

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN DETERMINING THE POLITICIANS' ACCOUNTABILITY IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the role of social media for determining the accountability of politicians. This is hypothesized that the social media plays a significant role in laying the grounds for politicians' accountability. The sample for the current research consists of 120 both professionals from different work sectors of Gujranwala city with age range of 20 to 60 years. The measures for collecting data included indigenous demographic information sheet, and scale for social media usage and public accountability. The data was analyzed through SPSS. Findings reveal that usage of social media cannot determine the public accountability. Pearson correlation test indicate that social media exposure does not correlate with accountability. The findings carry significant implications for strengthening democracy in Pakistan.

Key words: social media, politicians' accountability, youth, public sphere, digital democracy

Introduction

The ICT technologies are promoting transparency, socio-cultural and technological success (Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010). Traditional media is considered to be accountable for the positive change in the society (Enikolopov, Petrova, & Sonin, 2016). Social media websites (face book, twitter, etc.) are latest sources of information and by the use of these sources the individual decisions are made toward successful protesting against authorities (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). People argue freely on social media about the current affairs of the society especially for strengthening the democracy (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012). Modern democracy is determined through Public accountability (Bovens, 2005). The public accountability of public governance has been a major concern in all societies and civilizations (Haque, 2000). In developing countries, the corruption is pervasive in public service delivery and cause the less effectiveness of the foreign capital investment (Davis, 2004). In the situation described above, it is easy target to extort the rights of public through corruption by politicians in the power, the corruption is universal phenomena with its different magnitude as comparative to developing and developed countries as suggested in a study of World Bank Staff (Gould & Amaro-Reyes, 1983).

In the traditional societies, the system of information is controlled under the government and no access is given about the information to the public or the information reached is filtered, it is difficult for a society to grow without new information. The social media is like oxygen in the corruption-contaminated societies where the people use these channels as their voice and make the accountable to politicians' corruption. The outrage against corruption in several countries has been emerged since last few years and people have discredited the Governments from holding the public offices (Treisman, 2000). Since the birth of Pakistan, the political system could not establish on concrete foundation due to its corrupt political system, poverty and injustice in class differences (Odho, Oct 17, 2011). The system is highly centralized so the people of small provinces are depriving the power of democracy, and the consequent is that all

the small provinces are suffering from the deprivation of their legal rights (Myerson, 2014). Kardar (2006) argued that whereas Pakistan is free country but it is highly centralized in structure, constitutional powers, political system and fiscal systems. Since the independence of Pakistan, the transparent and corruption free governance system could not establish and the army had to interfere in the ruling body; army ruled by different intervals; a consolidated government can be form through trusted voters (Myerson, 2014). In a situation when the growth of political institutions halts, it would difficult for a democratic society to survive in corruption free environments and the bureaucracy could be abusive for the public (Gerring & Thacker, 2004). The social media usage is like a scanner that depicts the real picture of the corrupt politicians for the public, the people are free for giving their opinion about the corrupt politicians through social media (Mohapatra, 2013). Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are considered by massive as a tool of openness and reduce the corruption. It is convenient for a common person to approach the social media to record the opinion because it is almost free to use and effective for getting the benefits of social interaction, entertainment and passing time as well (Whiting & Williams, 2013). A large number of people use social media effectively, and with efficiency daily and up load their opinions (Caron & Light, 2016).

Literature Review

New information technologies role in public accountability has gained much attention of media scholars. As Olabe and Kahn (2012) stated that the public and the civil societies have the potential to access information for the accountability of government through social media. The participation of this type causes the change of improvements in public policies and good governance. Aman, Al-Shbail, and Mohammed (2013) Suggested in their paper, the e-governance system enlightens the fair dimensions of the governance system. They provided comprehensive framework for promoting e-government in Pakistan. Iosifidis (2014) did not agree with the social media accountability effectiveness. His view is the traditional media access is more understandable. Reliable media brands, PSM contribute to the creation of an inclusive public sphere enhanced civic engagement and informed citizenship. social media is a facilitative tool, in Yemen, the first action for political revolution started by the youth and then the tribes' leaders took that action at massive level, we can conclude that social media is sufficient tool for the revolutionary change but still it does not reliable or sufficient for the revolutionary changing (Dewey, Kaden, Marks, Matsushima, & Zhu, 2012). The social media has the debates of new informational technologies under the light for democrat societies and information exchange. Earlier movements termed "SMS protests" and "Twitter Revolution" the conception is that social media's impact on the prospects of political mobilizations and, overall, democratization, has become more widely accepted across different disciplines and the broader public (Hintz, 2012). Abbas and Ahmed (2014) described the literacy rate and orthodox political systems are the major causes in Pakistan which are hindering the public accountability and they recommended the adoptions of new information technology and social media are far most important. Social media considerations are important tool for highlighting the corruption and misdoings of politicians, as focused in a study of social networks in Mexicans has empowered the people and decreased corruption; data reveals that whereas the traditional media and governmental media are working against the corruption but the social network like You Tube and Face book has a significance role (Plascencia, 2015).

Ae Chun et al. (2012) argued the transformational effect which are for interaction to one another as well government, the ways in which transparency can be promoted and reduce

corruption. Karamat and Farooq (2016) argued in a study of political activism that social media and simple websites have changed the public attitude towards the political debates positively.

Theoretical Framework

Democratic Participant Media Theory

The democratic participant theory is, in a way, the technological version of the libertarian theory. People can and must express their views freely, exchange ideas without fear, and with absolute freedom, making use of innovations in technology. The Internet came in handy, and with it came the interpersonal device of electronic mail (e-mail), without any central authority to control it (McQuail, 1987). This theory encourages citizens' participation in affairs of community. The emergence of this theory was the direct outcome of the dominance of mainstream mass media which is owned by private or public monopolies. The use of internet makes people more effective regarding communication (Baruah, 2012). The alternative media were technically made more efficient with the arrival of the Internet. Arab spring is one of the recent examples where people organized protests and popular movements against authoritarian regimes and the main tool of communication was social media. People get information and hence organized protests which resulted in favorable outcome. Theory of democratic participation of media can also applied to newspapers, radio, smart phones and all devices that can be used conveniently by the ordinary citizens can without interference from government (Coronel, 2003). Internet and technology are not likely to transform or to revolutionize the rule-making process from local, national or European level, but merely to create a broader connection between citizens and institutions, to mobilize resources in order to acquire a civic culture and to reinforce the institutional stability (Lazăr, 2015). Usman and Katsina (2015) noted that Nigerian citizens regardless of their political, educational and economic status become more active in sourcing and sharing information via face book, Twitter, etc. Prokhorov (2012) found that Facebook during 2011 revolution in Egypt proved to be mobile, easily accessible, uniting and non-controllable media enabling the citizens to share their opinion free and facilitating overthrowing the President and consequently the authoritarian regime led by him.

Objectives of Study

Followings are the objectives of this research.

- To study social media usage patterns among different professionals.
- To compare the social media usage patterns between male and females.
- To explore the role of social media for promoting public accountability of politicians.
- To describe the gender and professional differences in politicians' public accountability.

Hypotheses

Keeping in view the previous literature studies, following hypotheses are being formulated;

H1: More the usage of social media; more would be the public-accountability of politicians.

H2a: There would be gender differences in social media usage.

H2b: There would be gender differences in public-accountability of politicians.

H4a: There would be age differences in social media usage.

H4b: There would be age differences in public-accountability of politicians.

Method

The present study aims to explore the role of social media in promoting public-accountability of politicians among different professionals of Gujranwala city. For this purpose,

cross sectional survey design was used. Population of the present study was professionals of Gujranwala city, while the sample size was 120 professionals, including males and females. Stratified-purposive sampling strategy was used for sample collection. Strata were based on gender and profession. The criteria for sample selection was; a) the user of social media, b) among professional groups; Lawyers, Doctors, and Teachers. c), age 20to 60. All respondents were accessed personally, and data was collected through face-to-face administration.

Measures

For making variables operational and measuring the relationships of different concepts, data were collected through demographic sheet, scale for social media usage, and scale for public-accountability of politicians.

Demographic Sheet

In this sheet, respondents questioned about their name, gender, age, profession, department, income, and their dependents. All questions carried the option of open-ended technique of asking question.

Scale for Social Media Usage

A 12-item scale constructed to measure the mobile exposure of respondents. Questions were asked about the use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) for; hours, frequent status update, day spending, importance in life, busy routine, interaction with friends, recreation, leisure activities, spending time, in touch with relatives, colleagues and for getting updates of current affairs . All questions were measured at five point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Scale for public-accountability of politicians

A 15-item scale, constructed to measure the public-accountability of politicians. Questions were asked about the use of social media for communicating; political communication, corruption of politicians, carelessness of politicians, abuse of political authorities, negligence of politicians, public issues, fake promises and slogans of politicians, family politics, demerit policies, carelessness of politicians from public issues, misconducts of politicians, wrongdoings of politicians, directing politicians attention towards public, and undemocratic behaviors of politicians . All questions were measured at five point likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Procedures

For data collection, formal permission was taken from research supervisor. Respondents were firstly, introduced about the topic, and they were requested to sign consent letter. In which, they were ensured about their confidentiality and anonymity. They were also granted the right of withdraw. The average time in completing the questionnaire was 10-15 minutes.

Results

Data was analyzed through SPSS version 20. Descriptive and inferential analysis was executed.

Table 1

Relationships among Age, Income, Social Media Exposure, & Public Accountability (N=120)

		Social Media Exposure	Public Accountability	age of respondents
Income	Pearson Correlation	.473**	-.048	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.601	
Social Media Exposure	Pearson Correlation		-.095	.442**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.303	.000
Public Accountability	Pearson Correlation			-.062
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.500

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

The Findings concluded that social media exposure do not relate with public accountability (Table 1).

Table 2

Gender Differences in Social Media Exposure & Public Accountability

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t value	Sig.
Social Media Exposure	Male	64	42.53	10.55	5.3	.000
	Female	56	32.43	10.05		
Public Accountability	Male	64	52.73	16.54	5.1	.000
	Female	56	78.89	17.71		

Discussion

Social media is powerful weapon in the hands of public and it can be used against the corruption and public accountability. The perception and a number of studies on social media indicate the phenomenon in different time but in this study the results shown different. Our first research question is about the public accountability through social media. The results show the relation between social media and public accountability is not significant. The politicians' accountability is not determined through social media.

The genders differences for usage of social media and public accountability have significance value in this study. The study shows the results that the social media for public accountability are used more significantly by female genders.

The data was consisted of 120 men and women; the ratio of data was 64 male and 56 female respondents. The data was tested by Cronbach Alpha reliability test and the reliability of twelve items results .93 and the other fifteen items' result .95.

The correlation ship among Public Accountability and Age, Income, and Social Media Exposure is not approved. The table No.1 shows the Public Accountability cannot be determined through the differences of age, income, and social media exposures. The hypothesis H1 is rejected by the findings, the more usage of social media is not determined the public accountability the correlation results between usage of social media and public accountability could not be approved.

The hypothesis H2a is approved in the analysis. The table No.1 shows the result, the genders differences are significant to their opinion toward the social media. H2b, the hypothesis is also approved. The results show, the female respondents are founded more interested in public accountability. The hypotheses H3a indicates that the age differences exist in the usage of social media. The mature people like more to use social media than the people of younger age. The results of study approved the hypotheses H3a have significance value. The hypotheses H3a also approved the age differences have the influence on public accountability.

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