

# Digital Religion In Pakistan: Role Of SNS In Influencing Religious Practices Of University-Going Females Of Punjab, Pakistan

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## Abstract

*Digital media has therefore become one of the most powerful tools of conveying information and shaping opinions of people in matters that affect their lives, and therefore their thinking and doings. This has a huge effect of religious practices because it has opened up new channels through which people can participate in the production, distribution and use of religious material. This study looks into the topic that is becoming more and more important: what transforms in religious practices of female university students in Punjab, Pakistan because of digital media? It is therefore important to understand and gain insight on how these digital platforms moderate religiosity given the fact that they dominate communication and information dissemination today. As a theoretical framework, the Uses and Gratification Theory which postulates that people consciously use media to get specific needs met including spiritual and religious needs forms the base for the research. This study was conducted using sample of the University of Sargodha in order to analyze the impact of digital media in modern society about religious practices, religious groups, and religious text. Measures for Digital Media Consumption and facets of religious life were analyzed for correlation. Findings suggest some significant relationships and it is evident from the evidence outlined above that young Pakistani women's religious experiences are mediated through digital media. These observations contribute to continuing understanding of the link between religion and digital technology, and stress the importance of understanding how media in digital format contribute to modern religious practices.*

**KEY WORDS:** *University-Going Females, Digital Media, Uses and Gratification, Digital Religion, Females' Media Consumption Patterns.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Looking at the role of technology in the 21st century is in a position to appreciate the fact that technology has revolutionized the manner in which people used information to form beliefs and change their practices. Technology especially in the form of digital media has therefore risen to the challenge of being a potent instrument in the dissemination of information and communal involvement in different areas of practice, the religious for example. Social media networks, forums, and mobile applications have become part of people's daily lives which have changed the way people receive and practice religion (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). This shift to the use of digital media as a source of religious

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content have aroused interest to study the role of this change on personal religiosity and on religious tradition (Cheong, 2020; Hoover & Echchaibi, 2021). In view of the growing trends of blurring physical religious worship through the internet, the effects of new media on religious activities, attitudes and engagements become worthy of study.

From Pakistan, a country with a strong Islamic background, it is especially interesting to examine the role of the digital media in religious life. As the number of Internet users increases due to the popularity of internet services especially among the youths, social media platforms have become central to the delivery of Islamic knowledge or religion (Abbas et al., 2021). This is more so the case for university attending female young adults who amidst academic and social challenges seek for religious purpose and fellowship through social media. Earlier studies have established the impact of the digital media in constructing religion sex and gendered experiences especially among women in conservative societies (Bunt, 2018 Wagner, 2020). Nevertheless, little empirical work has been done to document the role that digital media play in the religious lives of women from Punjab, Pakistan.

The research of the present study will be based on the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) and this study will fill this gap by exploring the correlation between the use of digital media and religious activities of university-going females in Punjab. UGT suggests that people go in search of particular media need, which may be cognitive, affective or social (Katz et al., 1974). According to the analysis of religion, digital media enable people to receive religious education and information, communicating with others and performing religious rituals and activities that meet the spiritual and social needs of people (O'Leary, 2020; Kwon & Campbell, 2018). With the use of UGT in religious practices, this present research aims on understanding how new media leads to the spiritual growth, social connections with religious groups, and interpretation of religious content among females in Punjab.

Therefore, the importance of this research is basically in the sense that it is able to offer layered understanding of how new media technologies continue to define religious activities in a culturally conservative and religiously sensitive area like Punjab. Hence, this study plays a role in filling the research gap in regard to what is known of young females in a South Asian context in the global digital religion (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). Having a purposive sample of 150 females from the University of Sargodha, and through survey mode in combination with correlation analysis in SPSS27, this research provides influential data on the relationship between Digital media and religion. Therefore, the present study does not only shed light on how religious practice is affected by digital platforms, but also offers relevant insights to religious leaders, policy makers and educators for recognizing the nature and characteristics of religion in the new media age. The following inquiries are intended to be addressed by the study:

**RQ 1:** What is the influence of the digital media on personal spiritual growth?

**RQ2:** How does usage of digital media affect a person's engagement in his or her religious group?

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Religious practices are among the many spheres of people's activity that have been radically changed by digital media. In particular, modern technology such as social media, cellphones, the internet and other platforms altered how people consume religious messages. Some of the new forms of spiritual practice and participation are born from the increasing migration of the organized worship and religious group communication to cyberspace (Campbell, 2010; Towner, 2017). It is very easy nowadays to have an access to more and different forms of religion due to the opportunities that online platforms offer for

those who want to practice religion through the Internet, attend religious classes and build online religious communities (Campbell, 2012).

The university going females of the Punjab Pakistan offers a special category who exists on the periphery of tradition and moderation. In particular, this group is of special significance since women are struggling about how to meet cultural/religious obligations and study alongside the programs which are rapidly integrating digital technologies. Although new challenges are set for women regarding the negotiation of traditional practices in the light of new media forms of communication (Gonzales, 2020), these new forms provide new opportunities for constructing religious engagement. It is only when one understands how the digital media contributes to the given patterns of religious experiences it is possible to gain a better understanding of more general processes of religious change in contemporary Pakistan.

### **Digital Media and Religion**

Across the world there has been a go down of traditional religious practices due to the intervention of digital media. There is an increased appearance of internet faith communities, digital religious education and also virtual worship services mainly due to the internet platforms (Campbell, 2010). Research findings show that the internet is becoming more popular as a means of people's religious participation. Some of them are applying it for prayer and religious practices and others mostly searching for religious guidance (Cheong, 2013; Campbell & Tsuria, 2020). In recent years, a shift from concrete to virtual worship can also be observed by the fact that forty per cent of American adults have used the Internet to read a religious text or to participate in religious services (Pew Research Center, 2021).

It has also begun to impact the religious activities in the South Asian context particularly in Pakistan more recently on the usage of the digital media. With increased rates of internet users and smartphone penetration the use of YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook are becoming crucial in religious debates (Ali, 2022). For instance, Khilji and Khan (2021) found out that, Pakistani users rely mainly on Facebook groups and You Tube channels to get information about matters of religion, as more users are embracing social media for religious teachings and fellowship. However, more research finds out that there is a growing tendency that shows how the Pakistani religious practices are influenced by the digital media especially by distinguishing between the male and female experiences.

### **Women and Religion in Digital Spaces**

Women are experiencing more chances to come across with religious information and to perform religious selves via digital media. Bunt (2018) for instance argues that since digitization brought the religious experience to cyberspace, women can perform religious practices that were once forbidden or lacking materials to conduct physically. Radde-Antweiler (2008) notes that women use social media in things such as forming online religious groups, searching for religious guidance and sharing religious experiences. There are notable researches proving the tendency of women's Bible discussion and receiving religious information through electronic devices; this may strengthen or negate the traditional roles of religions (Campbell & Tsuria, 2020).

Pakistani ladies, participating in universities, are the specific category of ladies who face the certain challenges and perspectives while using the religious information in the digital environment. In a way, people can easily turn to digital media to learn and practice religion while at the same time, manage their academic work, culture and religion (Gonzales, 2020). Studying the target population, it is possible to identify that these women engage with faith communities and turn to the Internet to fetch religious resources that could influence their religious experiences and attitudes (Khan, 2019). However, few

studies have quantified the extent of their religious involvement through digital media and to what extent, particularly in Pakistani universities.

### **Digital Media in Religious Practices**

Digital media has thus brought noticeable changes in religious practices and beliefs. The survey also identified a key finding that religious information shared in the digital world influence the religious beliefs, behaviors and community participation of people (Hoover, 2011). For instance, Gelfgren (2012) found out that while internet religious content may create doubt as to doctrinal issues and religious extremism it increases understanding and participation in religious activities. This double effect reveals the exigent call for investigations on the impact that Digital media has on Religion.

Empirical research can be regarded as one of the key sources of data about the impact of digital media on religious practices. For example, Miller in a case study on how social media shapes the religious lives of the young people in the United States observed that indeed digital media has transformed religious participation. Ahmed and Qureshi (2020) also found the similar results in Pakistan stressing for more regional studies in order to better understand those trends and the growing role of digital media in religious practices.

Until this very day, there is so much that has not been said regarding the links that exist or do not exist between digital media and religion. More importantly, there is a dearth of studies on Punjabi women who are university attending and their consumption of religious media content through technology. To understand this demographics' religiosity and their use of Social Digital Media, further research is required and how this demographic is influenced because of their situations (Ali, 2022).

As such, the future research should add to these gaps by focusing on the personal experience of female university students and conducting cohort studies to observe transitions in religiosity. In addition, future research that also incorporates gender, media and religious studies may shed further light on how various and complex relationships between digital media and religious activities can be. From the literature analysis in this paper, it is only clear that digital media has greatly impacted on religious practices not only locally, but also globally, especially South Asia. It has also considered how the digital media influences religious practices with regards to gender, and pointed to a dearth of research about Punjabi women who are university students.

The findings of this evaluation have an implication to the present study focusing on examination of how religious practices are mediated by technology among Punjabi women students attending universities. It must be noted that this study can help to meet some of the existing gaps and develop present knowledge by recognising the body of literature. The literature review also has findings that call for further studies on how gender in the use of the digital media influences religious practices. Other studies should conduct research analysis on these processes in order to develop an adequate understanding of processes regarding the effects of digital media in religious practices in different contexts.

### **3. THEORETICAL APPROACH:**

This study is anchored on the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) which is a common theory in media studies that seeks to ascertain why and how people engage in seeking certain media to fulfil certain needs. Due to the fact that according to UGT consumers play an active role in selecting and engaging with media content, it is relevant in evaluating the impacts of digital media consumption on spiritual growth and social engagement. UGT was postulated by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch and it argues that audience is a rather active one that engages media in order to fulfill specific wants and needs as opposed to simply consuming content. These can be categorized as cognitive, where information is sought, affective, whereby emotions are met, social integrative, where social bonds are

strengthened, personal integrative, where personal identity is bolstered and tension relieving, where there is an escape from actuality (Katz et al., 1974).

Previous works have suggested that through digital media, religious information can be accessed at anytime and anywhere making it a powerful tool in people's spiritual growth. Based on this study, it is assumed that people look for relevant materials in digital media that could help them in the process of their own spiritual enlightenment within the framework of UGT: in sermons, scripture or communication with religious communities. A review of the existing literature suggest that consumption of digital media products can aid the spiritual journey in the following way: Providing easy and tailored information (Hoover, 2011).

It is commonly known that digital media can increase community involvement, and UGT offers a framework to help explain this phenomenon. People can use digital platforms to worship together, converse with those who share their beliefs, and connect with like-minded people. By examining how university-bound females in Punjab use digital media to satisfy their social needs in religious contexts, this study expands on previous research and increases the involvement of these women in religious communities. Empirical research has demonstrated a favorable association between the use of digital media and active engagement in religious communities (Gelfgren, 2012).

The relationship between digital media usage and the two dependent variables—personal spiritual growth and community involvement—is visualized in the conceptual framework for this study. The theoretical underpinning of UGT proposes that people actively use digital media to satisfy their social and spiritual needs, which promotes progress in these domains. The term "**Digital Media Usage**" (**DMU**) describes how and to what extent people use digital platforms (such as social media, websites, and religious apps) to obtain religious information, take part in virtual religious communities, and meet their social and spiritual needs. The term "**Spiritual Growth**" (**SG**) refers to how using digital media influences a person's growth in their faith, comprehension of religious doctrine, and depth of spiritual activities. The term "**Community Involvement**" (**CI**) describes how much people use digital media platforms to facilitate their participation in offline and online religious community activities.

**H1:** Certain digital media consumption behaviors, such joining online religious forums, have a major positive impact on a person's spiritual development.

**H2:** Interactive and community-focused digital media platforms contribute more to improving community involvement than do their non-interactive counterparts.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

Utilizing a cross-sectional survey methodology and a quantitative research design, the study investigates how the use of digital media affects the religious practices of female university students in Punjab, Pakistan. To comprehensively assess the relationship between the use of digital media and its influence on religious practices, a quantitative approach was selected. The study's population consists of female students who are presently enrolled in universities located in Punjab, Pakistan. The study utilized purposive sampling, with a particular emphasis on female students at the University of Sargodha. Given the study's particular focus on religious practices in an academic setting where digital media consumption is common, purposive selection is suitable. 150 people in all were chosen to take the survey. G\*Power analysis was used to estimate this sample size in order to guarantee sufficient power for identifying meaningful associations. The main tool used to gather data was a structured questionnaire. There were sections on factors and demographics on the questionnaire. The answers were tallied using a 5-point Likert scale with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree."

A pilot study with 30 respondents was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine the questions for clarity and relevance. The survey was conducted over a period of four weeks. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 27, a comprehensive statistical software package. Descriptive analysis, reliability analysis and correlation analysis was employed on data. This study adhered to strict ethical standards to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations like, Self-Report Bias and Cross-Sectional Design.

## 5. ANALYSIS

**Table 1:** Reliability of Variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
Digital Media Usage (DMU)	.898	4
Spiritual Growth (SG)	.848	6
Community Involvement (CI)	.736	6

Table 1 displays the Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the study's variables. With four items, Digital Media Usage (DMU) has a high reliability score of .898, indicating a significant level of consistency in the measurement of this variable. With a score of .848 on the six-item Spiritual Growth (SG) assessment, it likewise demonstrates strong dependability. The reliability score of .736 for the six-item measure of community involvement (CI) is considered acceptable. Overall, the findings show that the instruments employed to gauge these factors are trustworthy and consistent.

**Table 2:** Age of Respondents

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18-25 Years	60	40.0%
26-44 Years	76	50.7%
45-59 Years	13	8.7%
60 Years	1	0.7%

The age distribution of the study participants is displayed in Table 2. The largest group of participants, with 50.7% of the total, is the 26-44-year-old demographic. The next age group, which includes 40.0% of the respondents, is 18 to 25 years old. Merely 8.7% of the participants fall into the 45-59 age group, and a mere 0.7% of the respondents are 60 years of age or above. The age distribution of the responses shows a wide range, with a notable representation of younger to middle-aged persons.

**Table 3:** Residence and Exposure of Respondents

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Rural	27	18.0%
Urban	123	82.0%

The distribution of respondents according to exposure and place of residence is displayed in Table 3. 82.0% of them live in cities, which suggests that they are heavily exposed to digital media. On the other hand, 18.0% of the participants are from rural regions. The respondents may be more likely to have increased access to and engagement with digital media as a result of this substantial urban representation, which could have an impact on their community involvement and spiritual development.

**Table 4:** Qualification of Respondents

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
High School	13	8.7%

Bachelor's	68	45.3%
Master's	63	42.0%
Doctorate	3	2.0%
Other	3	2.0%

The respondents' educational backgrounds are shown in Table 4. 45.3% of the group is made up of people with a bachelor's degree, and 42.0% of people with a master's degree. Just 8.7% of the responders are high school graduates, and just 2.0% are doctorate holders. 2.0% more respondents fit into the "Other" category, signifying credentials not included in the list of conventional university degrees. This distribution shows that the sample is well educated, with a sizable majority having graduate degrees.

**Table 5:** Pearson's Correlations between Digital Media Usage and Spiritual Growth

		SG1	SG2	SG3	SG4	SG5	SG6
<b>DMU1</b>	Pearson Correlation	.530**	.198*	.528**	.428**	.523**	.478**
<b>DMU2</b>	Pearson Correlation	.531**	0.116	.514**	.249**	.436**	.431**
<b>DMU3</b>	Pearson Correlation	.424**	.305**	.525**	.426**	.374**	.431**
<b>DMU4</b>	Pearson Correlation	.521**	.183*	.585**	.344**	.494**	.484**

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

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Using Pearson's correlation analysis, Table 5 illustrates the association between several facets of Spiritual Growth (SG) and Digital Media Usage (DMU). The findings show multiple noteworthy positive relationships. There is a significant positive correlation ( $r = .530$ ) between DMU1 and SG1, indicating that increased digital media usage is linked to greater spiritual growth in this domain. Positive correlations of the same magnitude are observed with other dimensions of spiritual development, including SG3 ( $r = .528$ ) and SG5 ( $r = .523$ ). At the 0.01 level, these correlations are statistically significant. DMU2 also exhibits a substantial positive connection with SG1 ( $r = .531$ ), demonstrating that this component of digital media usage is linked to spiritual growth. The link with SG2, on the other hand, is less strong and not statistically significant, indicating considerable variance in the relationship between various facets of spiritual development and digital media use. There is a constant positive association between DMU3 and DMU4 and every facet of spiritual development. DMU4 exhibits the strongest association ( $r = .585$ ) with SG3, but DMU3 has a strong correlation ( $r = .525$ ) with SG3, suggesting that spiritual growth rises with digital media exposure, especially in specific areas.

Overall, the results point to a broad correlation between the use of digital media and spiritual development, but one that has differing degrees of influence on various facets of spiritual life. The majority of these relationships are noteworthy, highlighting the possible impact of digital media on spiritual growth.

**Table 6:** Pearson's Correlations between Digital Media Usage and Community Involvement

	CI1	CI2	CI3	CI4	CI5	CI6
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<b>DMU1</b>	Pearson Correlation	.472**	.575**	-0.112	.432**	.391**	.472**
<b>DMU2</b>	Pearson Correlation	.418**	.492**	-0.15	.439**	.346**	.485**
<b>DMU3</b>	Pearson Correlation	.375**	.362**	-0.029	.251**	.222**	.297**
<b>DMU4</b>	Pearson Correlation	.434**	.506**	-.177*	.398**	.336**	.522**

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

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson's correlation analysis between several characteristics of Community Involvement (CI) and Digital Media Usage (DMU) is shown in Table 6. The findings demonstrate a number of strong positive correlations, suggesting a relationship between some characteristics of digital media use and greater degrees of community involvement. Strong positive correlations between DMU1 and CI2 ( $r = .575$ ,  $p < .01$ ) indicate that increased use of digital media is linked to more community involvement. DMU1 exhibits a positive correlation with CI1 ( $r = .472$ ,  $p < .01$ ), CI4 ( $r = .432$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and CI6 ( $r = .472$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting a continuous association between the use of digital media and different types of community involvement. The negative and non-significant connection with CI3, however, suggests that greater digital media usage may not always be associated with community involvement. With significant positive correlations with CI1 ( $r = .418$ ,  $p < .01$ ), CI2 ( $r = .492$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and CI6 ( $r = .485$ ,  $p < .01$ ), DMU2 exhibits comparable patterns. Similar to DMU1, there appears to be some complexity in the relationship between the use of digital media and community involvement as evidenced by the negative and non-significant correlation with CI3. Additionally, DMU3 and DMU4 show favorable relationships with a number of community involvement-related factors. DMU4 exhibits a robust connection with both CI2 ( $r = .506$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and CI6 ( $r = .522$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting a substantial relationship between these digital media consumption variables and community participation. On the other hand, the negative associations with CI3 imply that a decrease in participation in some community activities may be associated with increased digital media usage.

The table indicates that, overall, there is a positive correlation between digital media usage and community involvement. However, the direction and intensity of this association can differ based on the particular facet of community involvement that is being examined.

## 6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Hence, in light of the findings of this study, the extent of correlation analysis suggests it is not entirely inconceivable for the university going females in Punjab to spiritually develop by capitalizing on the potential of the digital media. The obtained value of Pearson correlation coefficient,  $r$ , is quite vigorous that inclines towards the positive value. Therefore, one can safely argue that higher levels of reported personal spiritual growth are indeed associated with a greater amount of utilization of the digital media, with religion and spirituality as the content. This result aligns with the current literature whereby, digital media has been found to be at play where it supports other forms of media that have the elements of 'spirituality' with religious connotation to help develop the spiritual facets of a person (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). Altogether, these findings are the evidence of one of the fundamental concepts, which was revealed in the course of the research, the integration



of the internet let users think about the religious peculiarities on their own, become spiritual more often, and participate in internet supportive groups.

It is also equally relevant to mention here that while the frequency of using the different types of the digital media is positively correlated with the given effect on community involvement in the context of the study and this correlation is highly significant. This coefficient value indicates moderate relationship meaning that the level of use of digital media for religious purpose is moderate meaning that users that are frequently engaging themselves in online religious groups are also likely to be also active in offline religious groups as well. This means that unlike digital religion is not in a position of just attending religious services in real religious places, it also contributes towards the religious activities by enabling the participants to join other religious activities online, or even in making a post on religious forums (Cheong, 2017). This is especially essential when it comes to religious practice as they are based on communal practice thus enhancing the feelings of affiliation and the social relational aspect.

The correlation analysis enables identification of relationship between use of digital media and religious practice of University going females in Punjab. The study of 'spiritual growth' and 'community involvement' with Digital media supports the UGT hypothesis that indicated reception patterns of media gratifications is positive. According to UGT people consciously turn to media for specific need satisfaction including spiritual need and social need (Katz Blumler and Gurevich 1973). These findings confirm that these needs are met through digital opportunities that provide direct access to religious information and provide an individualized religious practice and virtual religious community.

Hence, the moderate correlation indicates that through digital media intervention, the user has control over the amount of religious information they wish to gain thus improves their spiritual knowledge. Other previous works have also found that religious apps, websites as well as social networks help people to enhance their spiritual practices by constant exposure to religious contents, sermons and discourses (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

From the analysis of data, it was observed that an increase in the usage of digital media is positively and significantly associated with an increase in the involvement level with religious communities among females. This is especially true when considering the university students who have little time to spare for going to religious place and as such can take part in virtual religious discourse, online prayer group or chat rooms, discussion forum among others (Cheong, 2017). According to UGT, social integrative needs can be met and by geographically and temporally connecting females to their religious community through digital media, those needs can be met.

Thus, the study underlines the potential of digital media in the emergence of the new forms of contemporary religions. They give a chance to individual faith development and social religious participation; they reveal the possibilities of applying the traditions of religious experience in the digital environment. The coefficients obtained from the analysis of the media use, spirituality, and community connection indicate that media plays an essential role in the religious development of an individual as well as in the communal religious engagement. It is for this reason that a future study could investigate how the use of digital media impacts religion in the long term with reference to how people are later seen to practice their religion in the physical world.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The research work titled 'The impact of digital media usage on religious practices of university going females in Punjab, Pakistan' throws the light on the impact of DMU on CI. Looking at the correlations presented in Table 6 one might see that raised level of activity with the digital media stands in the relation with increased level of community

activity, which is in line with the social use of the media where the digital technologies are seen as the enablers of social interaction (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). This finding is consistent with earlier studies pointing to communities' engagement and participation through the help of social media (Cheong, 2017). But the rich and diverse differentiation of the interconnection between DMU and CI discovered in the study means that there is more than meets the eye, and for this reason, it may be necessary to zoom in on the dissection of specific connection mechanics.

Let me also state that there exists a positive correlation between the use of digital media and enhanced community participation as indicated in the literature. Social media in particular constitutes the virtual domain where people disseminate information, interact and co-ordinate issues to do with community dealings (Shaw, 2016). This is in conformity with the study being conducted in that higher DMU has been associated with increased community participation. Cheong (2017) highlighted the role of digital media where despite the physical barriers religious groups are able to stay connected as also revealed by various religious groups.

However, the fact that the correlations can be weaker and stronger suggests that not all forms of CI can be benefited from the digital media in equal extent. For instance, they have labelled online environments as being positive for the interactions which are virtual, but not necessarily for face-to-face or deeper types of interactions (Schulz et al., 2020). This aligns well with research revealing that alternative digital communities although provide a platform where the members feel connected they do not possess the level of intimacy and integration seen in face-to-face relationships mostly because the latter involve more dedication and meeting in person (Nolan & Smith, 2019).

Nevertheless, the negative correlation established for some of the types of CI such as CI3 suggest that this may detract and not enhance. This can be attributed to the 'digital paradox' that Campbell and Tsuria (2021) point out which is that while social media increases the number of acquaintances and contacts and inclusion, it reduces the quality of interaction. For example, activities like being-audience, strictly confined to liking, sharing and responding in the form of short comments and posts is different from offline community participation. Such interaction creates what scholars call slacktivism that leads people to believe they are enrolled in a course but will not make effective contributions to the causes of change within their societies.

Secondly, the cultural attitude, and choice of type of use of the digital media also define the level of community participation. The level of participation in the general community of the participants can also prompt the level of participation in the specific social media if they are participating in it for fun other than for learning purposes or for religious activities. It also demonstrates that there is multifaceted nature of the digital media in which user's motives and types of profile led to the outcome of the media consumption.

Therefore, it can be said that the findings of this study were a valuable contribution to the accumulating body of knowledge about the effects of digital media on community engagement, while simultaneously challenging this engagement by asking certain essential questions to the nature and genuineness of such engagement. The positive coefficients with which DMU and CI support the view that web-based technology plays an important role in developing religious groups. Nevertheless, how a mixed picture whereby some types of participation are either negatively or weakly associated with the use of digital media can mean that the approach cannot be equally effective in raising community engagement rates (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

Regarding, this, the study also acknowledges aspect of context and content as significant factors that provide the enabling ground for the relationship between DMU and CI. Various digital areas (e. g., social networks, religious sites, or streaming services) correspond to

different users' needs and activity. This is in line with what has been discovered in other researches showing how diverse social cyber spaces offer different degrees of religiosity or religious practice and fellowship (Cheong, 2017; Schulz et al., 2020).

Another important practical conclusion of the present research is in regard to the need for future research to take into account the qualitative aspects of complex phenomenology. Although numeric relations allow for the general understanding of tendencies, they are equally ineffective in describing the encounters of the communicants in religious contexts using digital platforms. Schulz et al. (2020) argue that qualitative data tell more about how, why and how people narrate, motive and interact in rendering digital religious experiences, enhancing the role of statistical data.

Finally, this study supports the role of media in promoting community involvement with special reference to religious context among university going female students in Punjab. But it also outflows the subtle and phenomenon of this relation which is really full of color. Although DMU is significantly associated with CI for the most parts, there are areas that may also be negatively affected by this involvement, meaning that, depth engagement which is encouraged by systems adoption may not always translate to positive community participation. These findings pave the way for the subsequent research in which one may investigate particular conditions and incentives for the interaction between digital media and community engagement more thoroughly, possibly with the use of qualitative methods to better unveil the interaction mechanisms.

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