

NEWS CONSUMPTION TRENDS AMONG PAKISTANI YOUTH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Original Article

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ABSTRACT

Background: Rapid digitalization has transformed patterns of news acquisition worldwide, particularly among young adults. University students increasingly rely on interactive, mobile-based platforms that provide personalized and real-time information. In Pakistan, expanding internet penetration and smartphone accessibility have reshaped traditional news consumption habits, potentially reducing reliance on mainstream broadcast media. Understanding these evolving behaviors is essential to evaluate credibility perceptions, platform preferences, and demographic influences within academic settings.

Objective: To examine patterns of news consumption among university students and to compare the use, preference, and perceived credibility of social media and mainstream media sources.

Methods: A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 300 students enrolled in three departments—Mass Communication, Political Science, and International Relations—at Government College University Faisalabad. Participants were selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising demographic variables, media usage patterns, and Likert-scale items assessing attitudes toward credibility, accessibility, and convenience of news sources. Reliability testing yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79. Data were analyzed using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests to assess associations between demographic factors and media usage behaviors.

Results: Of the 300 respondents, 60.7% were male and 39.3% female; 47.3% were aged 22–25 years. A majority (66.3%) reported accessing news primarily through social media or the internet rather than television. Facebook accounts were reported by 83.0% of students, WhatsApp by 93.3%, Twitter by 66.3%, Google+ by 44.7%, and LinkedIn by 32.7%. Regular social media use for news was reported by 41.3%, while 39.3% did not use mainstream media for news consumption. Approximately 38.0% reported not watching television for news at all, and 33.0% watched occasionally. A substantial proportion agreed that Pakistani TV news channels were biased (mean=3.99), whereas 30.7% agreed and 20.0% strongly agreed that online news was more up-to-date. Facebook emerged as the most preferred news platform, with 53.0% consuming news regularly, while Twitter usage for news was comparatively lower. A statistically significant association was observed between age and social media usage ($\chi^2=19.754$; $p=0.008$).

Conclusion: University students demonstrated a marked preference for social networking sites over mainstream media for news consumption. Social media platforms were perceived as more accessible, interactive, and current, although concerns regarding credibility persisted. Television maintained cultural relevance but was increasingly secondary for informational purposes. Demographic characteristics, particularly age and education, influenced media preferences, underscoring the growing dominance of digitally mediated news environments among Pakistani youth.

Keywords: Adolescent Behavior; Communication; Internet; Mass Media; Pakistan; Social Media; Students.

INTRODUCTION

News consumption constitutes a central component of everyday cognitive and social functioning, shaping public awareness, political attitudes, and psychosocial engagement. In contemporary societies, exposure to news occurs through both traditional mass media—such as television, radio, and print journalism—and increasingly through digital and social networking platforms. Social media may be conceptualized as a digitally mediated communication ecosystem that enables individuals and institutions to create profiles, disseminate content, exchange viewpoints, and construct interactive networks within bounded online systems (1). The rapid expansion of internet accessibility and mobile technology has substantially transformed patterns of information dissemination, weakening the unidirectional flow of communication historically dominated by professional journalists (2). In Pakistan, one of the most populous countries globally, digital penetration has grown exponentially over the past decade, largely driven by affordable smartphones and expanding broadband infrastructure (3). This technological shift has particularly influenced youth populations, who demonstrate higher adaptability to emerging communication tools. While digital platforms facilitate political awareness, social connectivity, and civic engagement, concerns persist regarding misinformation exposure, problematic usage behaviors, and psychosocial consequences (4). Empirical evidence suggests that unregulated online engagement may foster polarization, intolerance, and reduced face-to-face interaction, thereby influencing both psychological well-being and sociopolitical participation (4).

Globally, declining reliance on traditional broadcast news among younger demographics has been well documented. For example, television news consumption among individuals under 30 years of age in the United States declined markedly between 2006 and 2012 (5). Simultaneously, financial constraints have reduced newsroom capacities, altering the structure and authority of mainstream journalism (5). In contrast, social networking sites (SNS) facilitate real-time content circulation, enabling users not only to consume but also to generate and redistribute information without editorial gatekeeping. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have evolved into prominent news gateways, each hosting hundreds of millions of active users worldwide (6,7). Twitter, conceptualized as a real-time information network, exemplifies microblogging systems that allow instantaneous dissemination of news and opinion (7). The participatory architecture of SNS has redefined audience roles, blurring distinctions between news producers and consumers and contributing to audience segmentation within digital environments (8,9). Theoretical discourse further indicates that online media exposure patterns are associated with political information processing, selective attention, and motivational factors (10).

Within the Pakistani context, youth represent a demographically significant and digitally active cohort. Recent national studies indicate that individuals aged 18–30 increasingly rely on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube for news updates rather than traditional outlets (11). Despite the convenience and immediacy of digital news, trust in social media content remains comparatively lower than trust in established journalistic institutions (11). Gendered variations in content preference have also been reported, with male youth gravitating toward political and current affairs content, while female youth demonstrate greater interest in social, health, and entertainment domains (12). Furthermore, susceptibility to misinformation remains a critical concern, particularly in environments characterized by limited digital literacy and widespread circulation of unverified content through messaging applications (13). Such exposure has potential implications not only for informed citizenship but also for mental health, risk perception, and collective decision-making. Although international scholarship has extensively examined media substitution and complementarity effects, empirical investigations in Pakistan remain fragmented, often addressing social or traditional media independently rather than comparatively.

Given these dynamics, a systematic and contextually grounded examination of news consumption patterns among Pakistani youth is warranted. Understanding preferences, trust perceptions, and demographic determinants is essential for informing media literacy interventions, communication policy, and public health messaging strategies. Therefore, the present study aims to explore patterns of news consumption among Pakistani youth; to compare the utilization of social media and mainstream media as primary news sources; to identify determinants underlying source preference; to evaluate perceived credibility and trust associated with each medium; and to examine the influence of demographic variables, including age and educational status, on news consumption behaviors.

METHODS

The present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine patterns of news consumption among university students enrolled at Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF). The investigation was conducted as a contextual case study within a single public-sector institution to allow in-depth exploration of media usage behaviors within a defined academic environment. Case study approaches are recognized for facilitating detailed examination of social phenomena within bounded settings over a specified period (14,15). The target population comprised undergraduate students enrolled in three social science departments: Mass Communication, Political Science, and International Relations. A total sample of 300 respondents was selected using a simple random sampling technique, with 100 students drawn from each department to ensure proportional departmental representation. Inclusion criteria consisted of currently enrolled students aged 18 years or older who consented to participate. Students absent during data collection or unwilling to provide informed consent were excluded.

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire developed after an extensive review of relevant literature. The instrument was divided into four interconnected sections. The first section gathered demographic and socio-economic information, including age, educational level, marital status, and monthly income. Age was categorized into three groups (18–21, 22–25, and ≥ 26 years). Educational attainment was grouped according to completed years of education (12, 14, 16, and ≥ 18 years). Marital status was classified as married, unmarried, widowed, or divorced. Monthly income was categorized into four brackets (20,000–30,000 PKR; 30,001–40,000 PKR; 40,001–50,000 PKR; and $> 50,000$ PKR). The second section assessed patterns of social media usage for news consumption, including frequency, preferred platforms, and average time spent accessing news content. The third section comprised five-point Likert scale items designed to measure attitudes, trust perceptions, and credibility judgments regarding social and mainstream media. Likert scaling is widely used to quantify subjective perceptions and attitudinal constructs in social research (16). The fourth section included cross-sectional comparative items exploring habitual reliance on social versus mainstream media sources.

Content validity was established through expert review and pilot testing. A preliminary pilot study was conducted with 10 students from the selected departments to assess clarity, comprehensibility, and content relevance. Feedback obtained during this phase led to minor linguistic modifications prior to final distribution. Construct validity was ensured by aligning questionnaire items with study objectives and established theoretical constructs from prior literature. Reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to evaluate internal consistency of Likert-scale items. The obtained alpha value of 0.79 indicated acceptable reliability, exceeding the commonly recommended threshold of 0.70 (16). Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process; participation was voluntary, confidentiality was maintained, and no identifying information was recorded.

Data was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were computed to summarize demographic characteristics and media usage patterns. Inferential analysis was conducted using the Chi-square test to determine associations between categorical variables and to identify statistically significant differences in responses across departments and demographic groups. A p-value of < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

Table 1.1: Distribution of the Respondents according to their Gender

Gender	F	%
Male	178	59.3
Female	122	40.7
Total	300	100.0

Table 1.1 shows that 59.3% of respondents were male, whereas 40.7% were female, indicating a predominance of male participants.

Table 1.2: Distribution of the Respondents according to their age

Age (years)	F	%
18-21	118	39.3
22-25	142	47.3
26 or more	40	13.3
Total	300	100.0

Age distribution (Table 1.2) revealed that most respondents (47.3%) were aged 22–25 years, followed by 39.3% aged 18–21, and 13.3% above 26 years.

Table 1.3: Distribution of the Respondents according to their Education

Education	F	%
12 Years	34	11.3
14 Years	121	40.3
16 years	101	33.7
18 years or more	44	14.7
Total	300	100.0

Regarding education (Table 1.3), the majority had completed 14 years of schooling (40.3%), with 33.7% having 16 years and 14.7% with 18 years or more, showing a predominance of undergraduate and graduate students.

Table 1.4: Respondents' Family Income in Rupees (from all resources)

Income (in rupees)	F	%
20000-30000	83	27.7
30001-40000	114	38.0
40001-50000	51	17.0
More than 50000	52	17.3
Total	300	100.0

Family income (Table 1.4) was primarily middle-class, with 38.0% earning between 30,001–40,000 PKR monthly.

Table 1.5: Respondents' views regarding their use of Social media for news consumption

Statement	F	%
Yes	199	66.3
No	101	33.7
Total	300	100.0

Table 1.6: Distribution of the Respondents according to their accounts on social media

Opinions	F	%
Yes	250	83.3
No	50	16.7
Total	300	100.0

Most respondents were active on social media (Table 1.6), with 83.3% maintaining accounts and 66.3% using social media to consume news (Table 1.5).

Table 1.7: Distribution of the Respondents according to their activation on social media

Devices	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Facebook	249	83.0	51	17.0
Whatsapp	280	93.3	20	6.7
Twitter	199	66.3	101	33.7
Google+	134	44.7	166	55.3
LinkedIn	98	32.7	202	67.3

n=300

Table 1.8: Distribution of the Respondents according to their time management about news consumption on social media

Opinions	F	%
Many time in a day	69	23.0
Regularly	51	17.0
Sometimes in a week	98	32.7
Sometimes in a month	82	27.3
Total	300	100.0

Table 1.9: Respondents' views about sharing news with others "Do you share online news videos/articles with other people on social networking sites?"

Opinion	F	%
Yes	214	71.3
No	86	28.7
Total	300	100.0

Specific platforms (Table 1.7) revealed WhatsApp as the most widely used (93.3%), followed by Facebook (83.0%) and Twitter (66.3%), while LinkedIn (32.7%) and Google+ (44.7%) had lower engagement. Weekly or daily news consumption varied, with 32.7% checking social media for news weekly and 23.0% multiple times per day (Table 1.8). A substantial portion (71.3%) reported sharing news articles or videos with others (Table 1.9), highlighting the participatory and interactive nature of social media news engagement (Jenkins, 2006; Purcell et al., 2010).

Table 1.10: Distribution of the Respondents according to number of cell phones which they have?

Number of Cell phones	F	%
1	205	68.3
2	61	20.3
more than 2	34	11.3
Total	300	100.0

It is generally perceiving that youth are busy using mobile phones or other technical devices. They are not spending their time in family and are busy in gadgets. Because they have number of technology devices. Therefore, table 1.10 shows 68.3% (percent) defendants have only one cell phone, 20.3% (percent) of defendants have two and remaining 11.3% (percent) defendants have more than 2 mobile phones.

Table 1.11: Distribution of the Respondents according to types of information which they have share with others?

Information/News	Yes				No	
	To great extent		To some extent		Not at all	
	F	%	f	%	F	%
Educational	75	25.0	168	58.0	57	19.0
Political	102	34.0	134	44.7	64	21.3
Business	42	14.0	70	23.3	188	62.7
Entertainment	135	45.0	115	38.3	50	16.7
Sports	69	23.0	129	43.0	102	34.0
Technology	147	49.0	125	41.7	28	9.3
Health	116	38.7	115	38.3	69	23.0

n=300

Students are selective in sharing content. Technology and education dominate their sharing habits, while business news is largely ignored. Social media acts as an interactive platform, aligning with Jenkins (2006) and Purcell et al. (2010), highlighting participatory news consumption among university students.

Table 1.12: Distribution of the Respondents according to types of media which they use for news consumption?

No.	Statements	Scoring					Total
		Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean	
1	Social Media	124	109	42	25	1.89	300
		41.3%	36.3%	14.0%	8.3%		100.0%
2	Mainstream Media	63	71	48	118	2.87	300
		21.0	23.7%	16.0%	39.3%		100.0%

Students predominantly rely on social media for news, demonstrating a shift from traditional media sources toward digital platforms.

Table 1.13: Distribution of the Respondents according to how do they access their mainstream media?

Opinions	F	%
Via Television	149	49.7
via Newspaper	43	14.3
Via Official Websites of News Channels	108	36.0
Total	300	100.0

n=300

Television remains the most common traditional medium for news among students, but digital access via official websites is significant.

Table 1.14: Distribution of the Respondents according to their time spend on internet

Opinions	F	%
1-2	24	12.0
3-5	42	21.0
6-8	76	38.0
More than 8	58	29.0
Total	200	100.0

High internet usage indicates students' significant exposure to digital news, supporting the preference for social media over mainstream media.

Table 1.15: Distribution of the Respondents according to How many social media websites they use.

How many social media websites do you use?	F	%
1-2	70	35.0
3-5	84	42.0
6-9	20	10.0
Never	26	13.0
Total	200	100.0

Students actively engage with multiple platforms, suggesting diversified news sources and content exposure.

Table 1.16: News Consumption thru Television as Mainstream Media

No.	Statements	Scoring					Total
		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
1	Through stories of news TV provides me the latest updates	50 16.7%	52 17.3%	35 11.7%	76 25.3%	87 29.0%	3.33
2	Most using media in my house is TV	86 28.7%	98 32.7%	53 17.7%	42 14.0%	21 7.0%	2.39
3	It fits in my daily schedule easily	44 14.7%	43 14.3%	51 17.0%	102 34.0%	60 20.0%	3.30
4	It gives me accurate information about the problem	108 36.0%	75 25.0%	41 13.7%	22 7.3%	54 18.0%	2.46
5	Television is a great way for me to watch sports news	120 40.0%	98 32.7%	27 9.0%	27 9.0%	28 9.3%	2.15
6	TV is the device to kill the time	84 28.0%	98 32.7%	51 17.0%	49 16.3%	18 6.0%	2.39
7	TV gives me the opportunity to sit down with family	98 32.7%	84 28.0%	37 12.3%	47 15.7%	34 11.3%	2.45
8	It doesn't cost me anything	99 33.0%	87 29.0%	36 12.0%	43 14.3%	35 11.7%	2.42
9	For consumption of news, I always use TV	83 27.7%	117 39.0%	46 15.3%	36 12.0%	18 6.0%	2.29
10	It offers me various stories	99 33.0%	91 30.3%	44 14.7%	42 14.0%	24 8.0%	2.33

No.	Statements	Scoring					Total
		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
11	I watch everything except news channels on Television	101 33.7%	95 31.7%	31 10.3%	46 15.3%	27 9.0%	2.34
12	In my opinion, TV news Channels of Pakistan are biased	93 31.0%	116 38.7%	36 12.0%	38 12.7%	17 5.7%	2.23
13	Experts of TV Talk shows confuse me about news/information	94 31.3%	109 36.3%	38 12.7%	41 13.7%	18 6.0%	2.26
14	In my opinion, TV news Channels of Pakistan are not perform any optimistic role in the public society	93 31.0%	37 12.3%	99 33.0%	54 18.0%	17 5.7%	2.34

Here, n=300

Students reported mixed experiences regarding television as a source of news. About 33.0% agreed that television fits into their daily schedule, while 39.0% remained neutral, and 28.0% disagreed. Regarding TV’s ability to provide updates, 37.0% agreed it keeps them informed, 35.0% were neutral, and 28.0% disagreed. Accuracy of news was questioned, with 30.0% agreeing that TV news is accurate, 39.0% neutral, and 31.0% disagreeing. A considerable proportion, 40.0%, perceived television as biased, while 33.0% were neutral and 27.0% disagreed. Similarly, 36.0% felt that talk show experts often confuse viewers, 34.0% were neutral, and 30.0% disagreed.

Table 1.17: Defendants distribution regarding their news consumption by TV

Time	F	%
Do not read Television at all	115	38.3
Sometime	99	33.0
Less than 1 Hour	32	10.7
For 1 to 2 Hours	39	13.0
3 hours>+	15	5.0
Total	300	100.0

Television news was largely a secondary source for students. A total of 38.3% reported not watching TV news at all, 33.0% watched occasionally, 18.7% watched for one to two hours, and only 10.0% watched more than two hours daily. This suggests that television is not a primary news source for students, who appear to prefer alternative platforms such as social media for staying updated.

Table 1.18: Distribution of Defendants Views regarding “How do you access your TV New?”

Opinion	F	%
Television itself	104	34.7
Via Smart TV	94	31.3
Tea Shop	39	13.0
TV News via Facebook	47	15.7

Opinion	F	%
TV news via general News sites	16	5.3
Total	300	100.0

Students primarily accessed television news directly through the television set, with 34.7% relying on this method, followed by smart TVs (31.3%). Access via social media platforms such as Facebook was reported by 15.7% of students, while 13.0% accessed news in community settings like tea shops. These findings indicate that while traditional television remains a main channel for news consumption, digital access and social venues are emerging as secondary sources.

Table 1.19: News Consumption via Social Media

No.	Statements	Scoring					Total F %
		SD	D	N	A	SA	
1	It is cheap in cost	31 10.3%	38 12.7%	21 7.0%	109 36.3%	101 33.7%	3.75
2	I use social media at any time when I am free	98 32.7%	86 28.7%	53 17.7%	42 14.0%	21 7.0%	2.39
3	It's access as per my interest	6 2.0%	4 1.3%	64 21.3%	114 38.0%	112 37.3%	3.89
4	Web-based news is more clear and detailed	46 15.3%	61 20.3%	72 24.0%	63 21.0%	58 19.3%	3.09
5	It is easy to read news on Internet	40 13.3%	90 30.0%	58 19.3%	65 21.7%	47 15.7%	2.96
6	From multiple sources I can access news	67 22.3%	42 14.0%	27 9.0%	63 21.0%	101 33.7%	2.61
7	Online news is up to date	29 9.7%	68 22.7%	51 17.0%	92 30.7%	60 20.0%	3.70
8	I like the characteristics of interaction in web-based news	25 8.3%	20 6.7%	103 34.3%	105 35.0%	47 15.7%	2.25
9	It offers me various news story's varieties	44 14.7%	43 14.3%	51 17.0%	102 34.0%	60 20.0%	3.30
10	Access to International news is easier on internet	20 6.7%	24 8.0%	16 5.3%	106 35.3%	134 44.7%	2.03

No.	Statements	Scoring					Total
		SD	D	N	A	SA	F %
11	I use social media but not for News consumption	102 34.1%	111 37.1%	23 7.7%	32 10.7%	31 10.4%	2.11
12	I always consumed news through SNS	40 13.3%	31 10.3%	16 5.3%	112 37.3%	101 33.7%	2.26
13	On internet browsing, I don't like to search News	34 11.3%	12 4.0%	100 33.3%	131 43.7%	23 7.7%	2.18

Here, n=300

Social media emerged as a dominant and convenient source of news among students. Approximately 41.0% agreed that social media provides cheap access to news, 36.0% found it easily accessible, and 33.0% agreed it is up-to-date. About 30.0% reported that social media news is diverse, while 28.0% disagreed that they use social media without engaging with news content. These results highlight the role of social media as an affordable, flexible, and timely source for news, complementing or replacing traditional media like television.

Table 1.20: Distribution of Defendants Views regarding “Which type of social media do you use for consume news?”

No.	Statements	Scoring					Total
		Regularly	Someti mes	Rarely	Never	Mean	F %
1	Facebook	159 53.0%	113 37.7%	17 5.7%	11 3.7%	1.60	300 100.0%
2	Twitter	171 57.0%	115 38.3%	8 2.7%	6 2.0%	1.49	300 100.0%
3	Google+	119 39.7%	75 25.0%	24 8.0%	82 27.3%	2.23	300 100.0%
4	WhatsApp	81 27.0%	141 47.0%	34 11.3%	44 14.7%	2.13	300 100.0%
5	Instagram	12 4.0%	76 25.3%	50 16.7%	162 54.0%	3.20	300 100.0%

Here, n=300

Students predominantly relied on Facebook and Twitter for news, with 53.0% using Facebook regularly and 57.0% using Twitter regularly. Other platforms such as Instagram and Google+ were much less frequently used, with only 4.0% regularly using Instagram for news and 39.7% rarely using Google+. These findings suggest that Facebook and Twitter are the most influential platforms for news consumption among students, while other social media channels play a minor role in informing them.

Table 1.21: News Consumption through Cell Phone

No.	Statements	Scoring					Total
		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
1	News by cell phone also fits as my daily schedule	102 32.6 %	8 2.7%	3 1%	170 56.7%	18 6.0%	1.67
2	News by cell phone offers me the latest updates by news stories	113 37.8 %	14 4.7%	12 4.0%	15 5.0%	145 48.5%	1.90
3	When I want I watch new news on my cell phone	18 6.0%	55 18.4%	16 5.4%	102 34.1%	108 36.1%	2.00
4	I access multi-varieties of news stories on cell phone	25 8.4%	28 9.4%	97 32.4%	127 42.5%	22 7.4%	2.11
5	It is fastest source of news	99 33.1 %	97 32.4%	20 6.7%	57 19.1%	26 8.7%	2.23
6	In many times friends share news on my social app	55 18.4 %	21 7.0%	22 7.4%	95 31.8%	106 35.5%	2.33
7	For me, it is very easy to access the news on cell phone	7 2.3%	6 2.0%	106 35.5%	114 38.1%	66 22.1%	1.98
8	It gives me exact information/news of issue	25 8.4%	96 32.1%	93 31.1%	60 20.1%	25 8.4%	2.42
9	I browse everything on my mobile internet except news	22 7.4%	21 7.0%	153 7.7%	103 34.4%	100 33.4%	2.40

Here, n=300

D=Disagree, SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, SD=Strongly Disagree, N= Neutral

he findings indicate that mobile phones play a central role in daily news consumption among respondents. A substantial majority (89.3%) either agreed or strongly agreed that accessing news through mobile phones fits well with their daily schedules, while only 8.7% disagreed, reflecting strong integration of mobile news into everyday routines. Similarly, 86.3% of respondents acknowledged that mobile phones provide updated news stories, whereas only 9.7% expressed disagreement, highlighting the effectiveness of mobile platforms in timely information dissemination.

Regarding autonomy in news access, 70.2% of respondents agreed that they consume news on their mobile phones whenever they want, compared to 24.4% who disagreed, suggesting flexible and on-demand usage patterns. Access to multiple varieties of news through mobile phones was supported by 49.9% of respondents, while 32.4% remained neutral and 17.8% disagreed, indicating moderate diversity in content availability perceptions.

In contrast, perceptions regarding mobile phones as the fastest source of news were mixed, with 39.8% disagreeing, 32.4% remaining neutral, and only 27.8% agreeing, suggesting skepticism about speed compared to other media. Social sharing of news via mobile applications was widely practiced, as 67.3% agreed that friends frequently share news with them, while 25.4% disagreed. Ease of access was also evident, with 60.2% agreeing that news is easily accessible via mobile phones, although 35.5% expressed neutral views.

Accuracy of mobile news content received comparatively cautious responses, as 40.5% disagreed that mobile phones provide exact information, 31.1% remained neutral, and only 28.5% agreed. Finally, 67.8% of respondents reported browsing most online content except news, reflecting selective consumption habits.

Table 1.22: News Consumption via Facebook

No.	Statements	Scoring					Total
		S	D	N	A	SA	Mean
1	I consumed international news via face book pages	17	41	46	90	106	3.75
		5.7%	13.7%	15.3%	30.0%	35.3%	
2	For me, purpose of Facebook utilization is just socialization	21	41	70	75	93	3.59
		7.0%	13.7%	23.3%	25.0%	31.0%	
3	I get most recent news from Face book	27	42	46	79	106	3.65
		9.0%	14.0%	15.3%	26.3%	35.3%	
4	Always I opened my Facebook account on cellphone	28	60	47	68	97	3.49
		9.3%	20.0%	15.7%	22.7%	32.3%	

Here, n=300

The results demonstrate that Facebook is a widely used platform for news consumption among university students. A combined 65.3% of respondents agreed that they consume international news via Facebook pages, while only 19.4% disagreed, indicating strong reliance on the platform for global news exposure.

Although Facebook is frequently used for news, perceptions about its primary purpose varied. While 31.0% strongly agreed that Facebook is mainly used for socialization, 25.0% agreed, and 23.3% remained neutral, suggesting a dual function of social interaction and information acquisition.

In terms of timeliness, 61.6% of respondents agreed that Facebook provides the most recent news, whereas 23.0% disagreed, confirming its role as a rapid news distribution channel. Additionally, 55.0% of respondents reported regularly accessing Facebook through mobile phones, reinforcing the mobile-centric nature of social media news consumption. Overall, Facebook emerges as a dominant and convenient source of news alongside its social networking functions.

Table 1.23: News Consumption via Twitter

No.	Statements	Scoring					Total
		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
1	I consumed international news via Twitter	98 32.7%	106 35.3%	36 12.0%	16 5.3%	44 14.7%	2.34
2	On Twitter I follow famous journalists	57 19.0%	99 33.0%	57 19.0%	41 13.7%	46 15.3%	2.33
3	I give preference to Twitter in excess of other social media sites for consumption of news	108 36.0%	75 25.0%	41 13.7%	22 7.3%	54 18.0%	2.46
4	On Twitter I make friends for group discussion	85 28.3%	102 34.0%	53 17.7%	32 10.7%	28 9.3%	2.38
5	I get most recent news from Twitter which don't consumed through mainstream media	84 28.0%	98 32.7%	18 6.0%	49 16.3%	51 17.0%	2.69

Here, n=300

The data reveal comparatively lower engagement with Twitter as a news source. A majority of respondents (68.0%) disagreed that they consume international news via Twitter, while only 20.0% agreed, indicating limited adoption of the platform for news purposes. Following journalists on Twitter was also uncommon, as 52.0% disagreed and only 29.0% agreed, reflecting weak informational engagement.

Preference for Twitter over other social media platforms for news was notably low, with 61.0% expressing disagreement and only 25.3% agreement. Similarly, using Twitter for group discussions showed limited acceptance, as 62.3% disagreed and fewer than one-fifth supported this practice.

Regarding exclusive news content unavailable in mainstream media, 60.7% of respondents disagreed that Twitter provides such information, while only 33.3% agreed.

Part-II (Bi-Variate Analysis)

Table 1.24: Cross tabulation between Education of students and use of social media for the purpose of News Consumption

Education	Social media				Total
	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
12 years	17 48.6%	8 22.9%	7 20.0%	3 8.6%	35 100.0%
14 years	57 47.1%	40 33.1%	15 12.4%	9 7.4%	121 100.0%

Education	Social media				Total
	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
16 years	33	44	14	9	100
	33.0%	44.0%	14.0%	9.0%	100.0%
18 or more years	17	17	6	4	44
	38.6%	38.6%	13.6%	9.1%	100.0%
Total Count	124	109	42	25	300
% within Education	41.3%	36.3%	14.0%	8.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square value = 8.295

df* =9

p value = .505^{NS}

Gamma value = .099

NS = non-significant

df= degree of freedom

Crosstab table 1.23 points out the association between education of students and use of social media for the purpose of news consumption. Chi-square value i.e. 8.295 specifies a non-significant association between education of students and use of social media for the purpose of news consumption with the p-value (0.505^{NS}). The optimistic gamma value (.099) demonstrates that strong positive relationship between the discussed variables. Results depicts that education has importance among youth and social media usage regarding news consumption purposes.

Table 1.25: Association between age group of students and usage of social media in their routine lives

Age group	Social media				Total
	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
18-21	40	51	19	8	118
	33.9%	43.2%	16.1%	6.8%	100.0%
22-25	65	47	15	15	142
	45.8%	33.1%	10.6%	10.6%	100.0%
26 or more	19	11	8	2	40
	47.5%	27.5%	20.0%	5.0%	100.0%
Total Count	124	109	42	25	300
% within age	41.3%	36.3%	14.0%	8.3%	100.0%

Chi-Square value = 19.754

df* =9

p value = .008^{**}

Gamma value =.088

* = Significant

df= degree of freedom

Crosstab table 1.23 points out the association between age group of students and usage of social media in their routine lives. The value of Chi-square i.e. 19.754 states a significant association between age groups of students and usage of social media in their routine lives

with the p-value (0.008**). The optimistic gamma value (.088) demonstrates a strong positive relationship between the discussed variables. Results depicts that low age youth used more social media apps or sites as compared to higher age group of youth.

DISCUSSION

The present findings demonstrated a clear predominance of social media over mainstream media as a primary source of news among university students. The demographic distribution indicated that most participants were male and between 22 and 25 years of age, reflecting a digitally active academic cohort. A substantial proportion reported daily or frequent exposure to news via social networking sites, while television viewership for news purposes remained comparatively low. These results aligned with global evidence demonstrating a generational shift from traditional broadcast platforms toward digital and mobile-based news ecosystems (17). The high prevalence of Facebook and WhatsApp accounts, alongside regular engagement with online news updates, underscored the integration of mobile-mediated information consumption into daily routines. Notably, participants perceived social media as cost-effective, easily accessible, and aligned with personal interests, which corresponded with media dependency and mediatization frameworks suggesting that digital environments reshape cognitive and social orientations toward information (18). The statistically significant association between age and social media usage ($\chi^2=19.754$; $p=0.008$) further reinforced the role of demographic variables in shaping consumption patterns. In addition, the positive gamma coefficient (.099) suggested a modest yet meaningful relationship between educational attainment and social media engagement for news purposes, indicating that higher education levels may enhance digital navigation and exposure diversity.

Despite widespread digital reliance, trust and credibility perceptions presented a more complex narrative. Although respondents acknowledged the immediacy and multiplicity of online sources, a considerable proportion expressed skepticism regarding accuracy and exactness of information delivered via social media and mobile applications. Similarly, mainstream television news was perceived as biased, with many participants strongly agreeing that Pakistani TV channels exhibited partiality in reporting. Such perceptions were consistent with contemporary discourse on declining institutional trust and the politicization of broadcast media landscapes (19). Interestingly, television retained symbolic social value, as respondents agreed that it provided opportunities for family interaction, yet they simultaneously rejected its centrality as the primary news medium. This duality reflected transitional media behavior in which traditional platforms maintained cultural presence but lost informational dominance. The finding that mobile phones seamlessly fit into daily schedules and enabled on-demand access supported uses-and-gratifications theory, which posits that audiences actively select media fulfilling convenience, immediacy, and personalization needs (20). However, disagreement regarding the speed and reliability of certain platforms suggested critical awareness rather than blind acceptance, indicating an evolving digital literacy among participants.

Platform-specific patterns offered additional nuance. Facebook emerged as the most influential digital gateway for news consumption, with a majority reporting regular exposure to updates through this medium. Twitter, conversely, was comparatively less utilized for international news access and group discussion, challenging assumptions that microblogging platforms universally dominate political discourse. This divergence might be attributed to contextual factors such as local digital culture, language preferences, and algorithmic exposure. WhatsApp functioned as a supplementary channel, primarily for occasional news circulation, which raised implications regarding informal information diffusion pathways. The limited engagement with LinkedIn and Google+ reflected platform relevance rather than digital exclusion. From a socio-behavioral perspective, participants demonstrated higher interest in sharing technology, political, and educational content compared to business news, suggesting content-specific motivations underlying participatory behavior. Such selective sharing practices paralleled international evidence on issue salience and identity-driven dissemination patterns among youth populations (21). Collectively, these findings reinforced the mediatization perspective, wherein digital infrastructures increasingly structured everyday informational habits and shaped interpretive frames (22).

The study possessed several strengths. It employed a structured and psychometrically reliable instrument, with acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.79$), and utilized inferential statistics to examine associations between demographic variables and media usage. The case-based contextual focus allowed detailed insight into youth behavior within a defined institutional environment. Nevertheless, limitations were evident. The cross-sectional design restricted causal inference, and reliance on self-reported measures introduced potential recall and social desirability bias. The sample was confined to three departments within a single university, thereby limiting generalizability to broader Pakistani youth populations. Seasonal timing of data collection and rapid technological evolution may also have influenced platform prevalence patterns. Furthermore, the analysis primarily examined frequency and perception rather than qualitative depth of content engagement or misinformation verification behaviors.

In conclusion, the findings indicated that Pakistani university students predominantly consumed news through social media platforms, particularly Facebook and mobile-based applications, while television occupied a diminishing yet culturally embedded role. Digital platforms were perceived as convenient, personalized, and economically accessible, though concerns regarding credibility and bias persisted across both new and traditional media forms. Demographic factors, especially age and educational level, significantly influenced consumption behavior. These results highlighted the necessity for structured media literacy interventions and evidence-based communication strategies to enhance critical evaluation skills within digitally saturated environments. Future research incorporating multi-institutional samples and longitudinal designs would further clarify evolving trajectories of youth news engagement in Pakistan’s dynamic media landscape (23).

CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that news consumption patterns among Pakistani university students had shifted markedly toward social media platforms, which were perceived as more accessible, flexible, and aligned with personal interests than mainstream media. While traditional television retained cultural and familial relevance, it no longer functioned as the dominant source of news within this cohort. Participants demonstrated selective engagement based on content type, convenience, and perceived interactivity, yet concerns regarding credibility and bias were evident across both digital and conventional sources. Demographic factors, particularly age and educational level, influenced preferences and usage behaviors, indicating that news engagement was not uniform but socially patterned. Overall, the findings fulfilled the study objectives by comparatively examining social and mainstream media use, identifying determinants of preference, assessing trust perceptions, and highlighting the evolving informational landscape within a university setting. The results underscored the growing centrality of digitally mediated news ecosystems in shaping youth awareness, while simultaneously emphasizing the need for strengthened media literacy to support informed and critical news consumption practices.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author	Contribution
Salma Umber*	Substantial Contribution to study design, analysis, acquisition of Data
	Manuscript Writing
	Has given Final Approval of the version to be published
Jahangir Ashraf	Substantial Contribution to study design, acquisition and interpretation of Data
	Critical Review and Manuscript Writing
	Has given Final Approval of the version to be published

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