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Article:	**Dialogic Interaction and Cyber Democracy: A Study of Twitter Accounts of Pakistani Politicians**
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ABSTRACT

Social media use equalizes the power among public and politicians, which promotes cyber democracy. This study explores dialogic interaction between Pakistani politicians and the public by examining Twitter accounts of politicians of major parties i.e., Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) PML (N), and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) for the year of 2021. It was hypothesized that among dialogic interaction features, it is more likely that conversations of visitors, usefulness of information, and the style of dialogic interaction will be the dominant features as compared to dialogic loop in Twitter accounts of Pakistani politicians. Content analysis was conducted on twitter accounts of Pakistani politicians (two politicians from each party). Total number of tweets during the selected time was 5421 from which 989 tweets were selected for analysis. The result showed that politicians are using usefulness of information followed by a style of dialogic interaction, dialogic loop and conversation of visitors. The results do not support hypothesis as dialogic loop is not least used feature in tweets of Pakistani politicians.

Keywords: Cyber Democracy, Twitter, Dialogic Interaction, Pakistani Politicians

Introduction:

Interpersonal communication, communication patterns, and social and political discourse have all changed as a result of new media and technology. Scholars in political science, sociology, media and communication, and international relations have undertaken thousands of studies on various facets of social media use. (Golan, Arceneaux, & Soule, 2019). Many activists, parties, politicians, and campaign practitioners are now trying to utilize various online social networks for publicity and citizen relationships. Similarly, political parties and politicians use social media to distribute their political messages among public and to connect to their followers directly. Norris (2000) states that due to the easy availability of the internet, ordinary citizens are empowered enough that they can talk to their government officials without any mediation of third person. Scholars argue that social media have enough political potential that these new communication technologies have empowered citizens in a way that they interact with their governments which lead to more virtual and real-life political participation, known as cyber democracy. Use of Twitter or Facebook facilities the engagement of citizens in politics. More than sixty percent of users of social media are now using this for political information, and nearly one in ten is befriending a politician whom they support via Twitter or Facebook.

Like many other countries, Pakistan is also new to using social media platforms for political purposes. In the last few years, Pakistani politicians also started using online social platforms to engage the public in political activities, but still, they appear to be uncomfortable with online media because they do not understand how to maximize their potential to interact effectively with citizens through social media. This study is designed to test whether dialogic interactions via social media can create a balance of power in political communication in Pakistan and help citizens to engage in online and real-world politics. In order to achieve that goal, this study will gather data for content analysis from Twitter accounts of Pakistani politicians.

This study will help politicians to realize the potential of online social networks i.e. Twitter for political purposes.it will give an extension to the dialogic interaction model and will provide qualitative dialogic features for future studies. On the basis of this study, Pakistani politicians can better understand the potential of Twitter and can use it in a better way to maintain healthy relations with its public and motivate them to participate in virtual and real-life politics.

Literature review

Social media has become a significant and constant part of our daily activities of communication over the last few decades. With the significant rise in the usage of social media, the motivations behind this increased involvement and usage of social media also remain an interesting area to explore. It is known now that social media has enabled people to connect with anybody around the globe. Social media gets used by political parties to influence their target audience. Eijaz (2013) has found a positive relationship between the increased use of social media and political mobilization all across the globe. He conducted a study to explore the way political parties use social media in Pakistan and the kind of influence they have on the dynamics of politics in Pakistan. The researcher has found out that Facebook and Twitter are two major platforms that are used by the people of Pakistan, as well as, Pakistani politicians for engaging in political activities or discussions.). To understand social media's influence on

the 2018 general elections in Pakistan, Muzaffar et al. (2020) examined two social networks, Facebook and Twitter. The political parties used old and new media outlets to promote their campaigns. According to the research, political parties use news coverage and social media marketing to influence voters' opinions and persuade them to vote for their party.

Cyber democracy is a democratic process in which online government activities, the elected legislature, political parties, and citizens play an important role. This includes biased or existing interaction symposiums or consultations among legislature and their constituent (Axtmann, 2003). The phrase "cyber democracy" refers to a variety of theoretical perspectives on the use of computer technology in democratic processes. Some people on one end of the spectrum contend that by using the Internet and computers, citizens may fully achieve their potential as citizens in a democracy. For them, it presents the chance to combine the ideals of traditional democracy with modern technology advancements in interactive communications. (Axtmann, 2003).

The actualization of the web community has been led by claims that the Internet brings the balance of political power between people and politicians by empowering common people to award open feedback to their elected representatives and governments (Rheingold, 1991). Morris (2001) argued that the Internet would revive direct democracy on political grounds by facilitating interactions between citizens and politicians. He further claimed that indirect democracy; voters contact their assignee easily via email and other web technologies. The Internet helps common people to raise their voices bluntly to their representatives without reliance on any organizational structure. It will bring forth a new era of cyber-democracy where the classic power structure will decline and a more fair and equal power structure will be actionable (Ferber, Foltz, & Pugliese, 2007). The interactions between influential figures and other individuals taking place on social media for Pakistan also allow people to heal the differences and mend wrecked images or relationships. Currently, the tools of social media including Facebook and Twitter are being utilized extensively and widely in Pakistan, and youth icon Imran Khan and his political party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf have shown a prime example of this utilization (Ahmed and Skoric, 2015).

Based on the above literature this study is designed to explore how Twitter involves the Pakistani public in dialogic interaction with the political leadership of political parties.

The rationale of choosing twitter for analysis:

As many political parties are using social media to untapped political potential, Twitter is in major use as an influential tool in election campaigns and for other political communication forms. In the UK, the 2010 General Election saw Twitter make its place as one of the core communication tools amongst political and media elites. Twitter has the power to evoke or symbolize emotions, which is crucial for the success of various campaigns or the escalation of various confrontations (Duncombe, 2019).

As far as dialogic interaction is concerned, there are deep roots of the concept of dialogue in the theory of relational communication and philosophy and its inclusion in the vocabulary of public relations is imperative to understand how different organizations and political bodies interact with the public, as well as, serve their and public interests (Wang and Yang, 2020). Rybalko & Seltzer (2010) presented a model which mainly deals with the use of Twitter between organizations and the public to maintain their goodwill. Based on the findings of Batool et al. (2021) and Masroor et al. (2019) for exploring the dialogic interactions of other

political parties of Pakistan on Twitter, it was found that the dialogic interactions were taking place in such a way that these politicians had the underlying objective of controlling the opinions of citizens, influencing or persuading them, and a major portion of their language usage was characterized by undermining other politicians. Also, according to Ashfaq et al. (2021), straight information or direct information is greatly observed in the dialogic interactions of Pakistan's politicians on Twitter. All of the findings throughout the literature review are inclined towards characterizing the dialogic interactions of Pakistani politicians towards the usefulness of the information and somehow the elements of conservation of return visitors can be traced. However, the literature shows very less findings on the dialogic loop created by the politicians of Pakistan on Twitter.

This model lacks the principle of analyzing tweets on basis of their qualitative features. So, further, this study will look into the extension of qualitative principle for the dialogic interaction model specifically in the political context of tweets. The research study will deal with the given research question and hypothesis.

RQ. Which dialogic features (dialogic loop, conversation of visitors, usefulness of information, and style of dialogic interaction) are present in the Twitter accounts of Pakistani politicians the most?

H: It is more likely that conversations of visitors, the usefulness of information, and the style of dialogic interaction as features of dialogic interaction will be the dominant features as compared to the dialogic loop in Twitter accounts (Twitter profile and tweets) of Pakistani politicians.

Research method

Content analysis method was used to see the presence of dialogic interaction features in the profiles of Pakistani politicians.

Official Twitter accounts of top Pakistani political parties' i.e. Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League N (PML-N), and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) (two politicians from each party) were selected. Thus, there were two units of analysis (a) politicians' Twitter profiles and (b) tweets on each profile during the selected time period. The time period of this analysis was one year from January 2021 to December 2021. The total number of tweets during the selected time period was 5421. The sample size was 989 which was selected by using Yamane's formula. Tweets were selected through a random sampling technique.

To measure dialogic interaction between Pakistani politicians and the public on Twitter, the study used three features suggested by Rybalko & Seltzer (2010) which include dialogic loop, the usefulness of information, and conversation of visitors. All these three principles of dialogic interaction are designed to measure the quantitative features of dialogue. These do not deal with qualitative features of dialogues in tweets by politicians. Keeping this in mind, to measure qualitative characteristics of dialogic communication present in tweets of politicians, one principle is added by the researchers named as the style of dialogic interaction in the dialogic interaction model.

Dialogic loop refers to reciprocal interaction with others on Twitter. The absence or presence of a dialogic loop in the tweet was determined by some indicators. The presence of a dialogic loop in this study was marked if the tweet suggested: (i) retweeting by politicians and (ii) a reply to citizens. If the dialogic loop is high, it shows that politicians are more responsive

and conversational to citizens on Twitter. If the dialogic loop is low, it means that politicians are less conversational.

Conceptually, Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) defined the conservation of visitors as the strategy that keeps Twitter visitors to stay within the Twitter profile page or other SNSs owned by the Twitter account holder. The presence/absence of this feature was decided on that whether the profile of politicians includes any link to other social media platforms.

The usefulness of the information in the context of Twitter can be measured by four additive dichotomous items of additional information posted on Twitter profiles such as links to other web pages, phone numbers, descriptions, and photos.

The style of dialogic interaction will be further categorized as conversational style or non-conversational style. The operationalization of dialogic interaction is as follows:
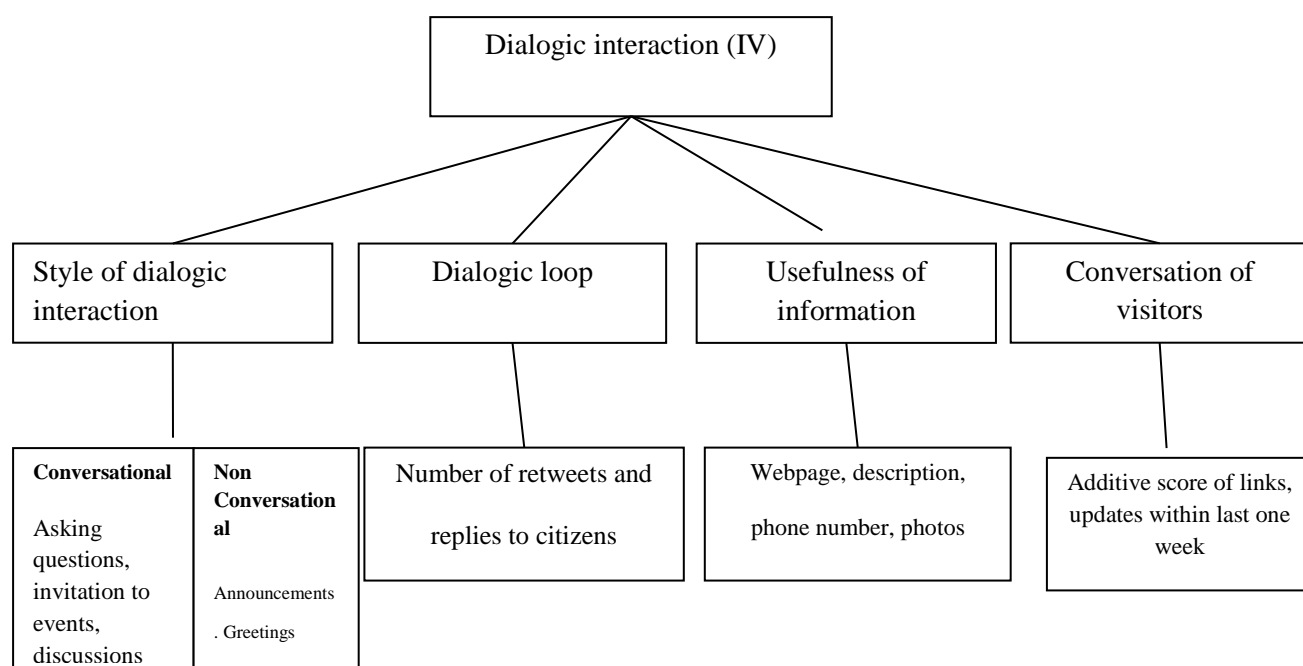
Frequency distributions and cross tables were developed through SPSS. The Chi-Square test was used. The P value for this analysis was taken as equal to 0.05. Each item was coded as "Yes =1" and "No =0".

Table 1: overall presence of Dialogic Interaction Features in tweets of Pakistani Politicians

Dialogic Interaction Features	Responses	
	Frequency	Percentage
Dialogic Loop	176	18%
Usefulness of Information	980	100%
Conversation of Visitors	158	16.1%
Style of Dialogic Interaction	246	25.1%

For the overall presence of dialogic interaction features in tweets of Pakistani politicians, 18% of the tweets (N=980) followed a dialogic loop style of communication providing replies to comments and retweets, while 100% of tweets provided links to webpages, descriptions, phone numbers, and photos. Sixteen percent (16%, n=158) of comments on tweets contained conversations of visitors. And, 25% (n=246) of tweets contained questions, invitations, discussions, greetings, and announcements.

Table 2: Details of overall all presence of Dialogic Features in tweets of Pakistani Politicians

Dialogic Interaction	Frequency	Percentage
Dialogic Loop		
Retweet as indicator of Dialogic loop	170	94.4%
Reply to citizen by politician	10	5.6%
Usefulness of Information		
Link to web pages	654	26.6%
Webpage description	823	33.5%
Phone Number	00	00%
Profile picture	980	100%
Conversation of Visitors		
Link to Social Media Pages	158	16.1%
Style of Dialogic Interaction		
Conversational	38	13.9%
Non conversational	235	86.1%

Table 2 shows the details of dialogic features present in tweets of Pakistani politicians in selected time period. Dialogic loop contains retweet (n=170) and reply to citizen (n=10) as the indicators of dialogic loop. While usefulness of Information shows link to web pages (n=654), webpage description (n=823), phone number (n=0) and profile photon (n=980,100%).158 tweets contained conversation of visitors and from style of dialogic interaction, 38 tweets were conversational and (n=236) tweets were non conversational.

The researchers examined the presence of dialogic features in the tweets of selected Pakistani politicians. Table 1 shows the overall presence of the dialogic features in the tweets during selected time period.

Usefulness of information is most dominant feature with 100% presence followed by style of dialogic interaction 25.1%, dialogic loop 18% and conversation of visitors 16.1%.it was hypothesized that conversations of visitors, usefulness of information, and style of dialogic interaction as features of dialogic interaction will be the dominant features as compared to dialogic loop in twitter accounts (twitter profile and tweets) of Pakistani politicians.

In the table 3 given below, chi-square test indicated that the political parties posted significantly different numbers of tweets related to dialogic interaction features. The parties less emphasized on adding link of other social media platforms (conversation of visitors).whereas all the parties used dialogic loop in some of their tweets. The results do not support the hypothesis as conversation of visitors feature is least present in tweets of selected Pakistani politicians.

Table 3: political party- wise presence of dialogic features in tweets

Dialogic Interaction Features	Political party			Total	Chi square
	PTI	PMLN	PPP		
Dialogic loop	39	63	74	176	Chi square 8.001 P.092
Usefulness of information	333	326	321	980	Chi square 1355.047 P.000
Conversation of visitors	158	00	00	158	Chi square 365.992P.000
Style of dialogic interaction	160	59	27	246	Chi square 12.402P.015

Discussion

A democracy is a system of governance that enables people to restrict the power of the head of state, distribute the power among different branches of government, and ensure the protection of fundamental rights and liberties. In its simplest form, democracy serves two main objectives. First, to build an equal political system and political stability. Additionally, it empowers citizens through widespread political engagement.

Anti-democratic forces describe the democratic system as inappropriate for Pakistan because it allows power-hungry officials to manipulate the country's illiterate populace. They believe that democracy is frail and fragile because no elected official has completed a full term of five years. Pakistan indeed has issues with political equality. Pmln is targeted because they treat politics like a family business and nominate members of their own family to serve as chief or prime ministers. A no-confidence vote similarly destroyed the government of PTI. However, Pakistan's democracy has not entirely failed. One benefit is that it has given the public a powerful voice.

Social media, specifically Twitter, plays a crucial role in political communication. Political parties now have a platform to interact with their followers and get direct feedback. Numerous studies have tried to explore how politicians and political parties use online media to craft their political messages. An essential component of sociology and political communication is developing one's image or positive self-representation. Politicians strive to act in a way that the public will form a favorable opinion of them, or at the very least one that is not bad, as a part of identity management (Van Dijk, 2020). For this, politicians need to interact with their followers, which is now very easy via social media platforms.

This study is designed to explore the usage of twitter by Pakistani politicians for building relationship with their public, this study examined that what dialogic features were present in politicians' Twitter accounts. Among the indicators of dialogic features suggested by Rybalko & Seltzer (2010), excluding phone number, the features representing a usefulness of information were the most repeatedly occurring, followed by style of dialogic interaction, dialogic loop and conservation of visitors.

As use of Twitter is rising in political dynamics, this study uncovered the dialogic interactions features present in Twitter accounts of leading Pakistani politicians. The capacity of Twitter to help users interact and collaborate is one of its strengths. Politicians and the

general public both can get benefit from Twitter as a social media platform. On the one hand, politicians who need more institutional and financial support from their parties can do their online campaigning using Twitter. They view Twitter as the most helpful tool for communicating with and listening to their followers. As a result, by enabling dialogic interaction between citizens and politicians, Twitter advances the relationship between citizens and politicians beyond what has been accomplished by previous communication platforms. Twitter, in addition, balances the power among citizens and politicians. Twitter can help more direct forms of democracy by bridging the communication gap between citizens and elected officials. The one-way communication from politicians to citizens no longer motivates citizens to move in the current communication environment. A sincere conversation will be more crucial in mobilizing the public.

In the last few decades, web technologies have shifted our society from the industrial economy to the information economy.in the new economy; every citizen plays a more significant role in public opinion formation. These prosumers are now empowered and can exert a political force as a group. Pakistani politicians need to fully understand the potential of social media platforms, specifically Twitter, for disseminating their political messages. If we look internationally, political leaders like Donald Trump, Muhammad Bin Salman, Narinder Modi successfully run their political campaigns via social media. Pakistani politicians need to realize the importance of a dialogic loop as an interactive feature. When a leader personally responds to one's comment, it will bring a sense of belonging to the followers of their political leader. Creating a balance of power between leaders and their followers and using these platforms can strengthen the politicians' reputation/goodwill

As this study concludes, politicians are engaging the public in dialogue and need to use more social media platforms efficiently; another concern raises the question regarding the potential of Twitter. Does the dialogic interaction increases the political mobilization of the followers? In Pakistani political communication, there is a need for more studies on Twitter use in political dimensions.

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