Influence of Social Media towards Politics and Intention for Voting among Youth using Social Web

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Abstract

Electronic Participation i.e. E-participation extended with E-Voting using social media along with religiosity and ethnicity factors play an important role to determine the intention of casting vote in the national general elections of any country. This identifies the behavioural tendency of registered individuals toward participation and voting. Demographically, Pakistan is a country with rich and diverse characteristics. Pakistan has a multilingual composition. More than twenty-one languages are spoken. Approximately 257 religious parties are recognized. The national politics of Pakistan is basically the politics of semantic groups. Usually, after the release of the election schedule, the rise in usage of social media platform reflects maximum peak immediately. Most of the political parties use social media as a venue to promote election campaigns while approaching every registered individual voter of the countrys 80 million registered electors population. This research present the factual statistical analysis of intention and the behavioural tendency of electors to participate in casting vote based on the influence of social theories regarding religiosity, ethnicity, and geographical belonging. A hypothetical study is conducted using data collected through survey questions. The proposed research model resulted with recommendation on the importance of social media in political promotion in various aspects.

Keywords:
Attitude towards politics, Behavioral tendency, E-participation, E-Voting, General Elections, Social Media;

Acronyms Used:

9/11 Nine-Eleven	Referring September 11th, 2001 WTC destruction
AoE	Anywhere-on-Earth
E-Participation	Electronic participation using social media.
E-Voting	Electronic Voting
IFV	Intention for Voting
JUI-F	Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (Fazal-ur-Rehman)
JUI-S	Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (Sami-ul-Haq)
PBC	Perceived Behavioural Control
PKR. / Rs.	Pakistani Rupees, Currency of Pakistan
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SEM	Social-Ecological Model
SLT	Social Learning Theory
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Software
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
WTC	World Trade Center, New York, USA

1. Introduction

Voting and election is the concern of attitude towards politics, behavioural tendency, and intention to vote. This mission walks around the opportunity to use social media and other vital success elements for voting remotely. This is a vast canvas of study for developing countries, especially Pakistan. "E-participation" or "Electronic Participation" plays an important factor to expand opportunities towards politics by allowing every registered elector to be virtually connected with each other mutually as well as with electoral staff through social media. The presence of utilization of E-participation service is in existence in Pakistan soon after the Nine-Eleven (9/11) World Trade Center outbreaks [1].

The development of E-Voting mechanism with the use of the internet to run political campaigns has grown up rapidly during the past decade. The public is customarily trained towards the use of ballot paper to cast vote. Such past method of an election often causes dissatisfaction from the vast population in the form of rigging. The election budget and resources are misused resulting in vote's slow counting, the vulnerability of ballot papers, and a big potential for fraud and errors vastly reported after election. This creates restlessness among the nation [2]. In recent years, this method is vastly rejected and considered not only a reflection of bad governance but a costly and time-wasting choice with the unreliable vote count. Use of social media has contributed improvement in running an election campaign and provided mobile technology to electronically participate from anywhere-on-earth (AoE) with the transparency of casting vote and electing the leader of choice [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]. Usually, the votes are blemished by simply attack but that doesn't break the people's will and right from voting in well-sized quantities [2].

Pakistan became an independent country on 14th August 1947 and got independence from the governance of the British-United Kingdom's political system. Pakistan is a state which has political transitions between democratic and military rule dictatorships. Since its independence, there happened three attempts in a vastly operational democratic changeover of power [8]. In historical studies, it produced an

assassination, a military general and a great hassle of martial rules. Despite this, the world's fifth-greatest democracy is observed in Pakistan as the world witnessed a historic achievement in the General Elections of 2013 and 2018 which reflected the true democratic process and provided the transparent democratic transfer of power [9].

2. Discussion

There is a need to elaborate on the main factors that motivate citizens to go and cast vote, or to access election site and remotely cast vote. All this depends upon the physical and psychological intention of a person with having alternatively the availability of device or mechanism to cast vote. Further, the intention for voting depends upon several considerable factors of liking; religious, cultural and regional obligatory over citizen etc. The following sections describe such factors of intention for voting, the theory of planned behaviour, social cognitive theory, and social-ecological model before social analysis. Fig.3 describes the intention for voting based on cognitive theories.

2.1 Intention for Voting (IFV)

The intention for voting is a vivid function of the country's demography which determines the behavioural and normative beliefs of an individual's mind and tendency. Voting is a planned action of an individual's intention depending on the predictors of understanding the social tendency, the political party's credibility, and an intelligent psychological decision to cast vote. There are a number of models that inspect the joint role of normative effect and attitudes on behaviours including Ajzen and Fishbein's "Theory of Reasoned Action" (TRA) [20] and the "Theory of Planned Behaviour" (TPB) [21].

Studies that have examined predictors of voting behaviour, however, have been limited. Past research has applied the TRA both to investigate the success of getting out the vote efforts [22] and to assess directional voting compliance in candidate elections [23] and find results consistent with the model. Nevertheless, as noted previously, referendum voting is distinct from general election voting. Referendum involves significant cost to many voters (i.e. those who own property) and the outcomes of the act may not be immediate or tangible [24] [20] [25].

2.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

In 1985, Icek Ajzen [21] developed the "Theory of Reasoned Action" TRA and in continuation, he proposed the "Theory of Planned Behaviour" TPB as well. The TPB is a social reasoning theory that has directed a large mainstream of theory-based exploration on human behaviour. Based on a systematic review of prior research, Ajzen decided to refine the TRA theory by introducing additional predicting element "Perceived Behavioural Control" PBC that was proposed in 1975 by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen [20].
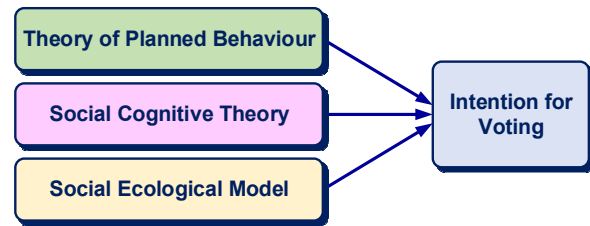

Fig.3. Intention for voting based on cognitive theories.

The TPB specifies that some or all of the following four main psychological variables influence one's behaviour: (1) Intention, (2) Attitude, (3) Subjective norm, and (4) Perceived behavioural control. The combination of an individual's anticipations about the performance of a "behaviour" and the value attached to that "behaviour" form the conceptual basis of this theory. The "intention" to do "behaviour" is the dominant element of whether or not an individual engages in that behaviour.

The "intention" is reflected in a person's willingness and how much effort that individual is planning to exert to perform the behaviour. The stronger as one's "intention" to perform a "behaviour", the more likely one will be to engage in that "behaviour". Thus, if someone has a strong intention to go to the stadium to watch a cricket match, that person is likely to go for that journey.

2.3 Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

In 1977, Bandura [26] proposed the "Social Cognitive Theory" (SCT) [27]. Bandura relies on an academic experiment governed by Miller and Dollard Miller (1941) [28]. But some scholars stated that the origin of the theory is initiated through the book of Edwin B. Holt and Harold Chapman Brown released in 1931 theorizing that all animal action is based on fulfilling the psychological needs of "feeling, emotion, and desire". The theory is known as the "Social Learning Theory" (SLT) and clarifies human behaviour in terms of dynamic, mutual, and three-dimensional model. The proposed three dimensions are (1) Personal factors, (2) Environmental influences, and (3) Behaviour. An elementary principle of SCT is that the individual's learning is not enough and done with their own practices, but also by seeing the activities of others and the results of those actions.

2.4 Social-Ecological Model (SEM)

Bronfenbrenner is the founder of social-ecological term, as he claimed the model in the 1970s and claimed the associated theory in 1980s. The social-ecological model aids to realize aspects of upsetting behaviour and also offers direction for evolving fruitful agendas over social environments. SEM highlight many altitudes of effect (such as separable, relational, structural, public and public policy) and the impression that behaviours are formed by the social setting. The values of SEMs are reliable with social

cognitive theory notions which propose that producing an environment favourable to change is significant to creating it at ease to approve well behaviour [29].

3. Hypothetical Model Framework

The study examines the impact of religion, ethnicity, and use of social media on the citizen's intention for voting and composed a generic hypothetical model framework with four first-order dimensions as shown in Fig.4 and described in further sub-sections. The aim of this research is to investigate the impact of religiosity, ethnicity, and social media on the intention of voting in Pakistan. The hypothetical model framework demonstrates that the "Intention for Voting" is a dependent variable that is depending on "Religiosity", "Ethnicity" and "Use of Social Media" the independent variables.

3.1 Religiosity

Mostly for any individual, religion and beliefs are not consistently the same over the span of time. These are developed, updated and learned with change by teaching since birth till presence. Several studies show that people may have a change of mind for their religious practices. Their association with one recognized religious society and personal belief on notions change. These are religious trajectories and transition of mind during life-course [30] [31] [32] [33] [34]. Religiosity is a complex concept and difficult to define [35]. It would seem that one had to believe that either religiosity was influenced by macro-factors like rationalization or differentiation or that individuals were rationally choosing religion (and would demand less religion in regulated markets) or that individuals were mainly influenced by the fact that they had or had not been exposed to religious socialization in their childhood [35]. In Pakistan, there are 257 religious parties, as explained by the Daily Times research. Of these, 28 responsively effect in politics, seven have been participating in the electoral process. Three were represented in the congress namely JUI-F (Fazal-ur-Rehman), JUI-S (Sami-ul-Haq), and Sipah-e-Sahaba. A continuous question is, whether the religiosity played a role in the win or loss of that religion-based parties [36] [37].

Religions are well-thought-out to affect political attitudes. However, there exist at least two potential paths shaping this fact. First, religion(s) affect political attitudes as a result of the value system. Religious teachings enable individuals with the significance of some values and degrade the position of other values, and thus, outline their individual's value system as a quoted example in [38]. This value system would then affect the political attitudes and beliefs of individuals that guide their political attitudes [39].

Alternatively, second, "Religions" influence political attitudes directly. For example, in Belgium, most of the Roman Catholics in Flanders choose the Christian Democratic Party during the voting process [40]. Therefore, hypothetically, this study tested the following first hypothetical proposition $H1$.

***H*1** - Religiosity has a significant effect on the intention for voting.

3.2 Ethnicity

Ethnicity is an umbrella concept that embraces groups easily. It is differentiated by colour, language, and religion. It covers tribes, races, nationalities, and castes [41]. Most of the recent researches in political issues use this concept of classification of ethnicity [42] [43] [44]. In the USA, studies conclude that the main factor after political ideology was race.

Race played a major role in the election of former President of the USA "Barack Hussein Obama II" [45]. Logan et al. concluded that 3+ generations of blacks are more likely to participate and vote in political elections than whites [46]. He also concluded that Asian and Latinos are much more dislike to participate and vote compared with whites [46]. Therefore, the study tested the following second hypothetical proposition $H2$.

***H*2** - Ethnicity has a significant effect on the intention for voting.

Hypothesis – H1: Religiosity has a significant effect on the intention for voting. | Religiosity

Hypothesis – H2: Ethnicity has a significant effect on the intention for voting. | Ethnicity

Hypothesis – H3: Social Media has a significant effect on the intention for voting. | Use of Social Media
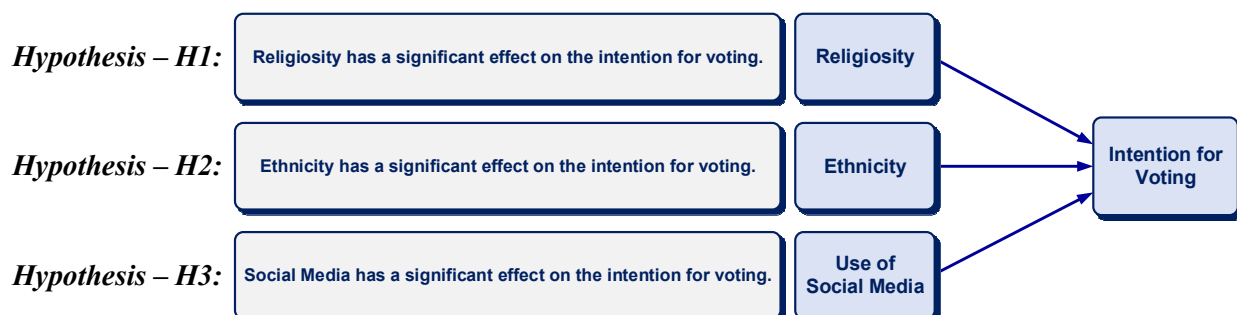
→ Intention for Voting

Fig.4. Hypothetical model framework for "Intention for Voting" depending on "Religiosity", "Ethnicity" and "Use of Social Media".

Table.1: The Region, Population, Sample Size, and Internet Users

City/Region	Population (Million)	Sample Size	Internet Users
Karachi	13.13	675	15,165,000
Lahore	7.13	367	8,241,000
Faisalabad	2.85	149	3,339,000
Rawalpindi/Islamabad	2.86	143	3,297,000
Total	**25.96**	**1334**	**42,718,893**

3.3 Use of Social Media

From past three decades, people are engaged in information and communication technology-based social media, an environment of interactions where they can communicate, create, exchange, comment, and share their cause in virtually connected communities over the internet around the world [47]. Social media provides a platform as a service to the general public to invoke internet-based applications built on a computer technology foundation. It provides a highly interactive virtual environment to individuals and communities to share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated web content using Web 2.0 infrastructure. It introduces dynamic, substantial and persistent changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals [48]. Social media has wide use in today's era in most of societies with the capability of the rapid spread of news within virtual societies. It encourages more and more voters to rely on social media during the political process [49] [50] [51] [52] [53]. It is clear that whenever the public heavily use the Internet, they explore political news and formulate political communities on social media forums and groups [54] [3] [55] [56] [6] [7]. According to social media experts, Facebook undeniably played a very important role in the lawyers' movement against General Pervez Musharraf in March 2007. While Facebook was the meeting point for cyber activism, Twitter was useful in spreading the word out to the broader world. It significantly helped in gaining the attention of the world community [57] [5] [58] [6] [3]. The cases in Egypt, Tunisia, and Lebanon in 2011 are proof that social media can play a role in instigating political change [59] [60] [61] [62]. Therefore, the study tested the following third hypothetical proposition *H3*.

H3 - Social media has a significant effect on the intention for voting.

4. Methodology & Data Collection

4.1 Survey Methodology

The major results that answer the research questions were acquired in quantitative techniques. The study used a well-structured questionnaire having 24 questions that were distributed among a selected random stratified 1334 size sample from the population of 25.96 million citizens in four cities of Pakistan i.e. Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi/Islamabad. The data were analyzed using SPSS data analytical tool.

4.2 Geography and Demography for Survey

The population is defined as a group of people who share common characteristics [63]. According to the demographic data, the population of Karachi is approximately 13.13 million, Lahore is 7.13 million, Faisalabad is 2.85 million, and Rawalpindi/Islamabad is 2.86 million approx. The population provides the sample and the sample is further used to collect data required to make conclusions. The sample size for Karachi was taken as 675 i.e. 675 people at random locations were observed via a survey. Similarly, the sample size for Lahore, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi/Islamabad were taken as 367, 149, and 143 respectively. Sample collected from each city is presented in Table.1 where the data is recorded with the parameters of population, sample, and internet users for the cities of Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi/Islamabad. The graphs of the collected data are also presented in Fig.5 where a symmetric view of the population to sample and to internet users is revealed. The same graph view is revealed with all i.e. sample to population and to internet users; and internet users to population and to sample. According to an estimate, there are about 42.72 million (i.e. 42,718,893) internet users in Pakistan and 50 per cent of them are mobile phone users [64] [65] [66] [67] [68]. The internet users of Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi/Islamabad are found approximately 15.17 million, 8.24 million, 3.34 million, and 3.3 million approximately who are actively

(a)   (b)   (c)
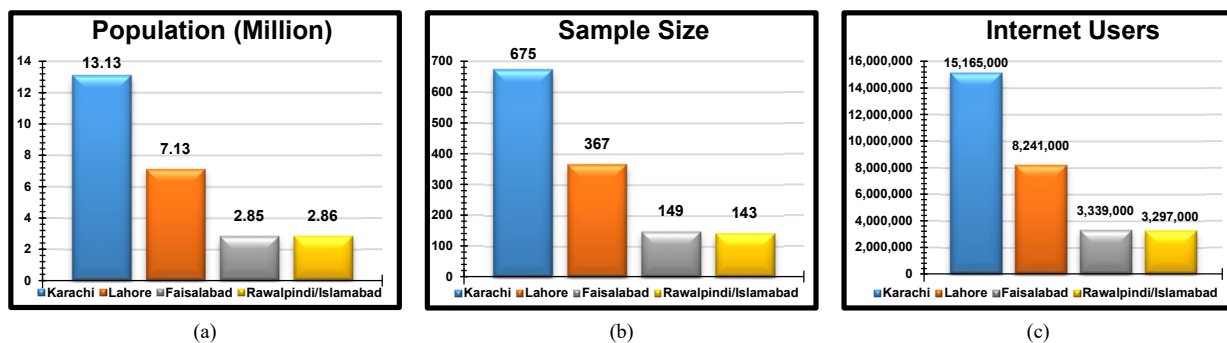
Fig.5: The graph of survey data: (a) Population, (b) Sample Size, and (c) Internet Users.

engaged in net surfing and using social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp etc. for mostly news updates.

4.3 Survey Questionnaire

Data were collected using the survey questionnaire of 24 questions formulated in Table.2. The survey questions were constructed from a systematic literature review using the qualitative approach as mentioned in Ref. [69] [70] [71] [72] [73].

Among 24 Questions, 4 Questions were asked about "Intention for Voting", whereas 10 Questions were asked about "Religiosity", 6 Questions were asked about "Ethnicity", and 4 Questions were asked about the "Use of Social Media".

The survey questionnaire was distributed and then collected manually using direct collection method. There were total of 1334 respondents. Distribution of the survey took place in four major cities as mentioned earlier, i.e. Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, and Rawalpindi/Islamabad. The distributions happened randomly inside every city i.e. in the city centre, malls, and the major public Universities were covered.

The aim and directions of the survey questionnaire were properly communicated to the participants before

Table.2: The Survey Questionnaire with subjective categorization based on literature sources.

	Survey Questions	Category/ Context	Literature Source Reference
Q1.	I am convinced that I will vote in the upcoming elections.	Intention for Voting	[69] [73]
Q2.	If I had to decide, I would vote in the next election.		
Q3.	I would recommend others to vote in the upcoming elections.		
Q4.	I have positive mind to talk about voting and elections.		
Q5.	I often read books and magazines about my faith.	Religiosity	[70] [73]
Q6.	I make financial contributions to my religion.		
Q7.	I spend time trying to grow and understand my faith.		
Q8.	Religiosity is important to me because it answers many questions about the concept of life.		
Q9.	My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life.		
Q10.	I enjoy spending time with others of my same religious affiliation.		
Q11.	Religious beliefs influence all my dealing in life.		
Q12.	It is important to me to spend days in private religious thought and reflection.		
Q13.	I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization.		
Q14.	I keep well informed about my religious group and have some influence in its decision-making.		
Q15.	I have spent time to learn more about my ethnic group such as history, tradition, and customs.	Ethnicity	[71] [73]
Q16.	I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better.		
Q17.	I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group.		
Q18.	I have a very strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.		
Q19.	I understand pretty well, what my ethnic group connection means to me.		
Q20.	I feel strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.		
Q21.	I use Facebook to learn more about the party candidate and election campaign.	Use of Social Media	[72] [73]
Q22.	I use Facebook to learn more about issues that is important to me.		
Q23.	I use Facebook to keep up to date with this candidate's campaign and events.		
Q24.	I use Facebook to decide whom to vote for in the election.		

giving them enough time to fill in. All participants voluntarily participated in the survey.

5. Demographic Analysis

According to the survey of 1334 respondents, the data is collected and tabulated as a record file. The parameters observed were (1) Gender, (2) Age, (3) Marital Status, (4) Education, (5) Ethnic Group, and (6) Income Group. The categorical findings of these parameters are presented in Table.3, Table.4, Table.5, Table.6, Table.7, and Table.8 respectively as well as shown via the Pie-Chart graphs of Fig.6, where classification is made on the basis of respondent's profile. Among 1334 respondents, 46.03% (614) were male, and 53.97% (720) were female participants (Ref. Table.3: Gender). With the Age groups categorically (Ref. Table.4: Age Groups), 30.29% (404) were between 18 to 22 years old, 35.01% (467) were between 23 to 30 years, 22.79% (304) were between 31 to 40 years, 6.07% (81) were between 41 to 50 years, and 5.85 (78) respondents were above 50 years of age. The marital status of the respondents was recorded as (Ref. Table.5: Marital Status), 43.10% (575) were single, 46.93% (626) were married, 5.25% (70) were divorced, while 4.72% (63) respondents were widowed. The education level (Ref. Table.6: Education) of 11.99% (160) was found to be Primary, 14.69% (196) were having Matriculation, 17.54% (234) were having Intermediate, 35.69% (476) were having Bachelors qualification, while 20.09% (268) have done Postgraduate degree. The ethnicity (Ref. Table.7: Ethnic Groups) of 14.47% (193) was Sindhi, 42.05% (561) were Punjabi, 5.55% (74) were Balochi, 9.00% (120) were Saraiki, 11.99% (160) were Muhajir, 14.54% (194) were Pathan, while others remaining were 2.40% (32). The respondents were belonging to various income groups (Ref. Table.8: Income Groups). The 38.91% (519) were in the group of income below 21,000 Rupees (PKR. Rs. 21K). The 20.91% (279) fall between 22K and 25K group, 28.41% (379) fall between 26K and 50K, 6.82% (91) fall between 51K and 75K, however, 4.95% (66) respondents were earning above Rs. 75,000/- (PKR. Rs. 75K) [74] [75].

6. Descriptive Statistics and Inference

The descriptive data analysis was carried out to infer the detailed findings of the results. The study has four variables, and every variable has multiple items, which are representing the respondent's evaluation on a scale of seven degrees (Likert 7-Scale). The mean and standard deviation values ($\mu \pm \sigma$) of every variable is calculated using SPSS software and recorded in Table.9. For the variable "Intention for Voting", respondent's evaluation is positive with a mean value of (4.33 ± 1.323) that represents a percentage of 61.9%. Then, for the variable "Religiosity", respondent's evaluation is positive with a mean value of (5.01 ± 1.76) that represents a percentage of 71.6%. Then, for the variable "Ethnicity", respondent's evaluation is positive with a mean value of (4.35 ± 1.727) that represents a percentage of 62.1%. Then, for the variable "Use of Social Media", the respondent's evaluation is positive with a mean value of (4.76 ± 2.10) that represents a percentage of 68%.

7. Reliability Analysis & Path Coefficient

The reliability analysis is computed with the determination of path coefficient values. Reliability statistics show that all construct's scales have an adequate Cronbach's Alpha values more than 0.7. Table.10 shows the reliability statistics of the research variables: "Intention for Voting" (0.777430), "Religiosity" (0.910476), "Ethnicity" (0.884803), and "Use of Social Media" (0.935405).

The path coefficient is important to assess the confirmation of the existence of a relation between variables. The p-value and t-Test value are used to know the significant existence while β (Beta) value is used to assess the significance level of a relation [76] [77] [78]. The p-value should be less than 0.05 and t-Test value should be more than 1.96 [76]. The calculated values are recorded in Table.11.

8. Conclusion & Recommendations

The following three desired relations were kept under study to prove the three hypotheses as:

(1) Religiosity → Intention for Voting

(2) Ethnicity → Intention for Voting

(3) Use of Social Media → Intention for Voting

Conclusion-1: It is learnt that the two relations are significant with p-value less than 0.05, i.e. "Ethnicity → Intention for Voting: $p-value = 0.000$", and "Use of Social Media → Intention for Voting: $p - value = 0.000$", but the relation "Religiosity → Intention for Voting: $p - value = 0.799$", found in-significant with p-value which is more than 0.05.

- The first hypothesis to assess the positive significant relationship between religiosity and intention for voting is rejected.

- The second hypothesis to assess the positive significant relationship between ethnicity and intention for voting is accepted.

- The third hypothesis to assess the positive significant relationship between social media and the intention for voting is accepted.

Conclusion-2: Results show that the "Use of Social Media" has significant level with $\beta = 0.435$ and "Ethnicity" has significant level with $\beta = 0.321$. It is determined that the best predictor of "Intention for voting" is "Use of Social Media" while "Ethnicity" is a good predictor.
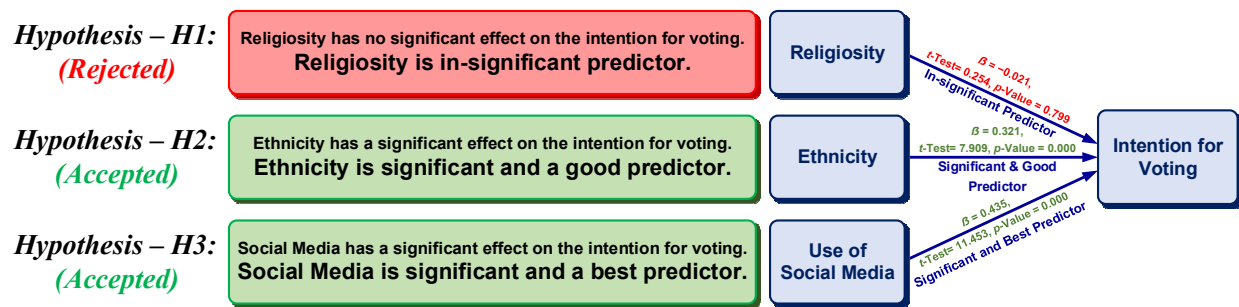
Fig.7. Conclusion and Inference for "Intention for Voting" depending on "Religiosity", "Ethnicity" and "Use of Social Media".

Conclusion-3: "Religiosity" has no impact on "Intention for voting" which confirms the separation between the two characteristics in forming the groups belonging in societies.

The rejected relation of religiosity in Pakistan could be cited to ethnicity power; the belonging of individuals to the social groups is based on ethnicity rather than religiosity. The power of the use of social media highly effects on people perception. Fig.7 shows the conclusion and inference for "Intention for Voting" depending on "Religiosity", "Ethnicity" and "Use of Social Media" with numerical facts and figures.

Recommendation-1: Results show the importance of social media and ethnicity in political proceedings and movements. It is learnt that the politician and their party management should give more attention to plan for ethnic-oriented political campaign delivered via social media networks.

Recommendation-2: Use of social media to influence people's behaviour should be kept under the control and supervision of non-biased third-party regulatory bodies to ensure that the platforms are not being used to brainwash people to instigate rebellions.

Recommendation-3: Campaign managers need to conduct continued examination and understanding of the needs that draw users to Facebook pages, WhatsApp groups, or Twitter platform to able them to create content that drives certain user's participation toward specific measurable offline outcomes. Pakistan is an emerging economy and has many challenges in every segment which require prompt change process to adopt new products/services or social change towards political adaptation for a new candidate. The only change is constant and social media could help in leaning the cognitive approach toward various parameters. Social Media has become global phenomena for change with its interactive and instant communication platform. Further research could be taken forward on how Social Media could bring positive change in the country without sacrificing local culture and tradition. Results highlight the importance of social media in voting and other political activities, therefore further research is recommended to replicate the study in different environments.

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