

Rebirth of Democracy in Pakistan Through Internet

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Abstract

Objectives: Current study objects to investigate; 1. how democratic attitude of youth is being affected by their attitude towards internet, 2. what is the democratic attitude of the youth according to the usage of internet? and 3. provision of internet benefits for democratic consolidation. **Methodology:** In this regard a survey was conducted among the students of computer science and information technology departments/ institutions of four universities of Pakistan belonging to various provinces of the country, such as; University of Sindh, Jamshoro; Punjab University Lahore; Balochistan University Quetta and University of Peshawar. In total 600 questionnaires were distributed. Researchers became able to collect back 482 questionnaires. Out of these questionnaires 427 questionnaires were found valid after deducting missing values and outliers. **Findings:** Current study finds a significant and positive correlation between student's attitude towards the subscale of internet such as; using internet in research, using internet in social interaction, liking to use internet in teaching, using internet in sharing information; and the subscale of democracy like; inclination to democracy; devotion to democracy and qualities of democracies; Adverse to the positive relation, this study also finds a negative correlation between negative view of democracy, using internet in research and liking to use internet in teaching. The study claims that merely laws and regulations are not sufficient to fulfill democratic needs but democratic education and values must be enhanced individually and collectively. Furthermore, it finds internet as a most powerful tool to highlight loopholes in the system. **Applications:** Current study may help to enhance the positive use of internet in democratic process generally and in electoral process particularly. Moreover, study contributes in understanding the attitude of young generation towards internet and its linkage with government and democratic issues.

Keywords: Attitude, Democracy, Informational Technology, Internet, Pakistan

1. Introduction

Internet is probably the biggest and most powerful tool for communication men has ever created. Whether it is; election, governance, communication, information sharing, shopping, entertainment or even cultural interaction, it is influencing everyone's life immensely. Existing literature acknowledges the augmentative usage of internet in almost every arena of life. In contemporary societies, it is an accepted fact that internet is playing and will play a significant role in educating every citizen. Economical as well as educational development of the modern societies may be ascertained through youth attitude towards inter-

net. Since last decade, researchers have been focusing on the measurement of e-governance and e-democracy¹. Rapidly, this mode of communication and information sharing has already taken roots in almost every society of the world through enabling individuals to be literate in an easier and faster method. Furthermore, it facilitates public to express their problems and raise voice for their rights. This increasing trend in the use of internet across the world is recognized as one of the essential steps to reach electronic or digital democracy². Internet is considered as a phenomenon which provides equal opportunities to every citizen without the differences of religion, gender, origin, ideology and class to participate in national and

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international socio-economic and socio political affairs. They further ascertain that this increasing phenomenon among the youth leads the world from global village to cyber society³. According to the latest studies of the domain; easier access and provision of equal opportunities to every individual, makes internet a strong factor on the planet earth that not only protects but also develops democracy⁴. Contrary to the newspaper and television, internet is based upon two or multi-ways of communication. Therefore, it has the power to unite people and provide a platform for information sharing by ignoring their geographical, boarder, ideological and religious differences which are not possible under global laws⁵. Assert the internet as a major ingredient for the rebirth of democracy. Furthermore, they claim that world is being molded into the ancient city of Greece (Agora) by internet because it provides the facilities and easy methods to spread information⁶. Besides information sharing and entertainment, internet is providing an effective, transparent, secure and quick electronic voting system which not only saves time, money and reduces the chances of rigging but it also increases the voter turnout or public participation⁷. In recent past, attitude towards the use of internet has been increased in the young generation of almost every society. Keeping it in the mind, domain researches have responded accordingly. A study conducted in Mexico, found 59% of the students who were using internet 50 hours in a month⁸. The positive and significant attitude of university student towards the use of internet was also noticed in the United States⁹. A strong inclination towards internet has been observed in the published literature. It is also finding that the individual who is the regular user of internet have higher democratic attitude as compared to those who are using internet irregularly for any reason¹⁰. Discrimination, authoritarianism, alienation, weak judicial system and violation of human rights are some of the factors that make democracy a requirement in society¹¹. In a state where democracy is fragile, these reasons must be realized while making policies and decision implementation process. Nonetheless, decision makers do not realize it themselves but it is the public that raise the voice against the injustice, discrimination and violation¹². To raise the voice, it is also essential for the public to be educated about their rights. Internet is the universally accepted platform which educate public regarding social, economic and political issues.

Besides education, public distrust in political leader and institution increases the mal-governance which ulti-

mately decreases the performance of the democracy¹³. Accordingly, public political participation and trust are fundamental factors which are required to consolidate democratic system. Recent studies in the west have found a positive contribution of digital platform in enhancing public political participation¹⁴. By providing easier and effective services to the citizen through digital platform their trust in the institution is also influenced in the developed democracy.

2. Previous Studies

The relation of communication technology and democracy is no more riddle in the modern time. This tool of communication was first declared as “democratizing force”. The potential of *RAND* paper¹⁵ was firstly realized when it describes the “third wave of democracy”. Prior to this description it was globally accepted that economic growth is the only fundamental factor that can enhance the process of democratization¹⁶. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, communication technology emerged as one of the most important effecters on the assumption that democracy can only be developed through economic growth^{17,18}. Today, infinite theories are present that explains the importance of internet for democratic development¹⁹. “Dictator’s dilemma” is one of most popular theories which highlight the impact of internet on democracy²⁰. The theory argues that internet not only facilitates global market but it forces government to keep their communicative boarder open to the other countries. According to the theory, the persistent flux of communication provides an effective passage not merely to commercial activities and information but also for information which is related to democracy²¹. Through the facilities those are provided by internet, public gains potential to highlight the problems related to the governance and politics. The general characteristics of internet such as; multidirectional, sensor free and low cost makes it even easier to criticize government’ actions which create negative image of the nation in the international community²². Internet enlighten the public of non-democratic or less democratic countries through the news related to the freedom, income, opportunities and lifestyles of the public living in the democratic states²³. As a result, public of non-democratic or less democratic countries desire a democratic change²⁴. With the passage of time this desire, converted into the public demand for democracy. It is argued by Steele and Stein (2002) that internet magnify the tendency in international

affairs. Several researcher of the domain claims internet as an invariant and neutral factor^{25,26}. The only effect of this politically neutral factor is to magnify the situation to the new elevation. For example, in an authoritarian regime, internet gravitate to worsen the brutality while in the democratic states, it strives to improve the democratic as well as social values²⁷. After looking at the history of democracy, it becomes apparent that the ascension of democracy starts since 1970s²⁸. Developed and influential countries like; United States and Britain have been campaigning for democratic system across the globe for decades. Additionally, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) are also dedicated to highlight and counter the problems related to the democratic values throughout the world. Despite all these democracy advocates, internet is more powerful source that can buttress democracy in reaching non-democratic states²⁹. The abundant information provided by internet helps individuals to take a line of direction in any social as well as political problem. It also helps public to choose suitable leader among them¹⁷. Like the social values, democratic values also failed to get due attention in Pakistan. Less opportunities and awareness regarding internet is perhaps one of the factors. Literature witnesses that very rare work has been done in Pakistan in which attitude towards internet and democracy has been examined. The current study is an effort in which students' attitude towards internet and democracy has been measure. To investigate the relation of internet and democracy through students' attitude, following objectives have been targeted.

3. Aim of the Study

Current study aims to investigate students' attitude towards internet and democracy. Focusing the aim, following objectives have been targeted to achieve.

1. How democratic attitude of the youth is being affected by their attitude towards internet?
2. What is the democratic attitude of the youth according to the usage of internet? and
3. Provision of internet benefits for democratic consolidation.

4. Research Methodology

In nature, this is descriptive study which is based on survey method. As it is mentioned above that this study aims

to investigate youth attitude, therefore; deductive method has been chosen because existing literature consider it as one of the authentic methods to examine human attitude, intention and behavior³⁰. For the collection of data, survey questionnaire was used. After data collection it was analyzed by using SPSS version 24.0 for windows.

4.1 Survey Instrument and Sampling Procedure

For data collection a close-ended survey questionnaire, consisting of 60 items (33 for *attitude towards internet* and the remaining 27 for *attitude towards democracy*) was adopted from the literature. Five points Likert scale where 1 shows "strongly disagree" and 5 indicates "strongly agree" was used. To make it more understandable, language of the questionnaire was slightly changed without changing the original sense of the items. To know, whether questionnaire is valid in our society or not, a pre-test and pilot study was conducted before main study. Data were collected through personal visits. Consent of the respondents was taken before distributing the questionnaire. Participation was totally based on voluntary. For main study, 600 questionnaires were distributed among the students of computer science and information technology departments/ institutions of four universities of Pakistan belonging to various provinces of the country, such as; university of Sindh, Jamshoro, Punjab University, Lahore, Baluchistan University, Quetta and Peshawar University, Peshawar. Out of total distributed, 482 questionnaires were received back but 427 questionnaires were found valid for the analysis after deducting missing values and outliers.

4.2 Measurement of Data

After data coding, missing values were deducted, this was found less than 5%. The found result of missing values was problem free³¹. Despite, all these cases were excluded from the data set³². In this way, outliers as well as normality of the data was measured by applying different statistical techniques such as; standardized scores and^{2,23}. Twenty two cases were detected whose value was above the required value ($\pm \geq 3$) of standardized scores while the study is free from the presence of multivariate outliers³⁴. All these cases were removed from the data to insure good result. Over all Cronbach alpha for the four variables of *Attitude Towards Internet* (ATI) was noticed 0.87 and 0.82 was obtained for the four variables of *Attitude*

Towards Democracy (ATD). Furthermore, Pearson correlation and (one way) variance were also conducted at the significance level of 0.05. Result of the Pearson shows a positive relation among the four factors and with attitude towards democracy (Table 1).

5. Results of the Study

Findings of current study are divided into three sections according to the objectives of the study which are described above. In the first section (3.1) correlation between students' ATI and ATD are presented while in the section 3.2 what the democratic attitude of the youth is, according to the usage of internet has been described. The third and last section (3.3) provides the result according to the benefit of internet for democratic consolidation.

5.1 Correlation between Students' ATI and ATD

In order to find out whether a correlation between students' ATI and ATD is present or not, this section is given. In this regard Table 1 is given below which extensively describe the results related to the first section of the findings. It can be seen in the Table 1 that there is significant and positive correlation ($p < 0.01$) has been noticed between student's attitude towards UIRH, LUIT, UISI and INTD, DNTD, QTOD. Furthermore, study finds a significant and positive correlation between student's attitude towards UISN

and DNTD while a non-significant and negative correlation ($p < 0.01$) between students' attitude towards UIRH, LUIT and NVOD. In addition, non-significant and negative correlation was also seen between UIS, UISI and NVOD (Table 1).

5.2 Students' Attitude Towards Democracy and their Intention Behind using Internet

Table 2 broadly explains the obtained result related to the students' attitude towards democracy and their intention behind using internet. Findings of the variance analysis shows (Table 2) a significant difference between students' attitude towards DNTD ($F = 4.08$ $p < 0.05$) and QTOD ($F = 3.19$ $p < 0.05$). A significance difference was noticed between mean results of students using internet for different purpose such as; research, chat and other by applying Scheffe' test on the subscale of DNTD. It is apparent in Table 2 that our respondents use internet for "research" purpose (4.21) and "chat" (4.38) have the highest mean score in the subscale of DNTD which highlight that they are at the scale of "strongly agree" while the remaining are at scale of "agree".

In this way, a significant difference was also observed in the subscale of QTOD between mean score of the participants who use internet for different reasons. In addition, study also explore that in the subscale of QTOD almost all groups of the respondents who use internet for different purposes are at the scale of "agree" but the group of the participant who state that they use internet for "other" purpose (3.74) are at the lowest scale.

Table 1. Pearson correlation between students' ATI & ATD

Democracy	Internet			
	UIRH	UISI	LUIT	UISI
INTD Pearson Sig. (2 tailed)	0.131.005	0.43.003	0.140.000	0.183.000
DNTD Pearson Sig. (2 tailed)	0.153.001	0.108.020	0.139.003	0.208.000
QTOD Pearson Sig. (2 tailed)	0.131.005	0.81.071	0.128.005	0.239.000
NVOD Pearson Sig. (2 tailed)	-0.096.36	000.991	-0.181.000	-0.018.434
Mean (Internet subscales)	3.91	271	3.18	3.36
Standard Deviation (Internet subscales)	.56	1.08	.65	.81

Note: UIRH= Using internet in research; UISN= Using internet in social interaction; LUIT=; Liking to use internet in teaching; UISI= Using internet in sharing information; INTD= Inclination to democracy; DNTD= Devotion to democracy; QTOD= Qualities of democracies; NVOD= Negative view of democracy

Table 2. ANOVA results of student's attitude towards democracy according to their purpose of using internet

Factors	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	ANOVA results
INTD				
Research	4.07	.658	241	F=1.86 p >0.05
Communication	4.08	.655	109	
Chat	4.07	.627	51	
Other	3.86	.756	26	
Total	4.09	.669	427	
DNTD				
Research	4.21	.709	241	F=4.08 p >0.05
Communication	4.16	.781	109	
Chat	4.38	.633	51	
Other	3.86	.921	26	
Total	4.12	.754	427	
QTOD				
Research	4.19	.731	241	F=3.19 p >0.05
Communication	4.17	.721	109	
Chat	4.13	.808	51	
Other	3.74	.716	26	
Total	4.14	.739	427	
NVOD				
Research	2.76	.928	241	F=2.75 p >0.05
Communication	2.61	.890	109	
Chat	2.48	.959	51	
Other	2.87	.909	26	
Total	2.71	.928	427	

Note: INTD= Inclination to democracy; DNTD= Devotion to democracy; QTOD= Qualities of democracies; NVOD= Negative view of democracy; Std. Dev= Standard deviation; N= Population

5.3 Student's Attitude Towards Democracy According to Benefits of Internet for Democratic Consolidation

Significant difference between students' attitudes towards INTD according to the benefits of internet was noticed ($F= 2.58$ $p >0.05$) by applying variance analysis (Table 3). In addition results of the Scheffe' test find statistical difference between the mean scores of the respondents' group who state that they are being facilitated by the internet in the learning process or education and those who acknowledges internet a provider of sources in the research. In the subscale of INTD, highest level of mean score (4.21) was obtained for the respondent group who think internet facilitate them in learning and the lowest

mean score (3.92) was noticed for the group who claim internet provides them different sources in research.

6. Discussion

Present study finds a positive impact of attitude toward internet on democracy in Pakistan. Furthermore, a significant and positive correlation between students' attitude towards the subscale of internet such as; UIRH; UISN; LUIT; UISI and the subscale of democracy like; INTD; DNTD; QTOD. Finding of the study is also supported by the recent studies^{10,35}. On the basis of these results it can be said that internet is an effective mean for educating people regarding democracy and enhancing democratic culture in Pakistan.

Table 3. ANOVA results of student's attitude towards democracy according to the benefits provided by internet

Factors	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	ANOVA results
INTD				
Enabling information sharing	4.01	.658	194	F= 2.58 p >0.05
Facilitating in learning	4.21	.531	87	
Providing sources for a research	3.92	.657	107	
Recognizing different societies & culture	4.02	.662	24	
Other	4.09	.888	15	
Total	4.02	661	427	
DNTD				
Enabling information sharing	4.18	.757	194	F= 1.58 p >0.05
Facilitating in learning	4.29	.491	87	
Providing sources for a research	4.03	.789	107	
Recognizing different societies & culture	4.07	.761	24	
Other	4.14	.962	15	
Total	4.14	.741	427	
QTOD				
Enabling information sharing	4.02	.781	194	F= 1.01 p >0.05
Facilitating in learning	4.12	.642	87	
Providing sources for a research	3.98	.711	107	
Recognizing different societies & culture	4.13	.551	24	
Other	4.17	.888	15	
Total	4.03	.738	.738	
NVOD				
Enabling information sharing	2.82	.928	194	F= 1.22 p >0.05
Facilitating in learning	2.61	.933	87	
Providing sources for a research	2.63	.858	107	
Recognizing different societies & culture	2.53	.827	24	
Other	2.67	1.11	15	
Total	2.68	.927	427	

Note: INTD= Inclination to democracy; DNTD= Devotion to democracy; QTOD= Qualities of democracies; NVOD= Negative view of democracy; Std. Dev= Standard deviation; N= Population

Second most important finding of this study is a negative correlation between NVOD; UIRH and LUIT. It can be seen in Table 2 and 3 that students' attitude toward NVOD was at the "neutral" scale. The negative correlation may be caused due to the shortage of internet facilities in Pakistan and individuals' hesitation not to speak against the system on social platforms.

The third finding of current study is that, majority of our respondents were at the scale of "agree" when inquired about their attitude towards INTD; QTOD, their attitude towards DNTD was noticed at the level of "strongly agree"

and at the level of "neutral" when examined about their attitude towards NVOD. The "agree" level of respondent attitude towards INTD; QTOD and DNTD highlights that students in Pakistan comprehend democracy as suitable and strong social system for the country. On the other hand, "neutral" level of participants' attitude toward NVOD need attention in Pakistan. The "neutral" level of the respondents may be resultant due to the difference between their democratic perception and application. Most possibly, students have faced lot of things which are undemocratic and against the democratic values in the

society. Therefore, participants of the current study may have related those undemocratic experiences to the subscale “negative view of democracy”.

7. Research Contribution

Social peace, tolerance and love have been vanished out from society of Pakistan. Therefore, it is the need of the time to establish a society which is based on justice, tolerance, harmony and love. It is only possible by applying and respecting democratic values. Merely laws and regulations are not sufficient to fulfill democratic needs but democratic education and values must be enhanced individually and collectively. In this regard, internet can play a paramount role like democracy. It is the unfortunate of the country that despite of the fact that, majority of the population likes to use internet and live in a democratic system both democratic as well as cyber systems are not working as wished by the public. In this castle of fish, current study may be the first step which compels the policy makers to design a policy in which internet can be used for the consolidation and betterment of democracy. Despite of the social media freedom in Pakistan, our youth is using internet for purposes like; entertainment, social interaction, self-publicity and in some cases for awareness. It is the calamity of this society that majority of the public is misapplying internet. Not only policy makers but the present study may highlight the proper usage of internet for public as well. Summarily, the study may help to enhance the positive use of internet in democratic process generally and electoral process particularly.

8. Conclusion

Current study aims to examine students’ attitude toward internet and democracy. In this regard, a survey was conducted in the four major universities of Pakistan representing the different provinces (Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) of the country. The current study finds a significant and positive correlation between student’s attitude towards the subscale of internet such as; using internet in research, using internet in social interaction, liking to use internet in teaching, using internet in sharing information; and the subscale of democracy like; inclination to democracy; devotion to democracy and qualities of democracies; Adversely to the positive relation this study also finds a negative

correlation between negative view of democracy, using internet in research and liking to use internet in teaching. The study claims that merely laws and regulations are not sufficient to fulfill democratic needs but democratic education and values must be enhanced individually and collectively. After obtaining the results of the study, it can be claimed that democracy and internet are significantly correlated. Democracy allows individual to live freely in term of political, economic, social and religious arena. At the same time, democratic system regularly improve itself in the fields of; human rights, public participation in national affairs, protecting social and cultural values. In the same way, internet provides equal opportunities to every citizen to express himself. Alike democratic system, internet also steadily improves itself in terms of technological and morality day by day. Therefore, this study also claims that internet is an effective tool in enlarging democratic education, values and knowledge in Pakistan.

9. Limitations and Future Research Path

Alike several studies, current study is not free from the limitations. The current study objects to measure attitude towards internet in general. In future, attitude towards social media can be investigated because majority of the young generation is highly interested in the use of social media. In the methodological context, current study adopted cross-sectional approach by applying close-ended instrument. Longitudinal approach and open-ended survey questionnaire may provide more authentic results in the future. Group of population other than university students can be selected in future.

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