My name is Khan: the use of Twitter in the campaign for 2013 Pakistan General Election

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Abstract

The 2013 Pakistan General Election was as a democratic milestone in the nation's troubled political history which also witnessed the rise of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI, under its leader Imran Khan), from its marginal status to a formidable political status. This study focuses on the first ever Twitter campaign by Pakistani political parties to mobilize, inform and engage voters during the elections. Through a content analysis of tweets (n =10140) from top four parties, our study reveals significant differences in their usage patterns. PTI's twitter usage was the most distinctive as it involved greater interaction with the public, more campaign updates and greater mobilization of citizens to vote. Through triangulation of our findings with publically available election data we also find that PTI's success (at a provincial level) was largely driven by a unique combination of Twitter communication and face-to-face campaigning aimed at increasing voter turnout, especially among the youth population.

1. Introduction

Pakistan, since its independence in 1947 has oscillated between democratic rule and military dictatorships. Three attempts at an effective democratic transition of power in the past produced an assassination, a military coup and an imposition of martial law. However, the fifth largest democracy in the world, recently witnessed a historical event in the country's democratic process as the 2013 General Election provided the first ever democratic transfer of power. The recent elections too were marred by violence but that did not stop the citizens from voting in large numbers and recording one of the highest voter turnout rates in Pakistan's election history.

The 2013 General Election also witnessed the emergence of social media, including Twitter, as a tool of election campaign and electoral mobilization [28].

For the first time in Pakistani politics social media played an active role, partly because violent attacks on political rallies in the past forced political parties to place a greater emphasis on the internet campaigning during this election.

Pakistani political affairs in the past have been dominated by old style dynastic politics and though the 2013 General Election result signaled a victory of sorts of the same it also saw a change. The social media campaigning combined with a vastly improved voter turnout has much to do with the emergence of a (non – dynastic) third national party, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI). PTI, a political party under the leadership of Imran Khan, a former cricket star whose appeal as an anticorruption crusader combined the party's extensive social media campaigns helped them come out of political backwaters and establish themselves as a major force in the political reckoning of Pakistan.

The political uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011 have further intensified the debates on the potential political role of Twitter. Politicians across the world have openly embraced Twitter and academic research has established how Twitter has been extensively used by political candidates in United States of America [8, 9, 27], United Kingdom [30], Finland [21], Sweden [22], Australia [2] and New Zealand [6] to connect and reach a wide audience base. The medium provides governments and politicians with an opportunity to connect with the citizens in new and effective ways and in the process eliminate the heavily mediated communication offered by the traditional media [20, 25].

Much of the exploits of Twitter as a political engagement tool have been in economically developed, highly networked societies such as the United States or the United Kingdom. The usage of the medium for exchanges between political actors and the public in an emerging democracy with a low Internet penetration and a constant threat of terrorist acts during elections has however never been explored before.

We present here the first study of such kind. This paper seeks to understand the usage of Twitter as a political engagement tool between Pakistani political parties and the public. By exploring the usage of

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Twitter by Pakistani political parties during the 2013 General Election with a special emphasis on PTI, a rising political power, we will investigate the strength of Twitter as a campaign tool. We will also present an analysis of PTI's Twitter approach and relate it to their success in the General Election with an aim to foster greater understanding of how social media campaigning in emerging democracies can contribute to success in the ballot box.

2. Background

2.1 Twitter

In recent years, Twitter has established itself as a very popular social media platform. With a projected social network of 500 million users, Twitter is growing as a conversational medium connecting ordinary people to celebrities, the commons to influential and citizens to governments (Twitter, 2013). Twitter has definitely changed the way people connect and interact in societies and extensive academic research has investigated Twitter use and questions related to it. Honeycutt and Herring [10] by applying their grounded theory approach analyzed Twitter and found its conversational power abilities. Porter [19] argues for the modeling of human relationships in Twitter conversations which sets it apart from other social networking sites. boyd, Golder, and Lotan [11] focussed on retweeting in conversations prevalent in Twitter and found users to adopt different approaches and styles for different purposes. Twitter is not only used as a conversational platform but also as a news source. Kwak and others [17] 2010 investigated how information breaks on Twitter while van der Zee [7] explained how it is carried into mainstream media. Lotan and others [16] found how Twitter plays an important role in amplifying and spreading information across the globe. Berger [14], Hughes and Palen [4] argued for the advantages of news spread via Twitter during emergency events. Besides the research on Twitter as a conversational platform and its everyday uses, researchers have investigated the political use of Twitter. In the following section we will highlight the role of Twitter in political life.

2.2 Twitter and political use

The role of Twitter in politics has been on the rise during recent years. A large group of scholars have investigated the use of Twitter by citizens during elections [1,5,12,13]. Bruns and Burgess [1] analyzed public communication during 2010 Australian federal election and found key patterns and themes of public conversations related to elections. Kim [13] investigated the use of Twitter during 2010 Korean elections and found the medium to be used for three specific uses by the citizens: primarily for political information-seeking, entertainment and social utility. Larsson and Moe [5] in analyzing how Twitter use was fashioned during the 2010 Swedish election identified different user types based on how high-end users utilized Twitter service. Gaffney [12] critiqued the use of Twitter by Iranian citizens during the 2009 Iran election protests. All these studies hint toward widespread Twitter involvement of citizens during elections.

In related research, other scholars have more specifically analyzed the use of Twitter by politicians and party organizations during election campaigns. Grusell and Nord [22] highlight the need of Twitter examination in relation to election campaigns due to the newness of the medium. Strandberg [21] raises the purpose of Twitter as a political mobilization tool and in doing so agrees with Norris [24] who emphasizes the use of online tool for the purpose of engaging the citizens. A majority of such studies deal with Twitter usage in the US political environment. Metzger and Maruggi [15] established the facilitating role of Twitter in unfolding of the 2008 US elections. Livne, Simmons, Adar and Adamic [3] in studying the 2010 midterm US elections find significant differences in Democrats, Republicans and Tea Party candidates' Twitter usage pattern and suggest that conservative candidates had used the medium more effectively for campaigning. Amman [29] in analyzing the same data found that most tweeting by Senate candidates was informational and had no correlation to voter turnout.

However, a spike in Twitter research in the US context happened last year when we witnessed the 'most tweeted' political event in history, the 2012 US presidential elections. Few scholars [8, 27] in measuring the potential impact of Twitter on 2012 US presidential elections found that while Twitter expands possible modes of election campaigning, high levels of Twitter usage by election candidates did not result in their greater popularity or greater level of public attention they received online. Christensen [9] went outside of two-party focused research and built a broader framework of how Twitter was used by minority candidates by reviewing Twitter usage by 'third party' presidential candidates during election. He found that 'third parties' were more frequent in discussing marginal issues and their tweets can be an useful indicator of the topics and issues that are of interest to an increasing minority within the US political system.

Zhang, Seltzer and Bichard [31] investigated the the impact of different types of social media tools,

including Twitter use on voters' attitudes and behaviour during the 2012 U.S. presidential campaign and based on their study suggest that political parties can utilize the political activism fostered by social media tools to empower and mobilize their supporter.

In other parts of the world, Bruns and Highfield [2] tracked specific interactions between Australian politicians and the public during 2012 election in the Australian state of Queensland and found different approaches adopted by specific candidates and party organizations during the state elections. Graham, Broersma, Hazelhoff and Haar [30] content analyzed tweets of candidates during the 2010 UK General Election and found Twitter to be primarily used as an unidirectional form of communication but some candidates specifically used it as a tool for mobilization and relationship formation with the citizens. Vergeer, Hermans and Sams [23] studied the micro blogging during the 2009 European parliament elections in the Netherlands and found low rate of Twitter usage as a campaigning tool which differed from party to party.

2.2 The Case: 2013 Pakistan General Election

On 11th May, 2013 Pakistan, second largest Muslim democracy elected the members of the 14th National Assembly and for the first time the country witnessed a civilian transfer of power after the successful completion of a five year term by a democratically elected government. This was an important landmark in Pakistan's political history that has been blemished by the acts of security establishment as the military has ruled Pakistan directly for more than half its 66-year history.

Pakistan is a federal parliamentary democratic where at the national level, citizens above the age of 18 elect a bicameral legislature, the Parliament of Pakistan, which comprises of a directly elected National Assembly (lower house of the Parliament) and Senate (upper house of the Parliament), whose members are chosen by elected provincial legislators.

Since its independence Pakistan has seen epic socio-economic changes but the politics in the country has been characterized by the dominance of old political parties who continue in engaging dynastic 'family' politics to keep their vote bank intact. Pakistani politics over the years has been dominated by Bhuttos and Zardari of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Sharifs of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) with support from secondary parties such as Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), Awami National Party (ANP) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI).

However, the 2013 General Election in 272 constituencies across four provinces of Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Punjab and Sindh along with Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Federal Capital of Islamabad saw a record voter turnout since 1970s and resulted in a significant change in the political landscape.

The elections did see the return to power of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, once a political exile deposed by the military, but it also marked the rise of the 'unknown factor' Imran Khan and his non-dynastic centrist party PTI. For the past seventeen years in Pakistani politics PTI had only ever won a seat in the national assembly (in 2000 General Elections) but 2013 elections saw a transformation as the party emerged as the third most successful national party securing second highest number of votes, winning a major province, KPK, and also winning key seats in three provincial capitals. Building on his surging popularity as a nationally revered cricketing hero, Imran Khan won three out of four seats he contested for.

Throughout the election campaign PTI spelled out a vision of transparent government in a modern Islamic republic focusing on the power of the youth in Pakistan. Also as outlined from their policies PTI appealed for a true democracy involving active participation of the people in elections -- a call to vote.

The 2013 elections in Pakistan was also the first 'social media' election as not only did PTI turn to social media for its political campaigns but the old giants PMLN, PPP and MQM also turned to Facebook and Twitter to promote and connect before and during elections. Since social media is on the rise in Pakistan with a following of 8 million Facebook users and 3 million Twitter users, this was the first time in Pakistani politics where party organizations took refuge in social media for election campaigning [18]. This move to social media platforms was not only motivated by an aim to connect to wider audiences and optimize party visibility but also an act to prevent against acts of violence. Violent attacks on political rallies are a common occurrence in election campaigns in Pakistan and this consequently also forced the parties to limit holding political events in sensitive areas and rely on social media as campaign platforms [18].

3. Research Questions

In most modern democracies with high Internet and social media penetration, well-crafted social media campaigns have become an integral part of any election. However the impact of social media on elections in a country with 86 million voters and less than ten percent Internet penetration rate could be quite different from the above contexts.

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This study will investigate Twitter usage of top four political parties during the 2013 General Elections with a special focus on campaigning by PTI. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Which political party was most frequently using Twitter during the elections in Pakistan?

RQ2: To what extent were Pakistani political parties using Twitter for interaction with others?

RQ3: With whom were these political parties interacting?

RQ4: What functions did the tweets by these political parties serve?

RQ5: How did PTI's usage of Twitter differ from that of other political parties and how did this relate to their success in the national election?

RQ5a: What is the relationship between PTI's provincial success and the increase in voter turnout?

4. Methodology

4.1. Data Collection

The present analysis involved two stages of data collection. The first stage of analysis was conducted on an archive of tweets posted from midnight on 10th April, 2013 (Pakistan Standard Time) to midnight on 14th May, 2013. We started to collect the data from 10th April, 2013 in order to collect data for one month period before the general elections which was scheduled for 11th May, 2013. In the process, we collected in total of 10,140 tweets posted by the top four political parties (PMLN, PPP, PTI and MQM) and their leaders. The tweets were downloaded in tab-delimited text format from Topsy (http://www.topsy.com/), an archive of the public Twitter stream. A Java program was used to access its Application Programming Interface (API), Otterapi (http://code.google.com/p/otterapi/) in the Eclipse IDE environment. For a given time period and search filter, Otterapi returns "significant" tweets, i.e., tweets containing links or retweets, for the time period entered. In this manner, we collected 10,140 tweets, which were organized into an Excel spreadsheet to represent the tweet's text, its timestamp, username, type of tweet (tweet, link, image or video), hits, trackbacks, embedded links and mentions.

For our analysis, we only collected English language tweets because we did not have the resources to analyze other tweets in Urdu. However, this was not a significant setback as these accounted for a total of 158 tweets, which is a small number as compared to the total number of English language tweets.

For the second part of our analysis we collected the publically available statistical data related to Pakistan General Election 2013 provided by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) at their official website www.ecp.gov.pk.

4.2. Coding Categories

A manual content analysis was employed as the principal mechanism for examination where an individual tweet was the unit of analysis.

The first stage of coding scheme focused on the type of tweet. Four tweet types were established: normal post, @ reply, @ mention of party leader (e.g; @imrankhanpti) and retweets (e.g RT @Mfaisaltariq: I will Vote #PTI).

Once the types of tweet were established we moved to the second stage of coding scheme where @ replies were consequently coded to understand with whom were the parties interacting through their tweets. The replies were coded for one of the following categories:

1. Public: The category comprised of all individual citizens in and outside of Pakistan.
2. Politics: The category 'Politics' comprised of all political parties and politicians.
3. Media: The category 'Media' comprised of all journalists, news sources in and outside of Pakistan.
4. Others: The category 'Others' comprised of every other category which did not fall under the above classifications.

For assurance of classification of a user's profile the coders first checked the user's profile and then if needed clicked on the user's profile details to find more information and then classify the user accordingly into respective category.

At the final stage of the coding scheme, partly based on approach tested previously in Twitter research [30] the tweets were coded for their function. The categories were as follows:

1. Campaign updates
2. Promotion (campaign and party promotion)
3. Criticism
4. Call to vote
5. Political news
6. Other news
7. Party details (eg: details about nomination, candidates)
8. Other

In cases where the tweet could fall into two or more functional categories, coders were asked to pay attention to the dominant functional category.

4.3. Coders and Reliability

A team of four coders were employed to code the tweets for the above mentioned categories. The

intercoder reliability was tested by randomly selecting 25% of the coded tweets by each coder. The Cohen's kappa values indicating reliability were found to be satisfactory:

a) Type of tweet: 0.94
b) For replies/interaction: 0.72
c) Function of tweet: 0.71

5. Findings

Our findings are presented in two parts. First we analyzed the collected data from Twitter API and the respective results are presented as Tweet Analysis in section 8.1 and secondly the analysis for the election results data gathered from ECP's website are presented as Election Analysis in section 5.2.

5.1. Tweet Analysis

Before analyzing the collected tweets we looked into descriptive statistics for the parties and their Twitter accounts. Table 1 reveals the results where we found PTI and its leader Imran Khan to enjoy the greatest number of followers as compared to other parties and their respective leaders. We also used Klout services which use social media analytics to measure users' online social influence by calculating the size of a user's social media network and correlating the content created. Here too PTI and Imran Khan scored higher than other parties and politicians.

Table 1. Twitter followers and social influence score of parties and their respective leaders

User	Twitter ID	Followers	Klout Score
PTI	@PTIofficial	140714	73
Imran Khan	@imrankhanpti	627651	78
PMLN	@pmln_org	17499	63
Nawaz Sharif*	@MaryamNSharif	93592	66
PPP	@MediaCellPPP	2299	60
Bilawal Bhutto	@BBhuttoZardari	51496	61
MQM	@OfficialMqm	11770	64
Altaf Hussain	@allaboutmqm	10389	62

*Nawaz Sharif did not have a Twitter account before the election. However his daughter Maryam Sharif (@MaryamNSharif) regularly used Twitter to post tweets related to Nawaz Sharif, hence, we included her tweets for our analysis.

To begin our analysis and answer RQ1, we first observed the volume and frequency of tweets posted by the top four political parties. Figure 1 provides a timeline illustrating the distribution of tweets throughout the observed period of 10th April to 14th May, 2013.
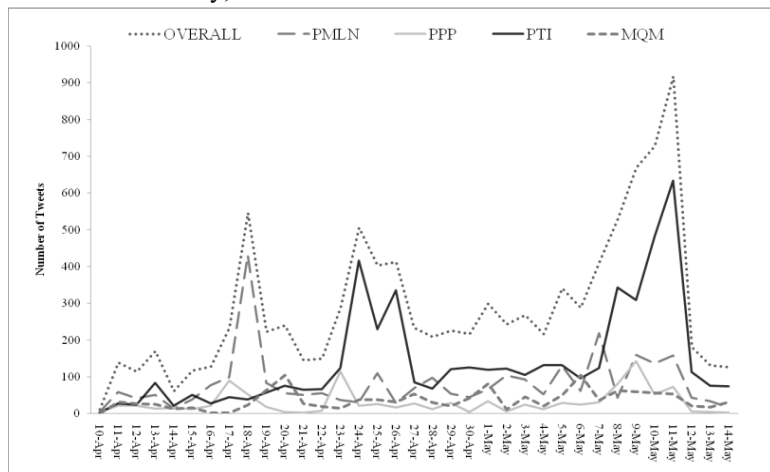
Figure1. Timeline of tweets

The distribution is characterized by number of spikes indicating an increase in frequency during specific days leading to the highest frequency of tweets during the Election Day on 11th May. The spikes visible before the Election Day can be explained by the offline events including major political campaigns. Overview of the activity reveals that PTI was the most active party on Twitter during the campaign period and the day of election. There was an exception on 18th April when PMLN announced its candidates list.

Figure 3 reveals PTI's tweets specific to the five provinces of Baluchistan, KPK, Punjab, Sindh and FATA/Federal Capital. Tweets specific to KPK were found to be most consistent in this analysis.
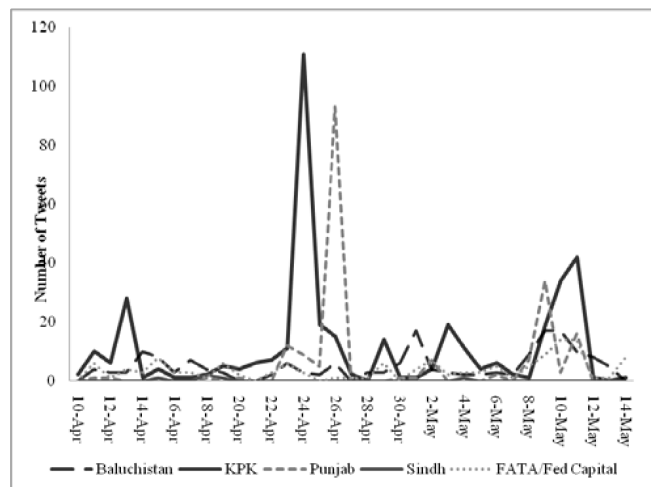
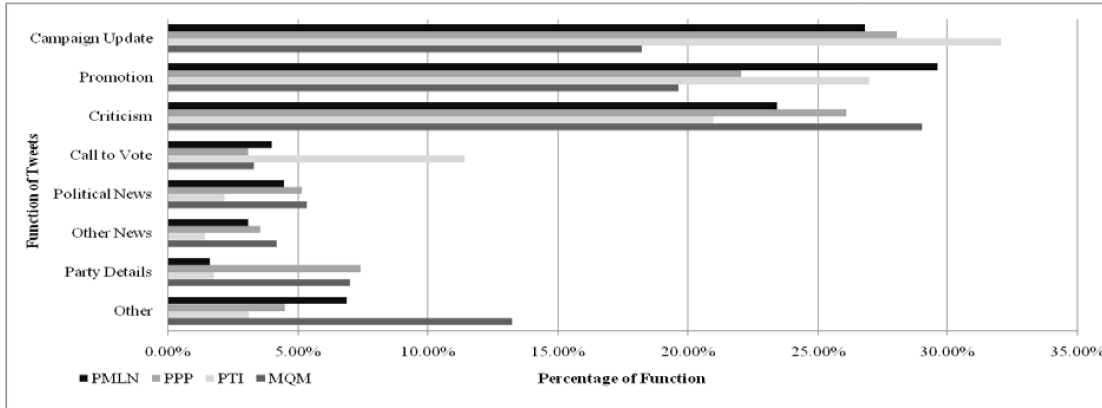**Figure 2. PTI tweets specific to provinces**

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Figure 4. Percentage of function

To answer RQ2 our investigation initially focused on the tweet type and the number of tweets specific to each type was converted into percentages for easier analysis. As Table 2 shows, there was a clear difference between the four parties. PPP mostly used Twitter as a unidirectional form of communication with approximately 92 per cent of their tweets representing either normal posts or mentioning their Party Leader Bilawal Bhutto. PMLN and MQM on the other hand used Twitter to moderately interact with their followers.

Table 2. Tweet type break up

Tweet type	Party Account			
	PMLN	**PPP**	**PTI**	**MQM**
Normal Post	2230	723	3499	1039
	78.4%	67.9%	70.5%	81.9%
@-Replies	387	35	1020	190
	13.6%	3.3%	20.6%	14.9%
Mention of Party Leader	166	256	355	37
	5.8%	24.0%	7.2%	2.9%
Re-tweet	62	51	88	2
	2.2%	4.8%	1.8%	0.2%
Total	2845	1065	4962	1268

The most significant finding was the use of Twitter by PTI who were not only the most frequent Twitter user party but also the leader in interacting with users (21 per cent of their tweets were replies). In addition, PTI were also the second on the list in mentioning their party leader in their tweets. This can be partly explained by the popularity of PTI leader, Imran Khan, who also is the most followed Twitter user in Pakistan.

It was imperative to understand with whom were these parties interacting on Twitter hence our focus on RQ3. Figure 3 reveals the results as the two most frequent parties on Twitter, PMLN and PTI were largely interacting with the public while PPP and MQM interacted with politicians. It is most noteworthy to find that PTI were once again ahead
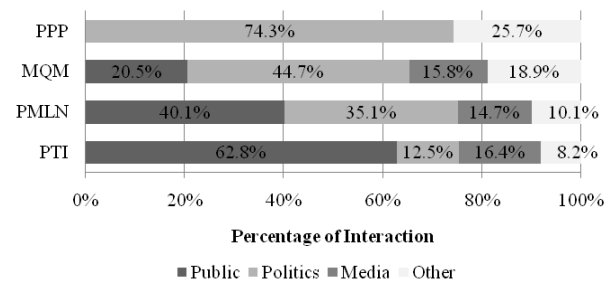

Figure 3. Percentage of interaction

of other parties in interacting not only with the public but also the media. This can be explained by the fact that PTI is the only non-historical party in Pakistan politics and is more in need of traditional media presence as well.

The function of tweets via RQ4 revealed the top three parties PMLN, PPP and PTI predominantly used Twitter for posting updates about their campaign and also using it as a platform for campaign promotion. Figure 4 shows that PTI were ahead of other parties in campaign updates via Twitter but used it less as a criticism tool to criticize other parties and politicians, while MQM used the platform more for criticism than any other function. The most significant finding was the use of Twitter to call out the voters to exercise their right to vote. While most other parties rarely used Twitter to urge citizens to vote, approximately every one out of ten PTI tweets urged the users to vote.

5.2. Election Analysis: Seats and Popularity

Table 3 shows that PMLN was the most successful (126 NA seats) and the most popular party (14.8 m votes) in the 2013 Pakistan General Elections. However PTI despite being the third on the number of seats won (28 NA seats) emerged as the second most popular party in Pakistan with nearly 7.6 million votes.

**Table 3. Seat division and votes won by parties**

Rank & Party	Total Seats	Baluchistan Seats	KPK Seats	Punjab Seats	Sindh Seats	FATA/Fed Cap Seats	Votes Won	Candidates Fielded	Avg Votes per Candidate
1.PMLN	126	1	4	117	1	3	14794188	220	67246
2.PPP	33	-	-	2	31	-	6822958	226	30190
3.PTI	28	-	17	8	1	2	7563504	232	32601
4. MQM	18	-	-	-	18	-	2422656	205	11818

Other than the leader PMLN, PTI also gathered more votes per candidate (32601) as compared to other parties (Table 3). When we look at the detailed level of party performance based on provinces to understand the voting patterns across provinces; we find that certain parties were favored in respective regions. While PMLN won the majority at the national level, their performance was largely based on the success in Punjab. PPP were largely successful in Sindh while MQM won all their seats from Sindh. However PTI while dominating KPK show some diversity in winning seats from Punjab, Sindh and FATA/Fed Cap.

5.3. Election Analysis: Voter Turnout and Increase in Votes Polled

As declared by the ECP the overall voter turnout in the Pakistan general elections 2013 was 55.02%. This is an approximately 11% increase since the last general elections in 2008 when the turnout was a meager 44.23%. We analyzed the turnout comparison of election results from 2008 to 2013 based on provinces to find any existing relationship between PTI's success based on province and the increase in votes in that province.

Keeping the voter turnout for the 2008 general elections as base (100%) we plotted the turnout for the 2013 general elections to understand the increase in number of votes polled per province. The results are displayed in Figure 5.
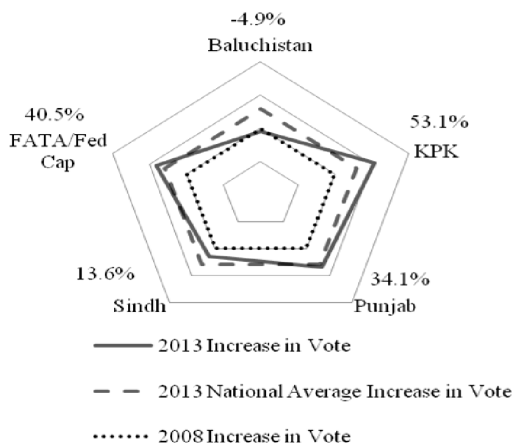
Figure 5. Increase in votes per province

There was a jump of 29.68% in the number of votes polled nationally in 2013 compared to the polled votes in 2008. Notably, the most prominent increase in votes polled was in the province of KPK (53.12% increase) followed by FATA/Fed Capital (40.50%). The number of votes polled in Baluchistan dropped (95.14%) when compared to the 2008 general elections. Interestingly PTI's major success in NA seats (17) was in the province of KPK which showed the highest increase in votes (53.1%). Also PTI was the second most successful party in Punjab, FATA/Fed Capital which recorded a significant increase in votes (34.1% and 40.5%). The two provinces which faired below the national average of increase in votes, Sindh (13.1%) and Baluchistan (-4.9%) were the provinces where PTI did not fare as well, by winning just one NA seat in Sindh and not recording victory in Baluchistan.
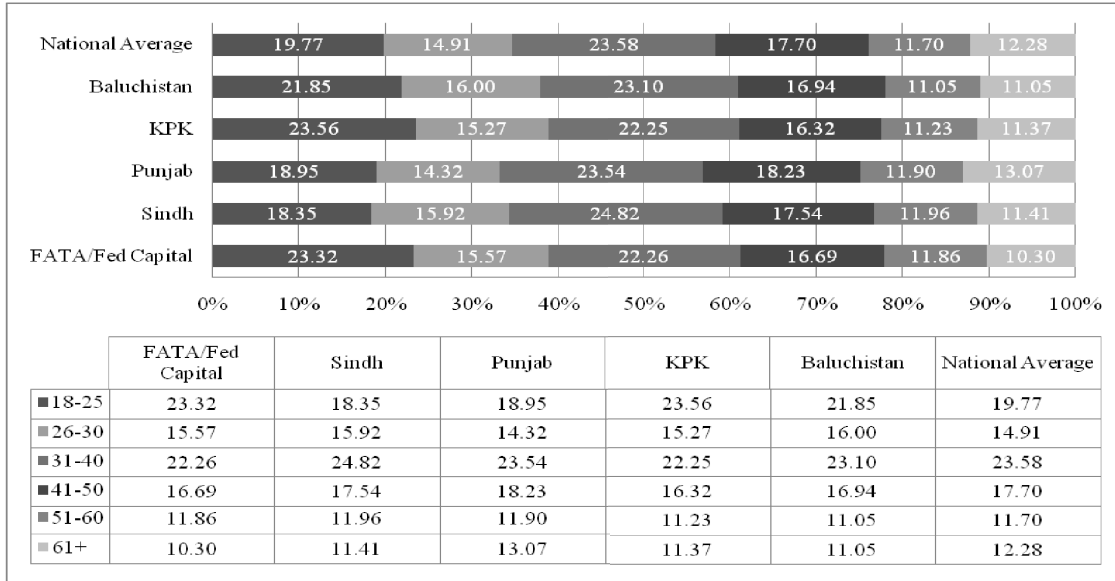
5.4. Election Analysis: Voter Age Group

The run up to the 2013 general elections in Pakistan termed the election as the country's first 'youth election'. When we analyzed the data for the voter age group we found results establishing the same. On the national level approximately 35% of the voters were under the age of 30 years with 20% in the age group of 18 to 25 years (Figure 6). When scaled at the province level we found the majority of the youngest eligible voter population in the province of KPK with approximately 24% of the population between the age group of 18 to 25 years. This was a major difference when compared to other significant provinces of Punjab and Baluchistan.

6. Discussion

Based on our analysis presented above we can ask the question: Can Twitter make a difference in the elections in an emerging democracy characterized by dynastic politics, religious extremism, and threats of ethnic and political violence? Moreover, can it make a difference in such a society that also has an underdeveloped telecommunications infrastructure and low social media penetration?

While it is still too early to provide a definitive answer to the question, we believe that our findings paint a promising picture and that PTI's success in

	FATA/Fed Capital	Sindh	Punjab	KPK	Baluchistan	National Average
■18-25	23.32	18.35	18.95	23.56	21.85	19.77
■26-30	15.57	15.92	14.32	15.27	16.00	14.91
■31-40	22.26	24.82	23.54	22.25	23.10	23.58
■41-50	16.69	17.54	18.23	16.32	16.94	17.70
■51-60	11.86	11.96	11.90	11.23	11.05	11.70
■61+	10.30	11.41	13.07	11.37	11.05	12.28

Figure 7. Province wise voters' age division

recent elections is a significant step toward more democratic politics in Pakistan.

The overall timeline distribution of Twitter activity by political parties in Pakistan signals a strong relationship between Twitter and offline party activities as the spikes in tweeting about the 2013 Pakistan General Election can be linked to major political events and offline campaigning. This is in consistency with similar previous studies [2,5]. Overall, Twitter traffic for respective parties were driven by their campaigns in specific province but here PTI stood out as the most frequent and a dominant force. This reflects on an expression of usage of new communication tools and minority party statuses in our societies as Christensen suggests through his study [9].

Minority parties face various challenges in reaching out to public during election campaigns partly due to the symbiotic relationship between traditional mass media sources and leading political parties. Most traditional media sources focus on leading political parties and figures in their election news coverage; the parties in power use these traditional media to garner support for their political agenda. Shepard [26], in analyzing minority party politics in United States emphasized the marginalization of these parties by the mainstream media in the United States which forced these parties to use social media to gain public attention. In the case of present day Pakistani politics, PTI faces a similar situation and their practice on Twitter seems to be an attempt to break free from similar obstacles.

We also see a similarity in PTI's online strategy and Twitter use and the approach adopted by the team Obama in the 2008 US Presidential Elections. As noted by Harfoush [25], Obama campaign in 2008 utilized social media tools for frequent campaign updates which included a large selection of campaign material (photo, video, blogs) being uploaded on social networking sites, including Twitter. Similarly, we see a pattern as PTI's Twitter account also had a plethora of campaign updates during this election and it included real-time updates about Imran Khan's campaign activities including photos and videos from campaign sites. PTI's decision to hold the US style intra-party election (even when it was not required by the law of Pakistan) and Imran Khan's request for a national debate against fellow PMLN competitor Nawaz Sharif (which was dutifully rejected) was an example of the campaign model favored by PTI.

PTI's rise from the obscurity of Pakistani politics to the forefront was a combination of strategic online and offline campaigning tapping on the wave of change against corruption in the country led by the youth. This mix of offline and online campaigning by PTI was very visible during the elections. Imran Khan led extensive on the road campaigns in Punjab, a province where PMLN historically holds a strong hand. On 26th April, Imran Khan attended 32 public gathering within six hours to cover large grounds and all the updates related to campaigns were regularly updated on Twitter. However in Karachi, a city with a population of 20 million people that saw all the parties holding extensive public rallies, PTI stayed away and did not organize even a single campaign event during the elections. PTI strategically and solely focused on online activities in Karachi as the city has disproportionally high percentage of youths within its population who are actively connected to the Internet. This proved successful as

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the party became the second largest party in the city after winning an important national assembly seat and three provincial assembly seats. Thus what we observe is Twitter presenting itself as a direct force in election campaign in some provinces while acting as an additional facilitator in others.

In focusing on PTI's election activity we find another aspect connecting Obama to Khan - the personality politics paradigm. Politics in many democracies across the Western world is becoming increasingly personalized. This personalization of political sphere is influenced by personalities of candidates who capture the voters' attention, as visible during Obama's triumph in the 2008 and 2012 US Presidential Election. The popularity of political actors impinges on political relationships in numerous ways, often with significant consequences. Imran Khan is the most followed Twitter user in Pakistan and this speaks volumes about his popularity, at least in the online sphere. This quality attributed to Khan was utilized by PTI through their usage of Twitter. PTI's political campaign on Twitter was built around the Khan persona and their tweets were reflective of this approach. PTI were moderately frequent but not overwhelming in direct mentions of their leader in their tweets, quite unlike other political parties like PPP who were too obvious or MQM who were too scanty. Bruns and Highfield [2] reported similar findings of different approaches adopted by different parties.

Our finding revealed a strong interaction between PTI and the public through Twitter. The connection between the public and political actors via traditional mass media sources can be sometimes critical as gatekeepers, such as newspaper or television journalists are responsible for filtering and editing the content and interpreting the messages. However, Twitter allows candidates to bypass this barrier and communicate directly with public empowering candidates to take total control over their campaign effort. PTI exploited this utility to maximum benefit --PTI were most active in interaction with the electorate also allowing the character of Imran Khan to become more appealing.

Pakistan has been low on voter turnout as the 2008 General Election saw a low voter turnout at 44%. However 2012 General Election was one of the most successful elections in Pakistan's political history. On the bigger front it would be interesting to establish prime causal factors but our analysis did find PTI to be a significant cause. In their tweets, PTI were ahead of all other parties in calling out the citizens to exercise their voting rights and this action reflect their election manifesto where they had criticized the low voter turnout figures and urged the citizens to contribute toward the democracy in Pakistan. Their offline action of pushing the ECP to grant voting rights to overseas Pakistani (present day Pakistani constitution does not enable Pakistanis settled abroad to vote in general elections) supplement their online action and political intention of bringing Pakistan closer to a true democracy.

PTI's success at the provincial level and more specifically in KPK is a mirror of all the factors discussed above with the most important ones being the high percentage of voting population under the age of 25 and the overall increase in number of votes. These factors combined with PTI's focus on KPK through their Twitter activity and on the road campaigns resulted in a strong success in the region.

Our findings indicate that Twitter can play a significant role even in a societal and political environment like Pakistan. PTI's offline strategies and their online involvement on Twitter signifies that the medium can be robustly used to involve more people in a democratic process, especially the youth, by providing them with campaign updates, interacting with them and mobilizing them to vote.

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8. References

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