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RESEARCH PAPER

Contentious Politics and Digital Media: Analyzing Effects of Pro-Pti Facebook Contents on Psychological Wellbeing of Users

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ABSTRACT

To investigate the effects of pro-Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Facebook content on the psychological well-being of users and explore how users process information and form perceptions in the context of contentious politics. The study is set against the backdrop of contentious politics in Pakistan, where social media has become a significant platform for political discourse. The Elaboration Likelihood Model provides a framework for understanding how users process information and form attitudes. A sample of 200 Pro-PTI Facebook users was selected through purposive sampling and surveyed to examine the effects of exposure to anti-establishment content on their psychological well-being. The findings suggest that exposure to pro-PTI content on Facebook contributes to a trust deficit in the political system and institutions of Pakistan, leading to the formation of stereotypes, perceived realities, and frustration, ultimately affecting users' psychological well-being.

| **Keywords:** | Anti- Establishment, Contentious Politics, Perceived Reality, Pro-PTI, Psychological Well-Being, Stereotypes |

Introduction

Digital Media is playing a key role in building up the opinion of people; exposure to media does not only change the views but also influences how people react towards different things. It alters the existing affiliations, attitudes and behaviours of people. Media has its own ways to influence people; it can be a simple text, image, colour, language or any type of content that can leave a certain effect on a person. (Muzaffar, et. al 2019; Ejupi, Siljanovska & Iseni, 2014)

It has been reported that there is an evident increase in Facebook users by every passing day; these days, people are quite aware of the importance of Facebook in this age. It provides the masses with different platforms. In particular, Facebook, (92.06% of the total internet users are actively using Facebook) which does not only enable people to reach out to one another, but also lends a platform to ordinary individual of the society for expressing what he feels without any hindrance (AlphaPro, 2018). The finding also showed that there were 35 million active Pakistanis using Facebook on a monthly basis, and the number has been increasing by 17% annually since 2017.

Through Facebook, different individuals act differently, they act in various roles and then they converge to a single profile that becomes an identity of an individual. Facebook also allows a platform to spread information between people, at one time it enables to send messages to thousands of people. (Troittier & Fuchs, 2015) further added that Facebook has become that outlet where people also express their anger. With the passage of time social media like Facebook has become the most accessible platform to access all the political

processes and even get engaged in such processes. People tend to witness and experience politics on social media. (Muzaffar, et. al, 2020)

Contentious politics refers to all the disruptive techniques employed in order to exert a political pressure on the opponent individual, group or party. Riots, sit-ins, demonstrations, civil disobedience movements, strikes or even insurrections may be classified as different forms of contentious political tactics (Tilly, 2008).

However, due to the increased popularity of social media particularly Facebook, contentious politics has been shaped into an entirely different and a rather more magnanimous phenomenon. In recent years, Facebook is widely being used in political context. The users use this platform to disseminate not only general information, but also their political opinions and it results in an increased political participation of people. The groups and pages on social media provide relatively unswerving ways of interaction among the citizens allowing them to have frequent political discussions with one another (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012). It is due to the same assumed and proved impactfulness of political communication through social media that the events of contentious politics catch on in a far wider locality within a much lesser time span.

The relation between social media and political behaviour has changed over the years; social media has been a good source for garnering political information (Muzaffar, 2016;Bode, 2015). Social media plays a vital role in political opinion formation in the modern media world. It is considered significant to learn about politics through social media and to let that information change the attitudes and behaviours of people. Social media is regarded as quite an important element of political engagement. The users who usually talk about politics on social media tend to use it as a platform for political purposes. They discuss issues related to politics, which they consider are important. Majorly, these activities are done by the young users as compared to the users who are 50 or above. Young users often post their political opinions and encourage others for political engagement. (Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady & Verba, 2012)

In Pakistan, contentious politics is becoming increasingly important. Contentious politicians tend to use the digital media platform and social technologies as a tool for sending and receiving messages, for mobilizing people and for increasing the political participation of publics in order to attain certain goals. (Fareed, et. al. 2019)The more the people interact with one another, more does the political activity increase. People with shared interests and purposes come together. Thus, digital media serves its core purpose of disseminating information to the masses and bringing them closer (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

Social media platforms have become potent instruments for political mobilization and involvement in the age of fast technology breakthroughs and the abundance of digital media. Political parties worldwide have grabbed the chance to use the immense impact and reach of digital platforms, utilizing them as practical tools to spread their beliefs and affect public opinion. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) stands out among these parties as a significant political force in Pakistan that has tapped into the power of social media, especially Facebook, to spread Pro-PTI content.

Hussain and Salti (2018) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the role of social media in political communication during the 2018 general election in Pakistan. Published in Media Watch, their study provides valuable insights into the ways political actors harnessed social media platforms, including Facebook, to shape political narratives and influence public perceptions. By examining the strategies employed by political parties, with a particular focus on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the researchers shed light on the impact of digital media on political mobilization and engagement within the country. This

investigation contributes significantly to the understanding of how digital media plays a vital role in shaping political landscapes and fostering political discourse in Pakistan.

For academics and researchers alike, the connection between divisive politics and digital media is becoming increasingly interesting.

This research paper aims to investigate the consequences of users' exposure to anti-establishment information on social media in the context of Pakistan using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). The ELM offers a theoretical framework to comprehend how people interpret persuasive messages and decide whether to take a core or peripheral information processing path. With the use of this model, researcher want to investigate whether PTI social media users choose a core path, critically analyzing the material and developing educated opinions, or a peripheral route, depending on heuristics and emotional signals to process information.

The idea that exposure to anti-establishment information on social media may lead to a lack of faith in Pakistan's political system and institutions is at the heart of our analysis. Users may become more skeptical and disillusioned when they come across material that questions the status quo and institutions. This loss of confidence may have significant effects on people's psychological health, increasing feelings of irritation and worry.

Furthermore, this study endeavors to shed light on the formation of stereotypes and perceived realities that may arise from prolonged exposure to politically charged content. Social media, as a virtual public sphere, has the potential to shape individuals' perceptions of political actors and events, leading to the creation of biased beliefs and judgments. Understanding these mechanisms is crucial to comprehending the ways in which social media can influence users' psychological well-being and political attitudes.

This research paper aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on contentious politics and digital media by investigating the effects of anti-establishment content on users' psychological well-being and trust in the political system. Through the lens of the Elaboration Likelihood Model, researcher seek to uncover whether followers of PTI on social media adopt central or peripheral routes in processing information and forming perceptions. By delving into these complex dynamics, researcher hope to offer valuable insights into the intricate relationship between political communication, social media, and individual psychological health within the context of Pakistan.

Literature Review

According to Tilly and Tarrow (2006), "contentious politics" refers to the range of disruptive tactics used to apply political pressure, including riots, sit-ins, protests, and acts of civil disobedience. According to Tarrow (2013), contentious politics include a sequence of discrete events and interactions between initiators who have common goals, which might range from social movements to civil conflicts. According to Lawoti (2007), one may examine contentious politics via the lens of the mobilization process, group conflict, possibilities that arise, and the connections between various political movements. These initiatives put public servants under pressure and make them answerable to the requirements of the populace. Due to the popularity of social media, especially Facebook, social movements and divisive politics frequently use it as a tool (Anduiza, Jensen & Jorba, 2012). Facebook users can track current disputed behaviors and evaluate their political affinities (Anduiza et al., 2012). According to research by Walgrave et al. (2011), Facebook use helps activists stay connected to one another and to carry out a range of actions, including rallies and demonstrations. Facebook is being used by activists and advocates of all political stripes as a result of the growth of the internet and rising levels of computer literacy (Rohlinger, Bunnage & Klein, 2012). The development and evolution of social

movements may be supported more effectively and economically by social media networks, which offer the necessary technological infrastructure (Juris, 2005; Garret, 2006).

Studies have indicated that social media and the internet have the power to shape political participation and behavior. According to a Loader (2007) poll, younger people frequently attempt to sway other people's voting preferences and are more willing to engage in political discourse and communication on internet media. This allows political preferences and beliefs to solidify via both physical and online engagement. Social media sites are now important instruments for planning protracted, large-scale demonstrations and social movements. According to Bennett and Segerberg (2012), these technologies are employed to spread messages, organize individuals, and boost political participation on social media in order to accomplish certain goals and unite people around common agendas and ideas. The impact of social media on people's attitudes and political engagement has been studied extensively. According to Anduiza, Jensen, and Jorba (2012), the use of social media can influence individuals' attitudes and levels of political engagement. It has been observed that users with similar characteristics are more likely to be technology-friendly and use social media for political purposes. The structure of social media platforms also plays a significant role in promoting political participation and generating interest in politics among users. This exposure to political content can result in increased political attitudes, participation, and even opportunities for mobilization and sharing of political information. Loader (2007) further argues that the digital age, especially among the younger generation, has played a crucial role in fostering their involvement and engagement in politics.

According to Farooq (2014), the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and opposition leader Imran Khan organized the "Azadi March" in 2014 as a protest against the PML-N government's purported election manipulation during the 2013 general election. PTI used social media to spark public outrage and rally support for their divisive policies, organizing a sizable number of demonstrators to march to the capital and demand the Prime Minister's resignation. Similar to this, Shah (2019) noted that Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), a different political party, initiated a protest at the Faizabad Interchange in 2017 to voice opposition to modifications made to the Elections Bill 2017, which changed the wording of the oath. The demonstrators called for the Law Minister's resignation in order to preserve the nation's "identity." PTI supported TLP in their sit-in protesting the government. The players turned to violent acts after their nonviolent occupations and large-scale protests failed to produce the desired effects. But in the end, the demonstrators' goal was accomplished when the minister resigned and the administration reached an agreement.

Hypotheses

H1: More exposure to anti establishment content on Facebook will lead to a greater trust deficit in national institution among users.

H2: Increased exposure to anti-establishment content result in negative impact on Psychological Wellbeing of Users (formation of stereotypes and perceived realities)

Methodology

Research Design

To investigate the consequences of users' exposure to anti-establishment content related to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party on Facebook, this study employ a quantitative research approach using an online survey questionnaire.

Population

In research terminology, the Population can be explained as a comprehensive group of individuals, institutions, objects etc. some common characteristics that are the interest of a researcher. Population for this study consist of users of Facebook, who follow the pro-PTI political pages.

Sample Size

The sample of this research consists of 200 respondents from pro-pti political pages The core objective of purposive sampling is that it represents your population logically.

Sampling Technique

The methodology used to sample from a larger population depends on the type of analysis being performed, but it may include stratified random sampling. The core objective of purposive sampling is that it represents your population logically.

Data Collection/ Research Tool

For this particular research, a questionnaire was designed as a research tool developed on five point Likert scale ("Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree"). Likert scale is considered to be the most commonly used scale for mass media research. This scale is also known as additive scale. By asking several questions from the respondents regarding this agreement and disagreement related to a statement to produce results.

In this regard, a survey was conducted to gather quantitative data on their psychological well-being, trust perceptions, stereotypes, perceived realities, frustration levels, and processing strategies and standardized scales to measure psychological well-being, trust, frustration, and information processing routes. Survey questionnaires were filled through Google Forms, The questionnaires filled by the respondents are kept in confidentiality.

Validity

The study ensures validity through the use of a established framework (Elaboration Likelihood Model), a clear definition of the population of interest (Pro-PTI Facebook users), and a robust data collection method (survey).

Reliability

The reliability of the study is ensured through the use of a pilot-tested survey, a sufficient sample size (200 participants), and the use of statistical analysis to ensure the consistency of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to ethical standards by ensuring informed consent from participants, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, avoiding harm or deception, and respecting participants' privacy and rights. The study also acknowledges the potential biases and limitations of the research and takes steps to address them.

Statistical Tool

The effect of pro-Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Facebook material on users' psychological health is examined in this study. The research attempts to quantify and analyze data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to comprehend any links between changes in users' mental health and exposure to controversial political information. The study adds significant understanding to the link between digital media, political discourse, and psychological well-being by analyzing user interactions and attitudes.

Results

Researcher wanted to find out how Facebook users' psychological health was affected by Pro-Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) posts. A stratified random selection approach was employed to choose 200 participants for the sample, ensuring representation from a range of demographic strata. This study used a quantitative analytic research approach that included a thorough investigation of Facebook usage trends as well as demographic data. Descriptive analysis of demographic data, including age, gender, education level, and socioeconomic position, was the first stage of the analytic process. After that, a frequency study was carried out to determine how frequently consumers were exposed to Pro-PTI content. Lastly, a correlation test was used to evaluate the theories on the effect of Pro-PTI Facebook material on psychological wellness. By examining any noteworthy connections between users' psychological health and the frequency with which they were exposed to Pro-PTI information, this investigation sought to provide light on the possible consequences of divisive political content on social media platforms.

This study's data analysis offers insightful information on the intricate relationships that exist between political affiliation, psychological wellness, and social media use. The study examined how pro-Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Facebook posts affected individuals' psychological well-being, cognitive processing pathways, and faith in national institutions. The results provide insight into the complex dynamics of political communication in the modern digital era.

The demographic information supplied erves as the foundation for analyzing the composition of the study's participants. The age distribution shows that young adults make up the majority of the population, with 52.0% of the total lying between the ages of 18 and 23. Male participants make up the majority (72.0%) in the gender distribution, while the distribution of education reveals a broad sample (44.0% having finished a bachelor's degree). These demographics offer a background against which to understand the ensuing analyses, taking into account the possible influence of age, gender, and educational attainment on participants' answers.

More insights into the characteristics of the participants by exploring the specific demographic data in greater depth. The sample appears to be homogeneous in terms of religion, since all participants identify as Muslims. The distribution of socioeconomic status shows a varied picture, with 44.0% of the population classified as middle class. These demographic facts help paint a more complex picture of the research group and might be crucial in interpreting how they will respond to the next survey questions.

One year's worth of participant participation at PTI events analysis. Notably, 32.0 percent said they have attended three to five events, indicating a modest degree of participation in PTI initiatives. The frequency with which individuals use PTI symbols, slogans, or hashtags in their Facebook pages is analyzed. A significant 48.0% said they did it frequently, demonstrating how deeply PTI-related information was ingrained in their online personas.

When it comes to the participants' engagement in political activities, shows that 44.0% of them said they participate regularly. Examining the patterns of Facebook usage of the participants, 32.0% reported 1-2 hours of usage. These frequency analyses provide light on individuals' political participation both online and offline, laying the groundwork for future research into possible associations with mental health.

The examine how participants behaved in relation to topics that are anti-establishment. 52.0% of users consistently interact with three to five postings a week that have anti-establishment themes. Participants' interaction with links to articles/videos featuring anti-establishment themes is analyzed, where 36.0% of respondents said they always did so. Investigates the involvement of participants in anti-establishment groups or conversations; 32.0% of them indicate being engaged at all times. A more complex picture of individuals' interactions with anti-establishment Facebook postings is offered by these studies.

The inclination of participants to verify the accuracy of political communications on Facebook is examined. Contrary to popular belief, a sizable portion of the sample (48.0%) may not actively check the material they come across. When asks participants about their level of faith in the government administration's operations, it finds a majority of mistrust (52.0%).

Examines the level of faith in Pakistan's judiciary's rulings. Significantly, 44.0% strongly disagreed, indicating that participants had a serious loss of faith in the courts. According to study, which looks at how national institutions are perceived for corruption, a startling 64.0% of respondents strongly agree that there is too much corruption. These results demonstrate the studied population's widespread mistrust and lack of faith in important organizations.

Participants' agreement with stereotypes pertaining to anti-establishment content is examined. A major fraction of the sample agrees with preconceived ideas associated with contrarian opinions, as seen by the significant 48.0% who agreed. The capacity of participants to appropriately perceive media information connected to anti-establishment themes is examined, where 36.0% of them disagree with their ability to do so.

The capacity of participants to self-perceive their ability to recognize information connected to anti-establishment themes is examined. A substantial 36.0% expressed no opinion, indicating ambiguity or a rather neutral position about their identifying abilities. These assessments of individuals' self-perceptions shed light on the reasoning and interpretation techniques they use while interacting with politically controversial materials.

The emotional reactions of participants to PTI content on Facebook are examined. A sizable 44.0% strongly concur that individuals react emotionally, demonstrating a significant degree of emotional connection with content connected to PTI. Participants' opinions of the attractiveness of Facebook sources for PTI material are analyzed, with 60.0% highly agreeing. The perceived impact of visual components of PTI material on Facebook is examined. A noteworthy 40% strongly concur that visual components have an influence, highlighting the significance of visual features in forming attitudes. Participants' stated habit of critically analyzing political statements from Facebook sites is studied, with 56.0% being neutral.

Explores how participants used arguments based on evidence while arguing about political issues on Facebook. The majority (36.0%) disagreed, indicating that a sizable portion might not always depend on logic based on facts. 36.0% of participants in a study on participants' understanding of logical fallacies in political messaging on Facebook disagreed with their capacity to recognize these fallacies.

To sum up, this study's data analysis offers a thorough grasp of the complex connections among political membership, psychological wellness, and social media use. The results highlight the necessity for sophisticated methods in the study of digital political communication, taking into account the complex influences on people's attitudes, perceptions, and levels of confidence in institutions. The importance of social media in influencing the political landscape is shown by the frequency of mistrust and skepticism toward important national institutions as well as the emotional and cognitive reactions to political information. Studying the intricacies and effects of digital political participation on people and society as a whole is crucial as social media keeps developing as a powerful political instrument.

Analysis of Hypotheses

Table 1.1 H1: More exposure to anti establishment content on Facebook will lead to a greater trust deficit in national institution among users.

Correlations

			EAE	TDN
Spearman's rho	EAE	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.220**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002
		N	200	200
	TDN	Correlation Coefficient	.220**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.
		N	200	200

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

The association between Facebook users' Trust Deficit in National Institutions (TDN) and their Exposure to Anti-Establishment (EAE) information was investigated using correlation analysis. A statistically significant positive connection between TDN and EAE was found in the data (Spearman's rho = 0.220, p = 0.002).

The weak to moderately positive link between users' exposure to anti-establishment information on Facebook and their lack of faith in national institutions is indicated by the positive correlation value of 0.220. There is a positive correlation between the amount of anti-establishment information encountered and the expressed lack of faith in national institutions. According to these results, people who interact with anti-establishment information on Facebook more regularly appear to dislike national institutions more. Although there is a clear link between exposure to such information and trust deficit, users' views of institutional trust may also be influenced by other variables, as indicated by the weak to moderate association. The present correlation study is a preliminary measure aimed at comprehending the possible influence of anti-establishment content exposure on users' confidence dynamics with domestic institutions. Additional research and examination of other factors could yield a more thorough comprehension of the intricate linkages at play.

Table 1.2 H2: Increased exposure to anti-establishment content result in negative impact on Psychological Wellbeing of Users (formation of stereotypes and perceived realities)

Correlations

			EAE	PW
Spearman's rho	EAE	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.236**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	200	200

PW	Correlation Coefficient	.236**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
	N	200	200

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

Correlation analysis was used to look at the link between Facebook users' psychological wellbeing (PW) and their exposure to anti-establishment (EAE) content, with a particular emphasis on how stereotypes and perceived realities are formed. A statistically significant positive connection between EAE and PW was found in the data (Spearman's rho = 0.236, p = 0.001).

A weak to moderately significant link, as indicated by the positive correlation coefficient of 0.236, has been found between exposure to Facebook content that is anti-establishment and the detrimental effects on users' psychological wellness, especially with regard to the creation of stereotypes and perceived realities. The observed detrimental effects on users' psychological welfare rise in tandem with their exposure to anti-establishment information.

According to these results, there is a greater chance of detrimental impacts on users' psychological wellness when they are exposed to more anti-establishment information, especially when it comes to the development of stereotypes and distorted reality beliefs. Although there is a clear link between exposure to such information and detrimental psychological effects, the weak to moderate association suggests that users' wellbeing may also be influenced by other variables. Additional research and examination of other factors could offer a more thorough comprehension of the intricate connections behind the influence of anti-establishment material on users' mental health.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study's data analysis offers a thorough grasp of the complex connections among political membership, psychological wellness, and social media use. The results highlight the necessity for sophisticated methods in the study of digital political communication, taking into account the complex influences on people's attitudes, perceptions, and levels of confidence in institutions. The importance of social media in influencing the political landscape is shown by the frequency of mistrust and skepticism toward important national institutions as well as the emotional and cognitive reactions to political information. Studying the intricacies and effects of digital political participation on people and society as a whole is crucial as social media keeps developing as a powerful political instrument.

Recommendations:

➢ Prioritize longitudinal designs to examine temporal dynamics and causation between variables.

➢ Use representative and varied samples to improve generalizability of findings.

➢ Examine how different demographic groups engage with political information on social media.

➢ Broaden focus to include multiple social media platforms and their unique features and user bases.

➢ Investigate how algorithms shape exposure to political content and contribute to echo chambers and filter bubbles.

➢ Consider the larger political and socioeconomic environment in which users interact with political information.

➢ Integrate quantitative and qualitative methods (e.g., focus groups, interviews) for a comprehensive understanding.

➢ Address ethical concerns, ensuring participant anonymity, informed consent, and moral data handling.

➢ Investigate the effectiveness of interventions or legislative changes aimed at promoting positive online political discourse.

➢ Conduct comparative research in various nations and cultural settings to gain an international perspective.

➢ Collaborate with scholars from multiple disciplines (computer science, psychology, political science, communication studies) to enhance depth and breadth of research.

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