Facebook Usage for Religious Motives: Difference in Time Patterns and Demographics

Mudassar Hussain *(Corresponding Author)*
Lecturer Department of Media Studies, University of South Asia, Cantt Campus Lahore. Mudassar.
Email: hussain@usa.edu.pk

Dr. Muhammad Shabbir Sarwar
Assistant Professor at Institute of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab.

ABSTRACT

This study explains how Muslim students use Facebook for religious motives and needs engaging with the religious contents on this social networking site gratifies. Students who access Facebook are selected from the universities in Lahore to participate in an offline survey (n=405). Specifically, the current study contributes to uses and gratifications theory by researching the relationship between Facebook usage and the religious motives. The difference is also explained which time patterns and demographics make in the scores of religious motives for Facebook usage. The small correlation between Facebook usage and religious motives is found. The variables of weekly access to Facebook usage, age of students and level of education have made a difference in the religious gratifications from Facebook use. The small interaction effect is also explored for weekly access to Facebook usage among male and female university students for religious gratifications from this social networking site. Pakistan telecommunication authority should check the religious hate speech on Facebook so the potential of Facebook can be utilized for the tolerant use of Facebook use for religious gratifications. The university students should also use their comments wisely when the religious content on Facebook is in question because this positive behavior will increase the chances of diverse and peaceful Islamic discourse.

Introduction

Social network sites are the web based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, these sites articulate a list of other users with whom they share connection, and view and traverse their lists of connections and those made by others.[1] These social networking sites vary in their structure, access and features. In Pakistan the active social media users in Pakistan were grown by 5.7% till January 2019 and Facebook solely had generated monthly traffic of four hundred and sixty millions.[2] Facebook was first accessible to high school students but the commercial organizations started to take interest in Facebook .This platform is public now. Facebook was found to be the most popular social network among university students in Lahore followed by WhatsApp, the smartphone was found to be the most prominent factor for Facebook usage and these students were found to be using this platform to communicate with friends followed by family.[3] This means that Facebook is widely used for belonging. Considering the rapid adoption of social network sites, it is not surprising that individuals, religious leaders, religious groups and even students have used these networks for spiritual guidance and enlightenment by seeking the faith-based content. The influence of religiousness on social network sites' membership and frequency of use for the emerging adults (between the ages of 18 and 23) was explored and it was found that Catholics and Evangelical protestants were more likely than the "not religious" to be social network sites' members, and more Bible reading was associated with lower levels of social network membership and use. [4] The motivations for Facebook usage have been found to be ministering, spiritual enlightenment, seeking faith-based information and for relaxing entertainment. Ministering is actively reaching out to others by sharing-faith based information, the spiritual enlightenment is to enhance one's

own spirituality by accessing content that enlightens and uplift the user, the faith based information include the inspirational content and the relaxing entertainment motives means to unwind, relax and being entertained.[5]In Pakistan, university students are observed to be using this social networking site not only for the educational purposes but also for the religious gratifications because Pakistan is an Islamic democratic republic with the diverse religious groups. The picture about the individual differences and the social categories for the religious motives for Facebook use is still burred because the results being produced are focusing on the educational, political, social interaction and the overall communication motives for Facebook usage which marginalize the research for the religious motives for Facebook usage in context of Pakistani culture. Therefore, it is aimed to research the associations of Facebook usage with the religious motives. The other aspects which make the study unique are the exploration of the interaction effects of the time patterns and demographics specifically for the religious motives.

Literature Review

Technological Affordances of Facebook

The social network of Facebook in particular and other social networks in general facilitate the online echo and ecology for faith for individuals and groups. In the online space of Facebook and other social networks, users can engage in the reciprocal exchange of information about religious or non-religious topics. It is argued in the previous research that youth were motivated to vast knowledge available and accessible in the social networking sites (SNSs) for their benefits.[6] The top three social networking sites in that research found among Malay adolescents were Facebook, Yahoo and Skype and most of these SNSs were found to be used for social, educational and communication motives followed by religious, entertainment, business and politics. In another research it was proposed a generic model for the association of social demographics, personality traits and motives for Facebook usage with the problematic

Facebook usage and in their descriptive analysis about the motives for Facebook usage they had explored that in Pakistan, university students were using utilizing Facebook for features like chatting, calling, status update, tagging, liking, commenting and sharing. Majority of the university students were found to be using Facebook for the educational and political motives and least mean score was found for the religious motives for Facebook usage.[7] The detailed discussion was being done about the educational and political motives but there was limited discussion about the religious motives for Facebook use.A research in Malaysia has explored the religious motives for Facebook usage among Muslim students and it was found, that the students in Islamic culture, use Facebook for sharing reminder based on Al-Quran (Islamic religious book) and Al-Hadith (sayings of Holy Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him), sharing wisdom from *Hukamah* (religious scholars), sharing *nasheed* (vocal music sung individually accompanied by a single musical instrument like daf); for preaching people to do good things and for sharing notes on religious values[8]. The spiritual, travel, friendship, self-presentation, and status motives are also found to be positively related to intentions to visit pilgrimage destinations and sharing pilgrimage experiences on social networking sites among adults of United States.[9] Christians in United States who had frequently used Facebook for posting, liking, commenting, and sharing faith-based content and who were more religious were more likely to minister to others; the frequent use also predicted seeking religious information; further the affiliation with the likeminded people afforded by Facebook had provides faith-based users with supportive content and communities for obtaining spiritual guidance and being entertained.[10]

Difference in Time Patterns and Demographics for Facebook Use
Youth have been consuming conflicting time for Facebook use. The

duration of having a Facebook account is found to be between one and twelve months among majority of Malay students who had used it either once in a day or twice per day, and fifty one percent had used it between thirty and sixty minutes. [11] In Pakistan fifty one percent university students are found to be using Facebook for less than half an hour.[12] It was also found in the earlier study that students were using Facebook even for less than fifteen minutes. [13] Both these studies have not told about the daily and weekly time patterns for Facebook use for the religious motives. There is conflict in literature for which gender between male or female frequently utilize the Facebook. Another study compared the youth profiles for using the social networking sites and the users were more likely to be found of male gender. [14] In the International Islamic University Malaysia, majority of introvert female students (22 and above) were found to be heavy Facebook users and were highly connected with others and they had mostly used this website, "to preach people to do good things;" [15] The female religiosity and the internet addiction relationship is found to be mediated by psychological escape motives for three religious groups.[16] However, in context of Pakistan, it was found that male university students are using Facebook more than the female students.[17] The time for Facebook use is well-documented however the time for the religious motives is not adequately explained in the literature.

Identification of Gap

The research being reviewed does not rigorously explain the variable of religious motives for Facebook usage in context of Pakistan, therefore, this study fills the gap by explaining the correlation between features of Facebook usage (e.g. like, share, comment) and the religious motives for Facebook usage. Secondly, it is explored the extent to which the daily and weekly time patterns for Facebook use make difference in the scores

of religious motives. Third, it is explained the extent to which the demographics of gender, educational level, social economic status, age and family system make difference in the scores of religious motives for Facebook use. Four, the interaction effects of time patterns and gender is explained for these motives. Fifth, the interaction effect of social economic status and level of education is examined for the selected motives. Sixth, the interaction effect of age and family system is also explored for the religious motives for Facebook use.

Theoretical Framework

The "needs" selected by youth also come from the institutional area of "religion". Gratifications attract and hold audiences to the kinds of media and the types of content which satisfy their social and psychological needs and people bend the media to their needs more readily than the media overpower them.[18] There is a difference in activity and activeness, former refers to more what audience does and latter means what the uses-and-gratifications audience had in mind.[19] Activity on Facebook includes like, share, comment or the status update. The activeness in context of Facebook is the extent to which people use it for the social interaction or the religious motives.The individuals select Facebook or its features in their roles as Muslims in context of Pakistani Culture. The researchers in Pakistan can gain insight into the relationship between the real or perceived attributes of Facebook and the social and psychological functions of Islamic motives which this social networking site serve for university students in Pakistan. Therefore the hypothesis is formulated to research the association of Facebook usage with the religious motives.

H. Facebook usage is likely to be associated with religious motives among youth. The level of activity might vary by time of day and by type of content.[20] In context of Facebook use the religious gratifications of religious content can vary by time. Time is an important factor which can

tell different patterns for religious motives for Facebook usage. The demographics for the religious motives for Facebook usage can also be different therefore research questions are formulated to research the difference in variables. **RQ₁**The extent to which the time patterns (e.g., daily and weekly time for Facebook use) make difference in the scores of religious motives for Facebook use?The time is not the only factor which makes the difference in the scores of religious motives. The demographics can also play a vital role and can reflect the difference. Therefore the research question is formulated.**RQ₂**The extent to which the student demographics (e.g. gender, social economic status, level of education, age and family system) make difference in the scores of religious motives for Facebook use?The time patterns for Facebook use can also interact with the gender to make difference in the scores of religious motives for the Facebook. Therefore the research questions are made to explain these interaction effects.**RQ₃**The extent to which the interaction of daily time for Facebook use and gender make difference in the scores of religious motives for Facebook use?**RQ₄** The extent to which the interaction of weekly time for Facebook use and gender make difference in the scores of religious motives for Facebook use?More research questions are made for exploring the interaction of other demographics. **RQ₅** The extent to which the interaction of social economic status and the level of education make difference for the religious motives for Facebook use? **RQ₆**The extent to which the interaction of age and family system make difference in the scores of religious motives for Facebook usage?

Methodology

The population for the study is university students in Lahore (n = 405). By using the non-probability convenience sampling technique the students are selected from two universities (e.g. University of the Punjab;

University of Central Punjab).The data was collected in class rooms of these educational institutes from the departments of media studies and political sciences after taking prior permission from the institutes. The Facebook usage is conceptualized as the extent to which university students in the selected universities report their use of features of Facebook e.g., status update, like, comment and share. The Facebook usage is operationalized on 4 items, "use 'status update' feature of Facebook;" "use 'like' feature of Facebook;" "use 'comment' feature of Facebook;" and "use 'share' feature of Facebook;", by asking, "How often have you happened to use the following features of Facebook?". The conceptualization and operationalization for the religious motives for Facebook usage are extended from the previous research.[21] The religious motives for Facebook usage are conceptualized as the extent to which university students in Lahore rate their Facebook usage for the sharing: wisdom with Islamic experts, advised contents; religious values; and preaching people good things with the help of messages. Religious motives for Facebook usage are operationalized on 4 items, "to share wisdom with *hokum*/religious scholars;" "to share *nashi do*/advised contents, videos or songs;" "to share notes on religious values like *purdah* or helping others;" and "to preach people to do good things by sending them text messages;", by asking students, "How frequently have you happened to use Facebook for the following religious motives?". The response format for the continuous variables of Facebook usage and the religious motives is 5-point Likert scale ranging, "1 = strongly disagree;" "2 = disagree;" "3 = neutral;" "4 = agree;" and "5 = strongly agree." The time patterns for Facebook usage are conceptualized as the extent to which university students in the selected universities report their daily time in minutes and hours and the frequency of weekly access to Facebook usage. The daily time for Facebook usage is measured on 5

point nominal scale, " 1 = more than three hours;" " 2 = more than two hours;" " 3 = two hours;" " 4 = thirty to sixty minutes;" and " 5 = less than thirty minutes;", buy asking, "How much time in minutes and hours do you happen to use for Facebook on daily basis?". The frequency of weekly access to Facebook is measured on 4-point nominal scale, "1 = almost every day;" "2 = after two days' interval;" "3 = once in a week;" "4 = twice in a week;" by asking, "How often do you happen to use Facebook within a week? "The gender of respondents is conceptualized as how respondents rate their sex either male or female. The gender is measured on 2 point nominal scale, "1 = male;" and "2 = female." The education level is conceptualized as the how respondents rate their current enrollment either in bachelors or master's program at the university level. The educational level is measured on 2 point nominal scale, "1 = BA/BSC;" and "2 = MA/MSc;" by asking, "In which grade are you studying at the moment?" The social economic status is conceptualized as how students from selected universities report the monthly house hold income either by them or other family member income and is measured on 4-point nominal scale, "1 = less than 20, 000;" "2 = between 30, 000 and 50, 000;" "3 = between 50, 000 and 100,000;" "4 = more than 100, 000;" "Following is the monthly house hold income earned either by you or your family member, please encircle the most appropriate option?"

Those who reported their monthly income less than twenty thousand are labeled as low income status students; students who have reported the monthly income between thirty thousand and fifty thousand are interpreted as belonging to middle income class, students who have reported their monthly household income between fifty thousand and hundred thousands are interpreted as students belonging to higher middle income class; students who have reported the monthly household income

more than one hundred thousand are interpreted as high social economic status. Family system is conceptualized as how students from the selected universities report about the joint family system or the nuclear family system. Family system is measured on 2-point nominal scale, "1 = nuclear;" and "2 = join;" by asking "In what type of family system do you live in? Age is conceptualized as how respondents rate their age and is measured on 3-point nominal scale, "1 = 20-22;" "2 = 23-25;" and "3 = 26-28;" by asking, "In which age group do you fall under?". In the previous research, the Cronbach Alpha values for the scale of religious motives for Facebook usage in two different studies are found to be .835[22] and .848[23].

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 21 is used to analyze data. The descriptive statistics like frequency and percentage are used to report the demographics like gender, level of education, family system, age and social economic status and for time patterns. The mean and standard deviation values for the items in the continuous scales are reported along with the reliability of scales. Pearson correlation test is run to see the correlation of Facebook usage with religious motives. Two Way between Groups ANOVAs are run to analyze the difference which the independent variables (e.g. daily time, weekly time, gender, educational level, age, family system and social economic status) make in the scores of dependent variable of religious motives for Facebook usage. The interaction effects of the selected variables are also explained.

Results

This sections first reports results about the demographics of students and time patterns for Facebook usage among them. Second, the mean score, standard deviation of the items in the continuous scales are reported with the reliability of the scales. Third, the hypothesis is addressed. Finally, the research questions are answered.

Table 1. *Demographics of Students and Time Patterns for Facebook usage (n = 405)*

Construct	Variable	Attribute	f	%
Social Demographics	Gender	Male	149	36.8
		Female	256	63.2
	Educational Level	Bachelors	204	50.4
		Master	201	49.6
	Social Economic Status	Low	199	49.1
		Mediocre	93	23.0
		High Mediocre	61	15.1
		High	52	12.8
	Age	20-22	285	70.4
		23-26	76	18.8
		26-28	44	10.9
	Family System	Nuclear	253	62.5
		Joint	152	37.5
Time Patterns for Facebook Usage	Daily time	More than three hours	61	15.1
		More than two hours	76	18.8
		Two hours	26	6.4
		Thirty to sixty minutes	75	18.5
		Less than thirty minutes	167	41.2
	Weekly Time	Almost every day	269	66.4
		After two days' interval	71	17.5
		Once in a week	45	11.1
		Twice in a week	20	4.9

Table 1 tabulates that 63% are students who belong to female gender; 50% are the bachelor students; 49 % have belonged to low social economic status, 70% are between the ages of 20 and 22 years; 63% belong to nuclear family system; majority with 66% have used this social

networking site daily but 41% have used Facebook for less than thirty minutes.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Variables (n = 405)*

Variables	Items	M	SD	α
Facebook Usage	use 'status update' feature of Facebook	3.314	1.179	.731
	use 'like' feature of Facebook	3.324	1.129	
	use 'comment' feature of Facebook	3.388	1.141	
	use 'share' feature of Facebook	3.370	1.154	
Religious Motives	to share wisdom from *Hukama*/religious scholars	3.220	1.083	.786
	to share *Nashido*/advised contents, videos or songs	3.069	1.126	
	to share notes on religious values like purdah or helping others	3.195	1.112	
	to preach people to do good things by sending them text messages	3.022	1.168	

The Cronbach Alpha value of .7 is considered good value for the reliability of a scale. [24] In Table 2, these values are above .7. Comparatively, the scale for the religious motives for Facebook usage (α = .786) has shown better reliability the scale for Facebook usage (α = .731). All the items in these scales have mean score higher than 3. For Facebook usage, the highest means score is for the comment feature (M = 3.88, SD = 1.141). The share feature (M = 3.70, SD = 1.154) high mean score. Other features, like (M = 3.324, SD = 1.129) and status update (M = 3.314, SD = 1.179) also show good scores. For the religious motives for Facebook usage, the highest mean score is for sharing wisdom from *hukama* or religious scholars (M = 3.220, SD = 1.083), then for, sharing notes on religious values like purdah or helping others (M =3.195, SD = 1.112); sharing *nashido* or advised content in the form of contents, videos or songs (M = 3.099, SD = 1.126), and to preach people to do good things by sending them text messages (M = 3.022, SD = 1.168).

Table 3. *Correlation between Facebook Usage and Religious Motives (n = 405)*

	Religious Motives	
	r	p
Facebook Usage	.285[**]	.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To determine the strength of relationship between variables the recommendations[25]are used who interpret the correlations (r) between .10 and .29 as small correlations. There is found a small correlation between the variables of Facebook usage and the gratifications of religious motives from this social networking site (r = .285, n = 405, p <.0005) in the positive direction among university students in Lahore.

Table 4. *Difference in Time Patterns, Demographics for Religious Motives (n = 405)*

Independent Variables	p	η^2
Gender	.347	.002
Weekly access to Facebook usage	.001	.040
Interaction effect of gender and weekly access to Facebook usage	.178	.012
Educational Level	.004	.021
Social Economic Status	.434	.007
Interaction effect of educational level and social economic status	.279	.010
Age	.001	.036
Family system	.675	.000
Interaction effect of age and family system	.009	.023

*dependent variable: religious motives for Facebook use

To interpret the significance value of the main effect of individual variables and the interaction effect of the variables the guidelines[26]are followed who recommend that the difference is significant if the significance value is less than or equal to .05. Table 4 reports that gender, social economic status and the family system do not make any difference for the religious motives for Facebook usage, however, weekly access to Facebook usage, educational level and age do show difference for the religious motives from the website of Facebook. The interaction of gender and weekly access to Facebook usage do not make any difference

for these religious motives. Secondly, the interaction of educational level and social economic status also do not make any difference in the religious motives seeking among students. But the interaction of age and family system do make difference for the religious motives for Facebook usage among selected university students in the educational institutions of Lahore city. To explain the effect size (partial eta squared = η^2) for the difference which the independent variables make for the dependent variable of religious motives , the recommendations[27] are followed who interpret the eta squared value of .01 (1%) as small difference and .06 (6%) as medium level of difference. The main small effects for the difference are found to be for the weekly access to Facebook usage (η^2 = .040) with higher 4%, age of respondents (η^2= .036) with higher percent (3%) and the educational level (η = .021) with 2 %. The small level of interaction effect for difference in religious motives for Facebook usage is found to be for the interaction of age and family system (η^2= .023).

Discussion

The study has contributed to uses and gratifications theory by researching the relationship between religious motives and Facebook usage. The small level of correlation is found between Facebook usage and religious motives among university students in Lahore. The difference in daily and weekly time patterns along with the diverse demographics of gender, educational level, social economic status, age and family system are also explained for the religious motives for Facebook usage. Although there is small correlation between the variables but there is found to be the significant difference in the time patterns and demographics of students for these religious motives gratified through Facebook. Weekly access to Facebook usage makes significant difference for the religious motives for Facebook usage among students.
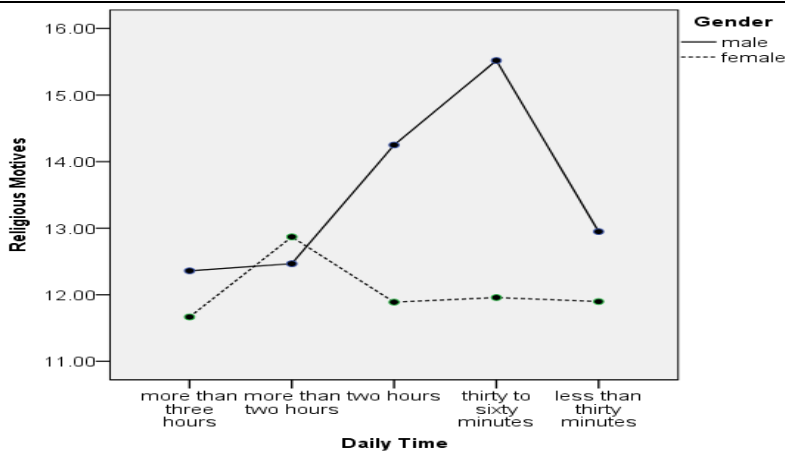
Figure 1. Difference in Mean Scores of Religious Motives for Facebook Usage for Gender and Daily Time

Figure 1 displays that male student are using Facebook for the religious motives more than the female students. The male students have the tendency for using Facebook for the religious motives from between thirty minutes and two hours. This inclination is evident from in the figure.
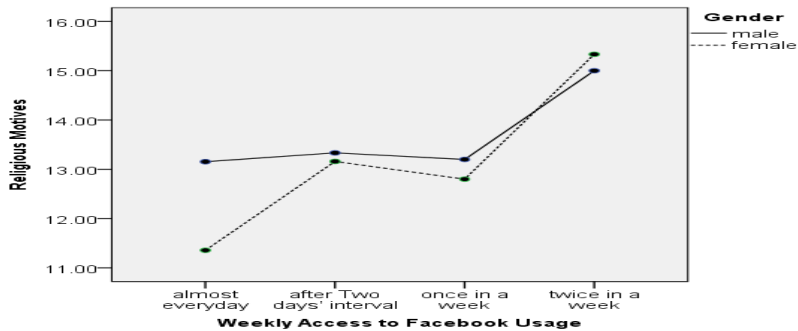

Figure 2. Difference in Scores of Religious Motives for Facebook Usage for Weekly Access and Gender

Figure 2 demonstrates the difference for Facebook usage for the religious gratifications on weekly bases among male and female students who use it daily and those who use it twice in a week. There is high mean score for usage of Facebook for religious gratifications among those who use

this website twice in a week. There is a high mean score for students who use Facebook daily for the religious gratifications when compared with female students. In a particulate week male students are using Facebook more for the religious motives than female students but the difference is not significant. However, the findings are contradictory to results[28] that females in US are more close to God than males. These findings are also contradictory to results that female gender using Facebook more than male gender. [29]

The interaction of age and family also make significant difference with small effect size for the religious motives for Facebook usage among university students in urban Lahore. The main effect is visible for the senior age group.
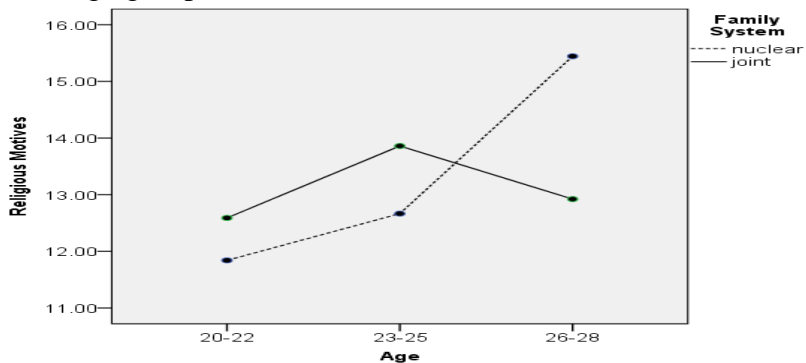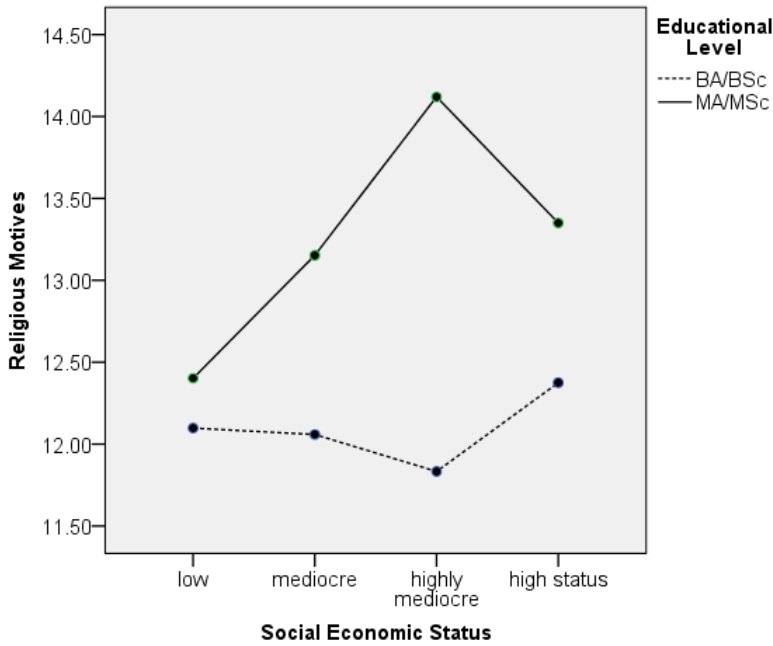

Figure 4. Difference in Scores of Religious Motives for Facebook Usage for Age and Family System

Figure 4. Demonstrates the difference between two age groups (e.g. 20-22 and 26-28). There is a visible increase in Facebook usage for the religious motives among older age group when compared with younger age groups. There is an increase in Facebook usage for religious motives among older students who are between the ages of twenty six and twenty eight years who belong to nuclear families but there is a decline in the Facebook usage for religious motives among these students.

The level of education makes a significant difference with small effect size among students who belong to groups of bachelors and masters.

Figure 3. Difference in Scores of Religious Motives for Facebook Usage for Social Economic Status and Educational Level

Figure 3 demonstrates that senior students at the master level of education are using Facebook more for the religious motives when compared with the bachelor level students. It is also observed an increase in that usage among students of higher social economic status groups.Facebook use is growing in popularity for both religious and non-religious purposes. It is interesting to understand the roles Facebook play in lives of people with Muslim faith. Gratifications of Islamic faith-based content satisfy needs beyond those fulfilled for a normal Facebook user. This study found uses of Facebook for religious gratifications for ministering. The students had used it to share wisdom from religious

scholars; for sharing songs, videos and contents to advise others and for preaching people to do good things. The findings are consistent with the factor of ministering for the religious Facebook motives.[30] Students in Pakistan who are the Facebook users are sharing Islamic contents because they want to inspire others by offering spiritual comfort. At the beginning of the study it was predicted that there will be medium to large levels of correlations between the variables of Facebook usage and the religious motives among university students because Pakistan is an Islamic country and majority of people here adhere to the religion of Islam. But, Facebook is a global medium and the small correlations of religious motives for Facebook usage indicate that university students in Pakistan are using this site for the religious motives but they are also using this site for other motives. It will be interesting to compare the religious motives with the non-religious motives with the help of secularization theory.

Conclusion

Although there are small correlations between the variables of Facebook usage and religious motives for this social networking site among students in Lahore, however, there are main effects found for the difference in religious motives for Facebook usage for the variables of weekly access to Facebook usage, age and the educational level with small effect size. There is also found an interaction effect of weekly access to Facebook usage and gender with small effect size which makes difference in the religious motives for Facebook usage among university students in Lahore in Pakistan. The small correlation of religious motives for Facebook usage is an indicator that students are not only using this social networking site for the religious motives alone. It is also evident that students who use Facebook for religious motives are those who use it

off and on which means that there is a reluctant attitude of students towards the social networking site of Facebook.

Recommendations

There is the presence of hate speech and sectarian content on Facebook which might me the reason for the less use of Facebook for the religious motives among university students in Lahore. It is therefore suggested to check this type of content by Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) so the university students may use the Facebook for religious gratifications. On the other hand students should also check their comments on Facebook especially when they are discussing the religious content.

Limitations

There are chances of conflict because of ethno-religious diversity in Pakistan and the current study has researched the university students in Lahore in powerful paradigm of uses and gratifications, however, the questions should also be addressed related to the mediation role of hate speech on Facebook therefore the following model is suggested.
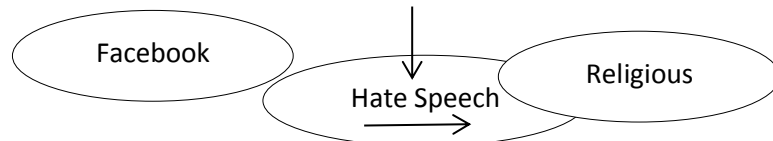
Figure 5. **Facebook Usage as Predictor of Religious Motives Mediated by Hate speech**

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