



## RESEARCH PAPER

### The Impact of Social Media on Political Polarization in Pakistan: A Case Study of GCWUS Students

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to investigate how social media algorithms affect public opinion and political polarization in Pakistan. Polarization is caused by a number of indicators, including economic strategies, social concerns, and wide-ranging societal ramifications. Although social media can help create a more balanced society, in Pakistan, its use is fostering political biases through disinformation, which exacerbates political polarization. This study is descriptive in nature and quantitative approach has been used. The target population of this study was the female students of BS and MS Programme of Social Sciences faculty of GCWUS. Maximum sample size, by using Cochran Formula of this study was calculated 333 and the responses received were 341. The data was collected with the help of conducting survey designed by Google Form. Students of final semesters were taken as study sample by using Cochran's Formula for taking sufficient sample size from the population. Political biasness and intolerance are observed very common among youth by conducting survey. The study recommends developing new policies to protect the youth from being exploited by social media or political parties.

**KEYWORDS** Proletariat, Bourgeoisie, Self-Interest, Social Exchange, Manipulation, Human Instinct

## Introduction

Political polarization is the term used to describe the growing gap between various political groups and people who hold divergent opinions and ideologies. Partisan divide has been one of the most pressing issues in Pakistan, exacerbated by a number of factors such as regional tensions, economic inequality, and the rise of extremism. Pakistan's history of political instability and military rule is one of the main causes of political polarization in the nation. Pakistani politics and the power vacuum between civilian and military leadership have been significantly influenced by the military. As a result, divisive political parties have emerged, and some military action has been taken to support the democratic system of governance (Manzoor, 2023).

Our opinions and stories about every current problem are influenced by social media. Indeed, a number of observers are now concerned that the numerous ideological ramifications expressed on social networking sites are having an increasingly negative effect. Compared to other news platforms, readers pay much more attention to social media on the internet, which leads to significant participation and partisanship in tales and

viewpoints, resulting in a diverse web of shared ideas and opinions. The main cause of this ideological polarization is the division of viewpoints at various societal levels, which leads to the formation of an echo chamber for various theories and beliefs and may cause polarization in the public discourse (Muzaffar, et al. 2019; Khan, et al. 2023). Pakistan media often display political biases instead of promoting impartial news coverage (Salam, et al., 2024).

In today's digital age, social media platforms have become influential channels for political discourse, connecting many people across the world. Social media offer many opportunities for engagement and awareness, their impact on political polarization. We explore the positive and negative impact of social media on political polarization. Social media encourage the political participation by allowing users to share their opinions and join advocacy groups. Political polarization, when political parties and state institutions were stand at different extremes, they are not ready to compromise their personal interest and their personal interest influence on national interest. Social media play a key part, it is a tool to be used to unite, but it offer amplifies division. Echo chambers form as procedures prioritize similar views, limiting subjection to diverse outlook.

### **Literature Review**

Since its independence Pakistan had been a politically polarized country. Most of the time political polarization was discussed in scenario of political parties. Different political parties have different political ideologies. It was not necessary that polarization is dependent on different policies. People were polarized based on religious or secular and traditional or modern. Polarization was divided into two categories ideological and affective polarization (Sadiq, 2024).

Social media has become an essential tool for communication, information and propagation regarding all social, religious and political discourse that towards ideological divisions. The role of social media was to building the public opinion through political information and debates. The survey shows that political engagement was mediator between social media and polarization (Amjad, et al ,2020).

Pakistan was experiencing arise in political polarization due to the influence of social media. The fragmented, high-choice environment had led to partisan views and adversarial programming, affecting the public's political outlook. The study highlights the role of social media algorithms in updating newsfeeds and delivering content. It suggests counter measures and plans to counter this growing threat, focusing on alternative methods rather than traditional methods (Ahmad & Ashraf, 2023).

One of the worst socioeconomic and cultural crises Pakistan has experienced is a highly polarized society. Ethnic conflicts, radicalization against minorities, and religious extremism are some of the factors that contribute to polarization. Due to religious extremism, ethnic conflicts, and unstable political environments, Pakistan's society is extremely polarized today, posing a threat to social cohesiveness and fabric. High levels of disagreement on political and socioeconomic issues are the hallmark of political polarization, which can be classified into two categories: among citizens and between political leaders and their associations. Regretfully, both kinds are having difficulties right now. Unfortunately, today we are facing both types (Javed, et al, 2025).

High levels of polarization are not new in Pakistan. Ideological disputes between conservatives and socialists caused a significant rift in society during the 1960s. West and

East Pakistan engaged in a largely ethnic conflict in the 1970s, which ultimately led to the division of the two federating units (Erum, 2023).

### **The Historical Background of Political Polarization in Pakistan**

Pakistan's political system has been unstable ever since it was established. Along with long-standing ethnic and radical divisions, due to the failure nation has been in turmoil to keep the balance of power among important institutions, which frequently resulted in military takeovers. But now, the brittle and immature political culture faces new and complex and problems, one of which is political polarization, which has grown to be a serious and escalating problem (Hussain, 2024).

The opposition parties, led by religious leaders, launched a campaign against Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the 1977 election after he was accused of abusing her position of authority and tampering with the results. As a result, the opposition parties began to sow discord through a variety of strategies, including the shrewd use of religious convictions and broader cultural standards. Religion was used as a tool throughout the process of General Zia-ul-Haq's eventual overthrow of Mr. Bhutto's elected government. During this time, the "Islamization" movement deepened divisions among the populace and intensified polarization in general. Political polarization is currently plaguing our society, not just among supporters but also among politicians (Misra, 2003).

Political polarization in Pakistan has numerous causes. One of the primary causes is the current state of affairs in Pakistan, where politicians from various parties view their respective fields as a zero-sum game and are unwilling to cooperate or even acknowledge the existence of others. Pakistan's political polarization has risen as a result of the rejection and denial of political legitimacy. On social media, political party workers and supporters compete on various trends, but it's also common to see abuse being exchanged. (Salman, 2021).

### **The Role of Social Media and De-Facto Institutions in Pakistan's Political Polarization**

Another potential cause of Pakistan's growing polarization is social media. Electronic media is easily regulated by the government, but social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are not as well regulated (Muzaffar, et. al., 2020). As a result, various political parties have established social media teams to facilitate the dissemination of their messages. Political polarization in Pakistan has also grown as a result of lax government regulation and the establishment of social media teams (Cheema, et al, 2019).

Improving communication between different stakeholders who can contribute to the development of a cohesive society is another strategy to lessen political polarization. As a result, the advantages of these contacts between various facets of society can both exacerbate social interactions and foster sincere dialogue between groups of people who are similar and different from one another. In order to lessen polarization, it has also become necessary for policymakers to consider the opinions of all societal members. (Asghar, et al., 2025; Arifah, et al, 2025).

Adopting a proportional voting system, where voters make decisions based on the party's manifesto rather than its future actions, is an alternative strategy to address the problem of political polarization. According to a thorough analysis, polarization can be reduced if voters choose the best course of action rather than the party. In addition, awareness campaigns ought to be launched right away through social media channels,

establishing trends that are grounded in reality, and employing suitable language and messaging that people can readily comprehend, identify with, and gain from. (Fahim & Junaid, 2023).

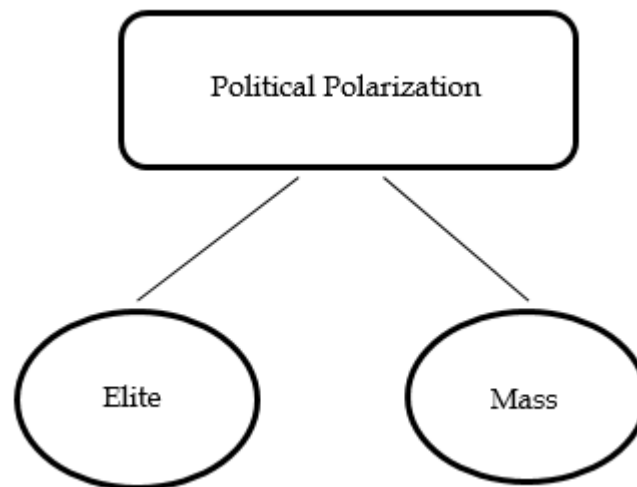


Figure 1: Levels of Political Polarization.

Elite and mass polarization are the two levels of polarization recognized by political scientists. Elite polarization is the term used to describe polarization among official political actors. All forms of polarization are detrimental to democratic actions. Because it gives voters programmatic options that increase their interest in political activities and stabilize the current democratic system, some extent of partisanship in a democracy is both normal and expected. Strong polarization creates a remedy for political disillusionment, stimulates political activity, and produces an honest political discourse with clear choices. (Rehman, 2023).

### **Role of Political Elite in Polarization in Pakistan**

Political party affiliations that incite violence and division by endorsing violent rhetoric, intolerance, derogatory language, accusations, and rudeness toward political opponents constitute a new aspect of partisanship in Pakistan. The political class has been mainly responsible for the division of Pakistani society along religious, ethnic, linguistic, and ideological lines. Regrettably, some political figures have been using rhetoric of revolution and civil war to further their own political agendas, which is upsetting the public and affecting state institutions. Pakistan's society has always been divided. Political party affiliation determines social identity. Speaking disrespectfully and hatefully to political opponents is becoming commonplace. The partisan divide of the majority of the population has an impact on Pakistan's national integration (Ishaque, et al, 2022).

Political parties in Pakistan, however, now play a different role. Pakistani society has been shattered by the recent trend of disrespect, protracted marches, derogatory remarks directed at electoral rivals, intolerance, inciting the populace against organizations, making threats protest movement if requirements are not fulfilled, and hate crimes (Hanif, et al, 2024).

Polarization in Pakistan is a result of the political elite's vested interests. Every political party is driven by a desire for power. Politicians' personal conflicts and inconsistencies are fuelling violence and disputes between institutions. There isn't even a middle ground for peaceful coexistence (Waseem & Hayat, 1997).

The intolerance has increased as a result of a motion of no confidence to eliminate former Prime Minister Imran Khan. On matters of national importance, there is an obvious reluctance to work with political rivals. Imran Khan encouraged his followers to attend his rallies by using his removal. Imran Khan has been informing the crowds at these rallies that corrupt politicians now hold the reins of power and are to blame for Pakistan's instability (Shah, 2022).

Imran Khan is using marches and rallies to put pressure on the government and convey to the population that it is not lawful. Other political parties. The Pakistan Democratic Movement's (PDM) primary objective was to overthrow Imran Khan, but they were ill-equipped to handle the severe economic problems the nation was facing. Therefore, they are unable to lift the nation out of its economic predicament and provide Imran Khan with justification for their excommunication. Numerous urban marches and rallies demonstrate how well-liked Imran Khan is by the general public (Sadiq, 2024).

### **Social Media and Political Polarization**

In Pakistan, the media has a significant impact on political debate and public opinion formation. However, worries about how the media contributes to political polarization, extremism, and the nation's democracy have grown in recent years. Giving radical and contentious voices a forum is one of the main ways the media has fueled political divisiveness and extremism. This covers social media platforms, which allow extremist voices to reach a larger audience, as well as more conventional media channels, such newspapers and television (Asghar, et al., 2026; Arshad, et al, 2023).

Media outlets in Pakistan have a history of supporting specific political agendas, and in recent years, this practice has only gotten worse. Biased reporting and the advancement of a specific agenda can result from the ownership of numerous media outlets by influential people or organizations with their own political agendas. People are now more polarized and split along political and religious lines as a result of this. Violent extremism has increased in the nation as a result of extremist organizations using the media to disseminate their message of intolerance and hatred. Extremism and media polarization have had a major effect on Pakistani democracy. People are now less inclined to participate in fruitful political discourse and are more inclined to use violence and extremism in order to further their political objectives (Khan, & Rahman, 2023).

Additionally, the nation's democratic institutions have been altered by the media's influence on public opinion. A situation where the government is less answerable to the people and more prone to commit corrupt acts can result from the media pushing a specific political agenda. In conclusion, political division and extremism in Pakistan have been greatly influenced by the media. This trend has had a substantial impact on the nation's democracy, and if Pakistan wants to fortify its democratic institutions and foster more social cohesion, this issue must be addressed (Ismail, et al, 2025).

### **Social Media's Impact on Pakistani Political Polarization**

On social media, people can voice their political views without considering the consequences. Social media deepens political polarization because of the widespread disregard for divergent political opinions. Social media is giving people the ability to express whether they agree or disagree with a political issue. On social media, people are constantly exposed to information and media manipulation that tries to appeal to them, which makes intolerance worse (Haider, 2024)

On social media, political party teams disparage political rivals and use profanity. In cyberspace, supporters of political parties disparage their opponents as there is no accountability. Instead of engaging in fruitful dialogue and exchanging ideas, people get into arguments and fights. Social media is providing a platform for the dissemination of abuses in Pakistan. The results show that social media engages citizens and polarizes politics. Additionally, the study found that social media promotes prejudice against outgroups and increases party loyalty. Thus, party loyalty and political engagement increase political polarization. Social sites consumption has become violent and unmanageable in Pakistan. That is promoting violence and hatred in the political conduct of Pakistanis. Even highly educated individuals cannot tell the difference between right and wrong (Kumari, et al, 2025).

With his followers, Imran Khan runs hostile social media campaigns. Imran Khan has been using live streaming to deliver speeches to youth. PTI has used social media extensively. PTI has committed social media departments across the country. Sadly, Pakistanis are not given impartial, actual information or political stances by the mainstream media. Channels actively support partisan division. political groups and promote Some people criticize news organizations that support a certain political party. However, some people prefer to watch biased news (Minhas& Khan,2025).

After Imran Khan was removed from power in April 2021 and the PDM Pakistan democratic movement took control, people took to social media to express their displeasure with the imported government. The term "Imported Hakumat Na Manzoor," which means "Imported Government unacceptable," became well-known on social media. Taking advantage of this trend, PTI supporters condemned foreign intervention in the government-overthrow plot. This tendency has been used 5.5 million times on social media. More than 3 million tweets have been made using this hashtag on Twitter. (Sadiq, 2024).

## **Theatrical Framework**

### **Cognitive Theory**

An agentic conceptual framework for examining the factors and psychosocial processes that influence human cognition, emotion, and behaviour is offered by social cognitive theory. Systems for communications function in two ways. Through educating, empowering, inspiring, and directing participants, they facilitate change in the direct pathway. Media influences in the social process pathway connect participants to community settings and social networks that can provide ongoing, individualized guidance and natural incentives for desired change. The terms of societal diffusion new behavioural patterns is examined by cognitive theory in the networks that facilitate and support them as well as the psychosocial elements that influence their adoption and acquisition. Potential diffusion pathways are provided by structural interconnectedness, as well as what diffuses through all those pathways is mostly determined by social cognition factors (Bandura, 2001).

### **Social Media Impact Theory**

Yoesoep Edhie Rachmad's Social Media Impact Theory, which was published in its 2023 edition by "Port Elizabeth Bay Book Publishing, Special Edition," explores the complex and wide-ranging impacts of social media on cultural dynamics, societal norms, and individual behaviour. Since starting his studies in 2016, Rachmad has worked to examine how social media platforms affect public opinion, human interactions, and conventional

communication methods in addition to disseminating information. This theory arises from the understanding that media for social media is a cultural force that has revolutionized the creation, sharing, and consumption of information rather than just a collection of digital interaction. Social media's pervasiveness has caused profound changes in a variety of areas, including how people view themselves and others, how movements are organized, and how business function. According to the Social Media Impact Theory, social media's effects can be comprehended from a number of important angles, including psychological, sociological, and economic. Social media has psychological effects on users' stress levels, attention spans, and self-esteem. From a sociological perspective, it shapes cultural trends, political activism, and social norms. Social media sites have changed business models, consumer behaviour, and marketing tactics from an economic standpoint (Rachmad, 2024).

### Conceptual Framework

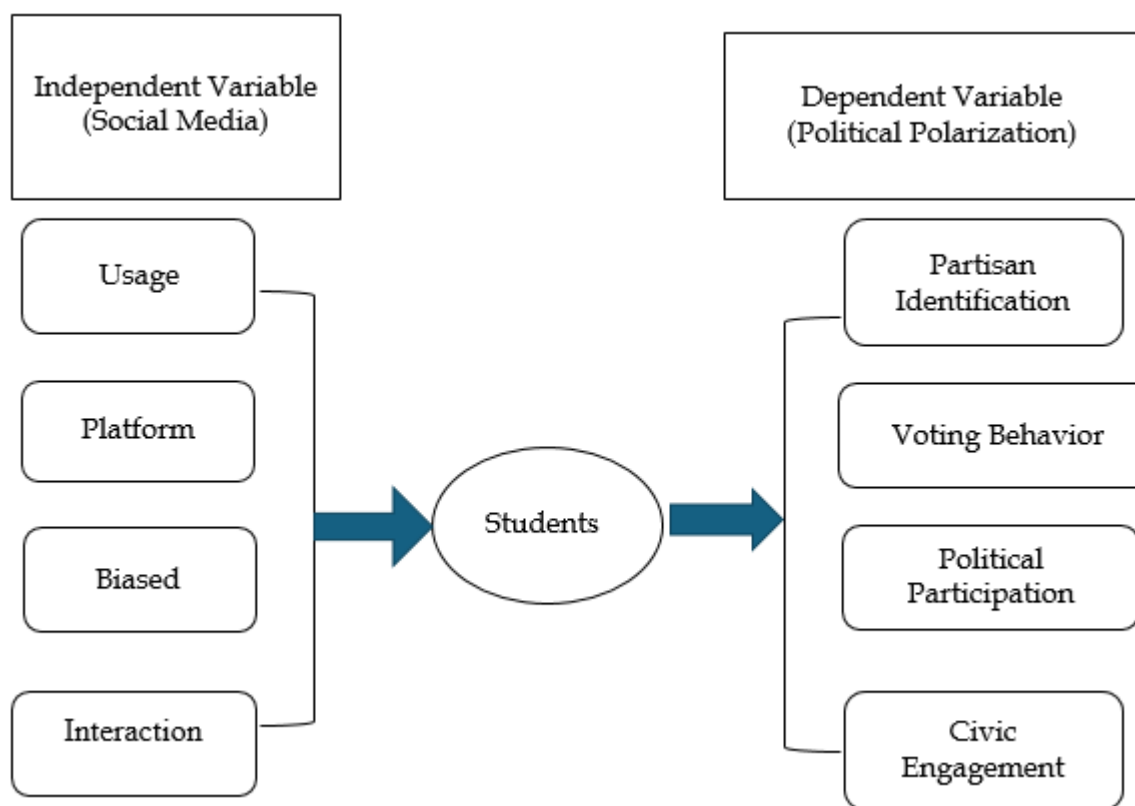


Figure 2: The impact of social media on political polarization in Pakistan

### Material and Methods

In this basic research, descriptive in nature and quantitative method has been used to generalize the results. Following methodology is used in this study

### Population

As this study concentrates how social media impact on political polarization in Pakistan among youth, therefore the population of this study was the students of Social Sciences Department enrolled in the BS programme in GCUWS in the academic year 2025.

### Minimum Sample Size

Minimum sample size, by using Cochran Formula, of this study with 95% confidence level was calculated 333.

### Procedure of Selecting Samples

A random and convenience sampling method is used to ensure a diverse representation of students from different backgrounds.

### Instruments of the Study

A questionnaire comprised of 21 statements on five-point Likert Type was developed for students to collect the data. Keeping in view the nature of questionnaire, Likert Scale was selected as SA=Strongly Agree=5, A=Agree=4, No Opinion=3, DA=Disagree=2, SDA=Strongly Disagree=1.

### Data Analysis

The questionnaires were used to analyse the target sample. Some multiple-choice questions based on media patterns were also added before statements on the questionnaire after a short demographic section. The mean score was calculated in order to analyse each statement from the questionnaires. The lowest point in the statement-by-statement analysis was set at 3. Statements with a mean score below "3" were deemed to indicate a lack of political awareness among the students. Whereas the questionnaire wise analysis the mean score was calculated.

### Ethical Consideration

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the research. Participation of the students were voluntary and no personal identifiers were collected. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were allowed to withdraw at any stage.

### Results and Discussion

**Table 1**

**Age**

Age Group	Frequency	%
18-21	200	59.5%
21-24	112	33.3%
24+	24	7.1

Table 1 shows that 59.7% respondents were belong to 18-21age group, 33.3% respondents were belonging to 21-24 age group and 7.1% respondents were belong to 24+ age group.

**Table 2**

**Qualification**

Qualification	Frequency	%
BS	305	91%
MS	30	9%

Table 2 shows that 91% respondent that BS qualification and 9% respondent had MS qualification.

**Table 3**

**Social Media platform you prefer the most for political information**

Social Media platform	Frequency	%
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Facebook	28	8.3%
Instagram	128	37.8%
Twitter	33	9.7%
News channel	150	44.2%

Table 3 shows that 8.3% respondents use Facebook, 37.8% respondents use Instagram, 9.7% respondents, 9.7% respondents used twitter and 44.2% respondents were listened news for political information.

**Table 4**  
**Number of hours spend on social media per day**

No. of hour/ hours	Frequency	%
Less than 30 minutes	41	12.1%
30 minutes - 1 hour	62	18.3%
1-2 hours	85	25.1%
More than 2 hours	151	44.5%

Table 4 shows that 12.1% respondents spend less than 30 minutes, 18.3% respondents spend 30 minutes- 1 hour, 25.1% respondents spend 1-2 hours and 44.5% respondents spend more than 2 hours every day on social media.

**Table 5**  
**How often do you come across political arguments or heated debates online?**

Activity	Frequency	%
Rarely	102	30.1%
Sometimes	159	46.9%
Frequently	52	15.3%
Always	26	7.7%

Table 5 shows that 30.1% respondents rarely participate in argument or debates, 46.9% respondents sometimes, 15.3% respondents frequently and 7.7% respondents always participate online.

**Table 6**  
**Use of Social Media for sharing Political Content**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
1	Social media accounts are used to share political content	Strongly Agree	47	13.9%	3.65
		Agree	176	52.1%	
		Neutral	86	25.4%	
		Disagree	24	7.1%	
		Strongly Disagree	5	1.5%	

Table 6 shows that 13.9% respondents were strongly agree, 52.1% was agreed, 25.4% had no opinion, 7.1% was disagree and 1.5% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.65.

**Table 7**  
**Social Media a source of Political Information**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
2	Social media is a source of political information for me.	Strongly Agree	65	19.12%	3.77
		Agree	179	52.65%	
		Neutral	63	18.53%	
		Disagree	28	8.24%	
		Strongly Disagree	4	1.18%	

Table 7 shows that 19.12% respondents were strongly agree, 52.65% was agreed, 18.53% had no opinion, 8.24% was disagree and 1.18% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.77.

**Table 8**

**Changing Political Beliefs**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
3	I change my political views as a result of exposure to news information or ideas on social media.	Strongly agree	27	7.94%	3.40
		Agree	161	47.35%	
		Neutral	92	27.06%	
		Disagree	50	14.71%	
		Strongly Disagree	9	2.65%	

Table 3 shows that 7.94% respondents were strongly agree, 47.35% was agreed, 27.06% had no opinion, 14.71% was disagree and 2.65% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.40.

**Table 9**  
**Social Media influence beliefs and attitudes**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
4	Social media has influenced my political beliefs and attitudes.	Strongly agree	44	12.94%	3.51
		Agree	164	48.24%	
		Neutral	80	23.54%	
		Disagree	39	11.47%	
		Strongly disagree	8	2.35%	

Table 9 shows that 12.94% respondents were strongly agree, 48.24% was agreed, 23.54% had no opinion, 11.47% was disagree and 2.35% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.51.

**Table 10**  
**Social media platform for news and information**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
5	Social media platforms are the primary source for political news and information	Strongly agree	53	15.59%	3.70
		Agree	191	56.18%	
		Neutral	59	17.35%	
		Disagree	27	7.94%	
		Strongly disagree	7	2.06%	

Table 10 shows that 15.59% respondents were strongly agree, 56.18% was agreed, 17.35% had no opinion, 7.94% was disagree and 2.06% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.70.

**Table 11**  
**Selective Media Sources**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
6	My social media includes specific political party or channels.	Strongly Agree	37	10.88%	3.24
		Agree	118	34.71%	
		Neutral	100	29.41%	
		Disagree	70	20.53%	
		Strongly disagree	12	3.53%	

Table 11 shows that 10.88% respondents were strongly agree, 34.71% was agreed, 29.41% had no opinion, 20.53% was disagree and 3.53% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.24

**Table 12**  
**Promote Political Content**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
7	Some social media platforms promote political content more than others	Strongly Agree	54	15.88%	3.73
		Agree	183	53.82%	
		Neutral	75	22.06%	
		Disagree	23	6.76%	

Strongly disagree	3	0.88%
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Table 12 shows that 15.88% respondents were strongly agree, 53.82% was agreed, 22.06% had no opinion, 6.76% was disagree and 0.88% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.73.

**Table 13**  
**Update about Political Events**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
8	I rely on specific platforms for updates about political events in Pakistan.	Strongly agree	45	13.24%	3.58
		Agree	178	52.35%	
		Neutral	74	21.76%	
		Disagree	27	7.94%	
		Strongly Disagree	14	4.12%	

Table 13 shows that 13.24% respondents were strongly agree, 52.35% was agreed, 21.76% had no opinion, 7.94% was disagree and 4.12% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.58.

**Table 14**  
**Web vs Traditional News**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
9	The information on these websites is more reliable than that from traditional news organizations.	Strongly agree	41	12.06%	3.40
		Agree	133	39.12%	
		Neutral	102	30%	
		Disagree	57	16.76%	
		Strongly disagree	6	1.76%	

Table 14 shows that 12.06% respondents were strongly agree, 39.12% was agreed, 30% had no opinion, 16.76% was disagree and 1.76% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.40.

**Table 15**  
**Perceived Political Bias in Social Media content**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
10	Social media platform are biased in their portrayal of political parties in Pakistan.	Strongly Agree	52	15.29%	3.67
		Agree	175	51.47%	
		Neutral	83	24.41%	
		Disagree	24	7.06%	
		Strongly disagree	1	0.29%	

Table 15 shows that 15.29% respondents were strongly agree, 51.47% was agreed, 24.41% had no opinion, 7.06% was disagree and 0.29% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.67.

**Table 16**  
**Filtered Political Views**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
11	Social media platforms tend to create echo chambers where users mostly interact with people who share similar political views.	Strongly Agree	43	12.65%	3.65
		Agree	184	54.12%	
		Neutral	83	24.41%	
		Disagree	24	7.06%	
		Strongly Disagree	3	0.88%	

Table 16 shows that 12.65% respondents were strongly agree, 54.12% was agreed, 24.41% had no opinion, 7.06% was disagree and 0.88% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.65.

**Table 17**  
**Mainstream Media Role**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
12	Mainstream media also plays a role in political polarization of Pakistan.	Strongly Agree	47	13.82%	3.62
		Agree	172	50.59%	
		Neutral	96	28.24%	
		Disagree	14	4.12%	
		Strongly disagree	2	0.59%	

Table 17 shows that 13.82% respondents were strongly agree, 50.59% was agreed, 28.24% had no opinion, 4.12% was disagree and 0.59% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.62.

**Table 18**  
**User engagement and interaction with political content**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
13	Social media increase political polarization in Pakistan	Strongly agree	65	19.12%	3.83
		Agree	199	58.53%	
		Neutral	53	15.59%	
		Disagree	13	3.82%	
		Strongly Disagree	4	1.18%	

Table 18 shows that 19.12% respondents were strongly agree, 58.53% was agreed, 15.59% had no opinion, 3.82% was disagree and 1.18% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.83.

**Table 19**  
**Views shaped by media**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
14	Social media helps to change our opinion.	Strongly agree	72	21.18%	3.84
		Agree	189	55.59%	
		Neutral	54	15.88%	
		Disagree	16	4.71%	
		Strongly disagree	6	1.76%	

Table 19 shows that 21.18% respondents were strongly agree, 55.59% was agreed, 15.88% had no opinion, 4.71% was disagree and 1.76% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.84.

**Table 20**  
**Intolerance is the cause of Polarization**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
15	Intolerance is the chief cause of political polarization on social media.	Strongly Agree	56	16.47%	3.69
		Agree	168	49.41%	
		Neutral	92	27.06%	
		Disagree	16	4.71%	
		Strongly disagree	5	1.47%	

Table 20 shows that 16.47% respondents were strongly agree, 49.41% was agreed, 27.06% had no opinion, 4.71% was disagree and 1.47% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.69.

**Table 21**  
**Youth and media impact**

Item no.	Statement	Levels	Frequency	%	Mean Score
16	Social media is contributing negatively to the moral values of Pakistani youth.	Strongly Agree	71	20.88%	3.62
		Agree	135	39.71%	
		Neutral	89	26.18%	
		Disagree	37	10.88%	
		Strongly disagree	4	1.18%	

Table 21 shows that 20.88% respondents were strongly agree, 39.71% was agreed, 26.18% had no opinion, 10.88% was disagree and 1.18% was strongly disagree with this statement. The mean score of this statement was 3.62.

**Table 22**  
**Mean Score Assessment**

Statement No	Mean Score	Statement No	Mean Score
14	3.84	1	3.65
13	3.83	12	3.62
2	3.77	16	3.62
7	3.73	8	3.58
5	3.70	4	3.51
15	3.69	9	3.40
10	3.67	3	3.40
11	3.65	6	3.24
Mean Average of 16 Statements= 3.61			

Table 22 depicts that 5 statements showed positive level of acceptance, 8 statements showed medium level of acceptance and 3 statements showed lower level of acceptance.

## Conclusion

This study was designed to explore the impact of social media on political polarization in Pakistan among youth. A number of books and research articles were reviewed and was observed that social media networks have negative effect on society. Pakistan has had political polarization ever since gaining its independence. Political polarization was typically discussed in relation to political parties. Political ideologies vary amongst political parties. Polarization did not have to be reliant on distinct policies. People were divided into traditional and modern, religious and secular groups. Political polarization is the term used to describe the growing gap between various political groups and people who hold divergent opinions and ideologies.

Supporting particular political agendas has long been a practice of Pakistani media outlets, and in recent years, this practice has only gotten worse. As a result, people are now more divided and polarized along religious and political lines. Extremist groups have been using the media to spread their message of intolerance and hatred, which has led to an increase in violent extremism in the country. Media polarization and extremism have significantly impacted Pakistani democracy. Nowadays, people are more likely to resort to violence and extremism in order to achieve their goals and are less likely to engage in productive political discourse.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested in light of the literature review and questionnaire data analysis.

- By encouraging communication and interaction between various political groups, political polarization can be lessened. The establishment of forums for discussion and debate where a range of viewpoints can be exchanged and examined can be greatly aided by the government, civil society organizations, and the media.
- If the media is not impartial or balanced, it can exacerbate political polarization and have a significant impact on public opinion formation. Political polarization can therefore be lessened by encouraging media literacy and teaching the public how to assess news and information critically.

- Political polarization can be lessened by fostering a culture of tolerance and respect for various beliefs and points of view. This can be accomplished by supporting educational and awareness initiatives that highlight the value of human rights, diversity, and peaceful coexistence.
- Reducing political polarization requires robust democratic institutions, such as an independent judiciary, free and fair elections, and a thriving civil society. These organizations can aid in making sure that everyone's opinions are heard and that authority is allocated in an equitable and open manner.
- One of the main causes of political polarization is economic inequality. By addressing this issue and fostering a more equitable society, policies that support social welfare, inclusive growth, and job creation can lessen political polarization.

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