

**RESEARCH PAPER****The Impact Social Media Political Memes on Youth of Pakistan: An Analysis****<sup>1</sup>Saba Sultana\*, <sup>2</sup> Aaima Batool and <sup>3</sup> Maham Akhtar**

1. Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication & Media, University of Narowal, Narowal, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Visiting Faculty Member, Department of Mass Communication & Media, University of Narowal, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Research Scholar Department of Mass Communication & Media, University of Narowal, Punjab, Pakistan

**Corresponding Author** saba.sultana@uon.edu.pk**ABSTRACT**

The objectives of the research was to analyze the impact of political memes on the Pakistani public. This research paper focused deeply on studying the aspect of political memes and the way they can encourage as well as manipulate the common public. Memes that are political have an immediate relation to politics and individuals. It may be utilized positively in politics since it appeals individuals in a hilarious way, but some parties take advantage of it. They employ political memes to undermine the other party in the eyes of the public, with the goal of spreading misinformation and hiding the truth. In order to reach the aim of the research, the researcher has conducted survey to collect data. This research has employed Survey method, a sample size of 200 respondents has been chosen in order to generate the survey results among youth of Narowal. The findings revealed that the youth of Pakistan is influenced by political memes in social media, however that political memes act as a strong influencer of influencing the political decisions of the youth in Pakistan. Future researchers may analyze such content by using different methodologies such as content analysis, semiotic analysis and discourse analysis.

**Keywords:** Political Memes, Politics, Social Learning Theory, Uses And Gratification Theory, Youth**Introduction**

Meme is an element that contains data conveyed by imitating. Dawkins (1976) invented the term meme and define how opinions expand, mutate, and develop (memetics). According to Leong (2013) memes is considered to be a tag that is given to single units of cultural dissemination as other imitates them. Internet memes are stated to be a discourse. Currently social media platforms serve as both most effective and entertaining tool sources for the viewers (Chick, 1999).

Mememes are portrayed as a new type of info distribution that influences the thinking of its audience in a lighthearted manner. Mememes are a type of communication that uses humor to transmit information and has long served as a symbol of resistance. The utilization of social networking sites to share mememes about politics can reach a larger audience. A political mememe uses strategically combined visuals and captions to offer information as truth about an issue, a person, or a certain group. Political mememes are controversial visual messages that are frequently found on social media. Students must have critical media literacy abilities in order to comprehend a political mememe carefully (Dawkins, 2006).

However, political groups have employed a variety of techniques to foster democracy amongst Pakistanis, and they have played a significant role in politics. It has consistently been an irony in Pakistan's politics. However, thanks to the internet, anyone may now communicate their political beliefs in a hilarious manner. Political comedy

generates an inner emotion about politics. The present Internet age has altered the entire nature of democracies (Liisi Lainesk 2016). And from there, they can see political memes about how democracy is being harmed in a comical way, rather than debating it, and people like them. A politician offers technology in a political context.

On the other hand, internet memes are stated to be a discourse. The concept of memes has become renowned because of social media websites. According to (Saleem, et, 2022), several sectors, such as advertising and public relations, have initiated to use of memes to send data and gather the attention of their audiences. The data sent through the internet meme is implied to generate an outlook and for the publicity mindset more than only stating the data. The relevance of internet memes is considered to be a renowned device of digital discourse. This is because memes are also implied for trending the type of advertisement crusades and within the political affairs. As per the view of Helberger (2019), it can be signified that younger generations do not have the consideration phase to get include in primitive political content. Memes are considered to be an effective method to both grab their attention and to get a message in the limited time of interaction that they will do. The political authorities consider memes to be an appropriate tool for campaigning.

Politics are vital to a country's existence, and social networking sites is an arena in which everybody may share their points of view. In today's contemporary era, democratic government has been advertised via social networks, with political usage boosting by every day and altering people's political opinions. The study's goal is to investigate how memes about politics influence people's political opinions. The goal of this research is to determine how various political parties make a reputation for their performance in a democracy via political memes, as well as to discover how people change their political beliefs via memes that are political.

## **Literature Review**

### **Social Media Memes and Online Public**

Saleem et. (2022) signify that memes are signified as a renowned basis of data distribution and influence the mindset of their spectators in a light way. It has been researched that internet memes serve as a way for individuals who live in the digital sphere to generate opinions and become a main reference of data when they start to discuss the newscast that is retrieved from the memes that are found on the internet.

Social media has turned out to be a modern public area, and it is prone to manipulation. By handling inauthentic accounts signifying humans, dangerous aspects that can multiply wrong data in a targeted society. The results of this sort of conduct are hard to analyze because of the ethical issues attached to investigations that can lead to influencing online communities. The research stated that infiltrating a society is a highly dangerous method that bad actors can manipulate and, most probably, create low-quality content that goes viral (Lou et. 2019; Muzaffar, et.al2019)

However, Theisen et al. (2021) stated in their research that technically used for spreading humour on social media. In present times, memes contain a huge impact on the perception of the public of world proceedings, creating them a crucial focus of study.

As per the study by Gleason et al. (2019), the images that are present on social media platforms are inaccessible to individuals that have vision impairments because of a lack of descriptions and can be read by screen readers. An appropriate alternative text can be provided for all sorts of visual content present in social media and is not feasible, but there are groups of images comprising internet memes that state affordances for an automatic or semi-automatic phase of alternative text.

Moreover, Morina & Bernstein (2022) in their study stated that media narratives recommend that cultural creations are generally created in marginal cultures and then switch to the typical core, while social discipline recommends that middle network functions that connect between the margin and the central are majorly likely to formulate several dominant cultural creations. This has included the ten per cent of societies, through network centrality, generating the memes that formulate sixty-two per cent of the visual meme diffusion occasions on the web.

Likewise, Ross and Rivers (2019) signifies that media frames have been imposed on data related to news for several years to influence the way in which news is both stated and analysed. In any case, media has the tendency to signify to aim at primitive channels of media, but the influence of social media areas now requires a mandatory formulation of the way media is framed and is determined in connection to communication scholarships. Based on the aim of the problem of climate change, this particular thesis finds the way framing is implied by the aspect of social media memes in the social media setting. Zhang & Pinto (2021) observed that internet memes are to be signified as the combination of content that includes humour, and rumour and is available over various websites. Internet memes are created both in an image or small video format. The results of the article state that revelation to climatic variations memes raises a person's intention of online civic arrangements connected to variations in climate. In addition, empathy has been detected to generate this impact.

Zou (2020) examined in his article that conduct of online imitation in China as a piece of social residency. There are various user-generated imitations that are formulated from a viral meme. Through this, understanding has been developed regarding the way young people over the internet share their joint uniqueness, reminiscence and social alterations based on a participating social construction online. This study focuses on young individuals' conduct of appropriate detection and lifestyle politics concerning civic expression.

However, as per the explanation of Kozhamkulova & Foster (2019), the social interest of Internet memes presented for the online digital area of Kazakhstan has been understood. It has been noticed that memes were commonly implied to question or give a substitute model to the official guideline prepared in the media. This comprises substitutes ranging from the political aspect to the social aspect.

Shiftman (2013) thinks memes come in numerous shapes, but their reason is to send a message and inspire a reaction. Over the past decade, memes have gotten to be omnipresent in social media discourse. In spite of the fact that that message is frequently funny (e.g. Memes that poke fun at match sports groups or spoof plotlines of prevalent TV appears), memes are progressively being utilized to supply commentary approximately social and political issues of the day.

### **Social Media Memes and Political Humor**

The study by (Ahmad et al., 2022) is about social and political memes in Pakistan. This study is formulated on the critical discourse analysis of social media memes in Pakistan to state the inside descriptions and communications behind those. This paper examines in what way memes can be used for social and political interpretation and by what means it can explain about society. In the present digital world, memes are considered to be an interesting aspect. In order to convey a message in a simpler way, memes are chosen. This helps in changing the message to a funny illustration and visualization.

However, Leong, (2013) in his study stated that media narratives recommend that cultural creations are generally created in societies and then switch to the conventional core, while behavioral science recommends that middle setup functions that connect

between the periphery and the core are majorly formulate several influential cultural creations. The study completely judge among the expectations because earlier effort aims at singular areas such as Twitter. The results derived recommend that societies that are at the heart of the network generate the maximum of the immense diffused image memes.

Moreover, based on the statement of (Heiskanen, 2017)), it has been known that internet memes are to be signified as the amalgamation of content that includes humor, and rumor and is available over various websites. Internet memes are created both in an image or small video format. This particular statement about the threats that animals and people come across based on climate variation is appropriately stated memes based on variations in climate. Generally, memes are signified to be puns that are silly; limited data is determined that it might have in the formulation and spread of one's expected threat of climatic variations and mindset to take participation in operations based on climatic variations. This particular article examines the impact of memes based on climatic variation on the expected threat of climate variation and the mindset of online assignation associated with the problems of climate change.

### **Hypotheses**

**H1:** Political memes are influential tools employed by various sources to reshape public opinions on political matters.

**H2:** Exposure to political memes contributes to shifting public perceptions about politics and the role of memes in political discourse.

**H3:** Actors and politicians strategically use political memes to shape the public's understanding and perception of democracy, framing their messages through humor and satire.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework is stated to be the model based on which the theory of the dissertation can be generated (CohenMiller & Pate, 2019). This particular thesis paper has been created in order to analyze the impact of political memes on the Pakistani public. In this study, the scholar will be implying two significant theoretical frameworks that are the gratification theory and the social learning theory.

The gratification theory is stated to be a way of determining the reason based on which individuals appropriately step forward to significant media in order to accomplish particular requirements (McQuail, 1994) this is particularly an audience-based strategy to understand the way communication with the masses can be initiated. The aim is divergent from other sorts of media and creates an impact on the theories that specify that context conducted by media on people. Despite this factor, the gratification theory focuses on the acts done by humans in the media. This specifies that media is a specifically available product, and the viewers are practically its consumers.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory demonstrates that students actively choose to engage with political memes to fulfill specific needs. This engagement, driven by desires for information, social interaction, entertainment, identity reinforcement, emotional expression, escapism, and critical evaluation, collectively shapes students' perceptions of politics. The impact is twofold: students' attitudes toward politics are influenced by the memes they engage with, and their motivations for seeking certain gratifications also affect the types of memes they choose to interact with. Through this theoretical framework, it has been easier to understand why the common people or the audiences use the media. In this aspect, this is used by them as a piece of entertainment. In recent times, internet memes have turned out to be unethical agenda makers in the recently generated attention inside

the nation because of social media and other messaging application. Through this theory, the fact that political memes have the potential to state a platform for individuals to be a part of politics could be analyzed. Social learning theory is stated to be the study of learned behaviors based on the aspect of observance, pattern and replicating of innovative conduct that is implied by other individuals (Van Dun & Wilderom, 2021). As an outcome of this, new sorts of behaviors either remain to be the same or stop being dependent on the way they can be implied in society.

People have the capability of learning through what they are visualizing. In this case, the audience on social media websites significantly goes through different sorts of political memes. These memes have the tendency to target a specific leader or a particular political group. After a particular incident, specific political memes are spread over the internet, due to which the mindset of the viewers changes accordingly. It has been through analysis that in case a particular political leader or a particular political group has been facing negative goodwill in society, the meme makers have the tendency to pick up sensitive topics and create memes out of it.

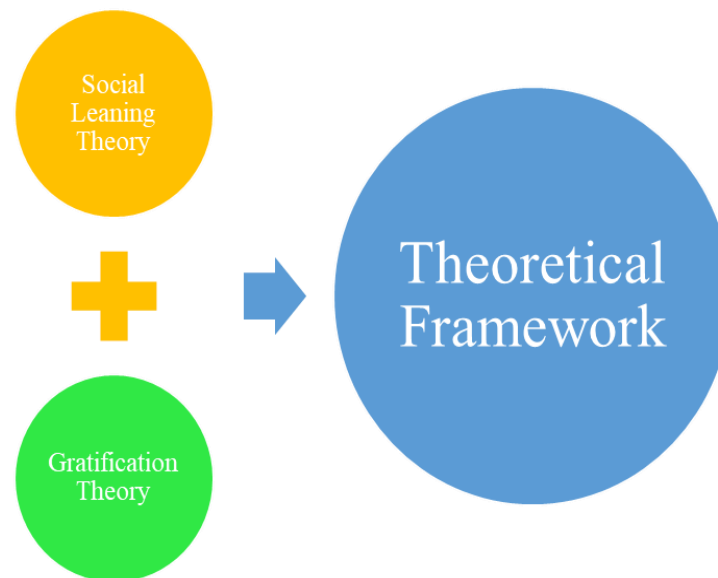


Figure .1: Theoretical Framework

## Material and Methods

An approach the research is considered to be the way that is chosen by the scholar in order to accumulate, examine and interpret information. There are three significant research approaches, including qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. In the current thesis study, a quantitative research approach has been opted for. The quantitative approach has been chosen as this will help in acquiring statistical data (Strijker, Bosworth & Bouter, 2020). This study utilized non-probability purposive method in identifying the respondents to by questionnaires. For the current study, students from the University of Narowal are identified as respondents which were purposively selected as the user of user media platforms.

A structured questionnaire was formulated and sent to individuals. A close ended questionnaire was prepared to examine the questions hypotheses of the study. The questionnaire was generated based on the Likert scale pattern that instigated the opinions, ideas and experiences while surveying respondents.

The targeted demographic chosen as the population for the survey are respondents. In order to acquire diversified results and authentic views, a focus has been

made on gathering data from young public. In order to formulate the sample for the current study, the researcher has taken primary data from **200** respondents who are both male and female and young university students. The researcher has significantly limited the sample of the survey, so it is easier to gather original data and work accordingly. In the current research paper, the researcher has chosen the statistical data analysis method. The gathered data was analyzed through SPSS that gave insightful outputs.

**Table 1**  
**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.932	20

Table : 1 indicates that the acceptable range is stated to be above 0.6, and below that is not acceptable (Schrepp, 2020). Based on the test value, it has been detected that the range of Cronbach Alpha's test is .932. This consider as the top range of reliability.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 2**  
**KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.929
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1857.351
	Df	190
	Sig.	.000

Table 2 indicates that generally, the value of KMO varies from 0 to 1. The values that range between 0.8 to 1.0 state that the sampling is in an effective manner. On the other hand, the value between 0.7 to 0.79 is signified to be in the mid-range, and the values between 0.6 and 0.69. However, if the value KMO is less than 0.6, then that states that the sampling for the survey has not been done in a proper manner and significant action should be taken. The KMO value in the current validity test has been retrieved to be .929, which states to be in the top-level score. In addition, the value of Bartlett's test is expected to be below 0.05 then, which signifies that the value contains a substantial parallel by the result. In the current analysis, Bartlett's test has been initiated in order to state equal variances across sample that define the similarities. The p-value of the current Bartlett's test has been retrieved to be .000, which states that the variances between the groups of samples are adequately equal.

**Table 3**  
**Correlation Analysis**

		IV1	IV2	IV3	DV
IV1	Pearson Correlation	1	.723**	.666**	.687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200
IV2	Pearson Correlation	.723**	1	.706**	.656**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200
IV3	Pearson Correlation	.666**	.706**	1	.742**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	200	200	200	200
DV	Pearson Correlation	.687**	.656**	.742**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	200	200	200	200

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

From the above table 3, it can be stated that at a 99% significance level (as  $p < 0.01$  twotailed normal distribution), the dependent variable (DV) shares the strongest positive

correlation with the independent variable (IV3) with a value of +0.742. Therefore, the dependent variable the high influence of political memes on the youth Pakistani voters, is significantly related to and dependent on the independent variable 3 in terms of getting exposure to Pakistani youths in the social media platforms through sharing memes and participating in political discussions. At the same time, IV3 is further influenced and related to IV2 with the next higher value of Pearson's correlation coefficient as 0.706. Therefore, it can be stated IV3, in terms of exposure of Pakistani youth through social networks. The influence of this social media exposure for creating political ideologies and perception among Pakistani youth is positively and strongly correlated with IV2 in terms of the impact of political memes for shaping the political ideologies. Moving forward, IV2 is having a strong positive association with IV1 with 0.723 Pearson's correlation coefficient, and therefore, it can be stated IV2 as the impact of political memes on Pakistani youth is significant, having a strong positive relation with IV1 as the role of social media platforms in influencing political; perceptions. Based on this, it can be stated that the high influence of political memes on

Pakistani youths are entirely dependent on the exposed l; level of those youth to different social media platforms, which is further influenced by different layers of meaning associated with political memes subjected to shape political ideologies in Pakistan, and this is again further impacted by the influential role of social media platforms.

At the same time, the dependent variable of the strong influence of political memes on the Pakistani youths is having a strong positive association with all the independent variables with the Pearson's coefficient values as 0.742, 0.687, and 0.656

**Table 4**  
**Regression Analysis**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.789 <sup>a</sup>	.622	.616	1.78882	.622	107.624	3	196	.000	1.953

a. Predictors: (Constant), IV3, IV1, IV2

b. Dependent Variable: DV

From the above table 4, R-values denote the goddess of fit for the existing variables' datasets in the developed model and, thereby, enhance the predictive capability of the proposed model. In that scenario, the R-value of 0.789 indicates 78.9% goodness of fit for accumulated data. At the same time, the R-square value of 0.622 describes that the dependent variable describe as 62.20% with respect to the independent variables, and the rest 37.80% of dependencies of the dependent variable remain unexplained.

Moving forward, the differences between R-value and R-square value are obtained as 0.167 (0.789 - 0.622 = 0.167) describes that the present research provides 16.7% less variance with respect to sample and real-world population awareness.

**Table 5**  
**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1033.147	3	344.382	107.624	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	627.173	196	3.200		
	Total	1660.320	199			

- a. Dependent Variable: DV
- b. Predictors: (Constant), IV3, IV1, IV2

From the above table, 107.624 can be stated as a large F value which signifies the error probability in the predictive model is very less. In that scenario, unstandardized and standardized coefficients obtained from the regression analysis play a crucial role to formulate the accurate association of independent variables to construct the dependent variable based on correlations. Unstandardized coefficients help to verify relationships with respect to raw accumulated datasets, and based on that, further standardized coefficients are formulated in order to standardize the model through minimizing the error possibilities.

### **Hypothesis Testing**

H1: Political memes are influential tools employed by various sources to reshape public opinions on political matters.

This hypothesis is signified to be an alternative hypothesis as through the survey responses; it has been found that the youth of Pakistan stated that they are influenced by the political memes that are present in social media. Meme does not only work as a micro-macro propagation but even replicates based on imitation. Memes are important to be a crucial information for data distribution and propagate the belief of the individual on a lighter scale. In the most general way, a social media meme is considered to be humorous photographic content that has been edited, and changed in order to meet varied aspects and derivations but still associates with the main idea considered by the individuals who are cross-culturally formed.

H2: Exposure to political memes contributes to shifting public perceptions about politics and the role of memes in political discourse.

This hypothesis is also signified to be an alternative hypothesis, as through the survey responses, it has been found that social media influences the political mindset of the youth in Pakistan. Generally, a meme is constantly manipulated, and by the end of it, it becomes hard to identify the origin of the meme. Due to the reason manipulation, the originality or the real meaning of the meme gets distorted. With the advent of data and communication technology, at least a decade earlier, the world got revolutionized. In the previous two decades, as the usage of the internet has increased, the revolution seems to be enhancing.

H3: Actors and politicians strategically use political memes to shape the public's understanding and perception of democracy, framing their messages through humor and satire.

As explained by Woodcock and Johnson (2019), with the rise in social media, political culture seems to be more integrated, and there remains a massive bunch of data available within a shorter span of time. This is signified to be an online communication technique that propagates corporation and bonding among individuals.

### **Conclusion**

The study was analyzed by asking respondents some questions related to political memes and its effects on public perceptions. The study found that the majority of respondents use social media platforms for political purposes and analyze how political memes effects the public perceptions and change their mindsets on political views. The selected sample of the study showed that 28.50% were strongly agree and 56.50% respondents were agree to that different social media platforms have increased the chances of different political viewpoints. Moreover 40% people strongly agree and 41% people



agree with that social networking platforms reshape their political ideologies whereas 45.50% respondents agree that political memes on social media have tendency to enlarge the audience perceptions and 38.00% were strongly agree with that statement. The study results shows that 37.50% strongly agree and 49.00% were agree that political memes are help to understand various viewpoints regarding a political aspects. In this study, 44.00% respondents strongly agree and 44.50% respondents were agree with statements that political content on social media has powerful medium which influence of political participation of the public specially youth.

The study concludes that the impact of political memes among university students of Narowal. The research paper has focused deeply on studying the aspect of political memes and the way they can encourage as well as manipulate the common public. Based on different contexts, the researcher identified the lack in the research of evaluating political memes, frames of memes and the ethics of memes. The formulation of political memes is commonly regarded to be a negative frame but it has the potential of generating politics interesting for the people who would generally assume that it is not an interesting topic. In the era of internet and social media memes, framing is showed to be the prime narrative and text of the complete artifact comprising both textual and semiotic aspects. Emotional framing also has the potential to instigate political aspects of view. Future researchers may analyze such content by using different methodologies such as content analysis, semiotic analysis and discourse analysis.

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