



Analyzing the Role of Political Knowledge in Political Participation Through a Sociological Lens: A Quantitative Approach

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Abstract

Individuals' participation in politics is subject to political knowledge and awareness. The study aims to learn about the relationship and association between political knowledge and political participation. To investigate the phenomenon, the researcher adopts a quantitative research method and a cross-sectional research design to collect and analyze the data. Data was collected through a simple random sample from a sample size of 381 at Punjab University. A structured questionnaire was constructed to collect the data from the respondents. We used simple frequency and percentage to look at the data at the univariate level. Chi-square tests and Kendall's Tau-b tests were used at the bivariate and multivariate levels to find out how the study variables were related and in what direction they were related. The result at the bivariate level indicates that all the items of political knowledge were significantly ($p = 0.000$) and positively associated with political



participation. At the multivariate level, there was a strong ($p = 0.000$) and positive ($T^b = .952$) spurious link between political knowledge and political participation based on gender (male and female). There was also a strong ($p = 0.000$) and positive ($T^b = .952$) spurious link between political knowledge and political participation based on level of education (BS and MPhil).

Keywords Politics, Political participation, Political Knowledge, Political Awareness

Introduction

In Pakistan the participation of youth in politics due to their rich political knowledge is growing day by day. Students and youth are actively engaged in politics and political affairs (Noor et al., 2024). Political advertisement has become a vital element in influencing election outcomes, especially in molding voter views and allegiance towards political candidates (Bastian et al., 2020). As worldwide focus on political involvement intensifies, comprehending voter interactions with political brands—candidates—has become essential for cultivating political brand loyalty. Even though participation in elections has been shown to be important in promotional efforts and political discourse literary works, little is known about the intricate connections that exist within political involvement, awareness of brands, and political individuals brand loyalty, particularly in places like Pakistan where voter participation has historically been minimal (Youth Parliament Pakistan, 2021; Kausar et al., 2022; Dawn, 2024). Poor political participation and a lack of political understanding have long been blamed for Pakistan's a low rate of voter (Youth Parliament Pakistan, 2021; Dawn, 2024). These problems have been noted in earlier research, but the precise mechanisms by which political participation might convert these unfavorable opinions into voter devotion have not yet been clarified (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Khan et al., 2024). The involvement of individuals in the political party's election campaign dramatically increases their understanding of politics (Dimitrova et al., 2014). Political participation including direct interaction with voters is most successful in fostering knowledge about politics (Kahne et al., 2015).

The amount of interest of people in politics is significantly influenced by social media (Iftikhar et al., 2024). In recent years, internet usage, social media output, and consumption have expanded drastically over the world. This growth has had a wide range of political consequences. Social media has become a tool for politicians to achieve their political goals, raise awareness about political issues, and motivate young people (Vromen et al., 2015; Masinde, 2024). Social media is a set of online communication platforms that promote community-based input, engagement, content sharing, and collaboration. Social media includes websites and programs for forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, and social curation. Social media, often known as new media, has made it easier for people to share their opinions and stay informed. Social networking has become an integral aspect of daily life for many young educated individuals. Social media is becoming increasingly important in altering traditional political space

(Hassan, 2004; Smith et al., 2009; Zhang, et al., 2010). Social media is essential for young people to engage with one another, especially those who are educated and read. On websites like Facebook, there are a lot of pages on politics and political activism, and individuals seem really committed to the political causes when they "Tweet" on their laptops or portable smartphones. Youth political awareness refers to active participation in civic and political life, such as forming political groups, sharing political information and manifestos, expressing concerns about certain political issues, propagating a political party or leader, and shaping a specific agenda (Cohen et al., 2012; Choi, 2016). Participation in civic and political life is regarded as critical in shaping the democratic process (Fishkin, 1997; Habermas, 2018).

Problem statement

Political knowledge plays an important role in the political socialization of individuals. Political knowledge enabled them to understand political scenarios, political contents, political issues, and the electoral process. For political knowledge, the role of social media is very important, and the majority of the youth are using such platforms. However, the precise role of social media in Pakistan remains unclear, despite its significant contribution to political awareness. Conducting a study on political knowledge and its impact on political participation is crucial. This study will also explore how much social media is helpful for promoting political awareness among the youth in the Pakistani context.

Research Objectives

1. To know the role of political knowledge in political participation.
2. To examine the association between political knowledge and political participation.
3. To understand how demographic factors contributes to political participation.

Literature review

Within contemporary democratic governance frameworks, the engagement of adolescents in civic and political affairs is seen as essential for safeguarding and advancing accountable and efficient systems to address the difficulties encountered by developing nations (Shoab et al., 2024). Pakistan, with over 65% of its youthful voters around 18 to 35, largely plays a crucial role in deciding the result of every political process. The recent election process conducted in 2024 seen a surge in young participation for the very first time. These inclusions not only enhance the electoral procedure but are also crucial for comprehending their significance in the wider context of political activity (Saud et al., 2023). However, this development is only achievable when the political consciousness of the young is cognizant of the political choices they make and the manner in which they make those decisions. The advancement reliant on the involvement of young voters underscores a vital requirement for political knowledge to support the fundamental objective of democratic principles of enlightened civic participation. Research indicates that individuals with heightened political awareness exhibit more engagement in political processes, demonstrate superior expression of their political views, and contest prevailing political discourses (Ansolabehere & Puy, 2018; Bartle, 2000). In nations such as Pakistan, where political

ideologies are primarily influenced by the interplay of social and cultural, historical, and financial variables, comprehending young people's involvement with these complexities is essential for fostering active political participation (Shoaib et al., 2024). A comprehensive study indicating that while numerous learners have a fundamental comprehension of political processes, their grasp of specific programs and political candidates is rudimentary and based on inadequate judgment. The survey indicates that over 40% of graduate and post-graduate learners at the higher education level were uninformed about regional political issues, highlighting a gap that may hinder effective involvement in democratic processes (Asma & Rauf, 2024). Schooling is an essential component in the determination of political knowledge. Research indicates that students who attend school in subjects related to social sciences or political science exhibit greater degrees of political engagement than those who are admitted in other university programs (Shoaib et al., 2024). The comprehension of political problems among learners is significantly improved by a school curriculum that prioritizes civic education and political issues (Kavanagh, 2024).

On the other hand, the ability of new media to personalize communication is growing (Schulz, 2008), and this is especially true of the internet (Castells, 2002). There is little time for journalistic and political analysis and contemplation. At the same time, the quantity of communication altered the way people interpret and interpret political messaging. Political content often refers to non-fictional material that discusses political institutions, events, and topics (e.g. Political news, analysis, roundtables). Last but not least, SNSs were among the first social factors identified in sociolinguistics as perhaps complimentary or an alternative to socioeconomic classes (Bennett, 2012; Thussu, 2018; Bischof & Senninger, 2018). New and uncharted communication channels are made possible by the Internet's explosion, which began in developed democracies and has since expanded throughout most of the world. However, the media's use of the Internet creates new issues for citizens, politicians, researchers, journalists, and the government (Oates et al., 2006).

Theoretical Framework

We know that education and political participation are the best determinants of political literacy. Theories regarding what mechanism causes these elements to determine political literacy differ, with some arguing that it is an internal psychological force, an external force imposed by societal roles, or impacted directly by agents from social institutions like social media.

Cognitive Mobilization theory

In cognitive theories of political literacy and other political variables that may be assessed by degree (political interest and political ambition), political scientists argue that education and political participation activate political literacy as an internal process. At the moment, this theory dominates the field. It asserts that education and political participation cause the person to activate his or her mental skills in dealing with politics. Individuals are regularly picked for advancement via the educational system based on their present intellectual abilities. Furthermore, the goal of

education is to enhance these skills, such that a person who progresses through higher levels of education is more likely to use diverse modes of thought when assessing items than someone with equal baseline potential but a shorter education. Sufficient political participation may serve as a reasonable substitute for education in offering more efficient strategies of structuring political perspectives (Campbell et al., 1960).

It is said that the political elite have a better level of political literacy than the political masses due to the motivating impact of political participation. He also argued that the mobilizing impact of political experience over time explains why political awareness increases with age (Carol et al., 1997). Campbell et al., (1960) and Converse (1964) argued that improving educational levels in our society will progressively raise the public's ideological consciousness, particularly at lower levels where a lack of education may be most crippling. Converse (1975) did not abandon the hypothesis after discovering that political literacy did not rise at lower levels, but concluded that education's "long-term effects should not be underestimated." Others merely took education as a measure of political complexity and concluded that growing education levels had activated the West's political powers (Dalton, 1988; Inglehart, 2018). Similarly, Stimson (1975), Hamill and Lodge (1986), and Krosnick and Milburn (1990) state that schooling assesses cognitive capacity in political sophistication and political opinion models.

Political literacy

In classic socialization agent studies, political literacy refers to the purpose of political education in schools. Westholm et al. (1990) defined political literacy as "the basic concepts and facts that constitute a necessary condition for comprehending the contents of public debate." According to Denver and Hands (1990), political literacy is "the knowledge and understanding of the political process and political issues which enables people to perform their roles as citizens effectively." Wormald (1988) defined the aims of self-government training as political comprehension, as well as instruction in voting methods and purposes.

Traditional socialization studies thus offer the basis for this paper's concept of political literacy as the ability to participate in politics. Krosnick (1990) described this notion as "political expertise," whereas Zaller (1992) defined it as "political awareness," which he defined as "the extent to which an individual pays attention to politics and understands what he or she has encountered." Investigators agree that political literacy should involve understanding of political concepts and facts. They disagree, however, over whether political interest and media exposure are other factors. Strate et al. (1989) identified political knowledge, interest, and media exposure as markers of the same notion known as "civic competence"; Krosnick (1990) and Zaller (1992) also utilized similar indicators. However, Krosnick and Brannon (1993) observed that political knowledge, interest, and exposure are separate dimensions of "political involvement." This study focuses on narrower factors such as awareness of basic political ideas and facts. We assume that political interest and exposure refer to a distinct political engagement construct. We respect

Krosnick and Brannon's (1993) concerns while adhering to widely held ideas regarding cognitive capacity. We do not disagree with Zaller's (1992, p. 336) conclusion that "neutral factual information is, on both theoretical and empirical grounds, the preferred measure of political awareness."

Material and methods

Methodology is the description, explanation, and justification of procedures used to attain research goals and objectives (Tellis, 1997). It simply conveys the concept of how the current investigation was conducted scientifically. This study uses a quantitative research technique to address the problem by generating numerical data that may be turned into usable statistics. To obtain findings, the approach examines attitudes, views, actions, and other stated factors in a broader sample group. It makes use of quantitative data to draw conclusions and expose various study trends. For the purpose of collecting and analyzing the data statistically, we adopt a quantitative research method (Haq, 2015).

Research Design

According to Burns and Grove (2003), a research design is "a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings." According to Parahoo (2014), a study design is "a plan that describes how, when, and where data are to be collected and analyzed." We adopt the cross-sectional research design, which is a subpart of survey research design of the quantitative method (Hirose & Creswell, 2023).

Sampling Technique

The study employed the random sample approach, which involves selecting departments at random. The comfortable sampling approach is indicated for respondent involvement in order to consider all situations in the most convenient manner. All of this data contributed to the development of a highly complete survey research project, and all sample units were individually contacted.

Sample

Polit et al. (2001) describe a sample as "a proportion of a population." The sample consisted of students from Punjab University. A correctly chosen sample can yield data that is typical of the population from which it was obtained.

Sample size

Because this is a quantitative research technique, the sample size of the study is defined. The sample size for the current study is 381.

Tools for Data Collection

Parahoo (2014) defines a research instrument as "a tool used to collect data." "An instrument is a tool used to assess knowledge, attitudes, and skills." For this study, survey-based semi-structured questionnaires were employed to collect data. The instrument for data collection was developed with the help of existing literature. The data was obtained directly from university students. A close-ended questionnaire was developed to assess the influence of social media in

raising political awareness among university students. Our study is conducted in real settings rather than in a laboratory, ensuring a non-contrived approach.

Data analysis

The term data analysis refers to the organization, structure, and elicitation of meaning. Qualitative data analysis is an active and interactive process (Polit et al., 2001:383). The data were analyzed using a variety of statistical methods. The collected data was analyzed with the help of SPSS. Data was analyzed through simple frequency and percentages. We used the chi-square test and Kendall's Tau-b test to look at the association and direction of association between two variables at the bivariate level. To find the association and direction of association between variables at the multivariate level, we cross-tabulated the intervening (background variable) variable, the independent variable, and the dependent variable.

Limitations of the study

The current study was confined to the Lahore geographical region. The study is conducted in accordance with the unique characteristics of a public university.

Ethical considerations

The researcher strictly followed the ethics of social research while conducting the study. The researcher informed the study respondents verbally, and after verbal consent, data was collected from them. We assure the confidentiality and anonymity of their identities, and we also assure that this study is only for research purposes.

Results

Frequency percentage of background v 2variable of the respondents

This table indicates the frequency and percentage of respondents, gender wise and their level of education. This table highlights that the bulk of the respondents were male (51.4 percent), and 48.6 percent were female of the study participants. In addition, 51.2 percent respondent have been having MPhil and 48.8 percent respondent have BS as their level of education.

Table 1 Frequency percentage of background variable gander and level of education of the respondents

Gender of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Male	196	51.4
Female	185	48.6
Total	381	100.0
Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
BS	186	48.8
MPhil	195	51.2
Total	381	100.0

Association between Political Knowledge and Political Participation

The table below illustrates the relation and direction of this relationship between political knowledge and political participation. The results reveal that those who know about the current president of Pakistan were significantly and positively ($p = 0.000$, $T^b = .479$) associated with political participation. The association between those who know about the prime minister of Pakistan and political participation was significant ($p = 0.000$) and positive ($T^b = .533$). Similarly, those who know about the figures of members of the national assembly were significantly and positively associated with political participation, as indicated by the P value ($p = 0.000$) and Tau-b value ($T^b = .894$). The association between political participation and the respondents' knowledge about the number of senators from Punjab Province was highly significant ($p = 0.000$) and positive ($T^b = 0.941$). In addition, awareness about the most important political issue in Pakistan was significantly and positively ($p = 0.000$, $T^b = .882$) associated with political participation. Those who were aware of the number of major parties participating in the 2023 electoral process showed a significant ($p = 0.000$) and positive ($T^b = .707$) association with political participation. Further, the association between those who know about the most prominent political personalities of Pakistan was significant and positive ($p = 0.000$, $T^b = .952$) with political participation.

Table 2 Association between Political Knowledge and Political Participation

Independent Variable Political Knowledge	Dependent Variable	Statistics Statistics χ^2 (P-Value) Tau-b
I know about the current president of Pakistan	Political Participation	$\chi^2= 87.483$ (0.000) $\tau_b = .479$
I know about the prime minister of Pakistan		$\chi^2= 108.430$ (0.000) $\tau_b = .533$
I know about the figures of member of national assembly		$\chi^2= 304.375$ (0.000) $\tau_b = .894$
I know that how many senator from Punjab Province		$\chi^2= 337.155$ (0.000) $\tau_b = .941$
I am aware about the most important political issue of Pakistan		$\chi^2= 296.476$ (0.000) $\tau_b = .882$

I know that how many major parties take part in electoral process of 2023		$\chi^2= 190.340$ (0.000) $\tau_b = .707$
I know about the most prominent political personalities of Pakistan		$\chi^2= 345.660$ (0.000) $\tau_b = .952$

Association between Political Knowledge and Political Participation while controlling Gender

This table indicates a multivariate analysis of independent variables, dependent variables, and background variables by gender. The results show that there was a significant and positive ($p = 0.000$, $T^b = 1.000$) spurious association between political knowledge and political participation for male respondents. In addition, political knowledge and political participation have a significant and positive ($p = 0.000$, $T^b = .914$) spurious association for female respondents. Moreover, the overall results of this table indicate that there was a highly significant ($p = 0.000$) and positive ($T^b = .952$) spurious association between political knowledge and political participation while controlling for gender.

Table 3 Association between Political Knowledge and Political Participation while controlling Gender

Gender	Statistics Statistics χ^2 (P-Value) Tau-b	Level of Significance for Entire Table
Male	$\chi^2= 196.000$ (0.000) $\tau_b = 1.000$	$\chi^2= 345.660$ (0.000) $\tau_b = .952$
Female	$\chi^2= 154.712$ (0.000) $\tau_b = .914$	

Association between Political Knowledge and Political Participation while controlling Level of Education

This table presents the results of a multivariate analysis that examines the relationship between political knowledge and political participation, controlling for level of education. The results show that level of education acts as a mediating variable between political knowledge and political participation. The results reveal a highly significant ($p = 0.000$) and positive ($T_b = 1.000$) spurious association between political knowledge and political participation at the BS level of

education. Similarly, respondents with an MPhil level of education show a significant and positive spurious association ($p = 0.000$, $T^b = .919$) between political knowledge and political participation. Further, the entire table of results reveals a highly significant ($p = 0.000$) and positive ($T^b = 0.952$) spurious association for levels of education, both BS and MPhil.

Table 4 Association between Political Knowledge and Political Participation while controlling Level of Education

Gender	Statistics Statistics χ^2 (P-Value) Tau-b	Level of Significance for Entire Table
BS	$\chi^2 = 186.000$ (0.000) $\tau_b = 1.000$	$\chi^2 = 345.660$ (0.000)
MPhil	$\chi^2 = 164.767$ (0.000) $\tau_b = .919$	$\tau_b = .952$

Discussion

This study is focused on the factors that contribute to political participation. One important factor that contributes to political participation is political knowledge. Those who have rich information and knowledge about politics are likely to participate. Political knowledge and political participation have a significant relationship. The knowledge about politics, political issues, political trends, and participation in the electoral process leads individuals to political participation. The rich political knowledge contributes to political interest, and such interest leads individuals to political participation. People interested in politics were more likely to learn about it. They are using various means to gain political knowledge, including social media networks, print and electronic media, as well as listening to speeches by political figures. The more individuals have political knowledge, the more they know how to participate in politics. Political institutions play an important role in the political socialization of individuals; this institution enables individuals to know how to govern government, how to tackle various political issues, how to participate in the electoral process, and even how to attend a political gathering. According to (Nasir, 2020) Political literacy is a critical component of contests in a nation that is democratic, as the standard of democracy application is directly proportional to the level of political knowledge among its citizens. Political procedures and concerns that enable individuals to proactively and efficiently fulfill their responsibilities as citizens, including voluntary participation in the election of representatives and involvement either directly or indirectly in the creation of general policy (Ridha & Riwanda, 2020).

In addition, the results indicate that both male and female genders have knowledge about politics, and such knowledge enables them to participate in politics. Today, both males and females actively participate in political campaigns, political gatherings, and the electoral process, demonstrating their understanding of political issues. Female candidates are actively participating in elections for general seats, both at the provincial and national levels. Female political interest is growing day by day as the number of female political figures in the electoral process grows. Political literacy and political participation are essential for both males and females. Political awareness will contribute to a politically educated community. The deficiency of political understanding within the population will influence its susceptibility to being swayed by unprofessional viewpoints. Consequently, political literacy is essential to impart to the population (Revalina et al., 2024). According to Sutisna (2017), the voting process generates both a significant level of engagement and a high quality of involvement. To ensure a high-quality election with substantial participation, several prerequisites must be met, including the engagement of voters who are educated, wise, and politically discerning, so enabling their political preferences to be logical decisions.

Further, education plays an important role in understanding politics and gaining political knowledge. They participate in student politics, where they learn about how to engage in politics, the pressing issues facing the country, how democracy contributes to the development of a civilized nation, and how to foster political growth within the nation. The students actively participate in protests for student rights both on and off campus. They also understand the importance of addressing various political issues throughout this process. Students have more energy to take part in political campaigns for various political parties. When they cast their votes, they do so more wisely than illiterate individuals. According to Rosadi (2020), beginner voters represent a new generation in the electoral process, characterized by distinct qualities, backgrounds, experiences, and obstacles compared to earlier voters. Consequently, insufficient knowledge of politics may result in indifference, apolitical attitudes, and susceptibility to mobilization for specific goals. Participation in politics denotes the active involvement of people or organizations in the political domain, including votes for government officials and affecting policy decisions, either directly or indirectly (Sihombing et al., 2024). Political engagement includes behaviors such as polling in general elections, attending public events, supporting political associations or associations of interest, and, in some instances, participating in protests or violent actions (Sihombing & Ivanna, 2024).

Conclusion

Individuals' political engagement is significantly influenced by their level of political awareness as well as their level of political expertise. Such political knowledge makes people more aware of the many political issues. The younger generation has the vitality to acquire further information about politics, and this knowledge enables them to participate in it on a local level as well as inside educational institutions. The fact that they follow a variety of political figures via

various channels, such as social media and electronic media, enables them to gain more knowledge about politics. The growing political knowledge of both men and women has led to increased participation in politics on both sides of the gender spectrum. In addition, those who are enrolled in graduate and postgraduate programs are actively engaging in discussions concerning politics and gaining information about politics. People are able to get a more profound comprehension of politics via the application of reasonable and logical thought when they have an education.

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