



Social Media and Political Socialization of Students in Higher Education Institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Zubair Khan, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Gomal University, Pakistan, drzubairbaloch@gu.edu.pk

Farhan Ali, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Political Science, Qurtuba University, Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Zafar Abbas, Assistant Professor, Government College, No.1 D.I.Khan KP Pakistan

Abstract: Modern communication technologies have profoundly influenced all the sphere of human life. Every aspect of social life including but not limited to education, administration, and statecraft etc. have been influenced by contemporary advancement in technologies. Political socialization is also not immune to its influence. This article focuses on the impacts of new media on political socialization of students of higher education institutions in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Awareness of the democratic system, civic sense and democratic obligations are powerful tools to enable the citizens to effectively engage in a country's politics. Social media is significantly playing its role in providing a deliberative forum to citizens of all age groups in general and young citizens in particular for the development of political socialization. This paper employs positivist approach. Survey has been conducted by using adapted questionnaire (contained 49 questions) which was consisted of 4 research variables and 6 demographic variables. Different statistical tests have been employed for extracting analytical findings.

Key words: Political Socialization, Social Media, Knowledge of Political System, Civic Sense, Political Accountability.

I. INTRODUCTION

Political socialization is a grooming process through which people know about basic political concepts, behaviors, customs, and political principles (Ferris & Stein, 2018). People assimilate these information and over a period of time through a complex process, these become part and parcel of their practical life. Political socialization tends to sustain the existing political structure and helps to work effectively. It is thought that the functioning of a political system is based on the social patterns, abilities, opinions, behaviors, habits, manners and political information of the individuals of a society (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Political socialization is influenced by a variety of actors, ranging from family and institutions to media as agents of political socialization. No one can deny the pivotal role of media in enabling the public sphere to mediate by establishing links between individuals and authorities in state (Khan et al., 2013). Generally, youth in almost every society has aptitude and knowledge about different computer programs, videos games and internet in today's world. Students of different educational institutions frequently use modern and latest technologies for receiving information and awareness. A variety of modern communication devices like mobile phones, music players, videos cam, personal computers etc., are being used to get valuable information (Abbas and Nawaz, 2014). Students mostly depend on the internet to streamline their current knowledge (Khan et al., 2013). According to reports released in January 2020, in Pakistan there are 76.38 million internet users since its introduction in early 1990s. Internet penetration today stands at 35 percent as of January 2020. 37 million people in Pakistan use social media, consequently social media penetration is 17 percent. Similarly, there are 164.9 million cell phone connections in Pakistan which show that mobile phone penetration in the country stands at 75 percent of the total population of 220 million (Datareportal, 2020). According to world ranking Pakistan is at 26th number in facebook usage (Farooq, 2019). According to these reports, it can be predicted that the role of social media will keep on enhancing in future socio-political developments in the country (Khan et al., 2013). With the passage of time, social media is becoming more and more popular in Pakistan. As the usage of internet has been increased remarkably in Pakistan, it has made her the 5th biggest mobile phone society in whole Asia (Ali, 2016). It has been observed that the increasing use of digital media technology in the recent years have tremendously affected the people in Pakistan especially its youth. Sixty-four percent of Pakistan population is under 30 years of age (UNDP, 2018), and has been found heavily involved in using new media especially mobile phone and social websites, therefore both the state and society is bound to feel the ramifications of increasing use of social media. The impact of social media is very constructive on

young generation of the country and has been aiding them in the field of politics and societal aspects. Latest social media devices like cell phones, i-pads, tablets etc., can be seen with every age group person along with availability of internet facility. These devices are used for information, entertainment and connectivity purposes by them. Social networking sites like WhatsApp, Viber, YouTube, MySpace, Blogs, Twitter, and Facebook are used widely for communication and connectivity (Zaheer, 2018).

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

It is important to use the proper tools and techniques research for validity and reliability in research. Relying on the existing research a theoretical model was extracted with the help of literature review. Survey was used to collect primary data with the help of a questionnaire. Data was collected from four public sector universities in major cities of the province of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. SPSS was used to analyze the data acquired through questionnaire in order to test hypotheses and answer hypothesized questions.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1: Socialization

Socialization is a spontaneous process through which conduct of an individual is modified in order to match the standard of a civilization or community. It is an activity partly voluntary and partly involuntary that spans over the entire life of a person through which individual acquires the pattern of a behavior acceptable in a society. He or she acquires tastes, enthusiastic sense, the standards of right and wrong in a community. A cultural process which is acceptable by the society is known as socialization. Many scholars contend that socialization provides basis for the growth and development of any society and human beings living in it (Turner, 2006). Socialization is like a metamorphosis that changes an individual to dignified citizen with a particular way of thinking, a set of attitudes, modes of emotions and aspirations that shared by social beings living around him (Abrutyn, 2016).

3.2: Political Socialization (PS)

Socialization is a multidimensional process. All of its dimensions are equally significant for shaping the personality of a socialized citizen. Political socialization is of utmost significance as it helps in shaping people concepts about statecrafts, political structures and political customs. These processes continue from birth to death. Radio, newspapers, television, mates, guardians, parents and educational institutions are sources of transmitting of political values; this process is known as political socialization. Political socialization enables the people to know about basic political concepts, behaviors, customs, and political principles (Janosk *et al.*, 2005). Citizens know and ultimately acquire political bonding, patterns and direction by the instrument of political socialization which are life lasting (Neundorf & Smets, 2017). Political socialization supports the existing political systems and facilitates its effective and successful functioning. Scholars contend that the functioning of a political system primarily based on wills and social arrangements, manners, conducts, abilities, views, and political information of the members of society (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Sigel is of the view that political socialization is a well-arranged mechanism which makes political values and conducts for the proper functioning of a political system. From generation to generation this political behavior is transmitted properly (Khan & Shah, 2015). Political socialization is responsible for the introduction of political personalities, state departments and political mechanism and political beliefs among people (Guth, Kellstedt & Smidt, 2010).

3.2.1: Elements of Political Socialization

Numerous theorists have identified various fundamental components of political socialization. Most scholars, however, agree on the following elements:

Knowledge of Political System

Basic facts and figures about a state and its governance system is generally referred to as Political knowledge (Bimber, 2001). Political scholars believe that political knowledge is a set of information about state related issues which remain in mind for a lengthy span of time. In view of Boudreau and Lupia,

political knowledge is a measure for reckoning the citizens capabilities to learn about pattern of fact related problems (Pastarmadzhieva, 2015). Inhabitants of a community having interest in the affairs of republics and its mechanisms are supposed to be politically more competent. Among them such people emerge who construct and make newer political ideologies and take part in public matters with greater zeal and interest (Owen and Soule, 2015).

Political Attitudes

The way individual respond to day today issues is of utmost significance. The methods they deem acceptable to bring change and the goals they target are all important dimensions of political attitudes of individual (O'Neil, 2003). Mental tendency to comprehend political issues gets influenced by variety of external factors and existing conditions, therefore understanding of political attitudes and behaviors, and their determinants is of immense significance (Gerber *et al.*, 2010). Change in political attitude is indication of prospective changes in the political traditions, habits and dogma concerned with politics (Barbosa & Francisco, 2007).

Civic Sense

Civic sense is closely associated with citizenship. It is a type of education that promotes democratic conduct, abilities and knowledge to encourage and enable a citizen to get involved in public issues. Galston has contended that civic knowledge promotes democratic moral principles. Civic education is imperative for the smooth uplifting and growth of a democracy. Politically socialized citizenry is a condition for the success of democracy as only the politically devoted and intellectually sound members of community have the desire, will and potentials to shoulder the responsibility for themselves and their societies (Hart, 2013).

Political Accountability

A politically socialized person realizes that he or she can hold the public office bearers accountable. Scholars like Ugalde believe that accountability is significant characteristic of democracy through which authority to run the government is trusted to elected people as agents of masses who are the principals (Jewkes and Murcott, 1998). The mechanism of accountability took birth simultaneously with the birth of republic and has further developed till today. Responsibilities and difficulties encountered by an administration for the betterment of its citizens is known as political accountability (Richard, 2000). Voters or people in general are the principal actors who have the power to make their elected representatives and public officials accountable (Han and Demircioglu, 2016).

Political Competency

Political competency is an ability of civic moral codes that people must hold for the continuation of democratic setup. Competency is just like ability needed for triumphant governess and enhancement of progress of the institutions in a democratic society (Soltan, 1998). It is political competency that help a citizen recognize his or her choice of electoral candidates during an election. It is this competency that enables him to figure out who or which political party best suits their need and who to stand with (Baum & Jamison, 2006).

3.2.2 Agents of Political Socialization

Major agents of political socialization include friends, educational institutions, households, political atmosphere or racial relationship. These agents play a significant role in building and bringing about individuals' attitudes and social behaviors. Our interconnection with others mostly rests on our views about community, homeland and the world (Genner & Süss, 2017). Following are the main agents of political socialization:

Family

The place of family is very important in respect of the civic development in younger. It is the family which firstly launches civic values and attaches significance to their role in life of a child (Holloway, 2014). Family performs a dominant role in the development of child's ethic principles. It is the family which decides which of political attitude a child will follow. This political conduct constitutes child's position in

the community, emphasizing ethnic relationship, mother tongue and will power towards religious commitments, proclaiming cultural features and job specifications (Roof & McKinney, 1987).

Educational Institutions

There is a consensus that education performs a vital role in making of political behavior of citizens. Almond and Verba contend that people with tremendous educational environment have rich knowledge of government, are more likely to take part in politics, have sound political information, and have out of the box views about existing political issues. They also remain connected with a lot of people in respect of many political matters (Atkin and Gantz, 1978). Educational disciplines like history, economics and specially social studies play vital role in promoting political socialization (Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

Peer Groups

In a variety of younger's meetings, political information, ideas and conduct are discussed frankly. It is thought very significant that young generation should take part in the public affairs of country (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). Indirect political socialization is the result of front line movements, sports organizations disco parties in which specific opinions and attitudes are being promoted to get predetermined objectives (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). As a beginner in the early hood everyone begins his group life with a narrative of either supporting or opposing a group that provides the first lesson for political (Atkin & Gantz, 1978). Common citizen generally copy their co-fellows in most of the matters like choice of schools for their children, electoral choices, choice of vacation period and spots etc. (Campos, Heap & Leon, 2016).

Mass Media

Mass media is defined as instrument of interaction or communication that has potential to put great influences on citizens on a large scale. It consists of television, radio, journals or weekly and monthly magazines, and newspapers. Movies, radio, television and different magazines are effective mass media tools for transmitting information to a large segment of people around the world in a short span of time. Mass media uses seven different types of tools for communication purposes which include print media in 1400s, recording in 1800s, cinema in 1900s, radio in 1910s, television in 1950s, Internet in 1990s and cell phones in 2000s. Mass media is also a source of entertainment and availing various kinds of precious information (Khan et al., 2013). In a democratic society mass media plays an important role in providing useful information to citizen. Whenever season of election approaches the role of mass media increases in respect of providing information about different kinds of political, economic and societal issues to masses. It is also a source of providing valuable information to people regarding different political parties and leaders (Dimitrova *et al.*, 2014). However, the last two decades have seen a major shift in the popularity of newer form of media i.e. social media.

SOCIAL MEDIA (SM):

The group of different social networking websites like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube etc., is known as social media. These websites perform the function of connecting individuals and group of individuals together. Like mass media, social media is also a good source of sharing any kind of information and for keeping the citizen well informed about contemporary world events (Ali, 2016). Digital age is truly termed as "information age" for the fact that contemporary technologies have compressed time and space in exchanging information in real time across the globe (Khan, Ullah and Nawaz, 2019). It is not the appropriate place to elaborate the history of the development of social media, however, in a nutshell one may say that the development of computer, laptop, mobile phone and networking facilities kept growing on a rapid pace in the last thirty years and helped materialize the stage of the development of information technology that we see around ourselves today. Enormous increase in the speed of internet become the cause of creation of two well-known social media website namely MySpace in 2003 and Facebook in 2004. In this way the term social media came into being and it got popularity in a very short span of time (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The tools and gadgets included in social media are characterized for their speed, compactness, efficiency, affordability and integrative qualities (Khan & Shah, 2015). No one can deny the role of social media in present computerized age. World Wide Web and internet have revolutionized the entire human history. Social media is reshaping the existing different structures of political involvement and creating the innovative kinds of engagement. Many

citizens of different regions of the world use social media for the purpose of getting information and to have a communication link with other citizens and political personalities and journalists. Social media is also used for text sharing purpose and fund raising campaigns (Owen & Soule, 2015).

3.3.1: Social Media Tools:

Though there exists a wide range of social media tools being used these days. However, keeping in view the emergent findings of supplementary focus group and pilot study, only three social media platforms will be discussed here which were found to be popular among the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Facebook (FB)

It is one of effective social media tools which started in 2004. A Harvard university student Mark Zuckerberg is its founder. Initially facebook was launched only for the students of Harvard University. However after some time, access to facebook was opened to everyone (Boyd, 2007). Title “frequently used social network website” was given to facebook in 2009. The number of its user in 2010 was about five hundred million. Google search engine published a report in which it was said that as compare to other social networking sites, more and more people daily use facebook in the world.

WhatsApp (WP)

It is another popular social media tool/app which is used by iPhone and android operating system all over the globe. Citizens irrespective of age, from various fields use this app for exchanging photos, videos, audios and short text messages. This app works on Internet. Information about different disciplines can be rapidly circulated throughout the world within seconds. Bere has pointed out following characteristics of WhatsApp:

Multimedia: With the help of these characteristic, different kinds of messages, videos and pictures can be sent and received. Group Chat: This feature provides the facility of making group up to more than 200 members for chatting purpose. Unlimited Messaging: If the facility of 3G/4G or Wi-Fi is available then message can be shared without limit(Gon & Rawekar, 2017).

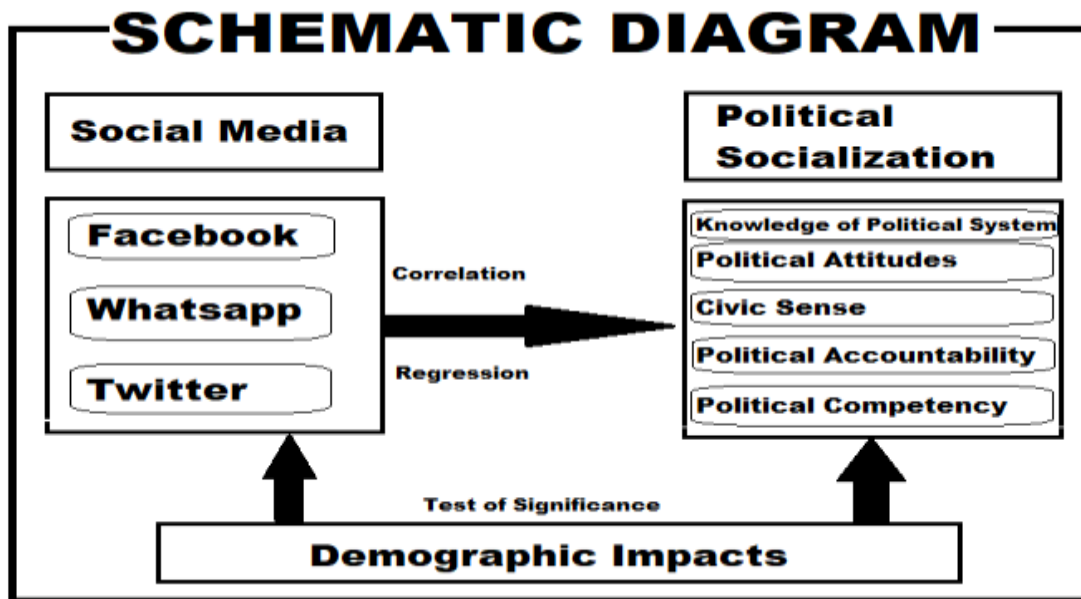
Twitter (TR)

Twitter was launched in 2006. Many social science scholars of different disciplines find this app very helpful and useful. It is very beneficial for researchers. The numbers of its users are more than 310 million all over the world who frequently share pictures, videos and audios and test. Messages can be stored on twitter. Different kinds of social, political and cultural issues can be discussed effectively and freely (Chappell *et al.*, 2017).

3.4 KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

It is situated in the North West of Pakistan. Its total area is 101,741square kilometer. Its capital city is Peshawar. According to Pakistan Economic Survey 2017-18, its total population is 30.52 million in which about 50% population is under 30 years. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KP) province has a “demographic gift” of youth which offers an opportunity for economic development. In KP, there are more than 6.5 million children in schools and over 6000 ICT graduates passing out from KP universities. KP is emerging as a digital nascent economy (Hussain & Khan, 2017). The government of KP (GoKP) has recently developed the Digital KP strategy. As a result, young people are finding employment and income generating opportunities online, starting up businesses - taking advantage of low transaction costs of the digital economy, and benefiting from GoKP programs (e.g. training) (Malik, Nicholson & Heeks, 2018).The KP Government is looking to actively promote the growth of local IT and digital businesses through tax relief, promoting incubation and entrepreneurship in its network of co-working spaces (durshals), and through promoting these in annual tech events, such as the Digital Youth Summit. Finally, the KP Government’s Information Technology Board has initiated a program to attract investment in IT and digital businesses in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

3.5: Research Model:



IV. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.1
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Facebook	414	1.00	5.00	4.2347	.73773
Twitter	414	1.00	5.00	4.1369	.88341
WhatsApp	414	1.00	5.00	4.3735	.83172
Knowledge of Political System	413	2.33	5.00	4.3757	.66188
Political Attitudes	412	2.00	5.00	4.4228	.51435
Civic Sense	414	2.50	5.00	4.4181	.48321
Political Accountability	414	2.00	5.00	4.4378	.46259
Political Competency	414	2.83	5.00	4.4175	.47347
Valid N (listwise)	414				

Correlation Analysis

Hypothesis # 1: The predictors (FB, TR, and WP) are associated with PS.

Table 4.2 Table of Correlations [n=414]

		Facebook	Twitter	Whatsapp	Political Socialization
Facebook	r-value	1	.669**	.625**	.647**
	p-value		.000	.000	.000
Twitter	r-value	.658**	1	.603**	.610**
	p-value	.000		.000	.000
Whatsapp	r-value	.625**	.603**	1	.618**
	p-value	.000	.000		.000
Political Socialization	r-value	.647**	.610**	.618**	1
	p-value	.000	.000	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Analysis:

Pearson coefficient for association between SM (FB, TR & WP) with PS is 0.647, 0.610 & 0.618 with p-value 0.000, showing strong association between predictors and criterion variable. Hence hypothesis # 1 is substantiated.

Regression Analysis:

Hypothesis # 2: Predictors (FB, TR, WP) brings variation in criterion (PS).

Table 4.3 Model Summary

Model	R	R2	Adj: R2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.646 ^a	.415	.411	.34051
2	.702 ^b	.588	.585	.32945
3	.810 ^c	.614	.509	.32198

a. Predictors: (Constant), FB

b. Predictors: (Constant), FB, WP

c. Predictors: (Constant), FB, WP, TR

Table 4.3a Coefficients of Regression (Predictors of Political Socialization)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.818	.115		23.678	.000
Facebook	.382	.015	.624	14.334	.000

2 (Constant)	2.492	.123		23.145	.000
Facebook	.250	.022	.530	6.123	.000
Whatsapp	.192	.019	.419	5.867	.000
3 (Constant)	2.641	.100		22.683	.000
Facebook	.174	.031	.304	5.339	.000
Whatsapp	.133	.019	.264	5.083	.000
Twitter	.102	.012	.212	3.797	.000

Analysis:

Model 3 FB, WP, TR combined together bring highest (61%) variation in PS. Beta value is evident that among all three predictors, FB brings highest 30% variation. Hence hypothesis # 2 is substantiated.

Test of Significance

	Gender	Residence	Qualification	Marital Status	Age	Mother Tongue
PS	.038	.042	.173	.722	.020	.370
FB	.532	.674	.068	.960	.001	.005
WP	.002	.038	.774	.734	.006	.882
TR	.004	.000	.323	.942	.000	.408

1. There found variation of opinion of the respondents in term of "gender" on three research variables out of four i.e., PS, WP and TR.
2. Residence has impact on the respondents' opinion on all research variables except FB.
3. Surprisingly, all the young people whether they were graduates or undergraduates having similar opinion on all the research variables.
4. Likewise, marital status has no impact on the opinion of the respondents on all research variables.
5. Age brings variation on the responses of respondents on criterion variable (PS) as well as on predictors (FB, WP, TR).
6. Mother tongue has no impact on respondents' opinion on any of the research variables except FB.

List of Findings:

1. Correlations [n= 414]

		FB	WP	TR
PS	r-	0.647	0.618	0.610
	p-	0.000	0.000	0.000

1. It is evident from the above results that predictors (FB, WP, TR) are associated with criterion (PS).
2. Among all three predictors, the r-value of FB is evident that it has high association with Political Socialization (PS). It means that political socialization among young people in KP Pakistan is increased with the use of Facebook.
3. Similarly, WP has also been highly correlated with PS and ultimately a source of political socialization in youth in KP Pakistan.
4. No doubt, results are evident that Twitter (TR) has also strong association with Political Socialization (PS).

2. Regression

Model	FB	WP	TR
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R2 = .614 61% Variation in Political Socialization	0.000	0.000	0.000
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It is concluded from the above results that 61 percent of variation in PS is attributed due to the combine role of predictors i.e. FB, WP, and TR. Hence, social media is a major source of political socialization among young people in KP Pakistan.

3. Test of significance

No consistent impacts of demographic variables were noted except demographic variable “Age”. Gender and residence (rural/urban divide) showed significant p-values for three of the research variables. While mother tongue showed significant p-value for one research variable. On the other hand, qualification and marital status have insignificant impact on the responses of the respondents.

V. DISCUSSION

Empirical results reconfirm the previous studies that political socialization is influenced by social media. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis provided that social media is an important predictor of political socialization of students in higher education institutions in KP. This trend was proved by moderate agreement of the respondents on all research variables that included Twitter, Whatsapp and Facebook as independent variables and political socialization as dependent variables. On the other hand, inferential analysis at the very first level show that all the research variables are significantly associated with each other. Pearson co-efficient values in correlations test proved the significant association of different levels among all variables. On a similar terrain, regression test also proves that 61 percent of variation in political socialization is brought about by social media i.e. Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter. These findings integrate with the existing research on the subject.

Social media has expedited the process of political socialization among students of higher education institutions. Like many previous studies, it can be said that social media has profound impact on the political grooming of students in universities in Pakistan. New generation, particularly the students, has got great awareness about their political, civics, social etc rights through social media. It makes them competent to actively participate in the political life of the country.

VI. CONCLUSION:

It is concluded that socialization is a multidimensional process guided by the overarching principles of a society targeted at shaping an individual with a particular set of norms, values, attitudes and aspirations. Political socialization being the dimension which guarantees the continuity and consistency of the particular kind of socialization as it revolves around the concept of power which is mandatory for achieving the goals of the society. Political socialization refers to the process that relates to all the dimensions of power; power as a construct, as political ideology, as a mechanism to achieve desired goals, as basis for political norms and values that lead to framing laws and constitutions.

Political socialization is an intricate process, difficult to segregate from many of the interrelated dimensions of socialization. However, it is manifested in an individual’s beliefs (knowledge of political system), an individual’s attitude, his/her social spirit i.e. civic sense, his/her desire for making political figures accountable, and to conclude these all it is reflected in an individual’s political competency. From family to market, there are different agents that influence this process, and culminated political individual. However, in the contemporary information society it is the communication technologies that has profound impact on the process of political socialization of a society where bulge of population is bracketed as youth. The same provided the rationale for this whole enterprise of research.

The social media provide opportunities for young people and offers them the chance to regain their lost position and take part in the state’s political process. The statistical results also confirms that there is a

significant association between social media and political socialization. It means that social media is source of political socialization of the young people. Similarly, cause and effects facts and figures are evident that there is a significant variation in political socialization of the youth due to the role of social media. Young people in KP province are more inclined to use social media for political information and knowledge.

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