

Role of Social Media in Fostering Youth Activism in Pakistan's General Election 2024

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of social media in fostering youth activism during Pakistan's General Election 2024, a period marked by increased digital engagement and political expression. Drawing on Mobilization Theory and Reinforcement Theory, the research explores how social media usage influences political interest, political efficacy, and activism among young adults. The study seeks to answer the following key questions: How does social media usage shape youth political interest? What is the relationship between political efficacy and youth activism? Using a quantitative approach, data were collected via an online questionnaire and analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to test hypothesized relationships among variables. The results demonstrate that social media use significantly enhances political interest, which in turn is a strong predictor of youth activism. Additionally, while social media positively affects political efficacy, the latter does not significantly predict activism, suggesting a disconnect between perceived political confidence and actual political engagement. These findings underscore the importance of digital platforms in youth political mobilization while highlighting limitations in translating digital engagement into real-world activism. The study contributes to existing literature by providing context-specific insights from Pakistan's electoral landscape and emphasizes the need for political actors to bridge the gap between online engagement and offline participation through inclusive and responsive strategies.

Keywords: *Social media, youth activism, political engagement, Pakistan elections, political efficacy.*

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has prompted a remarkable transformation in every aspect of human life, such as civic involvement, communication methods, and information dissemination. Within this evolving landscape, social media platforms play a powerful role in shaping political awareness and political efficacy and fostering participation and activism. The present study focuses its exploration within the unique context of Pakistan, a country experiencing significant political changes following the

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2024 elections. The study investigates how social media networking sites play a decisive role in encouraging Pakistani youth to participate in political discussions and events during the election. Pakistan is the fifth populated country in the world and 4th in South Asia (Worldometer, 2025) 64% of the total population in Pakistan consists of youth aged less than 30 years (UNDP, 2018).

Currently, Pakistan has a record number of young people than it ever has in history and this will keep increasing until 2050 (Ahmad, 2018). With an estimated 87.35 million Pakistanis use social media (Kemp, 2023). Pakistanis, especially young people are embracing social media as a tool for exchanging ideas, sharing information, participating, or any other engagement. They mostly rely on digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp etc for news or to catch up with current events (Matthes, 2022). Simultaneously, many international research studies have shown that young adults are, on average, less politically sophisticated, more reluctant to vote (Binder et al., 2021), and less interested in traditional politics than older generations (Carpini & Michael, 2017). However, scholars are also hopeful regarding youth's participation in the democratic process (Binder et al., 2021). Before the advent of social media, political parties were struggling to reach out to youngsters as they are the foundation of any democratic society. Consequently, social media has evolved into an essential means for officials, policymakers, political parties, and organizations to flagrantly use this tool for propaganda or to promote and shape political discourses. (Bano et al., 2021). As social media and the internet have become more prevalent, political activism has become progressively virtual and digitalized over time, growing and providing new avenues for participation in electoral procedures and civic engagement (Safdar and Khan, 2025; Safdar et al., 2015; Dubow, 2017). such as taking part in rallies, marches, protests and other activities aimed at transferring political change or drawing attention to social issues. The combination of the political and digital spheres has led to a rise in online activism (Cooper, 2023; Safdar et al., 2015a; Safdar et al., 2018). Youths organize campaigns, disseminate information, and engage in discussions about urgent societal issues through internet platforms. In addition, these platforms provide a big portion of information resources, from social networking sites to prominent news websites, forming an intricate web of digital environments that shapes people's opinions and political knowledge (Mustapha et al., 2023).

Social media users frequently ignite online movements to bring attention to pressing problems, and they also employ Hashtag Activism to show support for a cause or draw attention to situations that they find concerning (Suciu, 2019). In recent years, Pakistan's political parties, especially Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) have increased their use of social media in order to expand their circle of support and encourage citizens, especially the country's big portion of the population, youth, to get involved in politics. PTI was among the first political parties to employ social media for an array of political goals at first (Jaral, 2018). These goals included advocating its political agenda, encouraging young people to vote, inviting the public to political rallies, and tackling and criticizing the previous ruling party (Hussain & Shahzad, 2018). Observing the efficacy of using social media and online networking sites for campaigns and message delivery, other national and local political parties also joined the club (Dunya News, 2018). In the 2013 and 2018 general elections, the majority of voters were social media users (Sadiq et al., 2018). Since then, political parties have fastened their efforts to gain popularity on social media and persuade youth to actively participate in the democratic process.

Youth Activism During General Election 2024

Youth activism in elections is the term used to describe young people's participation in the political arena. This can involve things like organizing campaigns to register to vote, supporting political candidates, speaking out and advocating policies that have an impact on their lives. Youth activism has the potential to significantly influence a nation's destiny since youthful individuals frequently bring new perspectives and life experiences to the political sphere.

Studies have shown that the highest ever percentage of young voters has cast a vote in the 2024 general election. A recent survey by Gallup Pakistan (2024) disclosed that the voter turnout in this election was far greater than in previous years. In 2024, 34% of voters were under 30, in 2018 31% were under the age of 30 while in 2013, only 25% who voted were 30. Overall the youth voter turnout is 47% and that is similar to national voter turnout which is a substantial rise of 11% from the election of 2018. This is a historical development because over the years, the youth vote bank always lagged behind and turnout was half or a third less than the national average. It demonstrates the success of calculated actions meant to strengthen and elevate the voices of young people within the democratic system (Pildat, 2024). The prior research provides strong evidence that social media played a crucial role in activating political activism among young individuals in Pakistan (Mahmood & Awan, 2019). According to Gallup's (2024) survey about 82% of the voters were confident that their vote could initiate change and it is prominent from the voter turnout. The goals of this study are:

- To examine the consumption habits of social media networking among Pakistani youth during the 2024 general election.
- To assess the role of social media networking in fostering youth activism during Pakistan's 2024 general election.
- To analyse the role of social media networking in raising political awareness among young people throughout the 2024 election campaign.
- To investigate the effectiveness of social media networking in enhancing political efficacy among Pakistani youth during the 2024 election phase.

Despite the significant population of Pakistani youth, historically, voter turnout always has lagged behind the national average. Nonetheless, a mammoth turnout has been noticed in the general election of 2024 with a substantial rise in young voters. The intention of this study is to look into the role of social media networking in activating activism and contributing to this surge of political participation among young Pakistanis during the election. On the foundation of Mobilization and Reinforcement Theories, the study is grounded to explain how social media influences political behaviour by either encouraging political participation or reinforcing the existing beliefs. With given context and data of youth turnout in 2024, this study examines how social media impacted youth activism, awareness, and efficacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Youth and Social Media in Political Engagement

The 2024 General Election in Pakistan marked a significant political moment, particularly for youth involvement. The election was contested primarily by major parties such as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and Pakistan People's Party

(PPP), amidst heightened political polarization, allegations of pre-poll rigging, and a tense electoral environment. Notably, restrictions on political rallies and media coverage led to a greater reliance on digital campaigning and social media outreach by parties and activists alike. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and TikTok became central to political messaging, mobilization efforts, and real-time engagement with young voters. Given that over 45% of registered voters were under the age of 35 (Gallup, 2024), the digital political space emerged as a vital arena for youth activism and expression. This context underscores the urgency and relevance of exploring how social media shaped political behaviour and engagement among youth during this landmark election (Khan, 2024).

Shah and Khan (2023) conducted a study on youth activism to explore the young activists' role in fostering social change and interpreting its effects on contemporary society. By utilizing a qualitative methodology, they explored the experiences and challenges faced by young activists, keenly focusing on social media usage. They addressed how platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have become practical tools for amplifying the voices of young activists and mobilizing supporters. The study revealed that activists use social media for filling online petitions, hashtag campaigns, and viral challenges as it is an effective means for promoting awareness and garnering support for various issues.

The involvement of students in political activism in South Asia was also examined by Martelli and Garalytė (2019), who emphasized the interaction between student activism and the wider political context, demonstrating how student movements influence and can influence mainstream political processes. In the broader context of South Asian countries, the study identified the transformative effects of youth activism. The researchers showcased how young activists challenge traditional norms and culture, amplify the voices of marginalized groups, and advocate systemic change.

Additionally, Fullam (2016) study suggests that social media has a major impact in disseminating information and fostering the growth of online communities dedicated to youth-led initiatives. So, it is significantly influencing the landscape of youth activism. According to Müllenmeister et al. (2023), activism is a multifaceted field that is influenced by the moral obligations, duties, and priorities of families as well as the participants' own. The study underlined the importance of activism in fostering social solidarity, increasing social awareness, and helping in bringing social change. They also brought attention to the challenges and obstacles activists face during their activism. Because of its resilience, youth activism has the potential to spark a revolution quickly. In their study, Abimbade et al. (2022) looked into social media activism and examined the #EndSARS hashtag on Twitter. It was run by young activists and the protest progressed from mobilization to social action. Through social media activism, they succeeded in forcing the government to reverse the action. The scholars highlighted the influence of digital platforms on social movements and change-making.

Political Awareness and Civic Discourse

Wong (2021) examines the connection between social media and youth activism, highlighting how young people's passion for new information technology makes them increasingly entwined with and dependent on social media. He found a significant shift in how people, particularly the youth, consume and disseminate information. It highlights that while older generations continue to rely more heavily on traditional mass media like television, younger generations increasingly

use websites and social media as their primary information sources. The study also highlights the strong correlation between media consumption and political opinions, demonstrating the different media consumption habits of movement supporters and detractors. These findings provide insights into the changing dynamics of information consumption, political participation, and young individuals' interaction on social media.

Scholars believe that social media has fostered an environment that encourages young people to get involved in democracy and play a constructive role. Alodat et al. (2023) assess the connection between adults, their social media usage, and political engagement. The researchers used a questionnaire for data collection. The findings of the research exposed that social media use had a favourable and substantial impact on politics. According to the results, young people's political activism is positively impacted by political self-efficacy (PSU), technological self-efficacy (TSPU), and fear of social uprising (FSU). The findings imply that social media greatly instils dedication in young people to participate in political activities.

Political Efficacy in the Digital Age

Matthes (2022) provided a comprehensive analysis of the youth's involvement in politics. He has drawn attention to the fact that young people have adverse opinions and they are sceptical towards the political system. He also implied that young people's usage of digital media is seen as a partial solution to the problem of their declining engagement in civic and political life. The contention is that social media and digital platforms, via a variety of mechanisms like opinion expression, networking, learning effects, and accidental exposure to political information, can help to increase political engagement among young adults.

Researchers worldwide have deeply delved into inspecting the correlation between social media usage and political engagement, and scholars from Pakistan have also made a significant contribution to this area of study. Mahmood et al. (2020) discovered that Pakistanis utilize social media as a forum for political debates, drawing attention to national issues, initiating discussion, and exerting pressure on lawmakers and the government to take action or make policies. Iqbal (2024) examines social media's influence on voter attitudes and behaviour in Pakistan's 2024 elections, highlighting the shift toward digital-first political participation. Similarly, Ali et al. (2024) assess youth political participation in Pakistan's 2024 elections, emphasizing social media's role in fostering political discussions, activism, and voter mobilization. Mahmood and Awan (2019) also investigated the influence of social media on the political engagement of young people in Pakistan. 58.5% of those surveyed agreed that social media is useful in politics. This implies that an extensive portion of Pakistan's youth population recognizes social media's effects on political activation.

Batool et al. (2020) investigated the role of social media in political engagement among Pakistan's youth. They focused on how platforms such as Facebook and Twitter enable young people to participate in political discussions, disseminate political content, and raise political awareness among their peers. The findings showed that social media plays a major role in empowering and mobilizing youth for political movements and activism, particularly in the context of Pakistan's democratization.

Bano et al. (2021) noticed the growing influence of social media on the political engagement of young Pakistanis. They observed that social media platforms have really enabled young adults to express their political allegiance, confront their opponents, and engage in discussions about corruption, accountability, and patriotism. The analysis underlined that social media has changed the opinions and awareness of political issues, making youth more active and empowered in Pakistan's political discourse. Therefore, it is crucial to dig deep into political activism now and then to understand youth's attitudes and interests as young people are the core of a democratic society.

Although there has been a significant amount of research conducted worldwide on the relationship between social media and political activism, gaps still exist. Recent studies like Mahmood et al. (2020) and Batool et al. (2020) have explored young Pakistanis' involvement and participation through social media. Al-Kubaisi et al. (2024), emphasized the mounting impact of social media on voter behaviour during the recent election demonstrating the groundbreaking potential of social media in mobilizing young voters during elections. However, little attention has been paid to the specific dynamics and efficacy of social media activism during significant political events, such as the 2024 elections. Pakistan's distinct political, cultural, and technological panorama requires context-specific analysis. In Pakistan, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp play an effective role in shaping and motivating young adults for political activism. An in-depth analysis of the influential platforms can help future political campaigns and strategies for engaging youth more effectively. Through quantitative research, scholars can accurately assess the role of social media activism and political engagement during the 2024 general election.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand how social media networking influenced youth activism during Pakistan's general elections, this study draws on several key theories from political science, communication studies, and sociology. The primary ones guiding this research are:

Mobilization Theory

Mobilization Theory, as classically defined by Verba et al. (1995), explains how institutions and communication systems activate individuals toward political participation. The theory asserts that people are more likely to engage when they are recruited, informed, or feel needed by a cause. In the digital context, Casteltrione (2016) and Dunu and Uzochukwu (2015) emphasize how online platforms mobilize youth by lowering the cost of participation and increasing exposure to persuasive content. As a result, they might convince people to attend these events who have never heard about them before. The theory is very relevant to Jordan's youth participation. In this context, social media can be used as a propaganda tool to promote political events such as rallies or protests, as well as to connect young individuals with similar political interests and opinions (Mandrysz, 2016). Social media has enabled youngsters to connect with their peers and join hands for social initiatives and movements. On top of that, social media serves as a platform where individuals can debate, exchange thoughts, and gain insight from one another. By doing this, young people can become more informed and involved citizens and gain a greater awareness of political issues (Vraga & Tully, 2021). Overall, mobilization theory argues that social media can help in promoting partisanship among youth. Social media provides political

activists a platform to interact with potential supporters and disseminate information about political events and activities, which can help organize youth and encourage them to become more politically aware and active.

Reinforcement Theory

Reinforcement Theory, originally conceptualized by Klapper (1960), suggests that media primarily reinforces existing beliefs rather than changing them. This theory is crucial for interpreting how politically active youth may use social media to reaffirm their views, connect with like-minded communities, or engage in partisan discourse. According to this theory, people are more likely to come across facts and concepts that confirm their existing notions since they ought to actively seek out and engage with such content (Cheong et al., 2022). Social media has become a very lenient platform where youth can exchange their political views and connect with like minded people. This attracts the youngsters who are politically active to join and engage more freely and effectively (Diou et al., 2018). Whereas social media can spark controversies and create partisanship among the masses. It is because people are less likely to interact with others whose values conflict with theirs and are more interested in interacting with those who hold the same opinions (Lin et al., 2023) that have both good and bad impacts on young activists (Oser and Boulianne, 2020).

Combining these frameworks offers a holistic lens to understand how social media fosters youth activism: it both mobilizes the previously disengaged and strengthens conviction among those already inclined toward political participation.

Model

This study employs a diagrammatic model to demonstrate the research frameworks, which visualize the relationship between research structure. This model represents the relationship among key factors such as social media consumption, political awareness, political efficacy, reinforcement of beliefs, and political activism. It also provides the foundation on which the researchers cater the hypotheses.

Hypotheses

- H1:** Using social media networking platforms will considerably improve political awareness among Pakistani young during the 2024 election season.
- H2:** Social media networking activities will positively influence the political efficacy of Pakistani youth participating in activism during the 2024 elections.
- H3:** Increased engagement with social media networking will lead to high youth activism.
- H4:** Social media usage, political awareness, political efficacy and reinforcement of beliefs each will positively contribute to youth activism.

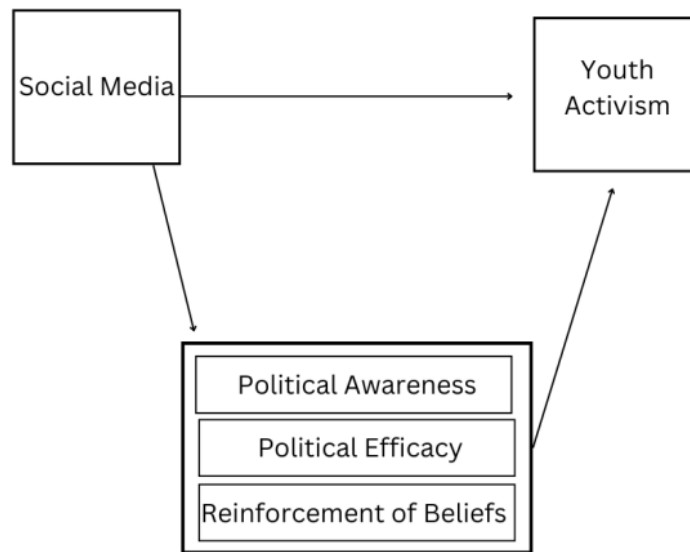


Figure 1: Study model

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research is designed within a quantitative framework that allows the understanding of various realities and the interpretation and evaluation of participants' perspectives on certain topics within their authentic setting. As a result, an emerging, deductive, and structured design is presented. Our methodology is based upon two theories: mobilization and reinforcement approaches that offer nuanced insights on social media's role in activism among Pakistani youth during the election. A questionnaire was developed as the main data collection tactic, and a survey was carried out to collect specific data. The methodological guidelines provide thorough and precise information on the characteristics, beliefs, and relationships of social media and activism.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Number of (n=264) participants accessed through various colleges and universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The questionnaire was also distributed online via email, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter groups. The convenience sampling technique was utilised and the youth was encouraged to participate by completing out the survey. While this approach enables swift data collection, it does present limitations, such as potential bias in representativeness and under coverage of offline youth. This limitation is acknowledged and addressed by ensuring a geographically diverse response pool. The sample (n=264) was aged between 18-29 with Mean 1.82. The Cronbach's Alpha is 0.882.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The pre structured, self-administrated questionnaire was developed to gather data which consisted of 4 sections. The indigenous demographic sheet was created for demographic data and the first section measures social media consumption habits (SMC), the second section carries

questions to analyse the SM role in youth activism (YA), the third measures political awareness (PA) among Pakistani youth and the fourth underlines the political efficacy (PE). They will help in analysing political participation (PP) and social media's relationship. Each indicator was evaluated using a rating system (5-point Likert scale) that spans from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For the descriptive statistical analysis, the SPSS statistical software was employed. The inferential tests were conducted using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) through SPSS software. SEM was selected due to its suitability in testing hypothesized relationships between multiple independent and dependent variables simultaneously. Model fit indices, path coefficients, and significance levels were examined to validate the research model. Ethical considerations were ensured by maintaining respondent confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The questionnaire utilized in this study yielded 264 genuine responses, which served as the foundation for the following analysis. The identified findings were consistent with the research objectives, including the results of a structural equation model (SEM). Missing data occurs when respondents do not answer one or more survey questions. Frequency analyses were performed on each measurement goal to confirm all data completion. We did not find any missing values because the survey was designed entirely online and the mandatory statement was stated; nonetheless, the form will not be submitted unless all of the questions are completed.

Descriptive Statistic

Table 1: Demographic data

Respondents' Demographic		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	88	33.3
	Female	176	66.7
	Total	264	100.0
Age	18-21	84	31.8
	22-25	144	54.5
	26-29	36	13.6
	Total	264	100.0
Education Level	Matric or below	12	4.5
	Intermediate	12	4.5
	BS	180	68.2
	MPhil /Phd	60	22.7
	Total	264	100.0

Table 1 depicts the demographic statistics of 264 Pakistani youth who are involved in political activism in any form. The indigenous demographic sheet includes information about the respondents' age, gender, and education level. The study acquired 264 valid responses among them 66.7% were females and 33.3% were male. The results indicated that 31.8% of the participants were aged 18-21, 54.5% were 22-25, and 13.6% were the ages of 26-29. The findings exemplified the education of the respondents, among them 68.2% were BS students, 22.7% were pursuing MPhil /PhD, and intermediate and Matric students were 4.5% each.

Table 2: Likert scale (variables' questions)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
SM	18.4091	3.63329	264
YA	17.7727	3.77220	264
PA	18.8182	2.42866	264
PE	19.2727	3.44670	264
RPB	7.1364	1.71672	264
Valid N			264

Table 2 presents the Mean and Standard Deviation of each group, collectively. The researchers utilized a 5-point Likert scale consists of 22 questions to measure factors like Political awareness, political activism and usage of social media platforms as well as their relationship with each other. The research comprised the results of Pakistani youth and it's interpreted through SPSS software for the standard and accurate data.

Table 3: Factors loading

	SM	YA	PA	PE	RPB
SM1	0.843				
SM2	0.765				
SM3	0.821				
SM4	0.433	0.588			
SM5	0.660		0.421		
YA1	0.638	0.551			
YA2	0.447		0.740		
YA3	0.834				
YA4	0.686				0.504
YA5	0.788				
PA1	0.790			0.420	
PA2	0.711				
PA3	0.697				
PA4	0.743				
PA5		0.508		0.592	0.413
PE1	0.762				
PE2	0.869				
PE3	0.805				
PE4	0.715				
PE5	0.698			0.427	
RPB1	0.494		0.413		0.428
RPB2			0.595		

Table 3 displays the factor loading of each item of the main variables. The factors extracted using Principal Component Analysis. These factors present the degree of the relation each component associated with specific factors. The factor has above than 0.4 value as in factor loading min 0.4 is consider stable.

Table 4: Reliability and validity construct

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
SM	0.797	0.906	0.813
YA	0.809	0.942	0.851
PA	0.720	0.957	0.874
PE	0.887	0.956	0.859
RPB	0.731	0.921	0.867

Table 4 provides the reliability and validity scores of the data. The Cronbach's Alpha is either 0.7 or above which exhibits the accuracy of the data. The composite reliability is 0.9 and above which means convergent validity is good. While good variance should be 0.7 or above and table 3 reveals the average variance is 0.8 and above. The table shows that each variable (SM, YA, PA, PE, RPB) shows a good validity convergence and internal consistency. These findings imply that the study successfully measured the underlying ideas that aimed to be assessed.

Regression Analysis

The scholars have run a multiple regression analysis using SPSS software to interpret the relation and effects of the variables. In the test youth activism was selected as a dependent variable while others were independent. Table 5 shows the results. This test helps in testing the hypotheses and understanding the complex relationships.

Table 5: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.881 ^a	.776	.772	1.80105

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), RPB, PA, SM, PE

Table 5 shows the summary of model 1 (structural equation model) and **R² (0.776)** indicates the variances of youth activism. Whereas adjusted R² is .772 which is 77.2% that is less than the R² but still demonstrates the accuracy of the model.

Table 6: ANOVA^a regression analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2902.224	4	725.556	223.676	.000 ^b
Residual	840.140	259	3.244		
Total	3742.364	263			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: YA | b. Predictors: (Constant), RPB, PA, SM, PE

Table 6 shows the results of regression of the variables. In this test youth activism was a dependent variable while political awareness, political efficacy, social media and reinforcement of political beliefs were independent variables. The F statistic 223.676 is the lowest significance of the model. The significance (p value < 0.01) explains the significant variance of the model.

Table 7: Coefficients of the regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	-4.075	.973			-4.186	.000
SM	.714	.052	.687		13.773	.000
PA	.484	.079	.312		6.152	.000
PE	-.093	.066	-.085		-1.413	.159
RPB	.195	.067	.089		2.899	.004

Note: a. Dependent Variable: YA

Table 7 displays the results of unstandardized and standardized coefficients. This depicts the association of the independent variables with the dependent variable. Social media and Youth activism B value (.714) and p-value < 0.01 indicate a positive significance between both variables. For every additional unit in social media, the predicted increase will be 0.714. Similarly, Political awareness and youth activism relation is .484 with p-value < 0.01 which also means that with everyone increased in PA is projected to 0.484 increase in PA scores. Political efficacy and youth activism B value is -.093 but its p-value < .159 which tells that the PE has very weak association with YA and the increase in unit is not predicted. The reinforcement of beliefs and youth activism B value is 0.195 and p-value < 0.004 which is statistically significant. This means for each increased unit in RPB is associated with 0.195 increase in YA points.

Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis was performed in SPSS software to investigate the relationship between social media usage and various dimensions of young activism, political knowledge, and political efficacy. Table 6 shows the coefficients [quoted under Pearson Correlation] and p-values [quoted under Sig. (2-tailed)] is .000 (described as) $p < 0.01$. This analysis helps to assess the extent and course of the associations between the variables.

Table 8: Correlation test

		SMC	PA	PE	RB	YA
SMC	Pearson Correlation	1	.707**	.800**	.181**	.856**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.003	.000
PA	Pearson Correlation		1	.802**	.094	.738**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.130	.000
PE	Pearson Correlation			1	.225**	.735**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000	.000
RB	Pearson Correlation				1	.223**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000
YA	Pearson Correlation					1
	Sig. (2-tailed)					

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

SM (social media consumption), PA (political awareness), PE (political efficacy), RPB (Reinforcement of political beliefs), YA (youth activism)

Table 8 presents the r and p values of the group collectively. It shows how these variables connected to each other with what significance. The findings show that all the variables have positive and strong and positive connections with each other except PE with RPB which is weak but positive and RPB with YA which is moderate and positive.

Structural Equation Model Results Analysis

The study utilized the structural equation model to explore the connection and role of social media networks fostering youth activism among Pakistani youngsters chiefly during the 2024's democratic process. Additionally, it also investigates the online platforms' function in infusing political awareness and political efficacy. This analysis helps to assess the extent and course of the associations between the variables as shown in Table 9 *Figure 2*. The study analysed how political biases can impact youth activism. Similarly, how awareness and efficacy lead to youth activism. The researchers utilized the various statistical techniques to interpret the connection. These are regression analysis, correlation, and SEM (Structural Equation Model). The results present very strong evidence supporting social media (SM) has a positive link with political awareness (PA). Moreover, the path coefficient data revealed that SM is positively associated with youth activism. Besides, PE and RPB have a weak correlation but have a positive significance. Likewise, PA and PE positively contribute to YA. On the other hand, RPB and YA fall between weak to moderate relations. The regression model analysis showed the SEM model accuracy and the results testified that the model fits appropriately. ANOVA regression and coefficient analysis have been done to investigate the collective link between YA and RPB, PA, PE. The researchers also have done the validity and reliability test to ensure the accuracy of the survey's questions and double checked the data during and after conducting the analysis. Overall, the SEM model presents a comprehensive overview of the study and fits well with the indicators.

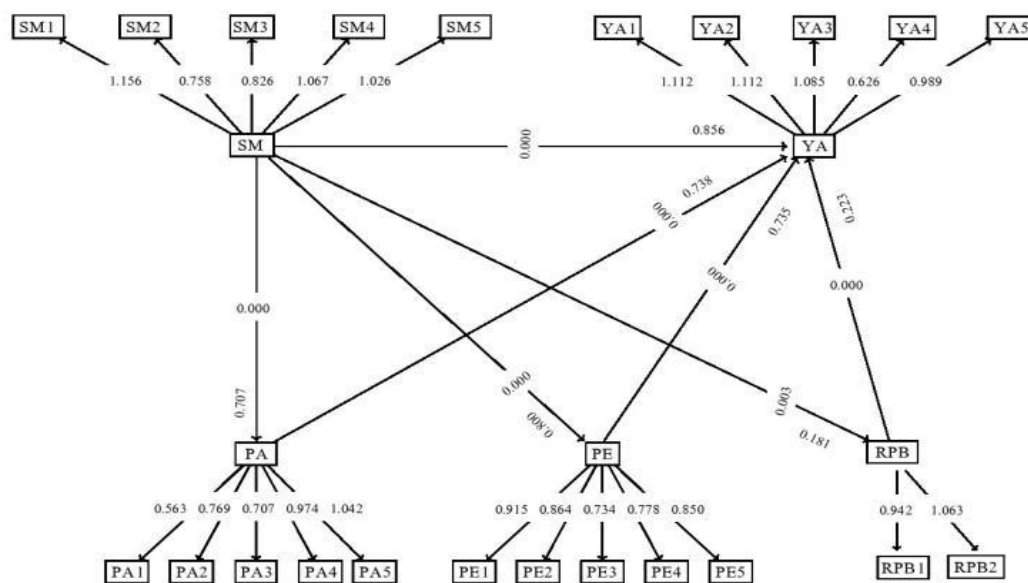


Figure 2: SEM analysis results

Table 9: Results of the path coefficient of the SEM model

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Deviation	t value	p Values
SM -> PA	0.707	0.029	16.160	0.000
SM -> PE	0.800	0.035	21.576	0.000
SM -> YA	0.856	0.033	26.770	0.000
SM -> RPB	0.181	0.029	2.983	0.003
PA -> YA	0.738	0.065	17.679	0.000
PE -> YA	0.735	0.046	17.532	0.000
RPB ->YA	0.223	0.132	3.707	0.000

Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses, the authors performed different tests according to the specifications and ensured that the results were consistent with the hypotheses.

H1: Using social media networking platforms will considerably improve political awareness among Pakistani young during the 2024 election season.

To test the H1, the Pearson correlation has been performed. The test discloses the relationship between SM and PA is 0.707 which is significant ($p < 0.01$). This suggests a strong positive influence, implying that higher social media usage correlates to increased political awareness among youth, thereby supporting H1.

H2: Social media networking activities will positively influence the political efficacy of Pakistani youth participating in activism during the 2024 elections.

The Pearson Correlation between SM and PE is 0.800 which is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). This demonstrates a very strong positive relation, indicating that greater social media exposure leads to more political efficacy. Hence, the H2 remains consistent.

H3: Increased engagement with social media networking will lead to high youth activism in the 2024 general elections.

The test was conducted to identify the Pearson correlation coefficient between primary variables SM and YA. It is 0.0856 ($p < 0.01$) that shows a very strong and positive association implying more social media usage leads to higher youth activism. Therefore, H3 is accepted.

H4: Social media, political awareness, political efficacy and reinforcement of political beliefs each will positively contribute to youth activism.

The analysis was designed to gauge that all PA, PE, and RB, contribute to youth activism (YA). To analyse the complex relation, the authors have run multiple regression analysis. Youth activism was selected as the dependent variable and the other four (social media, political awareness, political efficacy, reinforcement of political beliefs) as independent variables. The results indicate that all four factors positively contribute to youth activism. SM and PA have very strong positive links; their values are ($p < 0.01$) each. RPB has a weak association but its value is ($p < 0.004$) suggesting that it increases activism positively. However, Political efficacy's contribution is not significant; PE hardly contributes to YA. On balance, all four have positive contributions to youth activism either notable or insignificant. On that account, H4 is not supported.

FINDINGS

The results indicate that social media use had a significant positive influence on political interest, suggesting that youth who are more engaged with platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are also more politically curious and informed. This political interest, in turn, showed a strong predictive relationship with youth activism, confirming that politically aware individuals are more likely to engage in activism-related behaviours. Furthermore, social media use was moderately associated with increased political efficacy, indicating that digital engagement can improve young people's confidence in their political understanding and participation. However, the path from political efficacy to youth activism was not statistically significant, revealing a gap between feeling politically competent and taking activist action. These findings collectively suggest that while social media platforms are instrumental in informing and motivating youth, there remains a disconnect between digital engagement and actual political activism, particularly when institutional or systemic trust is lacking.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal a nuanced understanding of the interplay between social media usage, political interest, political efficacy, and youth activism during Pakistan's 2024 general election. The strong relationship between social media use and political interest aligns with Mobilization Theory (Verba et al., 1995), suggesting that digital platforms are not only channels of communication but also tools of political mobilization. Youth exposed to political content through social media were more likely to develop interest in political affairs, leading to increased activism.

The findings further confirm that political interest is a significant predictor of youth activism, consistent with the conclusions of Batool et al. (2020) and Bano et al. (2021), who emphasized the role of awareness in transforming passive consumers into active participants. This supports the idea that social media serves as a gateway to political consciousness and action among Pakistani youth. Interestingly, the study identified a moderate effect of social media on political efficacy, but no significant direct impact of political efficacy on youth activism. This partially contradicts the expectations of Reinforcement Theory (Klapper, 1960), which posits that reinforced beliefs through media would lead to increased participation. One interpretation is that while digital engagement may build political confidence, it doesn't necessarily translate into real-world action, possibly due to barriers like distrust in institutions, fear of backlash, or perceived ineffectiveness.

These findings are consistent with Matthes (2022), who highlighted that digital media can partially address the disengagement of youth from political life, but may fall short in transforming that engagement into tangible activism without supportive offline structures. Similarly, Abimbade et al. (2022) illustrated how youth-led digital movements can achieve social change, but only when combined with organizational strategies and real-world mobilization. Moreover, this study validates earlier research from the Pakistani context, such as Mahmood and Awan (2019) with Shah and Khan (2023), reaffirming that social media is increasingly central to the political lives of youth. However, it also highlights a critical limitation: while online engagement fosters awareness and solidarity, it does not guarantee participation in formal political processes or movements.

In sum, social media has proven to be a catalyst for political interest and digital activism, yet the pathway from engagement to activism remains uneven, shaped by broader socio-political constraints. The study reinforces the central role of social media platforms as spaces for information dissemination, mobilization, and youth empowerment. It supports the notion that digital platforms play a transformative role in shaping political behaviour yet also reveals that digital confidence (political efficacy) does not always translate into real-world action. The findings point to the need for greater institutional responsiveness and civic education initiatives to bridge the gap between digital and democratic participation.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the strategic role of social media in shaping youth political engagement during Pakistan's 2024 general election. Through a model grounded in Mobilization and Reinforcement Theories, the research highlights the influence of digital platforms on political interest and youth activism, while also exposing gaps between online engagement and real-world action. The findings contribute to both theory and practice by revealing how online political discourse influences attitudes, yet may not fully convert into physical activism, particularly in politically volatile environments like Pakistan. From a practical standpoint, the study holds implications for political organizations, electoral bodies, and civil society groups seeking to design more inclusive and interactive civic campaigns targeted at youth.

However, the study has few limitations. Firstly, the use of convenience sampling, may reduce the generalizability of the findings beyond urban, digitally active populations. Furthermore, the self-reported nature of online surveys carries the risk of bias, particularly among participants already politically engaged. Lastly, the cross-sectional design restricts insights into long-term behavioural changes, especially in a fast-shifting digital and political landscape. Future studies should consider employing mixed-method or longitudinal designs and diversify sampling to reflect broader socio-political strata. Addressing these limitations would offer a deeper, more holistic understanding of youth activism in the digital age.

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