
Social Media and Political Mobility During Imran Khan's Era

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Abstract

The evolution of media from print to digital has significantly reshaped political mobilization, with social media emerging as a powerful tool for political discourse and activism. This research explores the transformative role of social media in political mobility during Imran Khan's era, examining its impact on political engagement, election dynamics, and public discourse in Pakistan. By leveraging platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, Khan and his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), effectively mobilized support, shaping narratives and influencing voter behavior. The study contextualizes this within global digital movements, such as the Occupy Movement and the Arab Spring, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges of social media in political communication. The 2018 Pakistani general elections serve as a case study, demonstrating how social media facilitated political campaigns, amplified electoral controversies, and shaped public perceptions of governance and democracy. While digital platforms have democratized political participation, they have also raised concerns regarding misinformation, electoral manipulation, and the integrity of democratic processes. This research underscores the growing role of social media in modern political landscapes, particularly in the digital era's shifting power dynamics and participatory governance.

Keywords: social media, political mobilization, activism

Introduction

From the early days of print to the present digital revolution, the media's role in shaping political mobilization has undergone a significant transformation. To explain this intricate link, this research incorporates important ideas from several aspects. A new era of unprecedented connectivity and participation in political communication has been ushered in by the internet and social media platforms. Over the course of history, from the early days of print to the current digital revolution, the role of the

media in influencing political mobilization has experienced significant changes. An unprecedented period of connectivity and participation in political communication has been marked by the emergence of the internet and social media platforms. The influence of digital media on political discourse and mobilization, with case studies like the Occupy Movement and the Arab Spring are used to highlight the transformative potential. But digital media also presents challenges.

An important turning point in the development of information technology and communication occurred with the advent of the internet in the late 20th century (Leiner et al., 1997). The internet was first created for scholarly and military applications, but it swiftly grew to become a worldwide communication network (Abbate, 2000). The development of protocols like TCP/IP, which made it possible for data to be exchanged seamlessly across many networks, was what spurred this spread (Cerf & Kahn, 1974). The World Wide Web, a system of interconnected hyper text documents viewable using web browsers, was developed as the internet grew (Berners-Lee, 1991). The World Wide Web allowed people to produce, distribute, and consume content on a never-before-seen scale, democratizing access to information (Castells, 2001).

The emergence of email, forums, and early social networking sites like Friendster and Six Degrees around this time also helped to set the stage for eventual advancements in social media (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social media platforms that would transform online interactions were made possible by this new stage in the development of the internet. The 2004 debut of Facebook allowed users to connect with friends and family, create profiles, and share updates, which helped the site swiftly become a prominent social networking site (Ellison et al., 2007). When it was launched in 2006, Twitter pioneered the micro blogging format, which enabled users to post brief messages to a large audience, promoting instantaneous communication and the spread of viral material (Kwak et al., 2010). When YouTube was introduced in 2005, it completely changed the way that people shared videos online by giving them a convenient way to create, watch, and share videos (Burgess & Green, 2009). With the emergence of these platforms, the traditional media paradigm, this placed a greater emphasis on professional organizations producing and distributing media and significantly altering. Instead, a more decentralized model allowed individuals to directly participate in the creation and dissemination of media (Jenkins, 2006). Social media platforms have grown exponentially as a result of the widespread use of smart phones and mobile internet connectivity, becoming an indispensable aspect of everyday life for billions of people globally (Pew Research Center, 2019). Social media has developed into a vital tool for communication, amusement, and information exchange, having a significant impact on a number of societal spheres, such as politics, business, and interpersonal relationships (Hampton et al., 2011). A turning point in Pakistani politics was reached by the 2018 general

elections, which showed how much digital media has affected the political system. Both PTI's political agenda and its skillful use of social media were credited with the party's electoral triumph. Election-related scandals, including claims of electoral manipulation and tampering, surrounded the results despite the winner. These anomalies, according to opposition parties and detractors, weaken and corrupt the electoral process. The discourse around the elections' legitimacy and voting process' openness was greatly influenced by social media, which served as a forum for arguments on these issues. Social media's ability to effect political results and public opinion was demonstrated by its involvement in drawing attention to and intensifying these issues. In the face of these difficulties, Khan's ability to use digital media and manage it highlighted the increasing significance of internet platforms for contemporary political campaigns and governance. There are two types of media that plays a great role during Imran Khan era.

1. Print Media

Since it offers in-depth analysis, investigative journalism, and a forum for public discourse, print media has long been a mainstay of Pakistan's media landscape. Press freedom, budgetary constraints, and rivalry from digital media constituted major obstacles for print media during Imran Khan's Prime Ministership. This chapter examines how print media has changed over time, as well as its difficulties and effects (Khan, 2021). Print media was used as a mass communication method for disseminating information.

Role of Newspapers

During Imran Khan Regime, newspapers were vital in defining the political narrative. They were still significant sources of news, discussion, and political analysis because they were still considered conventional media. Newspapers remained critical to public opinion, political mobilization, and governmental accountability in Pakistan's media landscape even in the face of the growth of digital and electronic media. They provided for critical scrutiny of official activities and kept the public informed about recent developments by remaining constant in political discourse (Khan, 2021).

Role of Magazines

Magazines were just as important in influencing political narratives and popular conversation since 2018. For further in-depth analysis, interviews, and investigative research, turn to periodicals; newspapers and electronic media supplied daily updates. Periodicals that published well-researched pieces about Imran Khan's leadership, government policies, socio economic trends, and political developments included Herald, Newslite, The Friday Times, and Naya Daur. Magazines stood out from other media formats because this made it possible for readers to see politics with greater consideration and reflection (Rashid, 2022).

The Grey Side of Print Media

Upon taking government, Imran Khan's anti-corruption stance and reform pledges were welcomed by numerous prominent publications and magazines. Leading newspapers' editorial boards praised his vision for a "New Pakistan" and repeated his appeals for responsibility. The public's favorable opinion of his governorship was shaped in part by this early backing (Ali, 2020). Print media also started taking a more critical approach as Imran Khan's regime gained traction. Newspaper columns and investigative stories became more scrutinized as a result of political disputes, governance problems, and economic difficulties. This change in editorial tone emphasized the value of print media as a forum for reporting and reflected the growing discontent of the public (Hussain, 2021).

2. Electronic Media

In Pakistan, the political discourse and popular opinion have been greatly influenced by electronic media, which includes radio, television, and internet channels. Electronic media emerged as a vital tool for the government and opposition during Imran Khan's prime ministership, impacting votes, public opinion, and policy discussions. The dynamics, obstacles, and impact of electronic media are explored in this chapter.

Role of Television

TV media covered major events like elections, protests, and parliamentary sessions live in addition to providing daily news and hosting talk programs and political debates during Imran Khan's reign. Capital Talk, Of the Record, and AajShahzebKhanzada Kay Saath were among the most popular political talk shows. Voters were informed about the political climate of the nation and public opinion was shaped by the deliberations of political analysts, opposition leaders, and government spokespeople on these shows. Voters become more politically conscious as a result of their ongoing exposure to these types of presentations (Khan, 2023).

Role of Radio

Radio provided a special forum for political discussion and public participation. Radio may not have the same visual impact as television, but because of its wide accessibility and emphasis on auditory communication, it was able to reach a variety of listeners, even those who lived in distant places with limited access to the internet and television. Throughout Imran Khan's reign, major radio networks like Radio Pakistan, FM 101, and Radio City continuously covered political developments, popular reactions, and government policies. This helped to shape public opinion and political awareness (Khan, 2023). Radio was also instrumental in disseminating instructional and instructive materials about public policy and governance. In order to clarify the government initiatives, economic policies, and social reforms implemented by Imran Khan's administration, numerous radio stations prepared special programs and segments. Through educating the

public on complicated topics including health initiatives, anti-corruption efforts, and tax reforms, these programs hoped to increase public knowledge and comprehension of governmental policies (Siddiqui, 2023).

Role of Internet & Social Media

The way information was distributed and used was revolutionized by the internet during Imran Khan's tenure as Pakistan's prime minister. As digital platforms proliferated, they opened up new channels for political engagement, mobilization, and communication that had an unparalleled effect on public opinion and political activity. Social media sites, like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, have become essential for influencing public opinion, forming political discourse, and promoting political activism (Khan, 2023).

Electronic Media's Support for PTI

Many electronic media outlets supported Imran Khan's administration in the early days of its existence. A number of prominent news stations found resonance in the pledge of an anti-corruption administration and the concept of a "Naya Pakistan". Positive components of the government's plan were frequently emphasized in talk shows, interviews, and news broadcasts, which helped to foster a positive perception among the citizenry (Qureshi, 2020).

The Ascent of Talk Shows in Politics

During the Imran Khan administration, political talk programs took center stage in electronic media. Politicians, commentators, and journalists might discuss public policy, political changes, and national issues on these shows. These programs frequently provided breaking news and sparked political debates, and they were crucial in influencing public opinion (Khan, 2021) the young and energetic party members were all in the shows.

Transition To Digital Platforms

Traditional electronic media was greatly impacted by the growth of social media and digital platforms during the Imran Khan period. With livestreaming, social media updates, and material available only online, several news channels increased their online footprint. Because more and more young people were consuming news online, this change made it possible for electronic media to reach a wider audience (Iqbal, 2023). Social media platforms were widely used to disseminate information and create pro PTI stance attracting the youth of country. However, financial strains, competition from digital media, and the continuous fight for press freedom were only a few of the difficulties experienced by electronic media. As networks were compelled to give priority to dramatic programming in order to draw viewers and advertisements, it became more and more challenging to strike a balance between business interests and journalistic ethics (Ahmed, 2024). Concluding, electronic media played a multifarious role in both supporting and criticizing the administration. In addition to facing

tremendous obstacles from censorship, financial constraints, and competition from digital platforms, it was crucial in forming public opinion and keeping the government responsible as in Pakistan's political and social scene, electronic media continued to play a significant role despite these obstacles.

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