

Political Efficacy and Patterns of Online and Traditional Media Consumption among University Students

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Abstract

Online media has posed some serious threats to conventional media, as people are spending more time on it than traditional media. Online media has changed political and social attitudes of people. Different researches indicate positive effects of online media usage on political efficacy among students. This study aims to explore the difference in the level of political efficacy between the users of traditional and online media. A survey was conducted among 250 university students. Results show shift from traditional to online media among Pakistani students. It is found that university students have very little trust in the political system and its institutions, yet no statistically significant difference is found in political efficacy among the users of different media. There is no relationship between scores of political efficacy and frequency of Internet usage. Pakistani students seem to think about the political system independently of their media choices.

Keywords: Political Efficacy, Media Consumption, Online Media, Traditional Media

Introduction

Online media has changed political and social attitudes of people. Youth particularly students respond differently from older people regarding online media and internet usage (Ofcom, 2016). Due to online media, people develop different kind of views about socio-political issues, because the same issues are portrayed differently in online and conventional media (Kwong, 2015). Recently there has been a shift from conventional to online media and people are spending more time on online media than traditional media (Global Web Index, 2017). Benefits of online media including ease of access and a two way communication process are among the reasons of this shift. To cope up with this fast paced world, people have shifted from conventional media (including TV, radio and print) to online media. Different people use different sources of information but youth usually prefer online media for political information (Ekström, Olsson, & Shehata, 2014). The main objective of this study is to explore the relationship between political efficacy and consumption patterns of online and traditional media among university students.

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Traditional vs. Online Media Consumption

In recent times, there has been a wide use of Internet, mainly due to the advent of social media. The two most popular platforms of social media in recent times are Twitter and Facebook (Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, & González Canché, 2012). Online media has threatened the existence of traditional media (Salman, Ibrahim, & Mustaffa, 2011). Present era of newspaper decline and coming era of television decline would be the worst economic collapse (Mitchell & Holcomb, 2016). Since the arrival of online media, the advertising revenues of newspapers have been falling down. Due to the ease of excess of online newspapers, a large number of people prefer online media. Some newspaper organizations are under crisis (Price, 2015). Due to the crisis, several newspaper organizations have shut down their companies. The companies, which have not been shut down, have lowered the salaries of their employees, cut down the number of physical newspaper publication and moved towards online publications (Lucena, 2011).

Due to online media, the way of obtaining and processing information has been changed. In the past, most of the information obtained by the newspaper organizations came from the field work. Now news media organizations gather stories from online media, social networking websites and blogs (Alejandro, 2010). Many news media organizations have also created online websites to reach to a large number of audiences (Garrison, 1996, 2001).

The West, especially the United States of America, has been affected badly by the shift from conventional to online media. Although the online media has also affected the traditional media in the Eastern countries but the effect is not to that extent as in USA or UK. Along with this, there are many people all over world who still prefer newspaper and TV instead of Internet (Ahlers, 2006; Nossek, Adoni, & Nimrod, 2015). Some newspapers in few Asian countries have even increased their circulation since the arrival of online media (Hooke, 2012). On the other hand, some experts have predicted that soon electronic media will be eliminated once and for all (Nguyen, 2006). There are many experts who are of the view now that the shift from conventional media to online media should be accepted as it is, and the Eastern countries should rely more on digital newspapers to increase their advertising outcomes (Chukwu, 2014).

A study conducted by Schweiger (2000) showed that German media consumers consider conventional media more credible as compared to online media. Another study showed that Koreans consider traditional media to be a reliable source of news

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information as compared to online news formats (Yi Park, 2005). However, there are contradictory studies as well. Results of a study conducted in 1998, showed that people considered online newspapers and magazines more credible than traditional media (Johnson & Kaye, 1998).

Around 79% Internet consumers in America use Facebook and young adults between the age of 18 to 29 years continue to report using social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) at high rate (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). Young generation is more connected to new technology including computing gadgets and Internet than the previous generation and these digital natives will remain like this (Prensky, 2001). Use of social networking websites is increasing in developing or emerging nations like India and Pakistan (Poushter, 2016). According to Internet World Stats (2017), around 22.2% of the total population of Pakistan has access to Internet and this number is increasing very fast. Further, around 15.9% Pakistanis are also using Facebook.

Political Efficacy and Media Use

The concept of political efficacy was first introduced in the 1950s, and it is defined as belief of an individual that he or she can influence the political process of the country. Political efficacy is actually the feeling among the individuals that political change is possible and every individual can play an important role in bringing about the change (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954). When the political efficacy in a society is high, it is basically viewed as stability in the democratic process. Individuals feel that they have a power in the democratic process and they can bring into power whoever they want, which is the essence of democracy. People who have higher political efficacy participate actively in the political system of the country (Finkel, 1985; Jung, Kim, & de Zúñiga, 2011).

There are two types of political efficacy: internal and external. Internal efficacy is basically an individual's belief that one can understand and influence the politics therefore he or she takes active part in it. External efficacy is trust in government and its institutions. It is actually the belief that democratic institutions of the state will respond to the needs of citizens. Citizens, who trust the government, believe that they have a say in government policies and they can influence its decision making (Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990).

There is evidence that media use increases the political efficacy. At first, the research was limited to television and print media. However, by 2000, researchers started to

find out the effect of Internet usage on political efficacy. Scheufele and Nisbet (2002) found that although Internet increases the political efficacy of students but it plays a limited role. On the other hand, Kenski and Stroud (2006) found that the use of Internet increases political efficacy. While another research conducted by Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) also showed that the use of Internet particularly social media, results in the increase of political efficacy among students.

Due to Internet, people, especially the youth have gained a lot of political knowledge. Different political figures frequently use Internet to update the people about their activities (Bode & Dalrymple, 2016). Through different online and social websites, like Twitter and Facebook, young people are able to interact with the political figures and express criticism on their political activities. It ultimately increases the political efficacy of youth as they feel that they have a say in politics and they can influence the political affairs (Lee, 2006). Due to online media, the citizens get a perspective of the personal life of a political candidate; this does not happen in other forms of media (Tewksbury et al., 2008). Hence, it is hypothesized in this study that there is difference in the level of political efficacy between the users of traditional and online media.

Method

In order to test the hypothesis, a survey was conducted among 250 university students in Lahore city, Pakistan. The age range of respondents was 17 to 25 years. A questionnaire was designed for this purpose, which carried the questions related to two variables media consumption and political efficacy.

Media consumption among university students

The first few questions in the questionnaire aimed at finding the media consumption patterns among the youth. Questions were asked about the source of information (Internet 70%), frequency of Internet usage (daily 91.2%), time preference for Internet usage (night 49.6%), purpose of Internet usage (information 28.8%), time spent for different activities on Internet (social media 47.2%), purpose of TV viewing (watching news 25.6%), purpose of radio listening (listening to music 67.2%), and purpose of newspaper reading (reading political news 34.8%).

Political efficacy

In this study, the dependent variable is political efficacy. For measuring political efficacy among the students, responses were taken for seven different statements. Cronbach's alpha (α) value of these statements is 0.756. In these statements, the

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opinions of students were asked and options ranged from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, to strongly agree. These statements included: political parties can ultimately save the country (neutral 34%, $M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.237$), only military is savior of Pakistan (neutral 24.8%, $M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.436$), government is doing its best to find out what people want (disagree 35.2%, $M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.070$), organized movement makes government listen (neutral 27.2%, $M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.151$), government cares little about the people (agree 35.6%, $M = 2.38$, $SD = 1.092$), few individuals in the country have a lot of power as compared to others (agree 43.6%, $M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.045$), and politicians forget the needs of voters (strongly agree 42%, $M = 1.91$, $SD = 0.988$). After computing the values of these six questions, a numeric variable of political efficacy was created. The highest value of this variable is 35 and the lowest value is 7.

Respondents were also asked about casting vote in Pakistan's general election of 2013 (Yes 41.6%) as well as their choice of political party (PTI 38.8%). Only mainstream political parties of Pakistan including Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party Parliamentary (PPPP), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) were mentioned as options in the questionnaire along with "none" and "any other party".

Results and Discussion

Data shows that Internet (70%) is the most widely consumed medium by the students to seek information. Its main reason is that Internet gives the students liberty to post, comment, or share anything they want and they feel themselves active participants. After Internet, television (15.2%) is the most widely consumed media by students, followed by newspapers (10.8%) for getting general information. A small number of students prefer radio (2.8%) and magazines (1.2%) for the same purpose. Most of the students use Internet on daily basis. The data also shows that Internet has become a part of our daily lives. The percentages of the students who use Internet once or twice a week (4.8%), weekly (2.4%) and monthly (1.6%) are very low as compared to daily users (91.2%). Mostly students use Internet for seeking information (28.8%), entertainment (27.2%) and studies purposes (25.6%). The main reason for consuming Internet is that they need to keep themselves updated with the latest news and current affairs. Students spend their time on Internet for using social media (47.2%) and getting information about different things (39.2%). In contrast to online media, electronic media is not being used for mainly political information by the youth. Data shows that mostly students watch television for news (25.6%), movies (22%), dramas

(20.8%) and current affair programs (16.4%). One reason for these mixed results could be that mostly the students just check different channels and keep on changing the channels until they get something interesting to watch. Maximum number of students uses radio mainly for listening music (67.2%). Rest of them listen news (11.2%), dramas (3.6%) and talk shows (8.8%) on radio. While for print media, students read newspapers and magazines for political news (34.8%), entertainment news (26%), sports news (14.4%) and advertisement (5.6%).

Most of the students (22%) strongly disagree with the statement that the political parties can ultimately save the country. In response to the same statement, 18% answered disagree, 34% remained neutral, 16.8% responded agree and 9.2% answered strongly agree. On the other hand, most of the students disagree (27.6% strongly disagree and 11.2% disagree) that military is the true savior of Pakistan. There has been military rule in Pakistan for quite some time and therefore students think that it is not the ultimate solution. However, some students do support the military rule (20% agree and 16.4% strongly agree). They probably think that politicians are corrupt but people in military are honest.

Large number of students disagree that the government is doing its best to find out what people want (21.2% strongly disagree, 35.2% disagree, 28% neutral, 11.6% agree and 4% strongly agree). Students think that government is not honest with them and is not doing its best to find out what people need. Students even disagree that the organized movement of the people can catch the attention of leaders in the government (16% strongly disagree and 26.5% disagree). However, there are some students who agree that the organized movement can make leaders in the government listen to them (26% agree and 5.2% strongly agree).

Most of the students agree that powerful leaders in the government do not care about the opinions of the people (35.6% agree and 22.8% strongly agree). Only a small percentage of students disagree with the statement (6% strongly disagree and 8% disagree). Students agree that some people have a lot of power in Pakistan while others have very little power (43.6% agree and 34.8% strongly agree). Unlike previous statements, where a large percentage of students remained neutral, in this statement, only a small percentage of them remained neutral (10.8%). They also agree that politicians forget the needs of the voters quickly (34% agree and 42% strongly agree). They may have noticed that after elections politicians do not pay much attention to the voters.

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Hypothesis testing

Data is focused to prove or disprove the hypothesis that there is difference in the level of political efficacy between the users of different media. In order to check this hypothesis, one way ANOVA was applied on the scores of political efficacy and choice of media for information. This hypothesis can be explained by the following Table 1.

Table 1

Difference in the Scores of Political Efficacy for Traditional and Online Media Users

Political Efficacy	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	167.242	4	41.811	2.457	0.046
Within Groups	4169.658	245	17.019		
Total	4336.900	249			

Here the p value 0.046 is almost equal to alpha value of 0.05. This shows that difference in the level of political efficacy among the users of different media like radio, TV, Internet and magazines is not statistically significant. Table 2 shows the Tukey's post hoc test of political efficacy score for the different types of media and it also shows the same thing. The values of this table show that there is small difference in the political efficacy among the users of different media. Mean difference of political efficacy scores of different media users reveals that scores for Internet are slightly high than TV but quite low from newspapers, magazines and radio. But the differences in the scores are not statistically significant, so it can be said that our hypothesis is not supported by the data.

Table 2

Tukey's Post Hoc Test for Political Efficacy and Types of Media

Media (I)	Source Of Information (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
TV	Internet	-1.13008	0.73832	0.544	-3.1591	0.8990
	Radio	-4.38722	1.69681	0.076	-9.0504	0.2760
	Newspapers	-2.40838	1.03837	0.142	-5.2620	0.4453
	Magazines	-1.81579	2.47404	0.948	-8.6149	4.9834
Internet	TV	1.13008	.73832	0.544	-.8990	3.1591
	Radio	-3.25714	1.59014	0.246	-7.6272	1.1129
	Newspapers	-1.27831	.85299	0.564	-3.6225	1.0659
	Magazines	-.68571	2.40214	0.999	-7.2873	5.9158
Radio	TV	4.38722	1.69681	0.076	-.2760	9.0504
	Internet	3.25714	1.59014	0.246	-1.1129	7.6272
	Newspapers	1.97884	1.74975	0.790	-2.8298	6.7875
	Magazines	2.57143	2.84680	0.895	-5.2522	10.395
Newspapers	TV	2.40838	1.03837	0.142	-.4453	5.2620
	Internet	1.27831	0.85299	0.564	-1.0659	3.6225
	Radio	-1.97884	1.74975	0.790	-6.7875	2.8298
	Magazines	.59259	2.51064	0.999	-6.3072	7.4923
Magazines	TV	1.81579	2.47404	0.948	-4.9834	8.6149
	Internet	.68571	2.40214	0.999	-5.9158	7.2873
	Radio	-2.57143	2.84680	0.895	-10.395	5.2522
	Newspapers	-.59259	2.51064	0.999	-7.4923	6.3072

Relationship between political efficacy and the frequency of Internet usage was also found out. As political efficacy is a quantitative variable while frequency of Internet usage is a categorical one so in order to find the relationship between two, the Spearman rank-order correlation was applied. This relation is shown in the following Table 3.

Table 3

Correlation between Political Efficacy and Frequency of Internet Usage.

Political Efficacy	Frequency of Internet Usage	
	Spearman Correlation Coefficient	0.025
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.699	
N	250	

In Table 3, the p value of 0.699 is greater than the alpha value 0.05. It shows that there is no relationship between the political efficacy and the frequency of internet usage.

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Another interesting thing in this data is that a considerable number of students do not support any political party. Most of the students think that politicians are corrupt and they do not work for the masses, therefore it is useless to support any party in particular. This question about party affiliation was asked to know that how affiliation to a certain political party may relate to political efficacy. Table 4 shows the comparison between the political efficacy scores of the supporters of different political parties.

Table 4
Political Efficacy and Political Affinity

Political Party Supported	Mean of Efficacy Scores	Std. Deviation	N
Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N)	18.3810	3.91963	42
Pakistan People's Party Parliamentary (PPPP)	20.1667	4.61774	18
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	16.5773	3.83198	97
Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)	19.9286	3.81221	14
Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	24.5000	3.53553	2
None	16.3284	3.51356	67
Any other	18.0000	6.69992	10
Total	17.3800	4.17340	250

Minimum value for the score of political efficacy was 7 and maximum 35. With this range of the lowest and highest values, mean of political efficacy score is the highest for Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) but only two respondents opted for this party. Between Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) (n=97) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) (n=42), supporters of PML-N seem to have high level of political efficacy. PML-N was the ruling party since 2013 while PTI was in opposition. On the other hand people who did not favor any political party had the lowest mean of efficacy scores.

Conclusion

Most of the students are more inclined towards online media and they use it mostly for social networking. They spend quite a time on Internet and from the frequency of their usage, it can be concluded that there is a definite shift from traditional to online media among Pakistani young students. Then it is also found that university students do not believe in the present political situation of the country. They have very little trust in

the system and its institutions. They have no faith in the government and they believe that their problems cannot be resolved by political leadership.

In this study, the effect of Internet use on political efficacy among the students was evaluated. It was hypothesized that there is difference in the levels of political efficacy between the users of traditional and online media. The literature review as well as result of this study shows that there has been a shift from conventional to online media presently, and mainly youth is affected by this shift. Different researches indicate that Internet affects political efficacy positively among youth. However, according to the results of this study, there is not much difference in political efficacy among the users of different media. In fact, there is no relationship between scores of political efficacy and the frequency of Internet usage. Pakistani students seem to think about the political system independently of their media choices.

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