

Study on the Impact of Social Media in Changing Political Opinion in Pakistan - 2013

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ABSTRACT

In information age, internet has become an important source of information. With recent uprisings in the Middle East, called "Arab Spring," many researchers have tried to find out the factors that led to the Arab Spring and the role of social media in these uprisings. Many researchers have done comprehensive work on this occurrence. In developing world where conventional media is not absolute free, social media has become an alternate yet reliable source of disseminating and getting information. In Pakistan, the role of social media has become a topic discussion among media practitioners and scholars after the general elections in 2013. This study is about the impact of social media in changing political opinion in Pakistan. Quantitative research methodology is used to study the role of social media in changing political opinion and survey questionnaire was developed to collect data.

Key words: Social Media, Political Opinion, Pakistan, Communication, Awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Internet has been the main source of communication for the last couple decades. The impact of internet upon communication and development is enormous. Social media is part of new media technologies which emerged after Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). The term "Technology" generally invokes the idea of mechanical (hardware) aspect of some set of related techniques. However, this covers one component of the whole concept. In many a cases hardware aspect remains more prominent but at times it refers to almost entirely the information aspect¹.

Social Media in Pakistan

Social media is being used in Pakistan since its inception in developed countries². However, due to the lack of internet accessibility earlier in 1990's, there have been limited number of users across the country³. Internet facilities were available in urban centres of Pakistan in early years from 1993 to 2001. However, these facilities were costly as compare to per capita income of the country so as the cost of equipment. Every house hold was unable to purchase a computer. The broadband or Hi-Speed internet technology was introduced in the year 2001⁴. Since then a new form of computer mediated communication began and a powerful role of socializing networks was established. But the introduction and diffusion of technology across the country took some time.

Diffusion is the process by which a new or perceived as new idea is conveyed to some targeted population in a social setup over a certain period of time until it is internalized by them⁵. The diffusion of broadband and Hi-Speed internet took seven years. During first seven years from 2001 to 2007 broadband subscriptions were 45000⁶. The boom came in during the year 2007 to 2010. A global broadband

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could have damaged the reputation and honour of the plaintiff, is enough for the accused to be declared guilty of defamation. As in Islam every member of the society is honourable, no matter what his position, rank and financial status is".⁶⁵

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In Islam man has a unique position among the other creatures. He has been dignified by his Creator. The sanctity of a Muslim includes the sanctity of his life, his honour, and his property.

The uniqueness of the right to honour and repute in Islam lies in the fact that both the individuals and state are under obligation to respect and honour the sanctity of human life and not to harm or injure his body or repute.

In Islam not only the individuals are bound to avoid injuring others, without just cause and reason but they are also under a duty to assist and save his brother from insult, while he is being humiliated before him, provided he has the capacity to do so and to conceal the faults of his Muslim brother.

The protection of honour and human dignity is the primary obligation of an Islamic state. It is bound to make efficient arrangements for the protection of the sanctity of human body, repute and privacy of homes.

For the sanctity of a person, attacking each other's honour in any way, entering even into someone's own house suddenly or surreptitiously, without indication and permission, peeping into the houses of other people, finding faults of others, defamation, giving offensive nicknames, backbiting, gossiping, suspecting the people merely on the basis of suspicion, spying and search of the people's fault by the governments and intelligence agencies are strictly prohibited in Islam.

Islam not only makes it obligatory for the state to protect the honour of the citizens but also gives the people a right of private defence to protect their honour.

Along with these security of honour and repute of every individual in general, Islam gives a special emphasis on the women's honour seriously admonishes those who violate it.

The right to honour and repute in Islam is so all-pervasive that it stands far superior to the Western law of defamation. The interesting fact about the Western law of defamation is that the person who files suit for defamation has first to prove that he is a man of honour and public esteem. In addition, he also has to produce witnesses to testify in court that the defamatory accusations have damaged his reputation in their eyes. Whereas, in Islamic law, if it is proved that someone has attacked the honour of another person, then, irrespective of whether the victim is able to prove himself a respectable and honourable person, and the words used for it have actually disgraced the victim and harmed his reputation in the eyes of the public or not, the culprit will be punished.

“Contrary to the Western Law of Defamation, in Islam the mere proof of the fact that the accused said things which according to common sense