4	44.9
Equal Rights and Obligations		217	55.1	100
Goal of Political Accountability				
Make Public Representatives accountable		106	27.1	27.1
Prevent Abuse of Authority		81	20.7	47.8
Both		190	48.6	96.4
None		14	3.6	100
political accountability is vital for				
Human Rights		55	13.9	13.9
Peace and development		97	24.5	38.4
Overcoming Generational Issues		54	13.6	52
All		189	47.7	99.7
N=400				

Table two shows the usage and purpose of media by the respondents. The table reveals that 75.2% respondents use social media followed by 13.9% respondents use TV while 6.1%

Newspapers and only 2% respondents use Radio. Table two reveals that 63.3% respondents use social media as a source of news followed by 19.1% use TV for news and information while 8.1% newspapers and 6.4% use online newspapers as a source of news. As for as primary news for source and time spending by the respondents is concern the table two indicates that 40.1% respondents spend less than one hour for news followed by 31.7% respondents spent one to two hours for news on media while 15.7% respondents spent 3 to 4 hours for news, 6.9% respondents spent more than 6 hours for news and only 5.6% respondents spent 5 to 6 hours a day for news and information.

Table No 4: Barriers in Political Accountability

Category	Values	Responses	%age	Cumulative Percentage
Nepotism				
	Strongly Disagree	23	5.9	5.9
	Disagree	48	12.2	18.1
	Neutral	54	13.8	31.9
	Agree	153	39	70.9
	Strongly Agree	114	29.1	100
Dynastic Politics				
	Strongly Disagree	18	4.7	4.7
	Disagree	55	14.2	18.9
	Neutral	83	21.4	40.3
	Agree	157	40.6	80.9
	Strongly Agree	74	19.1	100
Lack of independent judiciary				
	Strongly Disagree	24	6.1	6.1
	Disagree	40	10.2	16.4
	Neutral	54	13.8	30.2
	Agree	146	37.3	67.5
	Strongly Agree	127	32.5	100
Politicized media ownership				
	Strongly Disagree	24	6.1	6.1
	Disagree	33	8.4	14.6
	Neutral	60	15.3	29.9
	Agree	176	45	74.9
	Strongly Agree	98	25.1	100
Corruption				
	Strongly Disagree	15	3.8	3.8
	Disagree	38	9.7	13.5
	Neutral	76	19.3	32.8
	Agree	157	39.9	72.8
	Strongly Agree	107	27.2	100

N=400

Table 3 is based on opinion of the respondents on political accountability, its understanding and reasons. The table three indicates that 55.1% respondents is of the opinion that political accountability assures equal rights and obligations followed by 31% respondents consider it as legal obligations while 7.4% respondents consider it as ethical obligations and 6.6% respondents has the opinion that it is moral obligations. The question was asked about the goal of political accountability and the table three indicates that 48.6% respondents have the opinion that political accountability is make public representative accountable along with prevent abuse of authority followed by 27.1% respondents consider it political accountability is make public representative accountable and 20.7% respondents thinks that it is to prevent the abusive use of authority while 3.6% have no opinion about the question. It is asked that why political accountability is vital, and 47.7% respondents have the opinion that political accountability is vital for human rights, peace and development and overcoming generational issues followed by 24.5% respondents consider it peace and development while 13.9% respondents think political accountability is vital for human rights and only 13.6% respondents consider it to overcome generational issues.

Table No 5: Opinion of the respondents on different political cases

Category	Values	Responses	%age	Cumulative Percentage
Political accountability has taken place in Panama Case				
	Strongly Disagree	49	12.8	12.8
	Disagree	50	13	25.8
	Neutral	111	28.9	54.7
	Agree	132	34.4	89.1
	Strongly Agree	42	10.9	100
Political accountability has taken place in Toshakhana Case				
	Strongly Disagree	45	11.5	11.5
	Disagree	94	24	35.5
	Neutral	94	24	59.4
	Agree	124	31.6	91.1
	Strongly Agree	35	8.9	100
Political accountability has taken place in Foreign Funding Case				
	Strongly Disagree	51	13.1	13.1
	Disagree	64	16.4	29.5
	Neutral	91	23.3	52.8
	Agree	139	35.6	88.5
	Strongly Agree	45	11.5	100

N=400

Table four reveals the different barriers in political communication. Table four indicates that 39% respondents agree that nepotism is one of the major issues in political accountability followed by while 29.1% strongly agree followed by 13.8% respondents remained neutral while 12.2% respondents disagree that nepotism is hurdle in political

accountability and 5.9% respondents strongly disagree with the statement. Table four indicates that 40.6% respondents agree that dynastic politics is the hurdle in political accountability followed by 19.1% strongly agree while 21.4% respondents remained neutral that dynastic politics is the hurdle in political accountability and 14.2% respondents disagree with the statement. 37.3% respondents have the opinion that lack of independent judiciary is the barrier in political accountability followed by 32.2% strongly agree while 13.8% remained neutral and 10.2% respondents disagree with the statement. 45% respondents agree that politicized media ownership is the hurdle in political accountability followed by 25.1% respondents strongly disagree that politicized media ownership is the hurdle in political accountability while 15.3% respondents remained neutral, and 8.4% respondents disagree with the statement. 39.9% respondents agree that corruption is the hurdle in political accountability followed by 27.7% respondents strongly agree that corruption is hurdle in political accountability while 19.3% respondents remained neutral, and 9.7% respondents disagree with the statement.

Table five reveals the opinion of the respondents on different national political corruption cases. Table five reveals that 34.4% respondents agree that political accountability taken place in Panama case followed by 28.9% respondents remained neutral 13% respondents disagree with the statement while 12.8% respondents strongly disagree, and 10.9% respondents strongly agree. Table five shows that 31.6% respondents agree that political accountability has taken place in Toshakhana case followed by 24% remained neutral as well disagree with equal percentile while 11.5% strongly disagree and 8.9% respondents strongly agree that political accountability has taken place in Toshakhana case. Table five indicates that 35.6% respondents agree that political accountability has taken place in foreign funding case followed by 23.3% respondents remained neutral while 16.4% respondents disagree with the statement 13.1% respondents strongly disagree that political accountability has taken place in Toshakhana case.

4.1 Summary

Data tabulation its subsequent analysis reveals that overall, more than 72% respondents use social media and social media applications frequently. Data tabulation and its analysis supports our first hypothesis i.e., “it is more likely youth of Mansehra frequently use social media”. As for as political information as compared to other mediums i.e. Newspaper, Radio and TV is concerned the empirical analysis of the data reveals that overall 76% respondents use social media for the purpose of news and political information followed by only 13% respondents use TV as a source of news for political information, the data supports our second hypothesis i.e., “it is more likely youth use social media for political information and political news”. Knowledge about the political accountability was one of the major points of this research work. The exclusive analysis of the data reveals that more than 55% respondents thinks that it assures the equal rights and obligations followed by 31% consider it as legal obligation and the empirical data supports our third hypothesis i.e. “It is more likely youth consider political accountability as equal rights and obligations”. The data tabulation also reveals that more than 48% respondents is of the view that the goal of political accountability is to make public representative accountable and prevent abuse of authority.

The question was asked why political accountability vital and data tabulation, and its analysis reveals that more than 47% respondents think it is vital for human rights, peace and development and overcoming generational issues followed by more than 24% respondents consider that political accountability is vital for peace and development. Data tabulation and its exclusive analysis reveals that overall majority of the respondents i.e., 68.1% agree that nepotism is the barrier in the political accountability while 69.8% respondents agree that lack of independent judiciary is the barrier in political accountability and 67.1% respondents agree that politicized media ownership is the barrier in political accountability and 67.1% respondents agree that corruption is the major cause and hurdle in political accountability. The empirical analysis of the data supports our fourth hypothesis i.e., “It is more likely lack of independent judiciary is the major barrier in political accountability”. Data tabulation and its analysis reveals that overall majority 47.1% of the respondents agree that political accountability has taken place in Foreign Funding Case followed by 45.3% respondents agree that political accountability has taken place in Panama Case while 40.5% respondents agree that political accountability has taken place in Toshakhana case. The empirical analysis of the data does not support our fifth hypothesis i.e. “it is more likely youth of Mansehra thinks that political accountability has taken place in Toshakhana case”.

5. Conclusion

Based on the tabulated data, its analysis, and interpretation, the study concludes that most of the youth in District Mansehra use social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and others for obtaining political information. Regarding the understanding of political accountability, most respondents believe that it is a legal obligation. In developing countries like Pakistan, numerous barriers hinder effective political accountability. This study identifies the lack of an independent judiciary as one of the major obstacles. When examining political accountability in prominent corruption cases, the study found that accountability measures have been visibly enforced only in the *Toshakhana* case, whereas limited or no significant accountability was observed in the *Foreign Funding* and *Panama* cases. Overall, the study concludes that political accountability in Pakistan has not yet reached the level seen in developed societies, where political figures are consistently held accountable. In Pakistan, this process is still evolving, and it will require time and the continued development of the political system to ensure comprehensive accountability.

6. References

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