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I. INTRODUCTION

Formal political process and democracy are depend heavily on effective communication and properly conveyed decisions making regarding political issues between citizens, politicians and other stakeholders as these are the people who can be affected with collective political decisions (Ali, 2010). Democracy guarantees is based on separation of powers, organization of free and fair elections and the respect of human rights and thus it encourages the participation of every citizen in the decisions at all levels. Democracy creates embraces agreements and disagreements and leads towards progress, peace, stability and tranquillity (UNESCO, 2013).

Political participation is moulded by the internet and social media, which provide an opportunity to individuals to come together in new communities of interest & wide, shallow networks, to blog, deliberate and campaign online, beyond physical boundaries (Collin, 2008). The expansion of electronic and digital media has given people the potential to learn, publish and communicate on an enormous scale (ITU, 2008). Digital literacy can provide effective channels of cooperation, dialogue and information exchange among people of tender years. Consequently, the role of young people in the Information Society is very important.

Digital literacy enables people to have real time communication, and allows them immediate access to new information (INXD, 2011).

Digital technologies offer new means for participation by allowing citizens to use and produce media in an easy and low-cost manner. Some optimistic scholars contend that digital technology promotes political knowledge, interest, discussion and voting (Ostling, 2010). New technologies provide information as well as tools that have the potential to enhance the role of the citizens in the social and political field (Khan, Gilani & Miankhel, 2012). Nevertheless, with the emergence of digital technologies, several new prospects emerged for individual and a possibility to achieve its lost participation in the political and economic affairs of the society. The role of internet and other digital technologies is vital in this regard (Khan; Miankhel & Nawaz, 2013).

Digital technologies can be a powerful way of youth empowerment. A 19-states social survey of European political participation found that regular Internet users were more likely to be a member of a civic organization (Halewood & Kenny, 2007). Research in Europe and the America shows that young people have been less engaged in the electoral processes than other age cohorts in recent years (Collin, 2008). New technology is profoundly influencing regular political activity in developed industrial societies, by either offering new channels for participation or changing different aspects of existing ones (Anduiza & Cantijoch, 2009). After the Obama campaign in the presidential election of 2008 in United States, it was obvious that social media would play an important role even in traditional party politics of the West. The platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have played important roles in the dramatic events in North Africa and the Middle East during 2011 is also to be underscored (Dahlgren, 2011). There are more digital technology users than ever before (INXD, 2011).

This paper is about the prediction of students' 'Political-Participation' due to their 'Digital-Literacy' by first examining their correlation (H₁) and then applying regression procedures on two separate dimensions of political participation: Political Mobility (H₂) and Voting Behaviour (H₃). Following hypothesis has been tested and discussed:

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1. H_1 : Predictors are Highly Associated with Criterion Variable
2. H_2 : Predictors Define Change in Political Membership & Mobility
3. H_3 : Predictors Determine the Variation in Voting Behavior

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Democracy is a mode of decision making regarding collectively binding rules and policies over which people exercise control, and the most democratic arrangement to be that where all members collectively enjoy equal rights to take part in such decision making directly (Samarasinghe, 1994). Democracy is a universally recognized ideal and goal, which is based on commonly shared values shared all over the world, irrespective of cultural, social, political and economic differences. Thus it is a basic right of citizenship which is exercised under conditions of equality, freedom, transparency and responsibility, with due regard for the plurality of opinions, and in the interest of a polity (UNESCO, 1997). Democracy creates an environment which is suitable for citizen participation and opposition to the elected officials (Altman & Perez-Linan, 2002). Political participation in politics has been modified by the Internet and news media (Collin, 2008). The emergence of a new medium allows new ways of political participation which never existed before (Anduiza & Cantijoch, 2009).

a) Digital-Literacy

The demand for universal computer literacy comes from the ways in which digital literacy dominates different aspects of the contemporary life and work (Oliver, 2002). The supporters of social inclusion through digital literacy propose a focus on the electronic literacy as a key to overcoming digital divide (Macleod, 2005). Different groups of people, students, teachers, and employer have different opinions about the meaning of computer literacy (Johnson; Bartholomew & Miller, 2006). In last 25 years, different models and approaches of computer and digital literacy have started to merge (Ezziane, 2007). Now, digital literacy skills are thought to be essential for effective learning in the present digital environments (Aviram & Eshet-Alkalai, 2006). People attain their technology literacy by two means: formally through school programs or in the workplace, and informally, either at home, from friends, or by themselves (Ezziane, 2007).

In today's technological era, basic computer literacy is required in every institution (Ezziane, 2007). Digital literacy is usually thought to be a combination of technical procedural, cognitive and emotional social skills. For example, using a computer requires procedural skills (e.g. handling files and editing pictures), cognitive skills (e.g. the ability to automatically read the visual messages embedded in graphic user

interfaces). With the growing popularity of digital workplaces and learning environments, digital literacy has become tantamount to a survival skill (Aviram & Eshet-Alkalai, 2006). With changes in technology, the different constituents of computer literacy are liable to change continuously and hence the educators need to constantly revise the course to take in the latest technological developments (Martin & Dunsworth, 2007; Kundi & Nawaz, 2010).

b) Political Role of ICTs

Political participation has focussed on the impact of technology, especially the Internet, on the political activity of general public. The Internet has significantly altered the cost structure of participation, and has also enhanced the range of possible political activities. It has extended the opportunities for mobilising conventional political associations, while giving fame to the use of certain extra representative styles of participation, such as direct action politics and new social activities. New technology has facilitated the extension of the aims of participation, broadening their scope and enabling coordination and political power on a transnational scale to occur with an ease which was almost unknown until a decade ago (Anduiza & Cantijoch, 2009).

Young people are in many ways the defining users of the new media. All generations accept devices and Internet technologies, but young people consumers are Net natives. They do not just go online; they live online (Montgomery, 2008). The rise of new media, particularly the Internet, has given ascent to a new wave of hopes and fears. Some philosophers warn that the use of Internet can displace face to face sociability, while the other researchers celebrate new means of connecting with others. The appearance of mobile communication technology warrants another pace with research and theory on the intersections among new media and civic engagement. Mobile subscriptions are into the billions, making it among the fastest developing communication technology ever. Yet, researchers are only starting to understand the position of the technology in civic participation (Campbell & Kwak, 2010).

i. Political-Participation

Democracy is the system of government run by the people, for the people. Democracy assures the separation of power and organization of free and fair elections, based on the respect of human rights and foster the participation of every citizen in decisions at all levels. Democracy makes room for agreements and disagreements and gives an environment of progress, peace, stability and tranquillity. Democracy is a system of consultation, dialogue, and consideration of stakeholders regardless. The engagement of young citizen in participatory structure, the dialogue between public authorities and young citizens and structures or

strategies to bring youth closer to political decision making are fundamental to support young citizen's participation in democratic life (UNESCO, 2013).

Individual participation in the democratic process and public life at levels must be regulated fairly, impartially and must avoid any discrimination, and the risk of pressure by State and non-State actors (UNESCO, 1997). Democracy generates the potential for citizen participation and opposition to elected officials (Altman & Perez, 2002). Democracy, assumes a genuine partnership among men and women, free political competition, and open, free and non-discriminatory participation by the people, exercised as per rule of law (Gill, 2006).

The development of electronic and digital infrastructure has given millions of the people the potential to learn, publish and communicate on an unprecedented scale. The rapidly declining the real cost of requisite information and communication technologies [ICTs], combined with huge changes to the available infrastructure, have allowed young people to take benefits of technology to do and achieve things unfamiliar to earlier generations (ITU, 2008). Political participation is a fluid concept and the ideas encompass a diverse set of activities. It can be defined as citizen acts in order to influence the selection of and/or the actions taken by the political representatives. In other words, political participation can be understood as referring to the different mechanisms through which public express their political views and so use their influence on the political processes (Chatora, 2012). A normative conception of young people participation, defining political participation broadly is about engaging in generating opinions and taking actions in order to bring about positive change in the society (LSE, 2013).

Participation in the civic life is fundamental human right. Young citizens have the critical role to play in social change. Civic engagement refers to the means in which citizens participate in the life of a community to improve conditions for others or/ and to help shape the community's future. Despite the fact that there are many existing definitions of civic engagement with no single, widely agreed upon meaning for the term, civic engagement is usually viewed as focusing on participation in on-going change by advancing economic, ecologic, social and the political conditions. Young citizens may contribute by informing, reforming, and constructing a society that will contribute to their wellbeing and promotion of equity and inclusiveness. Young people civic engagement is also increasingly accepted as a vital component of youth development because it can help build human as well as social capital and educate people regarding their political and the civic rights, as well as their responsibilities as citizens (UNESCO, 2013).

ii. *Voting Behaviour*

The main element in exercise of democracy is the contesting of free and fair elections at regular intervals in order to enable the people's will to be expressed. These elections must be held on the basis rules of universal, equal and secret suffrage so that all the voters can elect their representatives on the conditions of equality, openness and transparency that stimulate political competition. For the purpose, civil and political rights are vital, and more essential among them, rights to vote and to be elected, rights to freedom of expression and assembly, access to information and the right to organize political party and to carry out political activities (UNESCO, 1997). People are addressing their claims to the public authority and legislative body, and also having control on political decision making in elections by electing a candidate whose political manifesto seems to match best their personal preferences (Hayhtio, 2006).

A state of democracy guarantees that the process by which power is acceded to, exercised and alternates allow for political competition and is the product of open, free and non-discriminatory participation by the people, exercised as per rule of law, in letter and spirit (UNESCO, 1997). The most obvious way in which people participate in the political decision making is when they cast vote for their government representative. Digital literacy could make the voting processes more suitable by enabling electronic voting, either from a voting station of voter's choosing or by the Internet from anywhere. This will also speed up vote counting (Oates, 2003).

Digital software and technology were a central part of numerous efforts to promote youth voting during the 2004 presidential election in USA. While Internet had already been begun to play an increasingly significant role in campaign politics, 2004 marked the first real high-tech election. Scholars at George Washington University recognized a new class of Internet users, which they labelled as "Online Political Citizens." Though not exclusively young people, this group of Internet-savvy political participants included a noteworthy number of youth, with 36 % of them between the ages of 18 and 34, as compared to 24 % of the general public. A large majority of them (44 %) had not been politically engaged before and had never "worked for a campaign, made a campaign donations or attended a campaign event. "They visit campaign Web sites, donate money online, join Internet discussion groups, and read and post comments on Web logs." They also "organize local events through Web sites such as meetup.com or donate money to their causes on sites such as moveon.org or grassfire.org." They "use campaign Web sites as hubs" and "depend heavily on email to stay in touch with the campaigns, receive news stories and muster support" (Montgomery, 2008).

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

A close scrutiny of the social research methodologies shows that survey is the best way for collecting primary data through questionnaire and interviews of people about their thinking and attitudes. It is the most commonly used mode of observation in the social sciences (Babbie, 1993:257). The potential of survey research is that it allows the researcher to gather data in order to answer every question about the relevant topic (Yin, 1994:6). In case of human and social topics, the researchers have always thought that surveys are reportedly excellent means for measuring attitude in large population (Sekaran, 1999: 257). A survey is a consistent approach of collecting data. Survey research is greatly helpful in documenting existing community conditions, features of a population, and community

thinking. Both qualitative and quantitative data are included in the research.

Thus, survey approach is used in the current study by implementing a structured questionnaire distributed among 180 students of Public and Private Universities of D.I.Khan (KPK) with 67% return rate (121). The instrument consisted of six demographic and six variables (i.e., Dependent & independent variable). 7 point scale is used where 1 represent a strongly disagreement and 7 for strongly agree with the statement. SPSS 16 helped in creating the data base and statistical analysis. It is also pertinent to mention here that all the students of these universities form our target population of this study.

The researcher used the formula for selecting the sample size from a finite population: $[(SD^2)/(E^2/z^2) + (SD^2/N)]$ (Weirs, 1984).

IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

a) Descriptive-Statistics

Table 4.1.1 : Classification across Institution

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gomal University	75	62.0	62.0	62.0
Qurtuba University	46	38.0	38.0	100.0
Total	121	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1.2 : Descriptive Statistics on Research Variables

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Digital Literacy	121	3.44	6.78	5.4316	.71610
Internet	121	4.00	6.83	5.5275	.69267
Mobile	121	2.80	6.60	4.8645	.86803
Pol. Role of ICTs	121	3.25	7.00	5.0186	.81660
Pol Membership & Mobility	121	2.25	6.75	5.0692	.87082
Voting Behaviour	121	3.60	7.00	5.6810	.78042
Income	121	10000	100000	3.85E4	18608.708
Age	121	17	30	22.46	2.086

b) Testing of Hypothesis

i. Correlation (Association) Analysis

Hypothesis # 1 : Predictors are Highly Associated with Criterion Variable

Table 4.2 : Table of Correlations (n = 121)

		Digital Literacy	Internet	Mobile	Pol. Role of ICTs	PMM	VB	Income
Internet	R	.499**	1					
	P	.000						
Mobile	R	.341**	.362**	1				
	P	.000	.000					
Political Role ICTs	R	.323**	.315**	.463**	1			
	P	.000	.000	.000				
Political Membership & Mobility	R	.177	.330**	.455**	.330**	1		
	P	.052	.000	.000	.000			
Voting Behaviour	R	.413**	.400**	.203*	.315**	.421**	1	
	P	.000	.000	.026	.000	.000		
Income	R	.249**	-.042	-.173	.092	.083	.032	1
	P	.006	.651	.057	.314	.367	.724	
Age	R	.107	-.087	-.005	-.061	-.065	-.087	.039
	P	.243	.344	.960	.504	.480	.344	.672

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Analysis

The Hypothesis # 1 is about the association (relationship) of Independent variables (predictors) with dependent variables (criterion). The above table (Table # 4.2) gives statistics on the results of correlation analysis.

The correlation between Digital Literacy and Criterion variable (Political Membership & Mobility) is: $r = 0.17$ with p value = 0.052

1. The correlation between Internet and dependent variable (Political Membership & Mobility) is: $r = 0.33$ with p value = 0.000
 - i. Voting behaviour with Digital Literacy $r = 0.41$ with P-value 0.000
 - ii. Voting behaviour with Internet $r = 0.40$ with P-value 0.000
 - iii. Voting behaviour with Mobile $r = 0.20$ with P-value 0.026
 - iv. Voting behaviour with Pol. Role of ICTs $r = 0.31$ with P_value 0.000

Given the above analysis, it is decided that there is association of different levels between all the Independent variables and dependent variables. So H_1 is accepted as true.

ii. *Prediction Analysis*

Hypothesis # 2 : Predictors Define Change in Political Membership & Mobility

Table 4.3 : Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.455 ^a	.207	.200	.77889	30.998	.000 ^a
2	.488 ^b	.238	.225	.76645	18.452	.000 ^b
3	.514 ^c	.264	.245	.75669	13.976	.000 ^c

Table 4.3a : Coefficients of Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.851	.405		7.044	.000
	Mobile	.456	.082	.455	5.568	.000
2	(Constant)	1.863	.598		3.113	.002
	Mobile	.387	.086	.385	4.471	.000
	Internet	.240	.108	.191	2.212	.029
3	(Constant)	1.454	.625		2.328	.022
	Mobile	.416	.087	.415	4.806	.000
	Internet	.235	.107	.187	2.193	.030
	Income	7.601E-6	.000	.162	2.016	.046

Table 4.3b : Excluded Variables

Model		Beta In	T	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
						Tolerance
1	Digital Literacy	.025 ^a	.285	.776	.026	.884
	Internet	.191 ^a	2.212	.029	.200	.869
	Pol. Role of ICTs	.152 ^a	1.662	.099	.151	.785
	Income	.167 ^a	2.035	.044	.184	.970
	Age	-.063 ^a	-.767	.445	-.070	1.000
2	Digital Literacy	-.069 ^b	-.724	.470	-.067	.722
	Pol. Role of ICTs	.120 ^b	1.308	.193	.120	.761
	Income	.162 ^b	2.016	.046	.183	.969
	Age	-.047 ^b	-.579	.564	-.053	.992
3	Digital Literacy	-.156 ^c	-1.569	.119	-.144	.630
	Pol. Role of ICTs	.087 ^c	.942	.348	.087	.731
	Age	-.054 ^c	-.670	.504	-.062	.990

- a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Mobile
- b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Mobile, Internet
- c. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Mobile, Internet, Income
- d. Dependent Variable: Membership & Mobility

Analysis

The hypothesis # 2 is about regression analysis i.e. cause & effect relationship between criterion and predictors.

1. Table # 4.3 gives R² of 0.207 in model # 1 meaning that 21% of change in Political Membership & Mobility (dependent variable) is due to Mobile Services (Independent variable).
2. R² 0.238 in model # 2 meaning that 24% of change in Political Membership & Mobility (dependent variable) is due to Mobile and Internet services (Independent variable).

3. R² 0.264 in model # 3 meaning that 26% of change in Political Membership & Mobility (Criterion variable) is due to Mobile & Internet services (Independent variable) and Income (demographic variable).

Given these results, Hypothesis # 2 is partially accepted as true because 26% of variation in criterion variable (Political Membership & Mobility) is attributed to the predictors.

Hypothesis # 3 : Predictors Determine the Variation in Voting Behaviour

Table 4.4 : Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.413 ^a	.170	.163	.71381	24.439	.000 ^a
2	.470 ^b	.220	.207	.69487	16.684	.000 ^b

Table 4.4a : Coefficients of Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.238	.498		6.495	.000
	Digital Literacy	.450	.091	.413	4.944	.000
2	(Constant)	2.392	.574		4.164	.000
	Digital Literacy	.310	.102	.284	3.030	.003
	Internet	.291	.106	.258	2.753	.007

Table 4.4b : Excluded Variables

Model		Beta In	T	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics
						Tolerance
1	Internet	.258 ^a	2.753	.007	.246	.751
	Mobile	.070 ^a	.791	.430	.073	.884
	Pol. Role of ICTs	.202 ^a	2.336	.021	.210	.895
	Income	-.075 ^a	-.871	.385	-.080	.938
	Age	-.132 ^a	-1.586	.115	-.144	.989
2	Mobile	.015 ^b	.168	.867	.015	.835
	Pol. Role of ICTs	.164 ^b	1.895	.061	.173	.864
	Income	-.031 ^b	-.358	.721	-.033	.901
	Age	-.098 ^b	-1.189	.237	-.109	.962

- a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Digital Literacy
- b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Digital Literacy, Internet
- c. Dependent Variable: Voting Behaviour

Analysis

The hypothesis # 3 is about regression analysis i.e. cause & effect relationship between criterion and predictors.

1. Table # 4.4 gives R² of 0.170 in model # 1 meaning that 17% of change in Voting Behavior (dependent variable) is due to Digital Literacy (Independent variable).

2. R² 0.220 in model # 2 meaning that 22% of change in Voting Behavior (dependent variable) is due to Mobile and Internet services (Independent variable).

Given these results, Hypothesis # 3 is partially accepted as true because 22% of variation in Voting Behaviour is attributed to the predictors.

V. DISCUSSIONS

In the current study the relationships between the contemporary boom of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and political participation of the University Graduates were explored through analysing the first-hand data collected through a survey-instrument extracted from the existing literature.

The descriptive statistics is evident that respondents have shown moderate agreement with the impact of digital literacy on student's participation in politics, on all the variables i.e. Digital Literacy, Internet, Mobile Services, Political role of ICTs, Political Membership & Mobility and Voting Behaviour.

While considering the inferential results all the independent (Predictors) and dependent (Criterion Variables) were highly correlated as statistics approved the correlations between independent and dependent variables. Hence in correlation analysis results show that Political Membership and Mobility as well as Voting Behaviour significantly and positively in relation with Digital Literacy, Internet, Mobile and Political Role of ICTs. Therefore, results confirmed a meaningful correlation between dependent and independent variables.

Digital literacy was significantly predicting political participation of the students. Results show that 26% change in Political Membership & Mobility (dependent variable) is due to the Mobile & Internet services (Independent variable) and Income (demographic variable), while 22% change in Voting Behaviour is due to digital literacy and Internet services.

After thoroughly reviewing the exiting literature and minutely examine the primary data acquire from field survey through questionnaire, the comparison of both is evident that there is a significant relationship among several variables, while there is also some differences. Digital literacy has profound influence on networks of societies (comprising of individuals) and also different organizations irrespective of geographical locations.

It will be pertinent to state that as existing literature shows that the involvement of students (youth) has been enhanced due to the use of digital technologies in the political process, in a same manner our field survey also indicates the same results, it means that digital technology accelerates the participation of youth in political process of Pakistan. The coverage of electronic and print media is an ample proof in this connection that the turnover was about 60% in the recent general elections, which was the highest turnout ever before in Pakistan.

Literature indicates that internet has directly affected not only the cost but also the participation of youth on political process in positive direction. In this context the example of Egypt social awareness through social media in the year 2011 cannot be ignored in any analytical study of the globe. "We all are the Khaled"

was in fact a driving sentence on a social media (Facebook) in the political scenario of Middle East, which was the direct outcome of Internet and social media.

Participation, competition and liberty are basic elements of democracy, but due to lack of information dissemination, the participation of general masses and particularly youth was below standard, but with the inception of digital technologies the issue of information dissemination has been solved to some extent and now the participation of general population in electoral process has been increased while in particular it is said that digital literacy are their phenomena. As a result the participation of students (youth) in political process can be observed not only in whole world but also in Pakistan.

Both the literature and our survey indicates that due to digital literacy the connections and connectivity between the international community has been increased and now each and every individual has become the part of the discussion about world politics. It enhanced the capacity building of voters to decide about the use of casting their votes which ultimately set a trend of particular voting behaviour among youth.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

- Digital literacy and all its gadgets (internet, mobile etc.) are closely connected (statistically significant – H_1) with the political participation, political activism and voting behavior of the University graduates as verified in the current study of students from Gomal and Qurtuba Universities of Dera Ismail Khan.
- There is need to give more attention to the 'Digital-Literacy' and 'Political Role of ICTs' because their association is well established in the first hypothesis but these two predictor variables are not playing significant role in the variation of dependent variable of Political Membership & Mobility (H_2).
- Surprisingly, in predicting the 'Voting-Behavior' only two independent variables have emerged significant (Digital literacy and Internet) (H_3). The role of the rest of four variables is insignificant which demands attention for improvement.
- Internet has emerged as the most powerful tool for political participation (H_1 & H_2) because it has played significant role in both the regression procedures.
- Overall, Digital-literacy, Internet, Mobile-Services and Income of the respondents have been established as statistically significant factors (predictors) of political participation by the University Graduates.

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