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Social Media Usage and Political Participation among Female Voters in Sukkur Division: The Moderating Role of Digital Literacy and Patriarchal Constraints

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: May 23, 2026 Revised: June 06, 2026 Accepted: June 21, 2026 Available Online: July 04, 2026 Keywords: Social Media, Political Participation, Female Voters, Digital Literacy, Patriarchal Control, Sukkur Division, Political Awareness, Pakistan Corresponding Author: Maria.isani@salu.edu.pk	The main objective of the current paper is to explain how social media use is related to political engagement of female voters in Sukkur Division of the state of Sindh in particular with a complicative role given to digital literacy and the patriarchal restrictions. It is a quantitative and a cross-sectional study aimed at exploring any effects of platform engagement behaviour and socio-demographic factors on changing political behaviour (According to The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM). The proposed hypotheses were tested with the help of ANOVA methods and moderated regression methods. These findings suggest that social media can prove to be quite fruitful in enhancing female political participation and involvement; however this was not the case across all media platforms; with Facebook registering higher political involvement and participation within this group compared to Instagram. They discovered that age, and education moderately affected this relationship, but these factors had an average explanatory power. In more detail, higher levels of literacy smoothed out the relationship between social media use and political participation, and strong patriarchal controls moderated relationship between social media use and political participation. Summing it up, this paper finds that although it is an enabling factor, social media is not a consistent motivating factor for political engagement.

Introduction

The intersection of new media and political action of Pakistani women is a vibrant and dynamic area which is moulded to transform past inequalities, advancement in technology and cultural approach. In this case, Sindh province, and more so the Sukkur Division are a striking example, where a progressive approach towards more frequent access to smart phones, and modifications in gender

standards take place, which are certain to lead new patterns in civil participation of Pakistani women. Several recent researches adhere to the argument of women who initially were not excluded in electoral discourse due to patriarchal culture, now can become the participants of political discourse (Shehzad et al., 2021). These sites enable the gatekeepers such as political parties, the aged and the media to be relegated.

A recent Sindh research by Chhachhar and Malik (2021) recognises that the women users are becoming highly dependent on social media. Amazingly, the researchers found out that urban and semi-urban women in Sukkur were more digitally engaged in civic activities than expected, participating through political post-sharing, campaigns, and discussing election related issues within their small, privately held WhatsApp groups. These were unexpected results that dispute the belief that women in conservative regions are irresponsible and appear indifferent to politics.

Moreover, Masood and Adnan (2021) found in a study that Pakistani rural and urban women use the exposure to media as a source of political awareness but more urban women trusted that political messages that are shared in social media are credible and reliable as sources of political awareness, as compared to the conventional sources of news. This is significant in places like Sukkur whereby TV or print media may not be as accessible and other places where internet literacy is gradually on the rise with young people and women.

In addition, political parties through online campaigns are adjusting to this change. Political parties are also actively engaged in advancing gender-specific internet campaigns at female voters. The situation of women becoming more visible online involved Facebook during the 2018 and 2023 general elections in Pakistan, as Shehzad et al. (2021) argue that online visibility can grow especially in areas where people otherwise have low visibility. The case of Sukkur presents a number of local women organization and university students groups using Facebook to share political events, voting drives and discussing women rights.

However, there continue to be serious challenges. Digital involvement can frequently fail to transfer into real political engagement, as Hussain (2022) documents in his case study on women politicians in Sindh and Punjab. The obstacles of online harassment, family restrictions on phone ownership, unavailability of internet infrastructure, and low female digital literacy are still prevalent. These are issues which are especially acute in rural Talukas of Sukkur, such as Saleh Pat or Pano Aqil, where women are limited to their rights, which do not extend to their digital presence.

Lastly, women still have insufficient power and influence on political outcomes despite being more visible in party politics and political discourse. The increasing symbolic presence of women in online political discourse in Pakistan, although not yet translated into decision-making power or influence in policy formulation, also is a growing symbolic presence rather than a structural or institutional one, as Zeib (2021) argues.

Scope of Study

This paper attempts at the analysis of the correlation between the political involvement and social media usage of the women population of Sukkur Division, Sindh. It will focus on different dimensions of social media use (platform (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, Tik Tok), the frequency with which users consume these platforms, which content they interact with and how they interact with it) and on how these influence political attitudes and participatory behaviours (voting intention, political discussion and civic engagement).

The region is geographically confined to Sukkur Division including urban and rural regions to embrace the variations of their surroundings. The focus of the research is registered female voters, demographics being the age, education level, and socio-economic status. The research also uses the aspects of digital literacy and patriarchal constraints as the moderating-variable in an attempt to comprehend how structural and cultural constraints shape the political participation of women in a South Asian setting.

Problem Statement

Even if social media is exploding in Pakistan, women's political participation under its impact varies and is yet to be studied in detail in contrast to semi urban and rural communities (like Sukkur Division). While the access to more political information and political participation online is possible, women have faced structural and socio-cultural obstacles, such as male domination, mobility constraints, and insufficient autonomy to exercise decision-making in transferring online activity to political participation. Moreover, varying levels of digitalization has also restricted women's ability to effectively leverage the social media for politics.

The current literature has placed much emphasis on general or urban populations which does not take into consideration the gendered and context-specific nature of digital political behaviour. Consequently there exists an evident gap in knowledge on how

the use of social media intersects with digital literacy and patriarchal limitations to form political participation among the clientele of female voters in Sukkur. This paper fills this gap by studying the conditional impact of social media on women in terms of political participation in a structurally and culturally constrained world.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study:

- To determine relationships between overall social media engagement patterns of a sample of female voters (i.e. platform choice, content diversity, exposure frequency, and interactivity) and political perceptions, attitudes and actions of the sampled female voters.
- To find out and study demographic differences (e.g., age, education, urban-rural status, socio-economic class) in the effect of social media on political participation among female voters in Sukkur.
- To investigate the mediating/moderating effect of digital literacy and patriarchal limitations.

Research Questions

These questions have been formulated based on the core research objectives,

- RQ1. How do platform-specific engagement patterns (e.g., use of Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok) influence the political attitudes and actions of female voters?
- RQ2. How do socio-demographic variables (such as age, education, and socio-economic status) moderate the impact of social media on political participation among female voters?
- RQ3. To what extent do patriarchal norms and levels of digital literacy mediate or moderate the relationship between social media usage and political participation among female voters in Sukkur?

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses are formulated to test the proposed relationships between key variables in this study:

- H1: Different social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok) have varying impacts on the political attitudes and participatory behavior of female users.
- H2: The relationship between social media usage and political participation is moderated by demographic variables, such as age, and education level.
- H3: Patriarchal family control and digital literacy significantly moderate the relationship between social media engagement and political participation, either weakening or strengthening this relationship.

Literature Review

In the study by Tariq, Zolkepli, and Ahmad (2022), the authors examined the effect social media had on the youth in Pakistan in terms of voting. Nine direct and five indirect links between social media use and political participation were identified in the research—the same that suggests that citing such a relationship is complex. While there was buzz, subsequent activity has waned over the last couple of years and doubts have been raised about the feasibility of online politicking. One interesting result of this research was that online political efficacy, i.e., a perception on the side of an individual that he/she can do in relation to political processes had no/minimal impact on offline political action. However, in the political participation arena over the internet, especially in the debates, content sharing, it did play a mediating role. Political discussion and expression through the platforms of social networking sites continue to become the mainstay of political discourse and expression in most democratic settings, among them Egypt.

Researchers like Bail et al. (2018), have indicated that content diversity in social media platforms is an important component in informing individuals about the views of political candidates. When individuals are exposed to a mixed political opinion, political ideologies and political narratives then they will most likely develop a balanced and informed opinion about a variety of political actors.

Interaction with Political Content and Political Engagement

Researchers also caution that the degree and nature of online political participation are uneven, and the transfer of online political participation to real-life political action is not consistent, nor assured, across various situations, as well as, different populations. The digital literacy level, the algorithmic aspect of content selection, political context, and user motivation are all the critical factors making the difference between whether and how a particular online interaction can result in an offline civic and political engagement (Boulianne, 2015; Gil de Zunigab et al., 2017). In most situations, political activity on social platforms is still shallow or symbolic, commonly termed in the scholarly literature as being slacktivism since users are engaging with political content in low effort ways, such as likes, sharing or commenting, but not through sustained or relevant participation in civic behaviors (Morozov, 2011; Christensen, 2011).

Additionally, little is known of the way in which these dynamics work within specific subpopulations or across specified locations or regions that are politically complicated parts of the world like Sindh. Findings of the previous studies have placed the emphasis mostly on urban or generalised groups and thus the interrelationship between gender, geography and socio-cultural constraints as driving digital political behaviour were ignored (Bimber et al., 2012; Hussain, 2022). This shows an urgent requirement of context-specific research that can draw the lived experiences of groups that are not within the mainstream.

Demographic Variations in the Impact of Social Media

Hargittai (2015) notes that the influence of social media on political participation is not homogeneous or uniform because it significantly differs among various demographic groups, such as age, level of education, gender, and socio-economic standing. These age groups not only define the extent to which the individuals can engage, learn and react to the political content they are exposed on the Internet. As an example, older individuals would be less informed or more jaded with regard to social media as a source of politically sound information whereas newer generations might be more digitally literate and hence more capable of traversing and more adept at engaging in the digital political discourse that is valid.

This opinion is supported by Vitak et al. (2017) who demonstrate how the level of education and the socio-economic status predispose to exposure to digital platforms and the ability to critically evaluate political content. People with high levels of education are keen to highlight themselves for various sources, critical political narratives and participate in adequate political debate online. Conversely, the access to internet, digital literacy and high-quality political content can limit the low-socio-economic classes due to reduced capacity to depend on political empowerment as tools to social media.

Political Engagement

According to Xie et al. (2019), social media use had a significant positive correlation with political engagement and the authors found that active interaction with the political content on such platforms as Facebook and Twitter led to the development of civic awareness, political discourse, and perceptions of political efficacy. On the same note, Lee and Kim (2020) established that political inquiry activities are often translated into physical political activity such as voting, protesting, volunteering, and participation of civic activities through social media as a medium of communication between online expression and offline political action.

In the Pakistani case, Shehzad et al. (2021) found that when exposure to political content on social media is high, especially among educated young people, the impacts are an increase in political awareness and political participation, both of which occur through political discussions with Facebook. Kaur and Verma (2016) further stressed that social media lowers the participation costs through the low cost interactive features of social media that enables even marginalized groups to become participants of political discourses and campaigns. As far as female voters in Sukkur Division are concerned, it means that such platforms provide a relatively safe and accessible political learning and expression space though extent of impact remains dependent on the internet access, literacy, socio-cultural constraints, etc., which contributes to the necessity of context-specific analysis.

Perception of Political Candidates

According to Bail et al. (2018), exposure to varying political opinions on social media helps users better analyze political actors and policies and make informed evaluations of political policies. In accordance, ideological polarization was reduced when users were exposed to opposing views in politically diverse online space in accordance with Barbera et al. (2015), who have found that politically heterogeneous online setting can help lessen ideological polarization by exposing a user to competing viewpoints. The results of this study suggest that content diversity can be used to create informed and reflective political participation.

In their Pakistani case study, Ahmad, Alvi, and Ittefaq (2019) established that social media plays a significant role in enhancing political awareness and performance among rural university students, many of whom use social media to be informed about political activities as well as participate in these activities. Nevertheless, they also mentioned the constraints concerning the digital literacy and the lack of gender specific analysis. However, the potential to see different perspectives may be limited by the use of algorithmic filtering and low levels of digital literacy, so the benefits of content diversity to democracy are conditional, rather than universal.

Relationship with Knowledge about Political Issues

The study by Guess et al. (2020) revealed that there is a positive correlation between the exposure of the social media and the political awareness among individuals, which demonstrates that consumers that regularly consume content about political matters on such social media platforms develop greater knowledge about the issues on the political agenda and electoral processes, and thus become more informed political participants. Nevertheless, they also warn that the quality of information on the social media is significantly different; meaning that as much as the social media brings about increased accessibility and availability of political information; it does not necessarily imply the quality of the information gathered.

In a similar way, Prior (2013) points out the issue of selective exposure and algorithmic filtering, where the user is more likely to consume the information that supports his or her existing beliefs, and avoids exposure to alternative perspectives and reinforces bias. Furthermore, Neuman et al. (2014) believe that despite the fact that social media democratizes access to political information, misinformation and low levels of media literacy may skew political knowledge. Hargittai (2015) says socio-economic and educational disparities influence how people acquire knowledge, making knowledge acquisition uneven across populations. Research papers, including Karamat and Farooq (2016) and Ahmad and Sheikh (2020), also find that social media improves political awareness and involvement of the youth, whereas Tareen and Adnan (2021) associate it with more political effectiveness. But to female voters of Sukkur Division, the benefits are still uneven because of the lack of digital literacy, education and access, i.e. social media might enable more exposure, but without inoculation or intentionally informed and successfully political participation, the benefits will not be fully achieved.

Socialization vs. Actual Political Knowledge

Muzaffar, Chohdhry, and Afzal (2019) contend that despite their cautious ability to be politically exposed through social media, it does not necessarily translate into meaningful political knowledge, and there is a gap between the access to information and the meaningful political understanding. They insist on intervention by the institutions, including the education system, the public awareness programs, etc., to enhance the high quality of the political socialization with the help of the accurate and reliable digital content. Conversely, in the 2013 general elections in Punjab, Ghani, Shabir, and Ghaznavi (2020) reveal that social media sites like Facebook and Twitter had a strategic role in voter mobilization, political persuasion, and campaign communication, which demonstrates the increased involvement of social media sites in electoral politics.

Nevertheless, there are still limited studies focusing on gender but in context-sensitive ways. Tufail et al. (2015) discovered that female students were less likely to report political efficacy compared to male students, despite having a similar exposure to social media, which suggests that persistent gender differences were observed in political engagement among female students. On the same note, Butt and Awang (2017) point out that most studies do not consider intersectional aspects (i.e., gender and regional context) in the determination of political behavior. Recent studies also highlight another idea that political engagement via social media is extremely context-specific and influenced by cultural norms, structural inequalities, and the digital divide (Saleem et al., 2025). Additionally, the participation conceptualized by Trisiana (2025), considers participation as a wider so-called participatory culture, which involves even symbolic and low level digital engagement reflecting political participation. Indeed, even incidental exposure to political content can influence attitudes and participation, as shown by Matthes et al. (2025) conceptualization of participation. Taken together, these studies imply that political socialization through social media is a complex and contextual process and, therefore, requires localized, gender-specific studies, especially female voters in such regions as Sukkur Division.

Research Gap

Although there has been growing research on social media and political participation in Pakistan, much of the research has focused on general youth populations, urban users or university students, with little focusing on gendered and region-specific dynamics. Available literature majorly investigates how social media like Facebook, twitter and WhatsApp affect political awareness, electoral behaviour and their effectiveness as a political instrument at the macro level. Nevertheless, more recent scholarship is increasingly highlighting that, in fact, digital political participation is a situational and stratified process, which is the same process that occurs intersecting with multiple factors: gender norms, socio-cultural structures, digital literacy, and algorithmic mediation (Saleem et

al., 2025; Matthes et al., 2025). Although this change occurred, it still does not provide an adequate amount of empirical data on the mechanisms of operative success by identifying the foundation and functioning of patriarchal pressures and uneven access to digital resources as that in Sukkur Division, where patriarchal constraints and uneven access to digital resources are particularly sharp.

Besides, though a few studies have mentioned the positive relationship that exists between social media use and political participation, in spite constraints of the environments, especially by women. Platform-specific patterns of usage (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, Tik Tok), demographic factors, digital literacy and male-controlled patriarchal influence are under-theorized in the Pakistani context. There is also scanty knowledge of how political interaction online is moderated by structural barriers that can undermine or remodel the outcome of participation.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) as originally theorized by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevich (1974) is a relevant attempt to explain how individuals actively utilize the media to fulfill certain psychological, social, and informational requirements. Unlike the traditional models of media effects, UGT places users in a position of both active agents in that they intentionally choose media due to either information seeking or entertainment or social interaction or identity expression or empowerment. This theory has transformed, in the context of social media platforms (Facebook, Tik Tok, WhatsApp, and others). This theory has been modified to show the interactivity and participatory aspects, where users not only consume but also create and share contents. The informational and expressive purposes of social media are positively correlated to political awareness and participation (e.g., Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Lee and Kim, 2020).

UGT especially comes in handy in explaining political participation among female voters in the Sukkur Division in a context of socio-cultural limitations. In a patriarchal society where the mobility of women and their rights to express their opinions through the political sphere may be limited, social media supplies the sources of alternative platforms where the women can satisfy the information and social connectivity needs as well as the need to express their attitude towards the political sphere through the form of social media communication. The degree to which these gratifications can be translated into meaningful political participation, however, depends on the factors of digital literacy and the platform-specific affordances. The higher the level of digital literacy, the more an access to credible information and a chance to lead a substantive discussion; limited digital literacy can lead to passive or superficial engagement. Therefore, UGT provides a complete prism to interpret how diverse motivations and patterns of usage influence diverse degrees of political awareness and political participation amongst women in conservative contexts.

Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM)

The Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM), developed by Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady (1995), offers a model of explaining political participation based on three key factors: resources (time, money, civic skills), psychological engagement (interest, efficacy, awareness), and mobilization networks (interested, social networks). Although traditionally used to refer to offline participation, recent studies consider the extension of CVM to digital environments, where social media reduces the costs of participation and offers accessible platforms to exchange information, express outlets, and engage (Boulianne, 2020). The online networks also become a source of recruitment, which is rather mobilized by using peers, influencers, and community groupings rather than formal political institutions.

Applied to female voters in Sukkur Division, CVM provides a powerful model of interpretation of how social media overcomes structural and cultural limitations. Low-cost digital tools enable women who may have less access to traditional resources or have restricted mobility to participate in politics, gain knowledge, acquire civic skills and build political awareness. Meanwhile, repeated exposure to political content can lead to greater engagement in the psychic life, and the online social network allows development of a collective identity and mobilization through peer-to-peer mobilization. In this way, CVM assists to explain the fact that digital platforms do not only decrease the barriers, but also create new avenues of political participation among women in conservative socio-cultural backgrounds.

Research Methodology & Results

Research Design

In this study, the research design used is quantitative and positivism research design to test the relationship between the use of social media and political participation among female voters in Sukkur Division. It is based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) where Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) explains intentional media use and Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) explains that resources, engagement, and networks shape participation under limitations such as the lack of digital literacy and male presence. The data are collected by means of a cross-sectional survey, and tested by means of the application of statistical techniques.

Population and Sampling

The study target population comprised of female voters aged 18 years and residing in the Sindh, Sukkur Division in Pakistan. This diversity of women voters registered only makes sure that those concerned were themselves lawfully eligible to take part in electoral procedures and were further located within the democratic framework under study. In data collection, there was a random sampling method employed, it tried as much as possible to have representation of all age groups, education levels, income brackets and urban-rural type of residence among others in a bid to contribute to the generalizability of findings in the study area. The last sample of this project comprised 500 female respondents that were deemed adequate in conducting advanced statistical analysis such as correlation, regression and moderation tests using SPSS.

Research Instrument

In this research, a structured, close-ended, questionnaire is the primary tool to be used in data collection. The questionnaire has been formulated in such a way that there will be an equal level of consistency in the responses and this will make possible a statistical analysis of the relationships that will exist between the study variables. It was broken down into some sections each of which was on different constructions which included the use of social media, political awareness, political participation, digital literacy and patriarchal control.

The data collection for this study was done in a period of two months at both urban and rural places in the Sukkur Division.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS. The analysis steps included:

- One-way ANOVA to compare political participation across different social media platforms
- Moderation analysis using interaction terms or Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 1) to test if demographics, patriarchal control, or digital literacy moderated the relationship between social media usage and political participation.
- A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used throughout.

Testing Hypotheses

H1: Different social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok) have varying impacts on the political attitudes and participatory behavior of female users.

Table 1: ANOVA test of political participation

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	29.876	5	5.975	2.478	.031
Within Groups	1191.426	494	2.412		
Total	1221.302	499			

Table 2: Post Hoc Tests

(I) Which social media platforms do you use frequently?	(J) Which social media platforms do you use frequently?	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Facebook	WhatsApp	.52281	.20804	.122
	YouTube	.86033	.31775	.076
	Twitter (X)	.84842	.38577	.240
	TikTok	.64366	.52455	.823
	Instagram	.72036*	.23955	.033
WhatsApp	Facebook	-.52281	.20804	.122
	YouTube	.33752	.27624	.826
	Twitter (X)	.32561	.35236	.940
	TikTok	.12085	.50049	1.000
	Instagram	.19755	.18091	.885
YouTube	Facebook	-.86033	.31775	.076
	WhatsApp	-.33752	.27624	.826
	Twitter (X)	-.01190	.42643	1.000
	TikTok	-.21667	.55513	.999
	Instagram	-.13997	.30068	.997
Twitter (X)	Facebook	-.84842	.38577	.240
	WhatsApp	-.32561	.35236	.940
	YouTube	.01190	.42643	1.000
	TikTok	-.20476	.59668	.999
	Instagram	-.12806	.37184	.999
TikTok	Facebook	-.64366	.52455	.823
	WhatsApp	-.12085	.50049	1.000
	YouTube	.21667	.55513	.999
	Twitter (X)	.20476	.59668	.999
	Instagram	.07670	.51439	1.000
Instagram	Facebook	-.72036*	.23955	.033
	WhatsApp	-.19755	.18091	.885
	YouTube	.13997	.30068	.997
	Twitter (X)	.12806	.37184	.999
	TikTok	-.07670	.51439	1.000

Table 3: Platform comparison through Anova

Platform Pair	Mean Difference (I-J)	p-value	95% CI (Lower-Upper)	Significant
Facebook - Instagram	0.72036	.033	0.0350 - 1.4057	Yes
Facebook - WhatsApp	0.52281	.122	-0.0724 - 1.1180	No
Facebook - YouTube	0.86033	.076	-0.0487 - 1.7694	No
All other comparisons	Not significant	> .05		No

The H₁ hypothesis was aimed at testing whether there is a difference in the level of political participation between the most commonly used social media platforms by female voters. It turned out that platform choice is linked to the differences in the levels of political participation, $F(5, 494) = 2.478$, $p = .031$. Tukey HSD analysis demonstrated that only Facebook and Instagram users did significantly different with regard to the reported political participation (Facebook Users $M = 6.94$; Instagram users $M = 6.22$; mean difference = 0.72; $p = .033$). Comparisons of other platforms were not significant. Overall, the H₅ hypothesis is partially confirmed, and it seems that more platform-specific features facilitate political engagement, with Facebook appearing to be more favorable to political engagement than more visual-oriented platforms, such as Instagram.

H₂: The relationship between social media usage and political participation is moderated by demographic variables, such as age, and education level.

Table 3: Moderation Analysis: Age as a Moderator Between Social Media Usage and Political Participation

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	P
1	.089	.008	.006	3.96	.047

Predictor	B	SE	B	t	P
Constant	6.203	0.127	—	48.92	.000
Social Media Usage × Age (Interaction Term)	0.005	0.002	.089	1.99	.047

To test H2 (whether use of social media moderates the relationship between use of social media and political participation) a moderation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between social media use and political participation. The results showed that there was a statistically significant interaction effect, $F(1, 498) = 3.96$, $p = .047$ with a very small explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.008$), meaning that the model accounts only 0.8 percent of the variance in political participation. The interaction term (social media usage x age) was also significant ($B = 0.005$, $p = .047$; $0.89 = .089$) that means that age is a slight moderator to this relationship.

Table 4: Moderation Analysis: Education as a Moderator Between Social Media Usage and Political Participation

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	P
1	.137	.019	.017	9.55	.002

Predictor	B	SE	B	t	P
Constant	7.192	0.261	—	27.54	.000
Social Media Usage × Education (Interaction Term)	-0.010	0.003	-.137	-3.09	.002

There was a moderated regression analysis conducted to test whether the level of education acts as a mediating variable between the relationship between the use of social media and participation in politics (H6). The general model was significant, $F(1, 498) = 9.545$, $p = .002$ with a small explanatory power ($R^2 = .019$), showing that the model explains 1.9 percent of the variation in political participation.

The interaction term (use of social media × income) was significant ($B = -0.010$, $p = .002$), which exhibits a negative moderator effect. This follows that a positive relationship between social media use and political participation reduces with increase in education. Pragmatically, women of lesser education are more liable to social media as a source of political information and participation but highly educated women are less dependent on this source of information and political participation because they have access to other sources of information and political engagement. In general, H6 is accepted, which means that education has a significant impact on how social media can be translated into political involvement among women voters.

H3: Patriarchal family control and digital literacy reduces the relationship between social media engagement and political participation, either weakening or strengthening this relationship.

Table 5: Moderation Analysis: Digital Literacy as a Moderator Between Social Media Usage and Political Participation

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	p
1	.221	.049	.047	25.66	.000

Predictor	B	SE	B	T	P
Constant	7.246	0.178	—	40.739	.000
Social Media Usage × Digital Literacy (Interaction Term)	-0.004	0.001	-.221	-5.066	.000

A moderation test was performed to test H3, and establish whether a digital literacy coefficient mediates between the relationship between social media use and political participation. The same found the statistically significant model; $F(1, 498) = 25.664$, $p = \text{less than } 0.001$ and variance was $R^2 = 0.049$ indicating that the model explains 4.9% of the variance in political participation.

The interaction term (social media usage $\times$ the digital literacy) was also significant ($B = -0.004$, $p < .001$; $\beta = -.221$) showing the negative moderating effect. This shows that improved digital literacy decreases the effects that the use of social media will have on political participation. In practice, digitally less literate women depend more on social media to provide them with political information and engagement; whereas digitally more literate women are more selective and they tend to use more sources of information about politics and tend to engage with them more. All in all, the H7 is supported, and the overall finding is that digital literacy is a critical conditioning factor that determines the effectiveness of social media in promoting political participation, among the female electorate of Sukkur Division.

Table 5: Moderation Analysis: Patriarchal Control as a Moderator Between Social Media Usage and Political Participation

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	p
1	.092	.009	.007	4.28	.039

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	P
Constant	6.845	0.220	—	31.17	.000
Social Media Usage $\times$ Patriarchal Control (Interaction Term)	-0.003	0.002	-.092	-2.07	.039

To test H3, which was whether family control was patriarchal between social media use and political participation among women voters, the test was conducted as a regression analysis. The results indicated that the model has a statistically significant model, $F(1, 498) = 4.283$, $p = .039$ and very small explanatory power ($R^2 = .009$).

The interaction term (social media usage times patriarchal control) turned out significant ($B = -0.003$, $p = .039$; $\beta = -.092$) which points to the negative moderating effect. This implies that the already existing positive relationship between social media use and political participation deteriorates with an increase in patriarchal control. Practically speaking, females with more rigid familial or cultural limits can more easily transform online political activity into real political participation, despite their active use of social media. On the whole, the hypothesis H3 is supported, which emphasizes the impact of patriarchal structures as a limiting factor on the process of forming the political activity of women with the use of digital platforms in Sukkur Division.

Discussions and Conclusion

The results indicate that there are considerable differences in how political actors engage with the political form of social media, which is the presence of platform specific affordances in the presence of which social media consumers can be observed modifying their political behavior. In Facebook, political participation is stronger than in Instagram, probably because a text-rich environment, the existence of political groups, and establishment of discourse on politics form a stronger political interaction than in Instagram, which is largely involving a more visual interaction with graphics and lifestyle aspects of their existence rather than involving a substantive political interaction. This aligns with the digital affordance view, which views platforms as being not a space but a structurally different environment which shapes the intensity and form of political engagement, particularly in patriarchal security.

The findings of the moderation can be summarized as the demographic variables that would induce layers of inequalities in digital political participation are age and education. It turns out that younger women seem to be the more responsive sex that appears to be more incorporated and adaptable to the influence of social media, whereas older women are apparently less responsive. Likewise, education plays a negative moderating role between social media usage and political participation, indicating that more highly educated women will not be as reliant on social media usage as their primary source of political participation. This shows that the political effects of social media are not homogenous but will depend on the varying degrees of access to cognitive and informational resource.

The reasons of interest structure based on digital political participation is revealed more by the dual fine-tuning effects of digital literacy and patriarchal control. The negative moderating effect of digital literacy is that higher digital literacy skills do not necessarily result in increased political participation through social networks but rather, digitally literate users may be more critical, selective or diversified in their information strategies which will reduce their reliance on social media. Equally, the presence of patriarchal control became a major indicator of the suppression of political agency of women with or without digital accessibility. These findings underpin the wider argument that digital inclusiveness does not necessarily mean to be empowered as offline socio-cultural inequalities continue to be decisive on how political outcomes are shaped.

Recommendations for Future Research

- The studies should explore the platform-specific affordances by comparing, not only user demographics, but also the patterns of interaction across the platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, and WhatsApp, particularly in terms of influencing civic discourse.
- Moderators like religious values, household decision making dynamics or the influence of local media should be tested to unravel more concealed variables that may precondition women political participation.
- Greater use of research on a geographical basis to incorporate comparative aspects in rural, semi-urban, and urban locations across other districts of Sindh and Pakistan, should be addressed in efforts to validate whether the same patterns of digital-political behaviors hold.
- The research that needs to be put in practice is experimental studies or intervention based research that should be conducted to determine whether targeted civic education or digital literacy campaigns can have positive effects as regards the quality of political participation among female social media users.
- In the future, intersectional frames could be usefully integrated to understand how markers of identity (caste, class, ethnicity, marital status etc.) interact with digital interaction and the practice of politics.

Limitations of the Study

- There was no direct measurement of socio-economic status as an independent demographic variable, which might possibly miss an important factor which influences both digital access and political engagement.
- Additionally, the number of moderating variables tested was limited (only limited sources were tested), other sources were not used that could have been relevant considering the research topic and objective.
- Some respondents might have underreported their political behaviors or online activities due to caution or fear out of sensitivity around the issue of political views in some households or communities.

Conclusion

This paper investigated the correlation between social media use and political participation among female voters in the Sukkur Division with a particular reference to the moderating influence of digital literacy and patriarch roles. The findings confirm that social media serves as a significant source of political awareness that allows women to access the information, engage with the political content, and form an opinion in settings, where the traditional participation is limited. Nevertheless, the findings also prove that this influence is not universal and impartial, but is conditioned by particular abilities and socio-cultural statuses of people.

The empirical study has found that platform type plays a crucial role in encouraging participation, where Facebook encouraged more participation compared with the visual oriented platforms like Instagram. The variables of age and education were identified to moderate the relationship; however, with rather weak elucidatory force. More to the point, it was found that both digital literacy and patriarchal control moderated the relationship between using social media and participating in political activities, and found that stronger skills moderated the increased use of social media as a filtering mechanism rather than as an enhancement of political participation, whereas stronger patriarchal control had the opposite effect.

The study makes the following conclusion about the effect of social media on political participation: social media does not directly influence the onset of political participation but is rather a conditional factor the effect of which is determined by structural and contextual factors. Although it can potentially increase women participation in politics within conservative contexts, it is limited in its application because of inequalities in their access, schooling, digital literacy, and social-cultural constraints. Thus, digital access serves as a component of complementary strategies that need to improve women political participation by topping it off through vast improvement of literacy and overall socio-cultural reforms.

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