ACCESSING THE POLITICAL INFORMATION THROUGH NEW MEDIA: A REVIEW STUDY

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Keywords

Abstract

Social media provides a brisk access to information, knowledge, education and entertainment. Particularly, political information is greatly availing on online platforms with ease of access for its potential users. In this regard, the current study aims to highlight the availability of political information on digital platforms and its impacts on voters' engagement and voting decisions during the electoral process. The researchers adopted literature review approach, and randomly selected a sample of $n= 33$ peer reviewed research papers published from 2011 to 2019, witnessing the role of new media in disseminating political information. To further validate the phenomenon, the researchers also cited the examples of Egyptian Revolution (2011), Arab Spring (2010), BlackLivesMatter (2013), Iranian Presidential Election Protests (2009), and the others (Salanova, 2012). Therefore, the study concluded that Social Media platforms are playing a substantial role to disseminate the political information among the masses. This process is two-way in nature as Social Media facilitates to receive the information and feedback sharing. Moreover, political entities also prefer using these online platforms for political communication aspirations. This not only informs the public about political occurrence but also motivates them to actively engage in online and offline political activities. This leads people to make better political decisions on their own which further helps to strengthen democracy.

1. Introduction

Social Networking Sites have become an integral part of our lives because of increased communication and sharing environment (Ali, 2020). May Social Networking Sites are recently announced as interactive platforms that serve many purposes (Alghizzawi *et al*., 2019). Due to this reason, Social Media has greatly altered almost all fields of life. Today we have the potential to communicate with others which is a two-way process on Social Networking platforms. Social Media has enabled users to receive information and also to share it further. Indeed, digital media have great potential and the world is getting greatly benefited by this technology (Miller *et al*., 2018). We prefer Social Media today because they connect us with people from all over the world with a single click. We are staying in different Social Media communities with whom we have developed Media base based applications, encouraging users to share their opinions, information and other related content. As compared to traditional media, Social Media reinforces direct access to the information and active engagement in the online activities a strong sense of belonging. We share information and knowledge also Social Media have enabled us to socialize with each other (Das & Sahoo, 2011). During the last few years, internet technology has drastically modified the ways of interpersonal communication (Ali, 2018). Moreover, ease of access and enormous benefactions also lead the people to prefer Social Media usage on an almost

daily basis (Hou *et al*., 2019). Moreover, due to brisk technological advancements like mobile phones, have further benefited the globalization process. With several facilitations offered by mobile phone technology, the number of Social Media users is briskly growing (Alghizzawi *et al*., 2018). According to Lane & Coleman, (2012), the advancement of technology is highly compelling and rapid. People get connected to their Social Media profiles by using their mobile phones and even tablet devices. This is an explicit acceleration of pace as people are not required to rely on only face-to-face communication and information sharing process. As recent research revealed that Social Media platforms have become a commonplace to share and receive information from different sources all around the world (Watanuki & Moraes, 2019). In this regard, knowledge and information sharing is one of the most enlightened benefactions offered by Social Media usage. Today, information sharing and receiving are much easier and improved. Unlike traditional media, new media provided fast and efficient platforms to provide information about the various phenomenon (Ghazali *et al*., 2016). For Pousti *et al*., (2014) information through Social Media ensures a better understanding and motivates brainstorming regarding certain critical matters. Therefore, the role of Social Media to information to gain and share the information is largely helping the people to evaluate situations and make better decisions.

Especially, Social Media platforms greatly simplified the access and dissemination of

political information (Habes *et al*., 2018). As once, the information is delivered; it rapidly spreads to almost all the existing Social Networking Sites. The users of these Sites gain information and further share it with the others. Here the role of Social Media is democratic as information revealed from online platforms, reach to even far-flung remote areas (Outhwaite *et al*., 2018). Political information is widely available on Social Networking platforms both from Political entities and news media accounts. Today, Social Networking Sites bare largely considered as a vehicle of political information and awareness that help people to stay updated. People stay informed about political proceedings and also cast their own opinion (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). As Social Media has a user-focused approach and widely contains "by the users for the users". Social Networking platforms introduced new strategies to keep people informed and new ways to access deep political information (Zeng *et al*., 2010). For J, (2018), Social Media provides platforms that bring access to information and people, closer for their potential interests. Evens people can give feedback, share the information, revel their personal opinion and indulge in online political activities. Now Social Media has become a vehicle of political information for the people, which further motivates public involvement, strengthens the democracy and supports transparency. For instance, the Arab Spring was one of the most highlighted political movements,

took place due to Social Media. This movement started from small Social Media based discussion and took a transformational form. Likewise, the role of Social Media regarding politics in Turkey is of greater significance as well (Yunus, 2013). Even politicians also prefer Social Media to interact with their supporters and reinforce public participation. Especially during elections, the use of Social Media is highly recorded. Thus from receiving political information to get involved in an active political process, Social Media platforms are playing an important role (Turnšek & Jankowski, 2012). Therefore, the role of Social Media in Democracy is highly significant as now people have a better opportunity to access the information, evaluate it on their own, share it with others and eventually take possible steps to bring political changes (Fountain, 2017). In this regard, discussing Social Media in realms of political information is important as it highlights the policies and strategies designed to convey political information. This is also a contributive factor that can enhance the knowledge and understanding regarding the dissemination of Political information through Social Media for several aspirations (Outhwaite *et al*., 2018). Therefore, by keeping in view the role of Social Media about the dissemination of political information, this study reviewed the literature witnessing the role and importance of Social Media and the conclusions are drawn accordingly. Figure 1 below provides a graphical representation of the current study:
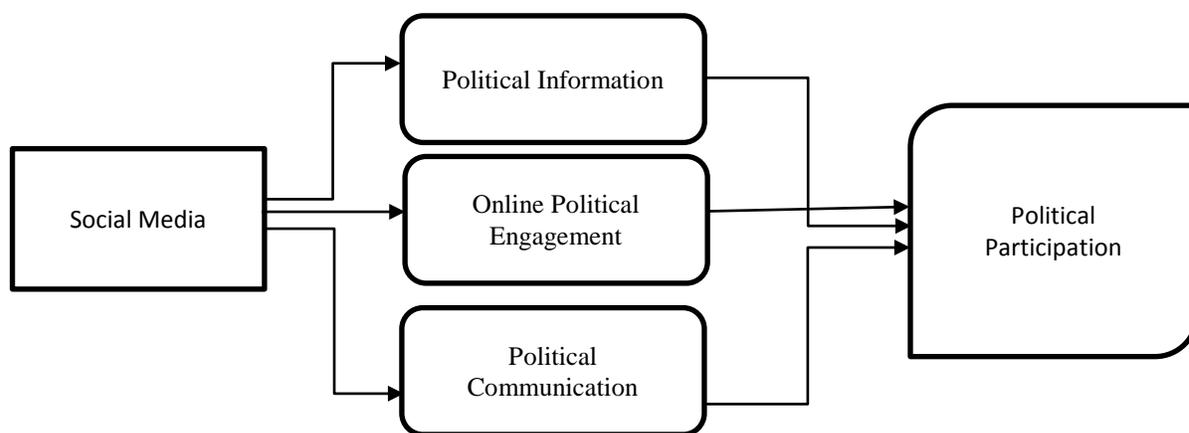
Figure 1 Source: Graphical Representation Of The Current Study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media and Political Information:

The role of Social Media to spread political awareness is also interlinked with undermining the dictatorship. As Reuter & Szakonyi, (2012) validated this phenomenon in their study and examined the role of media to abolish dictatorship and authoritarianism. The researchers used the survey method during Russian Parliamentary elections in 2011 and gathered data from the potential respondents. The results indicated that using Twitter and Facebook facilitated users regarding deceptive tactics used by different political parties. However, two local Russian Social Networking platforms Odnoklassniki and Vkontakte did not play any role to disseminate political awareness as they were regulated under the local political system. Similarly, Turnšek & Jankowski, (2012) investigated the methodological and theoretical approaches that affirmed the relationship between Social Media and political information. The central objective was to examine the role of YouTube videos regarding the spread of political information. To obtain the data, researchers selected several journals' articles from online database systems. Findings of this study indicated that the role of YouTube videos to spread political information is highly influential. Due to a higher number of individuals joining YouTube, this is also increasing their dependency on YouTube for political information and awareness. Likewise, the use of Social Media for political matters is highly practiced today Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, (2013). Different Social Networking Sites (SNS) greatly influenced the level of political awareness among the public. In this regard, the researchers reviewed the literature concerning the role of Social Media for disseminating political information. The researchers concluded that Social Networking platforms enabled political news sources to access the users and spread political information both from national and international scenarios.

Park, (2017) also investigated how different Social Networking sites are spreading political

awareness among the public in South Korea. The researchers used a cross-sectional study design and gathered data from 3000 respondents. The selected Social Media platforms included Facebook, Blogs, Twitter and YouTube. Findings revealed that Social Networking Sites largely worked as a career of political information. However, Twitter and Blogs were the main sources and other two Social Media platforms (Facebook and YouTube) did not play any significant role. In this regard, the researcher concluded that contributions made by Social Media are significantly aligned with spreading political information that further leads to the improved democratic system in the country. In this regard, J, (2018) argued that using Social Media for disseminating political information also brings the masses, political parties and the government closer. It also helps the public to share information, start debates over political scenarios and even making better decisions in the future. Further, he examined the role of two leading Social Networking platforms (Facebook and Twitter) regarding the spread of political information. Thus, results revealed that both Twitter and Facebook have a prominent role to spread political awareness among the users. However, Facebook, as compared to Twitter, is highly influential for spreading political information. Furthermore, Owen, (2018) argued that accommodation of political information and communication are the two most prominent contributions of new media technology. Due to increased political awareness through Social

Networking Sites, the democratic process and political entities have a wider range of implications. Now, journalists have modified roles and governments have new responsibilities to keep the people informed about ongoing political occurrences. For these reasons, today delivery of political information is radically altered and people are more capable of accessing the details of the political process. To further validate this phenomenon, Casero-Ripollés, (2018) examined the use and impact of Social Media regarding the dissemination of political awareness in Spain. According to researchers, this newly introduced environment for hybrid communication and strong strategic interactive applications affect the whole information sending and receiving process. Therefore, they concluded that due to the rapid shift from traditional to new media, users have a self-choice environment. Social Media in this regard, have a strong influence on users' perceptions concerning political scenarios which eventually leads to strengthening the democratic process. According to Opeyemi, (2018), Social Media platforms facilitate the spread of political information, especially during elections. The researcher further scrutinized the role of Social Media for spreading political awareness among Social Media users. For data gathering purposes, the researcher selected participants from the United Kingdom and conducted online interviews to gather their opinion. Further the researcher utilized Ethnographic Content Analysis Method to obtain the results. The results revealed that

Social Media platforms are playing a strong significant role to spread political information in Great Britain. To keep people updated about the political scenarios, new media sources in the country are effectively playing their part. The researcher concluded that political information through Social Networking Sites is of greater magnitude as it enables us evaluating the political scenarios on our own that further plays an important role to make better voting decisions.

2.2 Social Media and Online Political Participation:

Online media penetration has revolutionized the information gathering process leading to take active participation in the political process as (Yunus, 2013) investigated the role of Social Media regarding the mobilization of political protest in Turkey. The researchers used the case study method and cited the example of political protests entitled Internet Censorship Protest and Grezi Parki Protest during 2012 and 2013. Data gathered from both quantitative and qualitative approaches showed that Turks consider Social Media as an integral part of Social Networking based political movements. In all the political protests and movements, people interacted with each other on Social Networking platforms, shared their opinion and information as well. Furthermore, an increasing number of technological devices i.e, mobile phones, tablets, applications and others also help people to actively engage in protests against the political system in Turkey. Similarly, one more study conducted by (Kanagavel & Chandrasekaran,

2014) examined the influence of Social Media, particularly Facebook on the political participation decisions of the young users in Tamil Nadu, India. The researchers gathered data during elections in Tamil Nadu during April 2011 state-level elections and utilized content analysis (*n*= 50 Facebook profiles) and survey method (*n*= 110). Results unveiled that Facebook usage is highly influencing young individuals' political participation decisions leading them to make personal choices during the electoral process. According to the researchers, online political participation was directly associated with their practical life participation. 49% of respondents revealed that they are now supporting their favourite political parties and intending to vote them as their online political discourse led them to make their voting decisions. (Fountain, 2017) also investigated the role of Social Media to spread political information among the individuals ranging from 18 to 39 years. According to the researcher, as political participation is a fundamental part of democracy, political participation leads to strengthening the whole political system. Data gathered from structured, self-administered questionnaires revealed that Social Media usage directly affected the political perceptions and participation of the selected individuals. Regardless of their educational level, participants ranging from 18 to 34 years revealed that political information through online platforms is positively influencing their political participation, especially during the electoral process. Therefore, the researchers

found a strong positive correlation between Social Media based political information and political participation among individuals. 39% of them joined political activities as volunteers and rest of 34% also attended the political processions and meetings. Likewise, are several examples affirming the correlation between political participation and Social Media? For example, (Melanie Stilz, 2014) cited the example of "Enough is Enough" (EiE) movement questioning the credibility of the government in Nigeria. Here the researcher utilized a case study approach as the movement was based on Social Media encouraging the young generation from 18 to 35 years old, to actively protest against the current government. The protesters were also given four factors best approach which involved an active selection of the political candidate. The approach was entitled "RSVP" which stands for (1) Register to Vote, (2) Select the compatible and appropriate candidates, (3) Vote, (4) Protect your votes for the voting day and even for the next elections. Also the Nigerian Election Commission introduced an application containing certain useful features, aimed to empower the public to gain political information during the elections.

Moreover, (Schmiemann, 2015) scrutinized the extent to which Facebook official pages of European Union, European Parliament, European Commission and the Council of Europe contain messages that motivate the people to take active participation in political activities. According to the researcher, the interactive nature of Social Media platforms provides great opportunities for the public to stay updated about the national and international level political scenarios. The researcher conducted a direct content analysis to gather the data from the European Union organizations Facebook platforms. Results showed that official pages of The European Commission, The Council of Europe and The European Parliament contained posts and other content encouraging people for political participation. Moreover, $n=$ 133 Facebook political posts from all these organizations including pictures were also shared by the other users. Therefore, the official pages of The European Commission, The Council of Europe and The European Parliament contained posts about encouraging political participation. Furthermore, Mahmud & Amin, (2017) also investigated the dynamics of political participation among young university students in Bangladesh. The researchers used a cross-sectional study design and distributed $n=$ 110 close-ended, self-administered questionnaire among the students of the University of Dhaka. The main objective was to explore any existing relationship between online political involvement and offline active political participation. Results revealed that the majority (74%) of respondents use Social Media and are members of online groups designed for political discourse. According to the researchers, close ties between Social Media based political information and practical life activities i.e., gaining more political information, joining existing political groups,

raising voice against inequality and others were largely found. These online platforms not only spread political information but also work as dynamic factors to encourage political participation. Another study to affirm the phenomena was conducted by J, (2018), as the researcher reviewed the role of Social Networking Sites particularly Facebook and Twitter for encouraging political participation, especially during elections. Analysis of the literature revealed that both Twitter and Facebook have a prominent role in political awareness and participation. However, Facebook, as compared to Twitter, is more capable of influencing public behavior to actively engage in political activities. Also validated by Shahzad, (2018), as the researcher used the OSOR Model of Communication Model to examine the correlation between Social Media and political participation in Pakistan. The researchers used $n=$ 800 structured questionnaires for data gathering process. Findings indicated that the relationship between Social Media based information and active political participation was highly significant. The researcher concluded that the role of Social Media regarding political participation is highly prominent in Pakistan also; Social Networking platforms have a greater influence on strengthening democracy.

2.3 Social Media and Political Communication:

According to DAŞLI, (2019), political communication is as similar to simple communication with the basic elements of the sender, message, channel, receiver and feedback. In this regard, Social Media platforms are widely utilized for sending and receiving the political message resulting in various positive outcomes. In Turkey, currently here are more than 30 million Social Networking accounts owned by different political parties and their leaders. Even President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasize using Social Media to inform people about the political scenarios and he also uses his Twitter account for the same aspirations. To assess the extent to which political parties prefer Social Networking platforms Emruli, Zejneli, & Agai, (2011) studied this phenomenon in Croatia. The researchers preferred case study method and used the Macedonian case. Data gathered by using content analysis technique revealed that although political entities used Social Media on a limited basis they mainly preferred Facebook and YouTube to share the political content. Some parties also posted the photos regarding their political achievements. The researchers concluded that due to increasing number of Social Networking Sites, now several political parties are also adopting them. Here political parties mainly indulged in one-way communication especially during the elections to persuade the public regarding their voting decisions. Further, a study conducted by Vaccari *et al.*, (2013) examined the types of people preferring Social Media to connect with political entities for gaining the information during Italian General Elections in 2013. The researchers selected a random sample of participants and

findings revealed that the majority of them were male, young, educated and ideologically supporting the Left-Wing parties. Moreover, the respondents also revealed that Social Media also helped them to make their voting behavior and support for particular candidates. To assess the extent to which political parties prefer Social Networking platforms (Emruli *et al*., 2011).

However, for Roginsky, (2014) Social Media technology is purely driven by actors particularly political entities. They are capable of attracting the people, informing them about political proceedings and thus enable them to take relevant decisions. She further argued that digital media technology is not innovative but the combination of tactics particularly political content makes it innovative and highly appealing. The researchers also cited the example of the members of the European Parliament explaining why they adopt Social Media platforms and the extent to which they are changing political landscape in the region. Members of the European Parliament do not directly interact with their followers rather; their teams and staff members of the parliament use these platforms on their behalf. Therefore, innovation is used by political parties, if not directly then indirectly but the purpose is still the same as Social Media usage is solely to keep people updated about the politics and gain support? An example of "actors-driven" Social Media was cited by Gerodimos & Justinussen, (2015) as they investigated the use of Social Media during Barrack Obama's election campaign back in 2012. The aim was to investigate how people respond to Obama's digital political communication process. Here the researchers particularly focused on narrative buttons available on Facebook concerning like, dislike, comment, share and others. Data was gathered by conducting a content analysis of Facebook posts made by Barrack Obama's official account. Results showed that the majority of the posts were focused on highlighting the personality of Barrack Obama and strategically motivating the followers to make the favorable voting decisions. Also, the participation of followers was prominent however, they reacted more on policy-oriented content rather than the promotional content. Here the assumption is Social Media have handed over the power to every political candidate to interact with the public (Karlsen & Enjolras, 2016). Today, they independently share their message and persuade their followers. To further validate this, both researchers investigated the use of Social Media as an individual campaigning tool by the politicians in Norway. Results showed that majority of the politicians used Social Media especially during elections in a tandem with traditional media forms. Researchers also concluded that Social Media provide an interactive environment where the main objective is to persuade the public for political persuasion in Norway.

Similarly, more studies also affirmed the use of Social Media for political purposes and to further authenticate this Stier, Bleier, Lietz, & Strohmaier, (2018) examined the Social Media

usage for running election campaigns during German Federal Elections in 2013. Two leading Social Networking Sites (Twitter and Facebook) were selected and the researchers distributed open-ended questionnaires among the potential respondents. Data gathered from the *n*= 23,604 respondents and content analysis of total *n*= 282,118 Social Media posts revealed that both platforms mainly prioritize political issues and political entities also use both sites for political communication purposes. The researchers concluded that Social Media provide an interactive platform for political communication and running election campaigns. This helps the candidates to target the distinct groups and also gain support from a larger number of people. This is because, during elections, both public and the politicians prefer to utilize Social Media to meet their political demands (information, communication). People use these platforms to gain the relevant information and the politicians utilize them to gain political support during the electoral process (Vaccari *et al*., 2013) as the perennial nature of humans wants to gain political information and political entities are taking advantage of this human need through digital communication sources (Darshan & Suresh, 2019). That is why the objectives of communication are potentially changed and are preferred for political communication purposes. The researchers also conducted a review study of the relevant literature published from 2011 to 2018. The main finding of the study revealed that Social Media platforms are widely used for

political purposes by politicians in India. This usage is also leading people to actively pass the obtained information and make discussions about it.

2.4 Impacts of Social Media on Political Scenarios:

Social Media technology has greatly facilitated the communication process and persuasion through online communication sources is prominent as well (Eijaz, 2013). In her study, the researcher investigated the impacts of Social Media on political matters in Pakistan. The data collected from an equal number of rural and urban students revealed that the use of Social Media not only motivates them for political participation but also they have made a better political decision before elections. Now they are even more aware of current problems and Social Media have enabled them to make voting decisions on their own. Also discussed by Kaur & Kaur, (2013) as they addressed the fundamental role of Social Media for disseminating political information. According to the researchers, Social Media strongly influences the political system and political awareness among the masses. For instance, during Loksabha (2014) and Karnataka elections (2013) in India, Social Media highly motivated common man to share his opinion o open platforms. Emergence of Social Media enabled even young generation to stay updated about the political occurrences which also enlightened them about making suitable decisions. Therefore, Social Media are playing an important role to bring positive political changes

in India. Although these changes are not quick, they are gradual but are subtle in nature. As per noted by Jamil, (2018) digitalization of news has transformed the public's access to information sources worldwide. All the political activities today are widely available on Social Networking Sites that keep people updated. To further validate this, the researcher evaluated the use of Social Media by Pakistanis during the 2018 general election and its impacts on their overall political perceptions. Data gathered from both surveys and content analysis of web-based posts unveiled that political information on Social Media is not only received by the users but also they are sharing it with others. Moreover, ease of access to political parties and leaders through online platforms is also facilitating the people to make suitable voting decisions. Similarly, Kamp, (2016) cited the example of general elections in Uganda during 2016 when Social Media greatly influenced the opinion of the public regarding major political issues. According to the author, during the whole episode of elections, Ronald Kibuule, Minister of Youth Affairs, confronted extreme reaction from the public due to his controversial statement against the victims of the sexual assaults. Even the other candidates of election campaigns were also affected by the Social Media as the public was constantly following them on Social Networking platforms leading them to either gain more support or losing the existing supporters due to certain controversies. Here the United States 2008 Presidential elections are considered as the first

example of Social Media usage and its impacts on voting behavior and political perceptions of the individuals (AUVINEN, 2017). Similarly, in 2011 Egypt's Political Revolution and major revolution in Arab Spring were another major examples of the powerful impacts of Social Media on political scenarios. The series of events to bring political revolution was much intense and the role of Social Media was vital. In this regard, the role of media is considered as highly informational reinforcing political action. Likewise, for Bode, Vraga, Borah, & Shah, (2014) Social Media platforms provide a new space for more organized political behavior, political communication and thus bringing refined political consequences. Although, originally Social Networking Platforms were not conceived for political purposes gradually both political entities and the public started using these sites for political aspirations. Here the researchers examined the dynamics of adapting Social Media to gain political information and its impacts on people's voting behavior. Through a longitudinal study design, data was gathered first during May 2008 and later in November 2008. Results showed that information and Social utility were the two main reasons for Social Media usage during the whole episode of the elections. Also, the participants revealed that due to ease of access to political information through the online resources, Social Media enabled them to make suitable voting decisions during 2008 elections. As Gil de Zúñiga & Chen, (2019) further witnessed this in their study and reviewed the

literature concerning political information on Social Media and its impacts on democratic system. The researchers also argued that role of Social Media not only disseminate the political information but also help people to brainstorm about misinformation in a social-political system. Therefore, they concluded that Social Media platforms are not only capable of increasing political participation but also, they also tend to develop a deliberative society. For example, algorithms system on Social Media helps people to experience information about current political scenarios. This helps them to stay updated which eventually influences the improvement of democratic system. Also affirmed by Aaron Smith, Laura Silver, Courtney Johnson, & Jingjing Jiang, (2019) as they investigated people's perception regarding impacts of Social Media. The researchers executed the sample in 12 different countries including Lebanon, Vietnam, India, Jordan, Mexico, Kenya, Tunisia, Philippines and others. According to the respondents, Social Media deeply influenced politics and, the rise of mobile technology even revolutionized the whole political system. Majority of people also revealed that due to Social Networking Sites people are better informed about the politics as they are simultaneously keeping people aware about the political scenarios.

3. Methodology

Review studies are an important part of research, providing authenticated information regarding the relevant phenomenon. Such studies aim to give a

greater understanding in the light of existing research literature. They also provide direction to discuss and make conclusions accordingly (Library, 2017). In this regard, the current study contains literature review approach to retrieve the suitable research studies (Ali, 2020). In the current study, the researchers carefully gathered peer-reviewed research articles available on different online platforms (Sage, Taylor & Francis, Springer Journals, Wiley, and others). The selected research studies contained diverse study designs (cross-sectional, case-studies, review articles etc.), paradigm models (quantitative, qualitative, mixed method) and methodologies.

Furthermore, the researchers obtained articles from 2018 ISI Web of Knowledge Journals Citation Reports Indexed journals of social sciences, media studies, humanities, politics and sociology by keeping their impact factor and indexation under consideration. The selected journals included: Mass media and society, New Media and Society, International Review of Social Sciences, Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal, Critical Studies in Media Communication, Media Psychology, Social Media and Society, Political Science Quarterly, Perspectives on Political Science, and others. Nonetheless, several articles were based on research essay and perspectives based on new media and politics. Thus, the researchers used a total $n= 33$ articles based on the selection criteria. The data of each criterion is given below with the relevant graphs and tables:
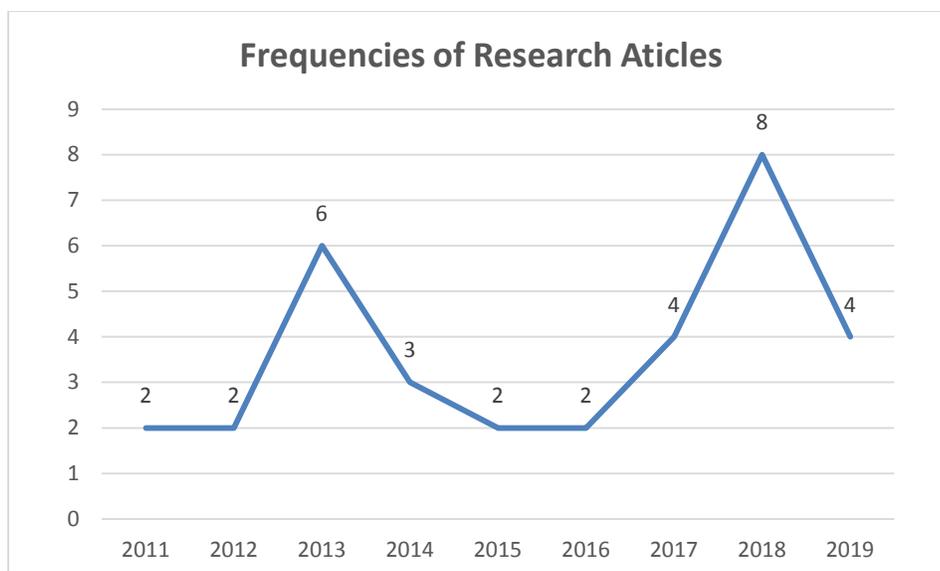
Figure 2: Frequencies of cited articles as per their publication years

Figure 2 above contain as a brief overview of frequency of selected research articles publish from 2011 to 2019. As visible, the researchers selected and analyzed a total of *n*= 33 peer-reviewed, published research articles. However, it can be seen that the majority of relevant research articles (*n*= 8 or 24.2%) are published during 2018 as political communication and information, both are among the basic considerations for media scholars. This not only highlights the role of media regarding political communication, also it shows people's dependency upon social media for political information gathering purposes (Rexha, 2014).

Table 1: Percentage of cited Research Articles according to their Study Method & Paradigm Models:

Study Design	Case Study	Experimental	Research Perspectives/ Essays	Review Studies	Others	Total no. of studies
	12.1%	45.4%	30.3%	9.0%	3.0%	33

Paradigm Models	Quantitative		Qualitative		Quantitative-Qualitative (Both)	
	42.4%		12.1%		3.0%	

Table 1 above contains a brief overview of the research design and paradigm models of cited research articles. Reading the study design, we can see that the cited articles were based on diverse study methods such as experimental designs, review studies, case studies and others. However, a majority (*n*= 15 or 42.4%) of articles were based on experimental design. Likewise, concerning the paradigm models, the researchers mainly preferred quantitative analysis (*n*= 14 or 44.2%), 12.1% studies contained qualitative method and only 3.0% studies involved mixed-

methods approach. Here it is notable that, the rest of all (42.0%) cited literature was based on

research persecute/ essays in general.

Table 2: Percentage of cited Research Articles according to their methods of data collection:

Data Collection Methods	Survey	Literature Review	Interview	Content Analysis	Others
	42.4%	9.0%	3.0%	18.1%	27.2%

Table 2 above gives an overview of studies, characterization according to their data gathering techniques. As visible, a majority of articles (42.4%) were based on Survey method. Here 27.2% of articles were based on research reports, essays, policy briefs, general discussions and

4. Discussion

It is widely acknowledged that the circulation of information creates political awareness among people especially through Social Networking Sites, where this circulation is fast and continuous. It also encourages people for both online and offline political participation. This process of amplifying the public voice by involving them in the online political debates further reinforce them to make suitable voting decisions (Outhwaite *et al*., 2018). Besides one-way communication from political entities, Social Media also accommodate the public discussion forums regarding several political issues. This feature facilitates the free and continuous flow of information leading to an advanced knowledgeable capacity. This political reinforcement is highly advantageous for the masses as it triggers them to stay connected with the current political happenings all over the world. Here Opeyemi, (2018) further

statute from different organizations. According to (Ponto, 2015), a suitable data collection is a major determinant of generalizability and authenticity of research. Indeed the whole study plan and conclusions are based on the suitable nature of the relevant study method.

acknowledges the role of Social Media as an important source of strengthening one's knowledge about political advancement and available opportunities for national and international development. For instance, the Occupy Movement initiated in 2011 through Social Networking Sites. Just like the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement was globally discussed, reinforced public participation and led them to protests against the political system. Later the role of Social Media concerning Occupy movement was highlighted by many researchers as Social Media became a substantial part of Social Movements all around the world (Yunus, 2013). As per noted by Owen, (2018) today we can consider Social Media as "Political media" widely preferred for creation and dissemination of political information. Here the exchange of political content is common as these Social Networking Sites provide distinctive platforms both for communication and

interaction. Even during the elections, Social Media have redefined voting practices and campaign strategies. Likewise, many times governments restricted communication and freedom of speech but Social Media continued the continuous flow of communication. Reuter & Szakonyi, (2012) considered these restrictive environments as "Authoritarian Regimes" as many scholars argued that during strict media controls, governments stayed unable to control the flow of information on different Social Networking sites. For instance, many times Social Media accounts remained full of content motivating anti-regime activities and mobilization for the protests. This was because of several reasons including: (i) Social Media kept the news sources and writers anonymous (ii), flow of information on Social Networking platforms was faster than other sources, (iii), due to the multitude of users' roles as information receiver and the career and (iv), the absence of the traditional practices of media gate keeping and monopoly (AUVINEN, 2017).

Furthermore, the revolutionary role of Social Media is also compared with traditional media forms. As Johansson, (2019) argued that political entities and news resources use different strategies to disseminate the relevant information through online platforms. In this regard, Social Networking Sites propose modified ways of communication facilitating the interaction and flow of political information. Unlike traditional media, now it is not necessary to arrange a face to face meetings and processions with the

supporters rather, the process is modified and subtle. We can assume that the digital circulation of political news and information is increasing as more people are turning towards Social Networking Sites. Unlike traditional media, here people not only receive one-way information but also, filter and share it with others. Moreover, besides political entities, people also follow journalists' Social Media accounts where they directly gain political information especially those stories which could not reach the traditional media resources (Möller, 2012). Newman, (2011) considers this shift from traditional to new media as a positive development of news distribution. For the researcher, Social Media provide transparency and visibility to the political content which was earlier under certain limitations as this technology has perceived usefulness regarding political information for the users worldwide (Salloum *et al*., 2019). The way Social Media resources produce, share and consume the news, is the result of advanced new media echo system today. Mostly the transmission of online news is faster than the traditional media forms leading to the declination of preferring traditional media. Even when there is multiculturalism in the society, people have different aptitudes, colour, language, ethnicity, creed and race, Social Media unite them all on the same grounds and mobilize the masses for the betterment of the democratic process (Kunz *et al*., 2014). This is because Social Media provide a crucial infrastructure for the production and dissemination of political information through different resources. The right

to information, freedom of speech and the freedom of action (particularly political participation) all are well served by Social Media (Möller, 2012).

5. Conclusion

Social Media as an important source of communication and information has facilitated almost every filed of life. As per noted by Kim *et al*., (2011), information is available through a wide range of sources and Social Networking platforms are among the most prominent ones. Users can access the information through online sources comparatively faster than the traditional media types. As technology has improved life, new media have become an effective source of information. Also, the users acknowledge the benefactions offered by digital networking (Scheiner, 2014). Especially, regarding political information, new media have the potential to serve the users on a larger level. Now users have unprecedented access to political updates by using their personalized Social Networking profiles (Owen, 2018). This online engagement in political information and communication has also transformed the people' engagement in the political activities leading them to make suitable political decisions. Also affirmed by Kahne & Bowyer, (2018) when perspective and opinions are shared online, it leads the mobilization of individuals for the political reformation purposes further strengthening the democratic system. Here Melanie Stilz, (2014) proposes that even political entities and government can design the project to involve people informal political

participation. As Social Media have deeper influences on one's cognitive thinking thus affecting their political decision-making process (Robertson *et al*., 2016). Similarly, Zhuravskaya *et al*., (2019) considered Social Media as providing an environment where both political entities and the public can interact with each other. To propose political solutions, to discuss new policies and to keep people updated, all are the leading reasons behind providing political information through online channels. Therefore, people prefer Social Networking Sites to gather political information which not only benefits them but also, political entities gain public support by using different online strategies. Here the digital media serve multiple purposes as when people gain political information, they support the suitable political parties leading them to make a better voting decision which further serves to an improved democratic system (J, 2018).

6. Limitations & Recommendations

This study mainly focused on informational benefactions offered by Social Media platforms concerning politics. As misinformation is one of the major concerns raised by Social Networking platforms, this analysis only focused on the positive aspects of the information which limits the scope of this study? Further, the use of Social Media by political entities sometimes contains libel and slander of their rivals which means that political information not only reinforces positive political participation. This factor further narrows the scope of this study however, in the current situation the role of Social Media is of greater

magnitude. Especially concerning the movements like Arab Spring, England Riots, Black Lives Matter, Iranian Election protests (2009) and others, Social Media played a significant role to update the people and reinforcing them to take the revolutionary steps. Therefore, as the scope of the study is limited, there are several other areas still left to be investigated. Especially the extent to which misinformation was spread during political movements in the past and their potential impacts. Thus the researchers recommend more investigations on the role of Social Media regarding political information and its behavioral impacts in general.

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