

## **SOCIAL MEDIA IMPLICATION ON POLITICS OF PAKISTAN; MEASURING THE IMPACT OF FACEBOOK**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The core purpose of this study was to investigate practice of social media consumption among the political parties and personalities in Pakistan. Data is collected from online use of Facebook officials ID's of different political parties and personalities at a same time. There were two categories measured using Facebook "likes" and "talking about this" options of Facebook users. The data is analyzed on the bases of online provided figures of Facebook about selected political parties and celebrities. These figures present popularity of political icon and parties in Facebook user as well in masses. These findings emphasize on significance of Facebook usage for political purpose. The results concluded that president Parvez Mushraf has more fans than President Asif Ali Zardari. It has also concluded that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has ranked on top among other political parties on Facebook.*

**Keywords:** Facebook, Political Personalities, Social Media, Social Networking, Internet Users.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

It was time when public have wait for newspaper to know about happening of their surrounding and international affairs. At that time audience was dependent on print media and Radio or TV channel to get information and news about different issues. At the moment due to usage of information technologies individual are interconnected with the world around. Advances in communication technologies have made easiness to connect with family friends or other social actors. People are utilizing facilities of Text messages, Voice calls, E-mails, Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and other social

media that replaced the conventional media like TV, Radio Broadcasting and Print media.

The public revolution in Egypt against government in 2011 has strengthened and endorsed the discussion of political issues through internet communications and on social media in worldwide. The new information technologies glimpse as facilitating information exchange and has emerged as new rapid medium of information. The new social media mobilize social actors as formation of political opinion and social behavior of the masses. These social actors were not appeared on social media previously.

Internet plays an essential role in field of communication and research. Today a huge chunk of

world population is using internet for various purposes. According to Internet World Stats (IWS) there were approximately 2,405,518,376 internet users in the world on June 30, 2012. That is 34.3 % of total world population. Whereas a regional disintegrate put forward 44.8% of total internet users are Asians. Surprisingly China is stand at number 1<sup>st</sup> among world top 20 countries, India at third and Pakistan at twentieth (IWS, 2012).<sup>[1]</sup> Internet World Stats (2012) stated that Pakistan's "total population was approximately 180 million out of which around 30 million used internet, which count 15.5 % of total population of Pakistan."<sup>[2]</sup>

In Pakistan "Facebook is the most visited Internet site in Pakistan, followed by Google, YouTube, Blogs, Wikipedia, twitter, LinkedIn and others." According to "Socialbakers" statics there are more than 8 million Facebook users in Pakistan, which ranked Pakistan 28<sup>th</sup> Facebook user by country in world. Socialbakers (2012) further explains that, "Our social networking statistics show that Facebook penetration in Pakistan is 4.38% compared to the country's population and 27.70% in relation to number of Internet users. The total number of FB users in Pakistan is reaching 8068900 and grew by more than 1307340 in the last 6 months. Comparing these nearest countries by penetration of Facebook users shows that Pakistan has 0.26% higher FB penetration than Nigeria and 0.09% lower FB penetration than Kazakhstan."<sup>[3]</sup> The 51% user's age group is currently 18-24 with total of 3 990 800 users, followed by the users in the age of 25-34, while gender ratio between male and female user is 70% Male and 30% female users in Pakistan.

### **Objective of the Study**

Pakistan is an Islamic democratic country where first time elected government is going to complete its five years tenure without any army interruption. Political parties access to voter very traditionally during election campaigns by public meetings, election rallies and door-to-door canvassing. Now it is very dangerous to gather masses for political gathering in possible terrorist threats. Political parties and personalities are looking toward social media for direct access to voters. This research intends to examine the social media implications on Pakistan's politics. It also tries to examine the role of Facebook in building the public perception. It focuses to measure

the fans of political personalities of Pakistan on Facebook. This research evaluates the comparison between ex-president Parvez Mushraf and the current president of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari.

### **Importance of Social Media**

Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein (2010) define it as, "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content".<sup>[4]</sup> Pakistan Telecommunication Ltd (PTCL) and other telecommunications companies have a significance contribution in offering internet packages on reasonable cost. Its penetration is dramatically increased in Pakistan's society due to speedy and affordable internet packages. It is observed that Pakistan's society has great involvement in social media networking. Government of Pakistan was greatly criticized by public when it impose ban on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. According to Solangi (2013) "Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) was vastly criticized by every field of life in Pakistan when it blocked tweeter for more than eight hours on May 20. Next day, it was a front page story on mainstream papers with editorials and opinions."<sup>[5]</sup> Recently social media has an inspiring impact on the political scenario in Pakistan. There are number of people using internet in their offices, home and on cell phones.

The social media networking cater the needs of masses in process of socialization. It provides a unique platform to user of internet where they can share and express their ideas and thoughts about any specific event or issue. Social media has strong impact on its user and society. Following are the core function of social media that made it more important in public.

1. It provides opportunity for public to get-together for any purpose or cause.
2. It provides a remarkable influence and gregarious familiarity.
3. It provides an excellent source of connectivity to family and friend on globe.
4. It provides a great arena to public where they can raise social, political or any other issues.
5. It provides a channel to concerned authorities to hear the voices of public.

6. It provides education and information to masses about true picture of any issue freely.
7. It can reshape public opinion and policies.
8. It can spread awareness about any issue to respective community.

#### **Political Parties and Personalities of Pakistan**

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Pakistan Movement for Justice), a relatively new political party is headed by a man whom one can describe as a modern politician. Imran Khan, a former cricket hero, founded the party in 1996. Apart from its official website ([www.insaf.pk](http://www.insaf.pk)), the party's supporters have created separate blogs to interact with the voters and the people at large. PTI contains its own Facebook account as "[www.facebook.com/PTIOfficial](http://www.facebook.com/PTIOfficial)". The party chairman, Imran Khan has its own Facebook account as "[www.facebook.com/ImranKhan.Official](http://www.facebook.com/ImranKhan.Official)".

Muttahida Quami Movement (United National Movement) is recognized as the third major political party in country and the second largest party in Sindh, however it currently holds fourth highest number of seats in the National Assembly while maintaining its second position in Sindh Assembly. The party founded in 1984 in Karachi by Altaf Hussain, sits comfortably in the national government of Islamabad and in the provincial government of Sindh, the second biggest province of Pakistan, as a coalition partner. MQM contains its own Facebook account as "[www.facebook.com/MQMOfficial](http://www.facebook.com/MQMOfficial)". The party chairman, Altaf Hussain has its own Facebook account as "[www.facebook.com/Mqm.1.MqM](http://www.facebook.com/Mqm.1.MqM)".

Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML "Nawaz group") is a centrist conservative party that has been led from by Nawaz Sharif. It currently holds 90 seats in the National Assembly and 7 seats in the Senate. In the Angus-Reid pre-election polls of 22 December 2007, the PML/N was in second place, with about 25% of the vote. It is strong in Punjab province. Its official Facebook account is "[www.facebook.com/pml.n.official](http://www.facebook.com/pml.n.official)". The party chairman Facebook account is "[www.facebook.com/Lion.Of.PAKISTAN](http://www.facebook.com/Lion.Of.PAKISTAN)".

Pakistan Muslim League (Q) (PML "Quaid-i-Azam group") is officially called the Pakistan Muslim League. It is the party behind past president Pervez

Musharraf. PML (Q) is a centrist conservative party that forms the opposition. It currently holds 53 seats in the National Assembly and 21 seats in the Senate.<sup>[2]</sup> The PML (Q) absorbed some minor parties through power-sharing agreements in 2002 general elections, becoming the government of Pakistan. In the 2008 general elections the party lost seats and was no longer the government of Pakistan. In the Angus-Reid pre-election polls of 22-December-2007, the PML (Q) was in third place, with about 23% of the vote. The party official Facebook account is "<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Pakistan-Muslim-League-Quaid-e-Azam-PML-Q>".

Awami National Party (ANP) has 13 seats in the National Assembly and 6 Senate seats.<sup>[2]</sup> The NWFP province government is run by the ANP. Its Facebook account is "[www.facebook.com/ANPMarkaz](http://www.facebook.com/ANPMarkaz)".

The Pakistan People's Party was founded on November 30, 1967 by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who became its first chairman and later Prime Minister of Pakistan. PPP is the largest political party of Pakistan. The PPP currently holds 126 seats in the National Assembly and 27 seats in the Senate. It is the current government of Pakistan. It forms the provincial government in Sindh and is the official opposition in Punjab. In the Angus-Reid pre-election polls of 22 December 2007, it was in first place, with about 30% of the vote. It is strong in the rural areas of Sindh and Punjab. Asif Zardari is the co-chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the largest political party of Pakistan. Victory in the indirect presidential polls on 6 September 6 2008, made him President of Pakistan. Its official Facebook account is "[www.facebook.com/PPP.PakistanPeoplesParty](http://www.facebook.com/PPP.PakistanPeoplesParty)". The party co-chairman has its own Facebook account as "[www.facebook.com/PresidentZardari](http://www.facebook.com/PresidentZardari)".

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Social Media Networks**

Social Media Networks means a place over internet where user exchange, discuss and share their ideas, contents or beliefs to strengthen their social interactions. According to Curtis (2012) "Social media are Internet sites where people interact freely, sharing and discussing information about each other and their lives, using a multimedia mix of personal

words, pictures, videos and audio. At these Web sites, individuals and groups create and exchange content and engage in person-to-person conversations. They appear in many forms including blogs and microblogs, forums and message boards, social networks, wikis, virtual worlds, social bookmarking, tagging and news, writing communities, digital storytelling and scrapbooking, and data, content, image and video sharing, podcast portals, and collective intelligence. There are lots of well-known sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, WordPress, Blogger, Typepad, LiveJournal, Wikipedia, Wetpaint, Wikidot, Second Life, Del.icio.us, Digg, Reddit, Lulu and many others.”<sup>[6]</sup>

Politicians, regimes, and activists look to decisively tap into the potential of social media. “The Internet, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook have re-constituted, especially among young people, how social relationships are constructed and how communication is produced, mediated, and received. They have also ushered in a new regime of visual imagery in which screen culture creates spectacular events just as much as they record them. Under such circumstances, state power becomes more porous and there is less control. Text messaging, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and the Internet have given rise to a reservoir of political energy that posits a new relationship between the new media technologies, politics, and public life” (Giroux, 2009).<sup>[7]</sup> These digital technologies influence the formation and activities of civil society groups: mobs, movements, and civil society organizations. While mass popular protests are by no means a new phenomenon, digital tools are facilitating their formation (Etling et al.).<sup>[8]</sup>

According to Castells (1996) “Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture”.<sup>[9]</sup> According to Bernard Lewis (2011) “The single most important development is the adoption of modern communications. The printing press and the newspaper, the telegraph, the radio, and the television have all transformed the Middle East.”<sup>[10]</sup> Hammond (2007) explains “Print and visual media developed within decades of each other in the Arab world, as opposed to developing through centuries in Western Europe,” so it is of little surprise that “ruling elites fear the Internet as a conduit for political and moral

subversion, and this fear has dominated the discourse on the use of the technology.”<sup>[11]</sup>

Manuel Castells’s network theory can be efficiently utilized to explain how the distinctiveness of social networks can be precious for political activism, through the creation of weak ties, the anonymity provided by the Internet, and the egalitarian nature of online communication. “Weak ties are useful in providing information and opening up opportunities at a low cost. The advantage of the Net is that it allows the forging of weak ties with strangers, in an egalitarian pattern of interaction where social characteristics are less influential in framing, or even blocking communication.”<sup>[12]</sup>

The United States Institute of Peace (2011) reported that “New Media” can have an impact by helping to transform individuals and give them new competencies that empower them in politics. This can be something as simple as taking a picture or a video with a smart phone, uploading that image of that footage to YouTube”.<sup>[13]</sup>

Social Media Networks facilitate user to create a profile on any social site over internet and access to a list of user whom they want to connect. Any user can “View and navigate their own list of connections and sometimes those made by others within the system” (Nasir et al., 2012).<sup>[14]</sup> It has been examined that social media sites strengthen the offline relations. Many researchers suggest that Facebook is used to congeal existing offline user connections.

### **An Overview of Facebook**

Facebook was introduced first time in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes, a site for Harvard students only. According to Valenzuela et al. (2008) “between Fall 2005 and Fall 2006, Facebook expanded to high school networks, first, work networks, later, and, eventually, to Internet users in general.”<sup>[15]</sup> Facebook profile creating is similar to other social sites that provides a formatted web page where every user can enter its gender, residential place, personal information, political affiliation, liking and disliking of any political personality and party, daily activities, interests, birthday, educational achievements, relationship status, favorite movies, videos clips and pictures, religious and cultural identifications with

recent personal pictures, E-mail address and contact numbers.

After completing profile user are able to visit other user page and likes its photos or videos. Golder, Wilkinson, and Huberman (2005) argue, "Like other social networking sites, such as Friendster, Tribe.net and MySpace, Facebook enables its users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate "friends" who can post comments on each other's pages, and view each other's profiles...they can also join virtual groups based on common interests, see what classes they have in common, and, via the profile, learn each others' hobbies, interests, musical tastes, and romantic relationship status."<sup>[16]</sup>

Users can join to friends or group and send request to person whom they know to add them on Facebook. They can also send request to people through using their e-mail contact. "Once someone is accepted as a "friend," not only the two users' personal profile but also their entire social networks are disclosed to each other. This allows each user to traverse networks by clicking through "friends" profiles, so that one's social network snowballs rapidly across people and institutions" (Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008).<sup>[17]</sup> "Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life" (Facebook.com, 2009).<sup>[18]</sup> Facebook account and profile provides two types of messaging. "The Wall" is public message place where friend can wrote, like and pass comments while another is privacy based messaging service like webmail service.

## METHODS

Present study focuses to find out the practices of social media by political parties to motivate their voters and public about policies of their parties. Facebook account of political parties and personalities were accessed through using respective party official website Facebook links. Researcher first got the data about top ranked political parties and personalities of Pakistan through using various online sources. When top rank political party and famous personalities identified than researcher visit the official website of related component. Through using official website researcher next jump to official Facebook account of respective party or personality. After accessing the Facebook account researcher gather the exact figures

of "likes" and "Talking about this" data in a same time as well as in same date.

Facebook followers, friends and fans are divided into two main categories as "Likes" and "Talking about this". Through categories researcher measure the statistics of fans of respective political party or political personalities. Data is analyzes through using MS Excel graphs and charts.

## Research Questions

RQ 1: Did the political parties of Pakistan use social media for change?

RQ 2: Which political party is more popular on Facebook?

RQ 3: Did Mushraf is more popular than Zardari on Facebook?

RQ 4: Which political personality has large number of fans on Facebook?

## Hypothesis

H 1: Pakistan Muslim League-N adapts usage of social media for change.

H 2: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is a famous political party on Facebook.

H 3: Mushraf has more fan than Zardari on Facebook.

H 4: Imran Khan has a large number of fans on Facebook.

## DATA ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

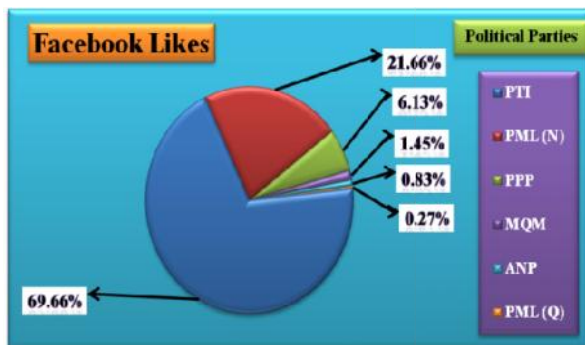
Online search about the Facebook account of different political parties and political personalities present the following data. There were two major categories of the data which depict the best results of Facebook usage by public and political parties. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was stand at top having 394,891 followers in category of "Likes" and 46,010 followers in category of "Talking about this" among the other five major political parties.<sup>[19]</sup> In second number Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML N) has 122,758 friend which "Likes" and 15,767 were "Talking about this".<sup>[20]</sup> In third number Pakistan People Party (PPP) has 34,739 followers in category

of “Likes” and 2,467 in “Talking about this”.<sup>[21]</sup> In fourth number Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) has 8,223 followers in category of “Likes” and 4,711 in “Talking about this”.<sup>[22]</sup> In fifth number Awami National Party (ANP) has 4,726 in category of “Likes” and 4,439 in “Talking about this”.<sup>[22]</sup> While Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML Q) has 1,513 in category of “Likes” and 20 in “Talking about this”.<sup>[24]</sup> There are six major political parties using social media like Facebook according to order of their followers as showed in table;1.

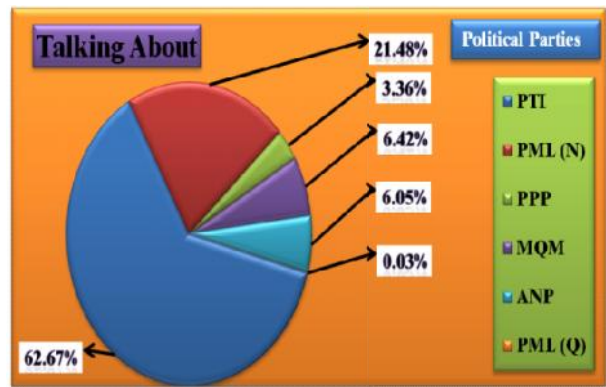
**Table: 1 Top Political Party on Facebook**

| Sr. | Political party | Facebook Likes | Talking About |
|-----|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1   | PTI             | 394,891        | 46,010        |
| 2   | PML (N)         | 122,758        | 15,767        |
| 3   | PPP             | 34,739         | 2,467         |
| 4   | MQM             | 8,223          | 4,711         |
| 5   | ANP             | 4,726          | 4,439         |
| 6   | PML (Q)         | 1,513          | 20            |

When researcher analyzed the data in category of “Likes” of political parties it was founded that PTI has enormous followership 69.66% in terms of “Likes”. The individuals who want to show their affiliation to respective political party had option to click on “Likes” icon on Facebook whether they are friend or not on Facebook. PML-N stand in 2<sup>nd</sup> number political party using Facebook having 21.66% “Likes”. Pakistan People Party is a ruling party in Pakistan stand in 3<sup>rd</sup> position 6.13% among other parties with a significant difference. MQM is a third largest political party in Pakistan but in Facebook “Likes” it stand at fourth number with 1.45%. Awami National Party (ANP) and PML-Q had 0.83% and 0.27% respectively as showed in figure (I).



In this category researcher analyzed data that how much Facebook user and fans talk about any political parties. PTI has again massive fans in category of “Talking About” among the six political parties. It has more than 62% followers and fans which share their comments on party photos. Pakistan Muslim League (N) has 21% fans which talking about it. MQM is the third party ranked as 6.42% fans in this category. ANP has 6% fans on this category. It is very amazing fact that Pakistan People Party which is ruling party in federal Government is ranked on fifth number among the six political parties. PML (Q) is on bottom in this category with least fans as 0.03% on Facebook.

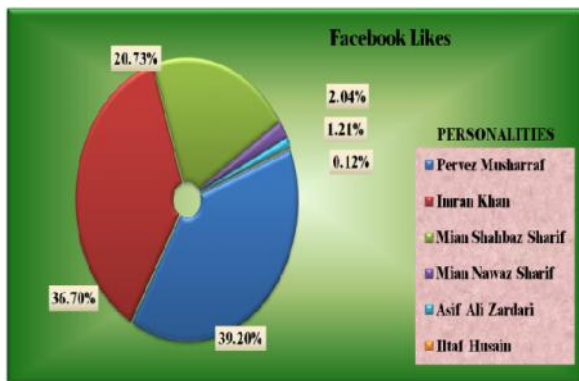


The Facebook account of famous political personalities present the following data. There were two major categories of the data which depict the best results of Facebook usage by public and political traits. Pervez Musharraf was stand at top having 583,914 followers in category of “Likes” and 35,177 followers in category of “Talking about this” among the other five major famous political celebrities.<sup>[25]</sup> In second number Imran Khan (PTI) has 546,742 friend which “Likes” and 30,745 were “Talking about this”.<sup>[26]</sup> In third number Mian Shahbaz Sharif (PML-N) has 308,827 followers in category of “Likes” and 57,990 in “Talking about this”.<sup>[27]</sup> In fourth number Mian Nawaz Sharif (PML-N) has 30,406 followers in category of “Likes” and 18,260 in “Talking about this”.<sup>[28]</sup> In fifth number Asif Ali Zardari (PPP) has 18,093 in category of “Likes” and 359 in “Talking about this”.<sup>[29]</sup> Iltaf Husain (MQM) has 1,716 in category of “Likes” and 69 in “Talking about this”.<sup>[30]</sup> There are six major famous political celebrities using social media like Facebook according to order of their followers as showed in table;2.

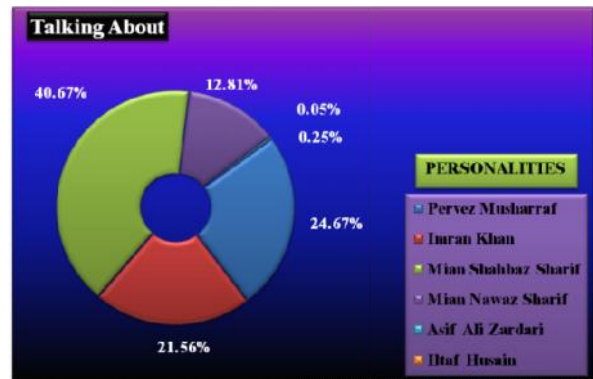
**Table: 2 TOP FAMOUS POLITICAL PERSONALITIES**

| Sr. | Political Leader           | Facebook Likes | Talking About |
|-----|----------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1   | <b>Pervez Musharraf</b>    | 583,914        | 35,177        |
| 2   | <b>Imran Khan</b>          | 546,742        | 30,745        |
| 3   | <b>Mian Shahbaz Sharif</b> | 308,827        | 57,990        |
| 4   | <b>Mian Nawaz Sharif</b>   | 30,406         | 18,260        |
| 5   | <b>Asif Ali Zardari</b>    | 18,093         | 359           |
| 6   | <b>Itaf Husain</b>         | 1,716          | 69            |

When researcher analyzed the data in category of “Likes” of famous political personalities it was observed that Pervez Musharraf has massive followership 39.33% in terms of “Likes”. The individuals who want to show their affiliation to respective political personalities had option to click on “Likes” icon on Facebook whether they are friend or not on Facebook. Imran Khan has placed in 2<sup>nd</sup> position celebrity using Facebook having 36.70% “Likes”. Mian Shahbaz Sharif is a Chief Minister in Punjab province stand in 3<sup>rd</sup> position 20.73% among other national level ranked personalities. Mian Nawaz Sharif is a president of Pakistan Muslim League (N) but in Facebook “Likes” it stand at fourth number with 2.04%. Asif Ali Zardari is president of Islamic Democratic Pakistan and Co-chairman of ruling party Pakistan People Party (PPP) has 1.21% “Likes” which is second last less follower among the famous personalities. Itaf Husain is leader off MQM third largest political party has only 0.12% “Likes” on his official Facebook page as showed in figure (III).



In this category researcher analyzed data that how much Facebook user and fans talk about any political personality. Mian Shahbaz Sharif has gained massive fans in category of “Talking About” among the six political personalities. It has more than 40% followers and fans which share their comments on party photos. Pervez Musharraf has 24% fans which talking about it. Imran Khan is the third party ranked as 21% fans in this category. Mian Nawaz Sharif has 12% fans on this category. It is very amazing fact that Pakistan People Party which is ruling party in federal Government its Co-chairman and President of Islamic Democratic Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari is ranked on fifth number as 0.05% among the six political parties. Itaf Husain is on bottom in this category with least fans as 0.25% on Facebook.



### CONCLUSION

It will be no wrong to claim that Facebook as a social media forum is playing very effective and constructive role in our society as well as in the politics of the country. In Pakistan where youth is 70% of population, political parties cannot ignore the fact that this segment of population uses the internet and social networks the most. Social media is challenging the traditional political patterns and it is introducing the new political paradigms. Our political parties have to own and adopt these new practices because social networks will definitely make some differences in future elections, and those who will ignore it, may lose.

Social media constitute an important forum for communication in Pakistan. They serve as a disseminator of information, an organizer of protest, a tool of humanitarianism, an advocate for social causes

and a facilitator of political discussion. However, due to the realities of Pakistan's media environment, and above all to its limited reach, Pakistan's social media will be very important agent for change in near future.

It is concluded that in Pakistan Facebook user increased very rapidly in last two years. Every event is discussed on social media particularly Facebook users share the pictures of the issues and freely leave comments on that actively. This way they build up opinion and perception of their respective friends and community about the resent happening. Among the political parties Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has numerous fans and friends on Facebook. It shows that PTI utilize Facebook very actively than others political parties. When researcher tries to find out the fans of political personalities it is concluded that ex-president of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf, Imran Khan and Mian Shahbaz Sharif are utilizing Facebook as a political tool.

With political groups in Pakistan using the internet to appeal to other media outlets and constituents for over a decade, the major political parties are now using social networking sites to transmit information through political forums and Facebook. This shows that Pakistani politicians are aware of tapping on the social utilities in the future general election set down for 2013.

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