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Keyboard Warriors to Real-World Activists: Does Social Media Platforms Actually Change the University Student's Opinion

Fazal Rahman
Graduate Scholar, Department of Sociology, Hazara University Mansehra Pakistan.
fazalrahmansocio@gmail.com

Akash Arif (Corresponding Author)
Undergraduate Scholar, Department of Sociology, Hazara University Mansehra Pakistan.
Akashkashi776@gamil.com

Zil E Huma
Senior Researcher (Women Resource and Publication Centre, Lahore)
humazile768@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of social media in shaping public opinion towards political, educational, and economic issues among the university students. The study aims to investigate the use of social media and how it builds various opinions among the respondents. Using a qualitative research approach and phenomenological research design, the researcher collected data through simple random sampling technique from twelve respondents by utilizing an interview guide. The thematic analysis method was employed to interpret the data. We extracted the themes from the collected data, such as use of social media and public opinion towards political issues, educational issues, and economic issues. Findings reveal that social media significantly contributes to opinion formation, offering a platform for debate, news consumption, and exposure to diverse viewpoints. Respondents reported using social media not only for entertainment but also for learning, networking, and activism.

Keywords: Social Media, Public Opinion, Educational Issues, Political Issues, Economic Issues

Introduction

Public opinion is greatly influenced by social media, particularly among young people, who are said to use social media platforms the most often. Younger people's curiosity in these platforms has grown over the last several years (AlKhudari et al.,

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2024). Pakistan is regarded as one of the most prominent countries in the world for the dissemination of social media networks (Hussain, & Shabir, 2021). These platforms are prevalent in a variety of regions, particularly among university students, who are the most frequent consumers of these platforms in order to obtain political as well as social content. This contributes to the development of their knowledge, information, and experiences regarding life, thereby influencing their perspectives on public life (Ahmad et al., 2019).

Facebook

Facebook is a social networking site that allows users to view short videos, write comments, share photos, and submit links to news or other relevant online material. Users may even talk live on Facebook (Sharma, 2024). Shared material may be made generally available, or it can be restricted to Facebook Groups or an individual (Bodle, 2011) Facebook was established in February 2004 as an academic social network at Harvard University. It was developed by Mark Zuckerberg and Edward Savarins, both of whom were students at the university. Facebook became accessible to those aged 13 and older in 2006, thus surpassing MySpace to become the preeminent social network globally (Harasymiw, 2019). Facebook's success is due to its capacity to attract both individuals and enterprises, as well as its capability to interface with many websites via a unified login system applicable across different platforms (Kirkpatrick, 2011). Facebook is accessible and user-centric for all individuals. Individuals with less technological proficiency may register and begin posting on Facebook. Initially conceived as a means to maintain contact or re-establish connections with estranged acquaintances, it has evolved into a favored tool for companies capable of precisely targeting audiences and delivering advertisements directly to those most inclined to want their goods or services (Alam, 2022).

Twitter X

On April 25, 2022, it was revealed that Twitter had completed a deal for acquisition by a company wholly controlled by Elon Musk. The purchase entails a cash payment of $54.20 per share, amounting to around $44 billion in total. Following the conclusion of this transaction, Twitter will shift from being a publicly traded entity to a privately owned organization. According to the terms specified in the agreement, current Twitter shareholders will receive $54.20 in cash for each share of Twitter common stock they own at the conclusion of the proposed deal (Isaac et al., 2022). Subsequent to the news of the agreement, Elon Musk disseminated the following statement via his Twitter account: Free expression is the foundation of a functional democracy, and Twitter serves as the digital forum where critical issues concerning humanity's future are deliberated. I want to improve Twitter significantly by introducing new features, making the algorithms open source to enhance trust, eliminating spam bots, and verifying all users as actual individuals. Twitter has significant potential - I anticipate collaborating with the business and its user community to realize it (PR News-wire, 2022). The significance of analyzing these shifts stems from Twitter/X's crucial role in political communication and information dissemination (Mitchell et Al., 2021).

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Instagram

Instagram is a social media application that enables individuals worldwide to share photographs and videos that depict their daily activities, artistic endeavors, fashion, culinary experiences, travel, weight-loss narratives, and several other subjects. Consider it a visual journal in which you may select the highlights of your life and share them with friends, family, and even unfamiliar individuals. The moments that evoke a sense of wonder, from your morning coffee artistry to unfiltered holiday pictures, are permanently captured on Instagram (or until you choose to remove them) (Phetborrisuth & Sangsingkeo, 2017). In addition to sharing personal photographs, Instagram serves as the premier content repository. Seeking fashion inspiration? Simply emulate the preferences of Rihanna or an influencer whose aesthetic aligns with yours. Seeking travel inspiration? Embark on a virtual journey by following National Geographic or travel influencers such as the Bucket List Family. You may discover your preferred companies, such as Nike or Starbucks, and be informed about their new products (Chang, 2014). Social media mostly focusses on presenting our most favorable image. The use of filters to enhance our appearance in selfies or other photographs is no longer exclusive to professional photographers. Filters may be easily applied to photographs to immediately enhance contrast, brightness, and other properties, making the image more visually attractive (Gilbert et al., (2015). The pervasive application of filters is particularly apparent on Instagram. A 2017 survey of 2 million Instagram accounts revealed that 18% of all photographs utilized a filter, but 25% of those labeled with the hashtag selfie employed a filter (Wise et al., 2020).

Objectives of the study

1. To investigate to what extent students at the university level use social media platforms.
2. How students' public opinion is shaped by Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram.
3. We aim to understand the diverse viewpoints shaped by social media among students.

Literature Review

Social media technology is swiftly expanding and achieving worldwide use. Survey and public opinion researchers inherently consider adapting their methodology to incorporate emerging technologies. The appeal of social media for research beyond the simple adoption of new technology for various reasons. Social media may signify enhanced access to survey participants. As numerous individuals forsake landline telephones (Blumberg & Luke, 2013) or adopt strategies to prevent unsolicited communication (e.g., caller ID, restricted access buildings), a substantial segment of the population is progressively interacting and conversing online through social media sites. Social media provides a medium for researchers to connect with potential respondents, enhancing the probability of garnering their interest and obtaining their involvement. It provides a potentially significantly more economical data source than a conventionally conducted survey. In numerous cases, certain personal data shared by people on social media (depending on user settings and platform features) is

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publicly accessible without limitations (Richard et al., 2021). Conversation is seen as a fundamental element of individuals' daily existence. Moreover, the existence of efficient communication channels, such as social media platforms, can enable individuals to express their opinions, convey their perspectives, and harmonize ethnic and national values (Adams, 2023). Social media is seen as the predominant communication medium and has a crucial role in shaping public opinion and promoting national values, particularly among young folks who are recognized as the primary users of social media platforms. These networks significantly facilitated the development of young persons' information and knowledge, hence influencing their public attitudes and molding their cultural, political, and national values via their engagement on these platforms (Alkhaza'leh et al., 2022). The persistent rise in interest in these networking sites has been validated throughout the last years. Recently, people have increasingly depended on current social media networks rather than conventional media, such as radio, television, magazines, and newspapers, for the formulation of ideas, opinions, perspectives, and information. The user-friendliness of these technologies has facilitated the proliferation of current media tools in public life, hence influencing the formation of thinking and culture. the significance of these websites and their influence on the opinions, beliefs, and national values of young people, as evidenced by Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter (Al-Dulaimi, 2020). Internet-based platforms that enable interaction, connection, and knowledge exchange between people globally are referred to as social media (Obar & Wildman, 2015). These platforms facilitate the creation, uploading, and sharing of multimedia content, such as text, images, audio, and video, thereby cultivating a digital environment that is exceedingly interactive (Abir, 2025). The primary objective of social media is to encourage digital social networking, support engagement with others, and connect individuals (Yohanna, 2020). In contrast to traditional media, which primarily operates through one-way communication, social media platforms provide real-time interactivity, enabling users to effectively engage with content, remark, and share (Al-Fraihat et al., 2023). In the last two decades, a plethora of social media platforms have come into existence, each with its own set of features and serving a variety of purposes. The manner in which individuals consume information, participate in public discourse, and convey their personal identity has been transformed by platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube (Abbas et al., 2022).

Given the increasing influence of social media on society, it is imperative to cultivate digital literacy, encourage responsible online behavior, and establish regulatory frameworks that strike a balance between user safety and freedom of expression. Future research should investigate methods to reduce the risks associated with extreme social media use while maximizing its advantages for public engagement along with knowledge dissemination (Millagala, 2023).

Public opinion

University students predominantly utilize social networking sites to establish connections with peers for academic purposes or to forge new friendships. A significant number of students cannot operate effectively without this domain. Despite being a relatively modern term, "public opinion" was employed under various titles in

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numerous ancient civilizations. Machiavelli was the first to underscore the importance of heeding the sentiments and tendencies of the populous, often reaffirming the maxim "the voice of the people is the voice of God." The concept of public opinion, which facilitates the formation of a judgment, was articulated by the English poet Shakespeare via the character of King Henry IV. The conflicts in England between the king and Parliament profoundly impacted the development of expressions such as “prevailing opinion,” which Parliamentarians upheld during their tumultuous clashes with monarchs and Catholics. In his 1672 article, William Temple elucidated the nature of government and its origins, contending that it emerges from prevailing popular sentiment on governance, alongside the virtue and valor exhibited by the sovereign (Hirst, 1980). Public opinions encapsulate the ideas, views, beliefs, and attitudes of a group of persons about a certain issue, event, or societal subject (Moussaïd et al., 2013). It also signifies the kind of individual relationships with others via the exchange of experiences, information, and ideas (Mallinson & Hatemi, 2018). This idea encompasses different facets of life, including social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions. Public opinion is seen as a vital component in decision-making and democratic procedures within society. Public opinion is acknowledged as a significant factor in the formulation of services, policies, and actions by governmental, non-governmental, or public institutions (Ausat, 2023). Moreover, public sentiment may influence social movements, governmental choices, and overall dynamics (Koopmans, 2004; Amenta, & Polletta, 2019).

Theoretical framework

We reviewed various theories for this study, including Uses and Gratification Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Social Exchange Theory.

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) is a leading theory in the field of social media. According to UGT, people seek for certain functions in media material in order to satisfy their wants and needs. This indicates that individuals seek out various forms of media in order to fulfil various needs, such as seeking amusement, friendship, or information. Because it shows what people seek out while interacting with social media sites like Instagram and Twitch, UGT is useful for publishing companies in their pursuit of consumer behavior insight (Camilleri & Falzon, 2021).

Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Another significant social media theory is Social Identity Theory (SIT). Social Identity Theory examines how individuals define themselves within certain social groups or cultures via self-categorization processes during interactions on social media platforms. This theory posits that individuals' self-concept is shaped by their views of group identities and the roles they assume within such groups. This theory posits that individuals use social media to construct and solidify their identities while delineating their interactions with others (Hornsey, 2008).

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory, created by sociologist George Homans, elucidates the dynamics of interpersonal interactions and the perceived value individuals get or

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forfeit in social exchanges. This theory posits that people evaluate the prospective advantages of a contact with someone else against the associated effort and hazards to choose whether to participate. Interactions on social media platforms may be predicated on likes, shares, comments, and following; each action has potential benefits that users assess when determining whether material to engage with or disseminate (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Research Methodology

A research methodology delineates the processes and procedures used to discover and analyses material pertaining to a given study subject (Goundar, 2012). The researcher employed the qualitative method to gather and analyses data. Qualitative research focusses on phenomena characterized by qualitative attributes, specifically those associated with or pertaining to excellence. This study employs a design based on phenomenology. We especially investigate students enrolled at Hazara University Mansehra. Data were collected from the social science student of Hazara University through simple random sampling technique.

Data was collected using an interview guide of open-ended questions. The technique was developed using existing literature. The researcher reaches saturation point at the 10th while collecting data and stops data collection at the 12th interview. In qualitative research, thematic analysis is a popular technique for analysis. The gathered data were analyzed using qualitative methodologies, namely theme analysis. In this context, a widely used and suitable strategy is the six-step model established by Braun and Clarke (2006). We extract theme different theme like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Educational Issues, Political Issues, and Economic Issues.

Thematic Analysis

Theme 1 Facebook

Facebook is a social media platform where individuals connect and share their thoughts by posting their writing, photos, and videos. On this platform they share ideas in the comments section or through messages.

Respondent 1st and 3rd narrates that:

> *" I used social media websites frequently within the campus after my classes and I used it when I am out of the campus. Facebook is the prominent social media network, and I spent most of the time on Facebook, watching different content and whenever get bored, I used to watch short videos for the entertainment purpose"*

Another respondent 2nd and 5th narrates that:

> *"I check social media a few times a day, usually during breaks or after work. My favorite platform is Facebook, where I like to stay in touch with friends and family. Facebook is very easy to chat with loved ones and stay updated on news. Facebook is a big part of my daily routine."*

Another respondent 4th narrates that:

> *"The effectiveness of social media, student groups, and university policies depends on their implementation and reception by students. When used effectively, these channels like Facebook can promote student engagement,*

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foster a sense of community, and support student success. However, if not implemented thoughtfully, they can also create confusion, promote misinformation, or alienate certain groups of students. Careful consideration is necessary to maximize their impact."

Theme 2 Twitter

Twitter is a free social networking platform where people send out brief messages called tweets. Text, movies, images, or links may be in these tweets. Users need a computer with an internet connection or a smart phone to utilize the Twitter app or website. It's a microblogging site that lets registered users publish, share, like, and react to tweets with brief messages. It's a mix of blogging and instant messaging. People who aren't registered can only read tweets. People use Twitter to stay up to speed on businesses' newest news and deals, talk to friends, and follow business leaders, politicians, and celebrities. They also utilize it to keep up with the news and happenings.

Respondent 1st and 7th narrates that:

"I'm on social media quite often, probably around 5-6 times a day. I use Twitter the most, as I enjoy staying up-to-date on current events and news. I also use Facebook and Instagram, but Twitter is my go-to platform. It's a great way to stay informed and connected."

Another respondent 6th and 8th narrates that:

"I use social media occasionally, maybe 2-3 times a week. My preferred platform is twitter, where I like to stay updated on every news and connect with professionals. I use Twitter, because twitter is my primary platform. It's a great way to network and stay informed."

Another respondent 11th narrates that:

"Twitter is a social media platform where users post and interact through short messages called "tweets." It is widely used for sharing news, opinions, and updates in real-time. Many public figures, journalists, and organizations use Twitter to communicate directly with the public and stay updated on current events."

Theme 3 Instagram

You may share photos and videos for free on Instagram. Users may post pictures or videos to our site and share them with either all of their followers or a small group of pals. They may also see, comment on, and like photos that their friends publish on Instagram. People who are 13 or older may make an account by giving an email address and choosing a username.

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Respondent 9th narrates that:

> "*I use social media several times a day, mostly during my free time or when I need a short break. The platform I use the most is Instagram because it's visually engaging and easy to scroll through. I follow content related to fashion, motivation, and current trends. Instagram stories and reels also keep me updated on what's happening around the world in a quick and interesting way."*

Another respondent 3rd narrates that:

> *"To use social media more positively, take breaks and prioritize self-care. Also use social media platform like Instagram is used carefully to set boundaries around your social media use, and focus on activities that bring you joy and fulfillment. Use social media intentionally, rather than mindlessly scrolling through feeds. By being mindful of your social media use, you can maintain a healthy online presence"*

Another respondent 12th narrates that:

> *"Instagram is a social media platform mainly used for sharing photos, videos, and stories. It is popular among young people and influencers for expressing creativity, promoting brands, and connecting with others through visual content. Features like reels, IGTV, and stories make it engaging and widely used for both personal and business purposes*."

Public Opinion towards educational, political and economic issue

As per the collected data, the use of different social media platforms builds the opinion of the respondents towards various issues. They are discussing the issues on various platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Theme 4 Educational Issues

The term "Education Issue" refers to the multiple problems and causes that affect education, especially for adults. These include changes in demographics, globalization, advances in technology, and the reality that certain groups in society have more access to educational opportunities than others. As schools try to play many different roles in the lives of their students, they face a lot of problems and difficulties that go beyond just teaching, sharing information, and giving out diplomas. Many kids have to deal with a lot of problems that get in the way of their education, such as bullying, violence, and the impact of less financing. In this part, you'll look at some of these current problems and worries.

Respondent 2nd narrates that:

> *"I follow educational content, including public and*

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political figures. They share their opinion regarding educational issues, such as gender gap in educational institution and insufficient funds for education. I appreciate platforms that offer in-depth explanations and practical examples. Educational content enables me to learn more about educational issues on local, provincial and national level."

Another respondent 1st and 8th narrates that:

"Social media is a powerful tool for shaping opinions, especially among younger generations. Due to social media student cannot give attention to their study so that cause an educational issue. It allows for real-time discussions and mobilization around social and political causes. Social media platforms can amplify marginalized voices and bring attention to important issues. However, the echo chamber effect can also limit exposure to opposing viewpoints".

Another respondent 10th narrates that:

"I think Hazara University students use both social media and educational sources, depending on their needs. For news and current events, social media may be their go-to source. However, for academic purposes, they may rely more on educational sources like lectures, textbooks, and academic journals. Students likely use a combination of both to stay informed but sometime they face educational issues."

Theme 5 Political Issues

A political debate is a subject or problem that has to do with government policies, power dynamics, or public opinion. It typically leads to controversy and discussion. When it comes to how social media affects the opinions of Hazara University students, certain political problems might come up because of the dissemination of false information, the power of echo chambers, or the way online conversations change people's political views and actions. These problems may have big effects on democracy, civic participation, and social cohesion. That's why it's so important to know how social media affects people's opinions and how they interact with political information online. Researchers may learn more about the complicated connections between social media, politics, and public opinion by looking at these interactions.

Respondent 10th narrates that:

"Yes I changed my opinion on social media. Once my friend told me that the CM did corruption in our district and without

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having any solid evidence I post the story on my social media account. After some research on that issue, I found that I did a mistake by posting fake NEWS on social media account, then I immediately deleted the post."

Another respondent 11th narrates that:

"I believe social media has a significant impact on shaping opinions, particularly in the realm of politics. It provides a platform for politicians and influencers to share their views and mobilize support. Social media can also be used to spread propaganda and manipulate public opinion. Therefore, it's essential to critically evaluate the information consumed on social media."

Another respondent 8th narrates that:

In my opinion, social media plays a major role in shaping opinions on political issues. It allows politicians, activists, and citizens to share their views instantly and reach a large audience. People use platforms like Twitter and Facebook to discuss elections, government decisions, and political debates. This can increase political awareness, but it can also spread misinformation if not used carefully."

Theme 6 Economic Issues

An economic issue is a problem or difficulty that affects the economy. It usually has to do with how resources are used, how wealth is shared, or how it affects economic development and stability. Economic problems are a wide variety of problems that influence how products and services are produced, shared, and used in an economy. These difficulties might be as simple as someone having trouble with their money, or they can be bigger problems that affect whole countries or even the whole economy. Some common examples include poverty, unemployment, inflation, recession, and economic growth, to name a few.

Respondent 1st narrates that:

"I'm interested in news and current events, including articles and opinion pieces. I stay informed about local and global happenings through reputable news sources and online publications. This helps me stay up-to-date on politics, economics, and social trends. I'm particularly interested in news related to my community."

Another respondent 4th narrates that:

"In my opinion, social media is quite effective in shaping public opinion on economic issues. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube allow economists, journalists, and the general public to share updates, opinions, and analyses instantly. For example, during times of

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inflation or economic crisis, people often turn to social media to understand the causes, effects, and possible solutions. It also helps spread awareness about unemployment, poverty, and government economic policies, which encourages public discussion and sometimes even pushes policymakers to respond. However, while it spreads information quickly, there's also a risk of misinformation, so it's important to verify facts before forming an opinion"

Another respondent 5th narrates that:

"*In my opinion, social media is a powerful tool for shaping opinions on economic issues. It helps people stay informed about topics like rising prices, fuel costs, job markets, and government budgets in real-time. Many experts use platforms like Twitter and LinkedIn to explain complex economic matters in simple language, making it easier for the public to understand. Social media also gives a voice to ordinary people, allowing them to share their struggles and concerns, which can influence public debates and even policy decisions. However, while it's effective in raising awareness, it's important to be cautious about fake news and biased information that can mislead people about economic realities."*

Discussion

This study focuses on the student's engagement with social media platforms and how it builds various opinions among the respondents. The study reveals tha Facebook is one of the most important social media sites for changing public opinion, especially among college students. This conversation looks at how Facebook affects the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of Hazara University students, taking into account things like political knowledge, social issues, and cultural trends. Facebook is an important place for students to talk about politics. Public opinion is significantly shaped by social media, especially among youth, who are reported to utilize these platforms most frequently. The curiosity of younger individuals in these platforms has increased in recent years (AlKhudari et al., 2024). Political parties, student groups, and activists utilize it to spread the word about their goals, get people to support them, and plan events. Pakistan is recognized as one of the leading countries globally for the growth of social media networks (Hussain & Shabir, 2021). Facebook is still the most popular social media site in Pakistan, but Twitter (now X) has become an important place for political discussion, activism, and news sharing in real time. This conversation looks at how Twitter affects the opinions of Hazara University students and compares its effects to those of Facebook. Twitter is different from Facebook in that it has shorter posts, hashtag-driven trends, and more journalists and politicians. Because of this, Twitter has a very different effect on how students think than Facebook does. Twitter is different from Facebook in that it relies on immediacy and exposure to the public. On Facebook, content is generally shared in closed groups or personal networks. Facebook lets users watch short videos, comment, share images, and post news and other pertinent resources. Facebook allows live chats (Sharma, 2024). Students at Hazara University who use Twitter are more likely to see uncensored political discussions, popular national topics, and have direct conversations with

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policymakers, journalists, and activists. In many places, university students use these sites to get political and social material. This enhances their life knowledge, facts, and experiences, shaping their public life views (Ahmad et al., 2019). Instagram is mostly known as a social networking site for pictures, but it has become an important place for news, activism, and forming opinions, especially among college students. Instagram uses pictures, videos, stories, and reels to shape public debate, unlike Facebook and Twitter, which rely mainly on text-based conversations. Instagram lets individuals worldwide submit photographs and videos of their daily lives, art, fashion, food, travel, weight loss, and more. Consider it a visual journal to share life highlights with friends, family, and strangers. (Phetborrisuth & Sangsingkeo, 2017). Instagram's visual and algorithmic nature has a unique effect on Hazara University students by making complicated topics easier to understand, using the authority of influencers, and getting them emotionally involved. It works well with Facebook and Twitter to shape public opinion, although its format could lead to shallow and divided opinions. Teaching kids how to critically analyze visual content is an important part of responsible engagement. Social media has become a key place for talking about educational issues, changing how college students think about and talk about things like curriculum changes, campus rules, and academic rights. This discussion looks at how sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram shape students' opinions on education at Hazara University and beyond, focusing on both good and bad conversations, such as false information and division. Social media gives students a voice in educational discussions, but if it's not used carefully, it might disseminate false information and make people more divided. Researchers can contact with potential responders on social media, increasing their chances of getting their participation. It may be much cheaper than a traditional survey. Social media user settings and platform characteristics can make certain personal data publicly accessible without restrictions (Richard et al., 2021). Students at Hazara University need to be careful while using these platforms and find a balance between advocacy and evidence-based engagement. Official social media fact-checking and other institutional activities could help with these problems. Furthermore, the presence of effective communication channels, such as social media platforms, facilitates individuals in articulating their ideas, sharing their perspectives, and reconciling ethnic and national values (Adams, 2023). The use of social media has changed the way people talk about politics, especially college students who are often at the vanguard of digital activity and ideological conflicts. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are some of the main places where people get political news, talk about politics, and organize protests. These networks have substantially enhanced the information and knowledge acquisition of young individuals, thereby shaping their public attitudes and affecting their cultural, political, and national values through their participation on these platforms (Alkhaza'leh et al., 2022). This conversation looks at how social media affects the political views of Hazara University students. It focusses on how it affects awareness, polarization, and activity, as well as problems like false information. This results in a disjointed information landscape where people usually base their opinion on memes, celebrities' approval, and viral hashtags instead of critical thinking. Due to the exposure of students to politically

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polarizing materials, be it concerning governance, human rights, or campus policies, it is peer network and digital activism that is shaping the opinion and affirmation of thoughts of our students, instead of education and rationale-based discussion. The ease of use of these innovations has helped media tools spread in public life, shaping thinking and culture. the importance of Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter in shaping young people's views, opinions, and national values (Al-Dulaimi, 2020). Social media are also becoming an important form of how public opinion on political matters, especially economic ones, is formed among students at university who use such services as Twitter and Instagram to receive news and to discuss the matter of interest. Public opinions encompass the thoughts, perspectives, beliefs, and attitudes of a collective about a specific issue, event, or societal topic (Moussaïd et al., 2013). Such digital realms have eased the speed of information dissemination, yet polarized opinions, misinformation, and echo chambers have accompanied the style. It affects the mindset of the students in terms of economic policies, inequality, and government responsibility. The algorithms on social media imply that it is advantageous to post engaging content, which may lead to the sensationalism of economic crises, partisan discussions, among others, therefore skewing the knowledge of complex issues in the minds of students. Besides, the peer interaction and the endorsement of opinions by influencers also shape opinions, which can go ahead of analysis by the experts. On the one hand, democratization of access to economic discussion that comes with social media leads to a risk of creating shallow or ideologically biased worldviews, which prompts the issue of enlightened civic action of young adult. Public opinion is regarded as an essential element in decision-making and democratic processes within society. Public opinion is recognized as a crucial element in the development of goods or services, regulations, and activities by governmental, non-governmental, or public institutions (Ausat, 2023).

Conclusion

The study was conducted at Hazara University Mansehra to determine the role of social media in building various opinion among the respondents. The responses gathered clearly highlight the significant role of social media plays in shaping opinions, behaviors, and societal awareness, especially among university students. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram are widely used not only for entertainment but also for news, education, and activism. Many respondents acknowledged that social media has shifted traditional practices like reading newspapers or attending lectures toward more digital forms of engagement. Social media influences how youth perceive social, political, and economic issues, with some individuals even changing their opinions based on the content they encounter online. It is also evident that social media can raise awareness about serious issues, such as educational issues, political issues and economic issues.

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