



## Impact of SMS Texts on Political Attitude of Youth

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### Abstract

*SMS have become an important source of infotainment besides being only a channel for communication. Youth especially is an active consumer of this communication technology. This study was planned to explore whether there is any relation between the exposure to the political communication and propaganda messages and attitudinal change in college students of graduate and undergraduate level. It was also aimed to investigate the perception of college students regarding change in political attitudes caused by exposure to political SMS texts. This study was designed to accomplish the objectives such as “to explore the relation between political SMS propaganda texts and the attitudinal change in the college students” and “to verify if SMS prove to be an effective tool of political communication, persuasion and propaganda”.*

*The study was carried out using a questionnaire to be filled by the respondents selected by randomization technique. Independent and dependent variables were defined adequately and demographic variables were also taken into consideration. On the basis of the results and findings, it is concluded that the exposure to SMS based political texts has the capability to change the political attitudes of young college students. Students are heavily relying on SMS based information and they believe in it as to be their personal medium of expression. This heavy reliance is leading to cause change in their political mindsets, conceptions and attitudes. Still it cannot be predicted that such campaigns can change the voting behavior too because of so many other social, economical and religious factors in Pakistan. So it is concluded that exposure of SMS based political information causes change in political attitudes of college students.*

**Keywords:** SMS, Political Attitudes, Political Propaganda, Pakistani Youth, Impact of SMS, Effects of SMS, Political Communication, Attitudinal Change

### Introduction

SMS text messages are turning to be the public media the world over, as it is a medium that is giving the absolute freedom of expression in most of the regions across the globe. Ko (2009) in a survey based article stated that Pakistan is ranking 4<sup>th</sup> in consumption of SMS texts in the world. Only at the eves of Christmas and New Year of 2008-09, Pakistanis sent 763 million texts.

Atta (2012) with reference to PTA sources reported that Pakistanis exchanged more than 175 billion SMS texts in 2010 which is 15.66% more than the SMS texts sent in 2009. There were 111 million cell phone consumers in Pakistan till Oct 2011. All the mobile phone companies in Pakistan generated more than 100 billion texts just in from July 2010 till Dec 2010 (Muslim, 2011). Ufone was at the top of the list, then Telenor followed by Mobilink, Warid and Zong. Every company is offering daily, monthly, weekly, quarterly and unlimited SMS bundle packages in cheap and competitive prices from 0.59 rupees/500/day which are the lowest SMS subscription rates the world over.



United Nations reported that the usage of mobile phone is increasing, it is speedily becoming in the use of people in developing countries as compared to other technologies. The reason of this wide usage is its cheap cost and its accessibility to remote areas where other communication facilities are not available (Lynn, 2010).

A survey conducted on the usage of mobile phones in the world which ranked Pakistan on the 5<sup>th</sup> position in mobile phone usage. It seems that the technology is growing in our country very rapidly. In 2010 almost ten million people got connections at domestic level in Asia. Pakistan Telecommunication Authority claims that there is a huge population in Pakistan who are using mobile phones and the number of people has reached approximately at one hundred and thirty one millions. PTA resources say that the reason behind this massive usage is the competition among different telecommunication companies. These companies are offering lower calls rates, different packages and other facilities. Mobile phones are making the life easy, making the people communicate frequently with each other, changing the values and living styles (APP, 2011).

In past, it was difficult to access youth for political campaigns. Cell phones have made it easy nowadays. Almost every youngster owns cell phone, especially in cities. It is becoming an integral part of society and proving itself the most frequently used channel of communication. Cell phones are not only helping people to stay in touch with one another but they are also affecting the attitudes and behaviours. There has been a seen a drastic change in society due to social networking websites and SMS culture. With the increase in cell phone usage researchers are more inclined to study its effects on individuals and on the society as a whole. There is a flood of forward messages. Mobile phone companies are offering different packages every day. Young people look more interested in subscribing to every new package. They are becoming prone to the SMS, from the start of the day till the end and that too till late night. So how it is possible that political propagandists ignore this medium? Youth has always been the target of political parties. Let's take a bird's eye view at our country's history. Politicians always used youngsters for their vested interests. Student's political groups PSF, ATI, JTI, MSF are examples of this scenario. Political parties always back up the irrational and emotional students and young workers. The parties are prevailing through propaganda.

Cell phone is becoming a vital propaganda tool with the help of instant messages; the moment something new happens somewhere, it spreads all around within the next few moments. In Pakistan, it can be noticed that in the current socio-political situation how propaganda of any nature spreads in the masses like the jungle fire; whether it is a call for protest against load shedding or a political call to attend a procession, long march, strike or rally. Educate youngsters are always enthusiastic to bring revolutions and to practice something new. And political parties target them for the sake of the survival of their political life. They try to twist the mindset and thinking patterns of youngsters accordingly through SMS based political texts favouring or defaming someone or something.

Another reason to target the youth for political propaganda is that they have lesser knowledge of politics and it is historically proved that they can't analyse the whole political scenario as the elder ones do. So they can easily be targeted for political propaganda. Hooghe (2004) was of the view that youngsters are becoming less interested on the real issues of daily routine. They are not involved in family issues anymore; they discuss lesser with elders and feels themselves wiser than their elders. As a result they use their emotional side of mind rather than intellect and wisdom. It helps propagandists to make them target of the political propaganda.



Pakistan has not a very good political history. It is full of corruption and false promises of politicians with public. Youngsters feel insecure and hopeless. They feel their future is dark. In this situation sometimes they need someone who assures them of their secure future, scholarships, employment, resources and riches. When a political party or candidate claims to bring these things to students, they start relying on them the reasons as there is no alternate to this. Here the political propaganda comes in to trap them in the hope for a new dawn.

It is observed that with mobile phones, political calls to come and protest for some wrong happening are extensively being made, such as a call for the protest against electricity load shedding, shortage of CNG in the country or other issues of political interests. An SMS text is the most instant and form of launching propaganda. It clicks the audiences within seconds. The attitude and behaviour obviously changes not only for the national politics but for the international one.

In president Musharraf's regime a propaganda campaign spread like a jungle fire wording "Go Musharraf Go". On the other hand people are experiencing a lot of messages against the government of Peoples Party. President Zardari, Dr. Firdous Aahiq Awaan and Rehman Malik are on the hit list of political propagandists. There are also some positive SMS propaganda campaigns for the emerging political party PTI (Pakistan Tahreek e Insaaf). Other religious and pressure groups use the SMS based propaganda according to their own vested interests.

### **Medium Change--Message Same**

Propaganda is a part of history of humans. From the traditional media to new media technology propaganda has been a useful technique to influence the minds of people toward a certain cause and ideology. Every medium has its own style of propagating a message. It is linked with the specific ideology of the media organizations. Nowadays most instant and rapid propaganda can be generated with a mobile phone message. It can be predicted that medium can be different but style of propaganda and vested interest of propagandist is of same type. Marshall McLuhan a famous communication scientist said that "Medium is the Message" (McLuhan, 1967). This simple statement has very deep meanings. He emphasized on the importance of communication medium in our life. He predicted the rule of new media technology on the entire world which would make the whole world a "global village". Mobile phone is the best example of McLuhan's thought. The intention of communicator is same but due to technological advancement, style of communication is changing. Mobile phone is an integrated medium which has all other medium in small handheld machinery. And the whole global village lies into our pockets now (Gibson, 2008).

### **Statement Of The Problem**

SMS have become an important source of infotainment. This study is planned to explore whether there is any relation between the exposure to the political propaganda messages and the impact of such SMSs and how it affects the perceptions, mindsets and attitudes of the college students of Gujar Khan. It is also aimed to investigate the perception of college students regarding change in political attitudes caused by exposure and reliance to political SMS texts.

### **Research Questions**

This study has been designed to get the answers of the following questions:

1. Whether and to what extent the exposure of college students to the political SMS



messages is.

2. Whether and to what extent the relationship between attitudinal change of college students and exposure to political propaganda SMS is.

### Objectives of the Study

This study has been designed to accomplish the following objectives.

- To explore the relation between political SMS propaganda texts and the attitudinal change in the college students.
- To verify if SMS prove to be an effective tool of political communication, persuasion and propaganda.

### Literature Review

Reviewing the literature helps laying the foundations for making a hypothesis and sets the ground for a new research. SMS is a part of new media technologies and there is not much literature available on this topic. Quite a few indepth and scientific researches have been conducted regarding the effects of SMS texts. The researcher has tried to access and review the most of them. Online libraries, HEC's E-brary, Libraries, Journals, Google Books and Internet have intensively been utilized and consulted to fetch the relevant literature for this study.

Evans (1992) is of the view that propaganda is a planned and deliberate effort made by a well organized group of people to educate or inform the targeted audiences so that they can become a part of the whole objective and can formulate a specific attitude as desired by the propagandist group.

It can be said that currently the political propaganda is not properly developed and in a completely practicable form in any country of the world because it is hard to concretely define its objectives and how to attain these objectives effectively (Barlett, 1973).

O'Shaughnessy ( 2004) argues that manufactured symbols and formulated campaigns play an important role in causing the successful effects of propaganda. The propagandists use specific symbols while creating the propaganda texts to give a certain meaning to some phenomenon. It is also a kind of negative advertising. It is presented in a way that the audiences take it as information because it is wrapped into some logics and rational persuasions.

The initial trend about the mobile phone is to use it as the publishing and broadcasting medium. This thing that makes the mobile phone users distinguished from the users of other media is that the mobile phone user at the same time can be sender as well as receiver. Since 2008 mobile phone's access has overlapped the access of television specially in the southern regions of the world. Jasmin News of Srilanka is providing news to more than 100000 users daily. Due to the SMS technology, mobile phones are growing as the Citizen's Media and farther is not the day when mobile phone will be the future transmitters of the media because this media is involving all the pre existing media into it (Ekine, 2009).

The size and nature of targeted audiences doesn't matter a lot in the case of political communication because the main purpose of this communication is to attain the objectives by causing the desired effects on the audiences (McNair, 2003).

The political parties which are focusing on the communication and marketing approach don't try to make the demand of their political product rather they conduct researches to measure the opinion of the public such as to guess what their voters are





demanding from them and what are their needs. This way the parties formulate their agendas and communicate the same to the audiences through the channels easily accessible to them (Foster, 2010).

Ekine (2009) some countries have already put a ban over text messaging because it has been considered that this medium of communication is being extensively used to urge the people to hold demonstrations against the governing parties. Ethiopia is one example for this. Although there are chances that these governments will restore this ban but they are actually trying to be capable enough to make a check and surveillance over SMS communication. Although a central information system can be built for this purpose but its aim should be the public service. If we use the SMS data against a person who is causing threat to the system, it should also be used in the favour of a person who is supporting the system and is minimizing the controversies.

SMS has the largest reach to the audiences today. Sterling (2009) reported that about 3.5 billion SMS text messages are being sent in the United States of America every day. Mobile medium is a larger medium than the internet. SMS marketing is a far better way to effect the audiences and sell the product or to influence the minds. Statistically about 90% of the Americans do own a cell phone. About 154 million people are regularly using SMS in USA.

People prefer SMS texts over the conversations. On the other hand the survey report showed that 75% of the people did not like to receive advertisements on cell phones, other than the ads sent by their cell phone companies. Still it is the most widely used tool for direct marketing at the moment and is drawing efficient results too (Sterling, 2009).

The people of Philippines claim to be the "Texting Capital of the World". Although this assertion is not true but still they are one of the largest consumers of SMS. Filipinos are using SMS for social, economical as well as political purposes. It has not only empowered their social bindings but also have given a medium of expression of their political views. TEXT MARY service by The Way of Mary Foundation is sending the prayers requests churches only costing them a single SMS charges and thousands of people use this service daily. In the 2004 elections, SMS played huge role in electing or defeating the candidates. It worked just like a marketing campaign. Raul Roco was the one who launched his political campaign in a technological way, using Text Bridges consisting of a bunch of workers sending SMS messages for meetings, events, processions and rallies (Lallana, 2010).

An international study was conducted by Motorola Mobile Company on the human behaviours in which 9 cities were chosen from the entire world. People were interviewed, field surveys were conducted and information was observed as well. According to the findings, the mobile phones are proving to be a personal power for the people. Women are using the mobile phones as a social medium to communicate with the society whereas men are using it for as a toy for interaction. Men are also using it as a status symbol and as a seduction tool for women. The use of thumbs for SMS has changed the general habits of teenagers such as they so habitual that they are using their thumbs to ring the doorbell. It has created a "Text Generation" who uses a different abbreviated and symbolic language and believes in the textual world (Brown, 2011). Pauli (2011) covered a story about Vodafone who admitted that their company sent SMS texts to its customers to politically support President Hosni Mubarak in the scenario of emergency imposed by his government. The message was:

"Egypt's youth! Beware rumours and listen to the voice of reason. Egypt is above all so preserve it" (p.1).



SMS has become an innovative tool to fetch information specially in Election Monitoring. In 2005 elections in Indonesia, SMS texts were sent by 750 election observers. Same technique was used in Palestinian Elections. In Albania, SMS texts were extensively used in 2007 elections by domestic observers as well as the parties. SMS was the quickest medium to report the crucial and concerning incidents taking place on the election day in Sierra Leone and Albania. SMS is profoundly used in educating the voters and for their vote registration. Voters registered their complaints through SMS. SMS could also be used to engage the citizens with elections regarding the protection of their civil rights (Schular, 2008).

Emily (2003) with reference to Sunil Bhargava (BJP's Campaign Incharge) reported that Bhartiya Janata Party is planning to launch an SMS campaign in the upcoming general elections in Rajasthan. While talking to the Hindustan Times he said that different slogans will be disseminated by SMS because 60 seats of assembly out of total 200 seats are from urban areas and SMS will be an effective tool to reach these voters.

With reference to Indian News Today, Emily (2004) stated that about 150 millions out of 650 million voters of India were accessed through internet and mobile phones in 2004's election campaign. BJP and Congress both parties focused this technology and believed to be helpful in convincing the voters. The industry sources predicted the SMS to be the most effective medium to launch a political campaign in elections.

Baum and Aglay (2004) in an article for Reuters described how SMS has shaped the politics of Philippines. They said that the Filipinos who went to poll their votes on 10<sup>th</sup> of May to choose the president and other 17000 officials would have received hundreds of SMS texts to influence their decisions at the time of pollings. Most of these messages would be jokes about a candidate consisting of rumours and a kind of black propaganda. Most of people would have less knowledge of the country's political scenario so they will be hit by this propaganda. One example of the victims of these text messages are President of Poe's LDP Party Senator Edgardo Angara about whom the propaganda was launched that she wants to reduce the salaries of soldiers, teachers and fire fighting staffs. SMS texts are so much accepted type of communication that the Governor of Central Bank Rafael Buenaventura uses to comment about the interest rates or day to day levelling of Peso through SMS to reporters.

Cho and Hung (2011) conducted a detailed study to measure the attitudinal changes caused by SMS regarding the privacy protection and conflict management. This research was aimed to answer the questions like why the people would use SMS to communicate something they generally can't communicate in person. According to their findings the effects of concerns about privacy protection is lesser than the effects of SMS to avoid conflicts. They suggested that if the mobile companies give permission to the users to encode their messages through some passwords, it will increase the security level and people will rely more on expressing their views on SMS. Through SMS the conflicts and privacy issues can be resolved if it changes the attitudes.

Suliman (2012) compiled a report about how the group SMS was initiated in Pakistan. It was a software namely Chopaal developed by the LUMS which afterwards was modified by Dr. Umar for bulk distribution of SMS for advertising as well as political purposes. It was named SMS-all. Over 1.5 million users are registered with it and more than 2.5 million more users are attached with it through different corporations. Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf and PML-N are extensively using SMS-all services to send political updates to their followers and also using it to change the political mindsets.

Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf is currently deploying SMS for its political campaign not only to make membership and register the voters but also to motivate, influence and



persuade them for the favourable voting behaviour. For the procession of 25<sup>th</sup> December 2011, a huge SMS campaign was launched to invite the people of Karachi to attend. PTI workers said that it was just an initial test of this new technology which was very helpful and now they have plans to launch a huge SMS campaign before the upcoming general elections (Hannan, 2012).

Although the literature review has no limits and ending but the literature consumed as referred hereinabove provided the grounds for this study and served as the sufficient enough logic and baseline to formulate the hypotheses.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **-Change in Political Attitude in the Context of Theories and Experts**

Mass communication research has a special worth for its theoretical perspective. In mass media research we look at the topics and issues according to the relevant theories. This research is going to explore the impact of mobile text messages and change in political attitudes. So let's look at some theories and their implementation with our current topic.

### **-Lippmann's Contribution in Developing "Public Opinion" Research**

It was an early time period of 20<sup>th</sup> century when Lippmann a famous communication scientist developed theories on the idea of public opinion. He was of the view that our individual perceptions and beliefs can be different from others. He explained it theoretically. He gave the idea of outside world which is different from the picture in our heads. Lippmann focused on the concept of propaganda as to generate a propaganda some hurdle or barrier should be there in between the targeted public and event. Through this way media can hide some part or show another part. It means media can be used to turn public opinion and attitudes toward a specific cause. It is because of limited presentation of information about media that public has some stereotypical views, judgments and opinions. It works best while generating a political propaganda (Lippmann, 1922).

### **-A Boom in Propaganda Research Early Period of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

As we know that start of 20<sup>th</sup> century was a boom in political propaganda so that researchers' mind turned to this area. Media messages were studied as very strong. These messages were called as a magic bullet or a hypodermic needle (Lasswell, 1927).

### **-Pseudo Environment**

Rogers (1994) further discussed that it is like a pseudo environment which is created by media. Lippmann discussed this pseudo environment of stereotypes. Rogers tells us that in this type of environment, gate-keeping process in the selection of news and events can be seen at high level. Lippmann (1922) also studied the process of agenda setting; he told that media knew the perceptions of public at individual and general level. So media tries to make public agree on one opinion that is provided by media itself. He emphasized on the importance of the link between media and individual's perception of world, and the real world (Rogers, 1994).

Rogers further argued that Lasswell was analyzing the empirical aspects of propaganda. All these aspects were written by the political expert Lippmann (p.40-64).



### **-Political Communication in Lasswell's View Point**

It was an excellent contribution of Lasswell that he was examining the strong effects of media on helpless public. He was agreed on the point that media gives a limited information to public. Public opinion can be made by media. Government uses media to give a specific message even in democratic environment. Lasswell (1971) proposed that the political communication is based first on the source (who) says what ( message ) with what channel ( medium) to whom ( receiver) and with what effect ( effect). Lasswell model is such a comprehensive model that we can implement it even on new media of today's age. For instance the use of mobile phone or text messages by mobile phone.

### **-Propaganda in the view of Herman and Chomsky**

Chomsky & Herman (1988) both are agreed on the point that internal setup and underlying condition of structure is very important and media is operated actually by this structure. Their propaganda model tells us that the process of news always goes through five types of filters. It means news passes through these filters before dissemination:

- At first they placed "ownership" as a big filter. The ownership of a particular media always has some influence on its working the reason is the financial aspect, so media is incline towards it due to the reasons of funds.
- Second filter suggested by them is "Sourcing". They say that every media organization has to deal with some source media need news to come through an authentic and reliable source. This source is powerful, decision makers, and other big faces like government.
- Third filter in the message travelling is the 'Flack "counter opinions and negative feedback of powerful. This negative feedback is in the form of complaints which are a big threat for the prestige of media organization itself. These opposite opinions usually come from government, big business organizations, politicians and other pressure and powerful groups. They have a powerful say to make an effect on the message of media.
- Ideology is the last filter discussed by Herman and Chomsky powerful. This is the ideology of powerful and the popular. It is the ideology of media, what is the perception of media itself about the world.

### **-Instant Learning Instant Messaging**

Bandura (1977) further says that a person start learning from childhood, in the early age a girl try to imitate the behaviour of mother and boy like father, or these kids try to be like other persons of their family. Media is replacing the inspirations of people from real life to the media world. Media is giving the people more choices to learn and act upon that learning. Now media has come in our pockets, just in the size of match box mobile phone has a lot of functions. It has not only calling and texting facility but it is also internet, television video and camera facility. It's very amazing amusing and attractive. People are learning a lot of new things from each other. The social learning and observing has reached at its zenith due to social networking and instant text messaging.

### **-Petty and Cacioppo's Concept of Persuasion**

Petty & Cacioppo (1986) have a remarkable contribution toward effect of persuasion. According to their observation there are two ways of making decisions. When a person is motivated to make a decision he is now ready to give attention to the topic or issue. Therefore he would consciously think about it and would use his mind to see the





logics in it. This process of decision making, lead him to change in attitude permanently. Central route of decision making works when a person uses logics while thinking.

## **Hypothesis**

**H1:** The more the exposure to political SMS texts, more the political attitudes will change.

**H1<sub>0</sub>:** The extent of exposure to political SMS texts does not cause any attitudinal change.

## **Research Design**

Survey design was followed and questionnaire was the major tool to gather data from the students. As the delimitations of the research, only the Gujar Khan city (District Rawalpindi) was focused.

### **-The Universe**

All the college students from grade 11 to 14 of Gujar Khan City were taken as the population/universe of the study.

### **-Sampling Technique**

The population was split into two main strata; Girls Colleges and Boys Colleges. A complete list of the government and private registered colleges of both the strata was obtained. Each college was assigned a categorized number and through basket-draws two boys colleges (1 government, 1 private) and two girls colleges (1 government, 1 private) were selected randomly. For each of the college, a detailed list of all the students of Intermediate and Graduation was compiled and each unit/student was assigned a number. Now assigning a number to all the students, the equal number of male and female students (100 male, 100 female) was selected randomly as per the requirements. At this stage, it was made sure that only the mobile users get selected.

### **-Sample Size**

Total 200 (100 male and 100 female) were taken as the sample from the sampling frame of "Colleges of Gujar Khan city" through the sampling method which is explained under the heading of "Sampling Technique".

### **-Construction of Questionnaire**

Questionnaire was prepared keeping in view the psychological and verbal capacities of the selected population. English was used as the language tool for as the students at college level can comprehend it.

### **-Pilot Study**

Data was gathered from 20 boys and 20 girls in the pilot study to measure the effectiveness of the research design and procedure, to check the reliability and validity of the research.

### **Data Collection**

Questionnaires were distributed personally by the researcher and the students/respondents were guided about the necessary information regarding filling the questionnaires. It was made sure that the researcher doesn't influence the opinion of the respondents while filling the questionnaires. At the end, the questionnaires were collected personally.



### -Return Rate of Questionnaires

Because the questionnaires were distributed, filled in personal presence and collected personally, the return rate of questionnaires was 100%.

### -Demographic Variables

1. Level of education (Intermediate/Bachelors)
2. SES (Government College / Private College)
3. Gender (Male/Female)

## Data Analysis

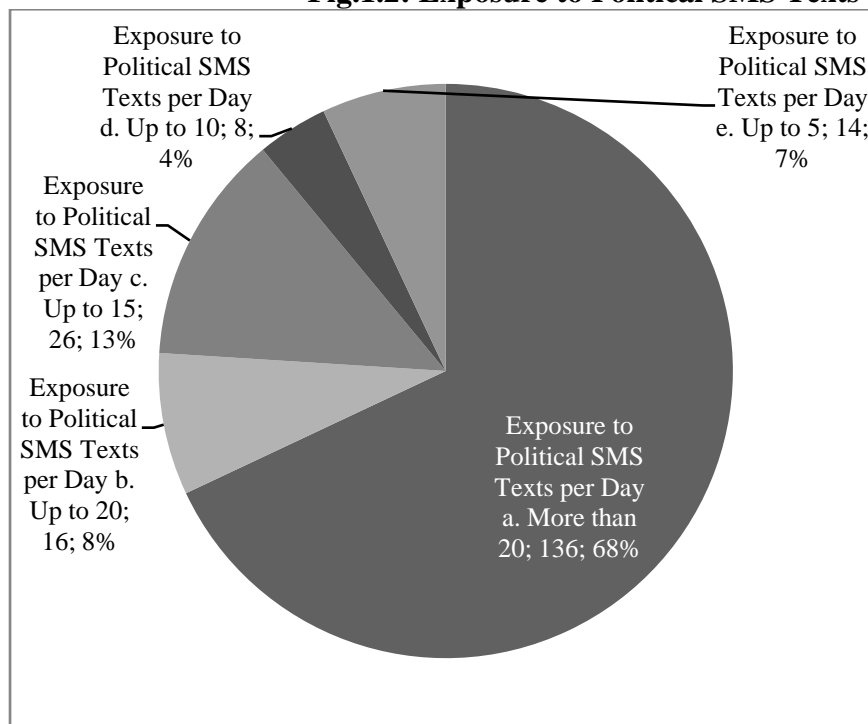
### -Exposure to Political Texts

It was the core concept to measure as per the need of study as it has been hypothesized that exposure is somehow related to the attitudinal change. Following question was asked from the respondents in this regard:

How many political SMS do you consume (receive & send) daily?

- a. More than 20    b. Up to 20    c. Up to 15    d. Up to 10    e. Up to 5

**Fig.1.2: Exposure to Political SMS Texts**



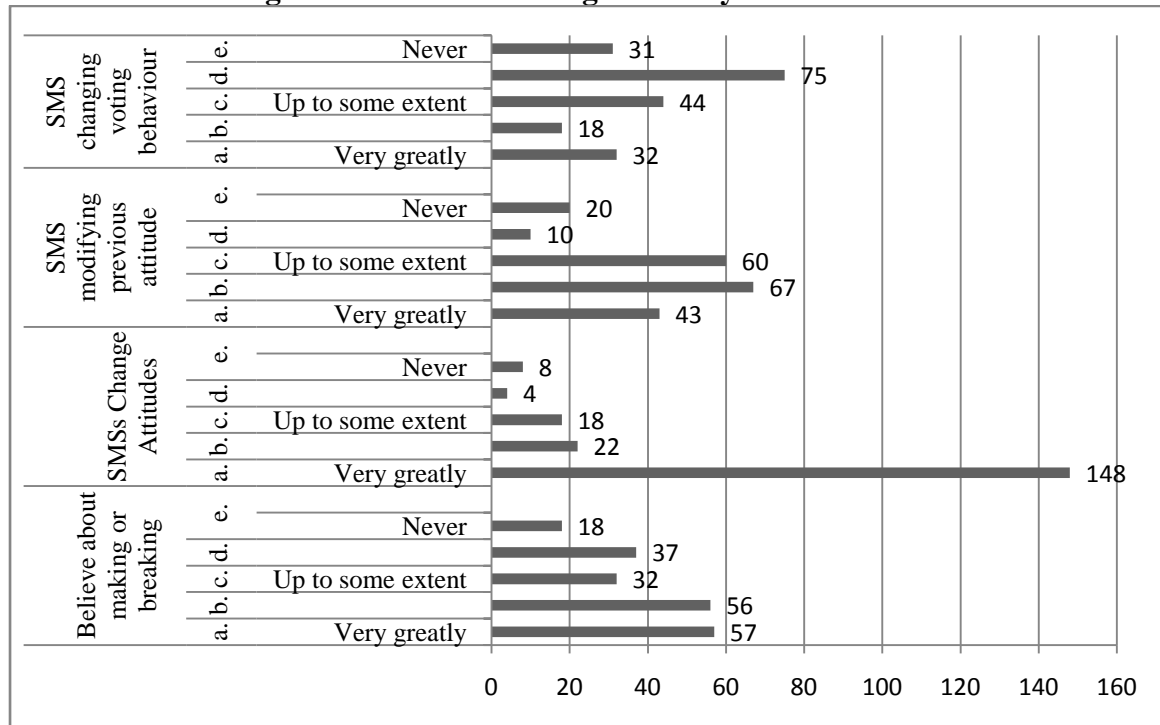
### Attitudinal Change by Political SMS

The best way to measure the attitudinal change in the audiences is to ask them directly (McLeod, 2009). In this connection, following questions were asked to the respondents:

- Did the political SMS texts make or break your image of politicians?
  - a. Very greatly    b. greatly    c. up to some extent    d. rarely    e. never
- How much the SMS changed your political attitudes?
  - a. Very greatly    b. greatly    c. up to some extent    d. rarely    e. never



- How much the political SMS messages caused change in your previous attitudes towards a political party/person?
  - Very greatly
  - greatly
  - up to some extent
  - rarely
  - never
- To what extent the political SMS campaigns affected your voting behaviour?
  - Very greatly
  - greatly
  - up to some extent
  - rarely
  - never

**Fig.1.3: Attitudinal Change cause by Political SMS**

**Testing Reliability**
**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.880	.890	2

**Inter-Item Correlation Matrix**

	Exposure to Political SMS	Change in Political Attitude
Exposure to Political SMS	1.000	.802
Change in Political Attitude	.802	1.000

In Tab.1.1, N is the number of Response Units i.e.200. Valid are the units who responded i.e.200. Excluded are the units who were absent i.e.0. Cronbach's Alpha is the



test used test the inter items consistency (reliability) i.e. 1.00:0.802. Cronbach's Alpha Based Standardized Items is the standardized reliability obtained after calculating the variance i.e. 0.890. N is the number of variables for reliability test. Inter-Item Correlation Matrix is the value of correlation between variables under study.

Cronbach's Alpha test was applied on the obtained responses to calculate the consistency and reliability in the variables. Test statistics reveal that there is a strong reliability in Exposure to Political SMS texts and Change in Political Attitudes. The ratio of this reliability was found to be "1:00 : 0.802" which means that if the value of Exposure to Political SMS is increased by 1, the value of Change in Political Attitude may increase by 0.80 and vice versa. As per the statistical rules, the values lower than 0.30 are considered weak whereas the values found in this ratio were 0.80. In simple words, there is more than 80% positive reliability in both the variables and the measures are reliable enough for validation.

### Testing Null Hypothesis (H1o)

#### Regression Analysis Model Summary<sup>b</sup>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.802 <sup>a</sup>	.643	.641	.609

a. Predictors: (Constant), Exposure to Political SMS

b. Dependent Variable: Change in Political Attitude

#### ANOVA<sup>b</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	132.506	1	132.506	357.078	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	73.474	198	.371		
	Total	205.980	199			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Exposure to Political SMS

b. Dependent Variable: Change in Political Attitude

#### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.366	.074		4.924	.000
	Exposure to Political SMS	.658	.035	.802	18.897	.000

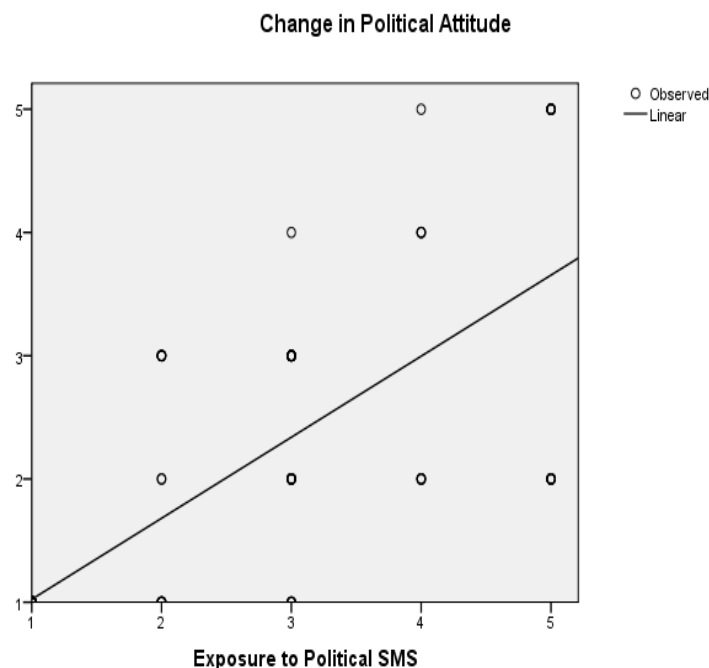
a. Dependent Variable: Change in Political Attitude

In current statistical analysis the value of R is 0.802. R Square is the Coefficient of Determination which calculates the measure of goodness of the fit i.e. 0.643. It is the proportionate measures of variance in dependant variable i.e. Change in Political Attitude which is predicted from independent variable i.e. Exposure to Political SMS. It reveals that there is 64% of variance is predictable from the independent variable. Sig. is the level



of significance (0.05) that predicts the significance of the obtained values of P (Probability or Predicted Value). If the Sig. is more than 0.05, the null hypothesis is proved and alternate hypothesis is rejected. In this case, the Sig. was 0.00 which means that null hypothesis is rejected. Beta is the value of relation between independent and dependant variables predicted on the basis of observed values of independent values. If one unit change occurs in X, beta value will predict how much change will take place in the value of Y. Thus on the basis of statistical inferences, the research concludes that there is a positive correlation between the Exposure to Political SMS texts and Change in Political Attitude of college students. Null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. The value of  $R^2$  and Beta 0.802 is fairly close to 1 (reference value: “-1 ↔ 0 ↔ +1”) that proves a strong positive relation between independent and dependant variable. Significant values prove that there is 95% confidence level in predicting and generalizing the result over the whole population.

**Fig.1.3: Estimated Curve Fit of Change in Political Attitude**



The scatterplot shows how the values of Y are predicted by the observed values of X. Exposure to Political SMS is placed on the X-axis while Change in Political Attitude is placed on Y-axis. This is a linear representation to predict which way the values of Y will move on if the values of X are increased or decreased. Observed values are presented by grey circles whereas known values are given in black circles. The black line shows the direction towards which the values of Y will keep increasing if the values of X are increased or manipulated. Overall the image reflects a strong positive correlation.

## Findings

It was revealed that majority of college students consume (send and receive) more than 60 SMS per day. One possible reason for such heavy consumption might be the cheap SMS costs in Pakistan. As per the observed the heaviest consumption of SMS texts is of “Funny Texts”. These might be of either nature, for recreation and to make the



receivers cherish. Religious SMS and Political SMS are being consumed respectively at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> number. Exposure to political SMS texts among the college students was found to be more than 20 SMS texts a day (see Fig.3.4). It doesn't mean that all these texts were different from each other. It is intellectually guessed that such huge consumption might be due to "Forward SMS" phenomenon (One text is forwarded to so many contacts).

A heavy majority responded that they extensively deem political SMS texts to be a source of information and political awareness. It shows the popularity affectability of this medium in the educated youth. More than 33% of students responded that political SMS cause change in their previous political beliefs greatly, if not very greatly. Whereas 30% of the total students said that such texts cause change in political beliefs up to some extent. There was a mixed response when the respondents were asked about the harms of political jokes. Almost equal numbers of students consider political jokes to be harmless and harmful and there is a minute difference. Still the numeric majority is of opinion that such jokes can cause harm. Majority of responses affirmed that SMS texts have made or broken their image of a politician or a political party. Perhaps that's why the SMS based propaganda campaigns are effective the world over.

It was further revealed that a huge number of college students said that political SMS texts have changed their political attitudes very greatly. Another strange fact revealed by the data is that a huge majority of young colligates consider that their political approach is far better than their parents'. It is perhaps they think they are technologically advanced having access to multiple communication channels for political awareness.

Most of the respondents said that they believe only up to some extent that the political SMS texts might be based on propaganda against some political parties or personalities. Few of them believed greatly too. A very minute number of students responded that they try to know about the source of SMS based information. Majority of them don't even bother to query the origin of such information. It reveals the effectiveness of grey propaganda. Although the respondents believe in attitudinal change caused by SMS based political campaigns, but most of them said that such texts don't have ability to change the voting behaviour. It is perhaps due to so many other factors influencing voting behaviour.

Data showed that there are just rare numbers of respondents who are disturbed by political SMS texts. Others feel them useful.

## Conclusion

On the basis of the results and findings, it is concluded that the exposure to SMS based political texts has the capability to change the political attitudes of young college students. Students are heavily relying on SMS based information and they believe in it as to be their personal medium of expression. This heavy reliance is leading to cause change in their political mindsets, conceptions and attitudes. Still it can not be predicted that such campaigns can change the voting behavior too because of so many other social, economical and religious factors in Pakistan. So it is concluded that exposure of SMS based political information causes change in political attitudes of college students.



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