Spiral Of Silence Theory Vs. Digital Era: Impact On Youth Of KPK

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Abstract

The spiral of silence theory was proposed at a time when traditional media was dominant. During this era media was in a few powerful hands and minorities were livings in a spiral of silence due to fear of isolation. However, now in the digital era, many new mediums of communication emerged that provide a platform to share opinions with others and break the spiral of silence. Similarly, in Pakistan due to propagandas of rivalry countries, a perception exists that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) are living in a spiral of silence. Therefore, this study test spiral of silence (SOS) theory in the digital era on the youth of KPK. Through purposive sampling, the researcher collected data from five universities of KPK namely, Abdul Wali Khan University, Peshawar University, University of Malakand, University of Swabi, and the Bacha Khan University of Charsadda. After the collection of data, the researchers analyzed the results through descriptive stats and correlation in SPSS. This research found that a positive correlation exists between digital media usage, willingness to speak, and fear of isolation. This study further found that the people of KPK speak out on their general and political issues even if they have to face the consequences.

Keywords: Digital media, fear of isolation, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Social media, Spiral of silence, Willingness to speak

Introduction

Spiral of silence theory has become one of the most researched communication theories that explain public opinion formation. The spiral of silence theory proposed by Elisabeth Neowlle Neumann stated that people speak out on their issues when they are in a large number or they share majority people's opinions in the society (Hayes & Matthes, 2017). While those who think they are in the minority, they remain silent due to fear of isolation, rejection, and separation. This theory assumes that the minority lives in the spiral of silence and censor their opinions unless they receive the support from majority. However, this theory was proposed in 1974, when traditional media was dominant in the form of print media. In the traditional era, media was in few powerful hands and the information was controlled. But, now in the current digital era, several websites and applications allow people to share information with masses. Likewise, now there are several social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter that allow people to create accounts and connect with the world without going into real-life settings.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the third largest province of Pakistan by the size of the population and economy, while it is the smallest province geographically. It is located on the international border with Afghanistan. In Pakistan, it shares a border with Punjab, Balochistan, Gilgit Baltistan, Azad Kashmir, and Islamabad. According to the census, results of 2017, the area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is 74,521 sq. Km. It has a population of 30,523,371, in which 15,467,645 are male, 15, 0548,813, female and 913 are transgender. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the main ethnic group is Pashtun, also known as Pashtuns, 73 percent of the people are Pashtu speakers, and likewise in the Tribal areas which are now part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the number of Pashtu speakers are 99 percent.

However, based on the implications of the Spiral of silence theory, Pakistan is blamed for keeping minorities in the spiral of silence. The foreign rival countries, mainly India and Afghanistan particularly stated about the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on many occasions, that people of KPK are deprived of their basic rights by the government of Pakistan and being a minority ethnic group, they are unable to raise voice for their rights.

But in reality, the government of Pakistan guarantees the freedom of speech to all its people under article 19, and no such discrimination exists in Pakistan. But, due to a lack of English channels and low representation on international forums, Pakistan is unable to portray his messages and counter the prevailing propagandas (Fatiana, Abdul Wahab, Halim, & Communication, 2018). Against its people. Therefore this research may help us to highlight the soft image of Pakistan and counter the prevailing propagandas.

Literature Review

SOS Theory in the Digital Era

The spiral of silence theory was developed in the 1970s when traditional media was dominant. It was in the 1990s when the World Wide Web was discovered, and communications started online (Roncallo-Dow & Scolari, 2016). The mediums of communication shifted from the traditional

form to news forums such as blogs and chat rooms. Now in the digital era, the increasing diversity of media content, selectivity and a large number of social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Journalism, Blogs, interactivity in the social media and the potential for privacy have posed various challenges to the theoretical assumptions of the spiral of silence. There was a time when communication was one way, from the owner of newspapers to the general public. And even if the people tried to speak out through the editorial, their responses were censored, discarded if against the policy of the organization and its publication was not in real-time. But nowadays studies found that speaking is different from posting. One who cannot speak in public on any issue or those who were once not in a position to initiate a discussion on a mass level can easily speak on the online media by posting without any fear. Therefore, in the digital era, the assumptions of the spiral of silence are challenged (Gearhart & Zhang, 2015).

Implications of SOS in the Digital Era

A research conducted by (Hayes, 2007) in the traditional era people avoid to speak out due to fear but now people post anonymously. Or now the people communicate on a selective platform where they receive support through comments, likes, and shares. Likewise, people differ in expressing their opinions in hostile and normal social situations. A survey found that people's willingness to express their opinion is affected by the fear of isolation. However, the active publics are more likely to express their opinion while the non-active do not express their opinions freely (Lee, Oshita, Oh, & Hove, 2014).

However, (Pornsakulvanich, 2006), contradicted the generalization of the Spiral of silence theory and highlighted that people have different traits, perceptions, and opinions. Therefore, they respond differently to different political issues. But opposite to this study (Chan & Society, 2018) compared the results of willingness to speak on political issues among masses on social media website Facebook and face to face conversation. From where researchers concluded that up to some extent the spiral of silence theory is still applicable in the digital era. Likewise, (Chang & Kim, 2019) highlighted that spiral of silence theory is not applicable in every case. People will more openly speak when their opinion is less contradictory and they saw less opposition from the others or when they have strong situational motivation while people avoid speaking if there is no motive behind it. So, not the spiral of silence theory or the fear of isolation but the circumstances made people speak out or live in the spiral of silence.

Perceived support and willingness to speak

An internet survey conducted on the Israeli agenda suggested that perceived support for one's opinion by the majority have a positive and significant effect on the willingness to express an opinion in the digital sphere. However, perceived support had less support in the online setting than the face to face conversation, which means that perceived support from the majority challenges the postulates of the spiral of silence theory in the real world or face to face conversation(Soffer, Gordoni, & society, 2018). Research also found that willingness to speak increases due to perceived social support online. Studying the role of the Facebook website in

breaking the spiral of silence found that when someone post news, or shares opinion, the other people comment below it and indirectly support their stance. (Chun & Lee, 2017). Likewise, in another research, data collected through surveys from 10,000 people highlighted that respondents who were most likely to perceive he majority agreed with their opinion would be more likely to speak out than those who perceive less support from the majority. (Dalisay, 2012). The willingness to speak by a person in a community also depends on his self-censorship. Through experimental study (Hayes, Glynn, & Shanahan, 2005) Highlighted that in some situations the topic is interesting, or a situation in which one feels comfortable in speaking on that issue, but still does not speak or self-sensor their expressions and views not due to fear of isolation but there may be some other reasons, for example, a person is conservative or one who holds information and does not share it with others.

Spiral of silence in the present world

Studying the implications of the spiral of silence theory in the digital era, (Hayes & Matthes, 2017) stated that the implications of the spiral of silence theory are questionable after the emergence of new media. Now a day, the new media dominates the channels of communication, new media is more friendly and interactive for the respondents to share their opinions. Likewise, (Roessing, 2017) highlighted that spiral of silence was applicable when there were few channels and users had no other choice to express an opinion, participate, and respond to it. But now in the digital era, there are multiple channels, websites, pages, social media in the form of Twitter, Facebook, and blogs, etc. for sharing an opinion.

Likewise, (Schulz & Roessler, 2012) also questioned the implications of the spiral of silence theory in the digital era and highlighted that due to computer-mediated communication, the assumptions of the spiral of silence theory are no more valid and applicable, However, digital media is not always successful in breaking the spiral of silence. As (Gearhart & Zhang, 2018) through a survey of Facebook highlighted that the spiral of silence is also influenced by the nature of the issue. This study found that for example, on the issue of abortions people feel strong and share opinions while on homosexuality or gay marriages the views of people seem divided and people do not speak openly on it.

A study conducted by (Singer, 2018), concluded that in today's world, the old theories are poorly suited to the contemporary world of journalism. However, (Soffer & Gordoni, 2018) through a survey found that in the new era of online media, still the spiral of silence theory exists and it has effects on the online comments, posts, and sharing information.

SOS in Pakistan

In KPK many incidents occurred which indicate the existence of a spiral of silence theory, as in the incident of Mashal khan, a 23-year-old boy of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. On 13 April 2013, news spread in Abdul Wali Khan University that Mashal khan a student of journalism department had posted blasphemous material on Facebook. Hundreds of students and some

university staff members march towards his hostel room. They drag him out beat him, stamped him, shot him, and let him bleed to death. (Noor, 2016) The mob not satisfied with his killing further attacked his body, hit him with a belt, pelt his body with stones, and burnt it as well. During the investigation, no such evidence was found against Mashal Khan and his killing was ruled to have been premeditated murder (Hyat, 2018). In recent years Christian communities have been targeted with violence, including Salman Taseer, governor of Punjab who was shot by his bodyguard or Kohistan video scandal in 2011, where four girls and a boy were killed after a video of their private celebration leaked on social media (Shahid, Kauser, & Zulqarnain, 2011). Likewise in July 2016, a social media celebrity Qandeel Baloch was killed by his brother in Multan, Pakistan (Hussain & Umer, 2019).

Objectives

1. To measure the relationship between digital media usage and fear of isolation.
2. To measure the relationship between digital media usage and willingness to speak.
3. To measure the relationship between digital media usage for political issues and fear of isolation.
4. To measure the relationship between digital media usage for political issues and willingness to speak.
5. To measure the relationship between digital media usage for general issues and fear of isolation.
6. To measure the relationship between digital media usage for general issues and willingness to speak.

Hypothesis

H1. There is a significant relationship between digital media usage and fear of isolation.
H2. There is a significant relationship between digital media usage and willingness to speak.
H3. There is a significant relationship between digital media usage for political issues and fear of isolation.
H4. There is a significant relationship between digital media usage for political issues and willingness to speak.
H5. There is a significant relationship between digital media usage for general issues and fear of isolation
H6. There is a significant relationship between digital media usage for general issues and willingness to speak.

Theoretical Framework

This study employed the spiral of silence theory proposed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1970 (Matthes, Rios Morrison, & Schemer, 2010). It aims to understand that people become silent due to fear of isolation or separation in society. If people perceive that majority of the people share the same opinion to them, they may be willing to speak out on that particular issue or problem but if

they perceive that their opinion holds opposite views to the majority or dominant group, in that case, they will keep silent and do not share their opinion. Noelle-Neumann also stated that people do not speak on controversial topics and cease their views because of the fear of isolation. While they speak when they strongly believe that their opinions are dominant or popular and they will not be isolated (Malaspina, 2014). People remain in a spiral of silence when they are not supported by the dominant majority and they remain silent due to fear of rejection or fear of separation.

Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory is based on the following assumptions:

1. Public opinion in mass media gives more attention to those who are in the majority in society and give very little coverage to those who are in minorities.
2. People have a fear of rejection and isolation to express their opinion in society.
3. Being the part of Minority, people lose their confidence to express their views because of the fear of isolation or they feel unsupported by the dominant majority groups in the society.
4. Sometimes the minorities withdraw their stated opinions from public debates to secure themselves from those who are powerful or share the majority views.
5. Maximum numbers or majority get more vocal space in the society while lesser numbers get less vocal space in the society.

Based on the implications of the spiral of silence theory, it is assumed that people who are in minority they censor their opinions due to fear of isolation. A similar perception exists in Pakistan regarding the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Due to internal and external propagandas, it is believed that minorities are not given equal rights, their views are censored and they are discriminated in all sorts of life in Pakistan. Based on the postulates of the spiral of silence theory researcher applied the spiral of silence theory as a theoretical framework to highlight the role of digital mediums such as Facebook and Twitter in breaking the spiral of silence in the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The spiral of silence theory proposed that those who are in minority, they do not speak on their issues and they hold or withdraw their opinion to avoid rejection.

Methodology

The population of this study was the students of KPK, who were 19 to 30 years of age. The researcher selects five districts of KPK through stratified sampling and then chose one university from each district. The selected universities were Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Peshawar University, University of Malakand, University of Swabi, and Bacha Khan University Charsadda.

The researcher further chose the social sciences department among the selected universities. Keeping in mind the facts of technological barriers in KPK, the researcher decided to approach 500 respondents from each university. The researcher sent a questionnaire to a total of 2500 respondents through emails and WhatsApp. The process of data collection was completed in one month and with an interval of 10 days, two further reminders were sent to the respondents to complete the survey. To avoid the repetition and mall practices researcher limited the number of responses from each respondent to one. The response rate was very low i.e. around 15-20%,

therefore, on sending a questionnaire to more than 2500 respondents only 400 respondents filled the online survey.

The questionnaire was divided into six parts. The first part aimed to determine the demographic background of the KPK youth. The second part highlighted digital media usage in the form of Facebook and Twitter in KPK. The third part studied the usage of digital media for political purposes such as social justice, gender equality, law and order situation, and political stability. The fourth part of the questionnaire highlights digital media usage for general issues such as health issues, education, and the economy. The fifth part studied the fear of isolation in the youth of KPK while the last and sixth part studied the relation between digital media usage and willingness to speak.

Descriptive statistics are computed through SPSS software for the demographics profile of the respondents and the frequency of using digital media. While the relationship between digital media usage and fear of isolation, digital media usage and willingness to speak, digital media usage for political issues and fear of isolation, digital media usage for political issues and willingness to speak, digital media usage for general issues and fear of isolation, digital media usage for general issues and willingness to speak is measured by correlations test in SPSS.

Results

Demographics and Digital Media Use

The survey was sent to total (N=2500) respondents and there were total (N=400) responses from the respondents. The response rate of the survey was 16%. After deleting the incomplete responses and the ones from those whose ages were from 19-30 were valid and used for further analysis.

Table.1 Demographics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.Gender of the respondents		
Male	298	75.7
Female	91	24.3
2.Age the respondents		
19-22	158	42.1
23-26	121	32.3
27-30	96	25.6
3.Locale of the respondents		
Rural	195	52.0
Urban	180	48.0
4.Qualification of the respondents		

Bachelor	239	63.7
Master	108	28.8
MPhil	28	7.5

In survey results, the frequency of male respondents is higher than female respondents. As the table shows 75.7 percent of the respondents (N=298) were male while 24.3 percent (N=91) were female. The reason behind this difference is the dominancy of males in the traditional society of KPK. According to stats of the labor force survey 2018-2019, the male literacy rate of KPK is 53 percent and the gender-based ratio is 71 percent and 35 percent for men and women respectively (Riaz & Nadeem, 2019). while women's participation is even lower in the higher educational institutions (Mustafa, 2012). Secondly, in KPK, women are not allowed to share emails and Phone numbers with male members. In some cases even if they receive the questionnaire, they avoid providing data due to traditional norms and values. Therefore, the researcher receives a low response from the female respondents.

The data was collected from the respondents with an age range of 19-30 years. The table shows that the age of (N=158) respondents are between 19-22 years, (N=121) respondents are between 23-26 years, and (N=96) respondents are between 27-30 years. Similarly, data is collected from the respondents of both urban and rural areas. The table indicated that 52 percent of the respondents (N=195) we surveyed, belonged to the rural population while 48 percent (N=180) were living in urban areas. The respondents were also inquired about their education. The table shows that 63.7 percent (N=239) of the respondents hold Bachelor's degrees, 28.8 percent (N=108) have 16 years of education while only 7.5 percent (N=28) has 18 years of education.

Likewise, the respondents were asked about digital media usage. They were asked about the medium they are using for accessing digital media, frequency of accessing new media channels, the amount of time spent on different mediums, and the purpose of using the new media.

Table.2 Digital Media Usage in KPK

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1.Channel of accessing media		
Facebook	195	52.0
Twitter	16	4.3
Both Facebook and Twitter	164	43.7
2. Frequency of access		
Several times a day	277	73.9
about once a day	47	12.5
every few days	15	4.0
Once a week	19	5.1

Do not check at all	17	4.5
3. Daily time spent on Twitter?		
1 to 2 hours	88	49.3
3 to 4 hours	14	7.5
4 to 6 hours	42	23.5
More than 6 hours	36	19.7
4. Daily time spend on Facebook?		
1 to 2 hours	202	56.3
3 to 4 hours	85	23.5
4 to 6 hours	36	10.1
More than 6 hours	36	10.1
5. Purpose of using new media		
Highlighting political issues in KPK	113	30.1
Academics	106	28.3
Making new friends	11	2.9
Timepass	145	38.7

In KPK, Facebook is the most popular new media website among the youth of KPK. The majority of the respondents i.e. 52.0 percent (N=195) access digital media through Facebook while only 4.3 percent (N=16) use Twitter. And 43.7 percent (N=164) of the respondents are using both Twitter and Facebook. Majority of the respondents 73.9 (N=277) percent are those who access digital media several times a day, 12.5 (N=47) percent access new media once a day, 4.0 (N=15) percent access new media every few days, 5.1 (N=19) percent check their account once a week while only 4.5 (N=17) percent were those who are not accessing their new media accounts regularly.

The table also shows that majority of the respondents i.e. 49.3 (N=88) percent spend one to two hours per day on using Twitter, 7.5 (N=14) percent spend three to four hours, 23.5 percent (N=42) spend four to six hours and 19.7 (N=36) percent spend more than 6 hours per day on Twitter. As compared to Twitter, the frequency of using Facebook is even higher in the youth of KPK. The table highlight that 56.3 (N=202) percent of the respondents spend one to two hours on using Facebook, 23.5 (N=85) percent spend three to four hours, 10.1 (N=36) percent spend four to six hours and 10.1 (N=36) percent spend more than six hours per day on using Facebook. As explained by (Busselle & Van den Bulck, 2019) cultivation theory proposed by George Gerbner investigated that, those who watch media for more than 4 hours, they are heavy viewers and media effects are powerfully on them. Therefore, according to the results of the survey 50.3 percent of

the respondents in KPK, are heavy viewers of Twitters and 43.7 percent of respondents are heavy Facebook users.

The table finally highlights the purpose of using digital media in KPK. The table shows that 30.1 (N=113) percent of the respondents are using new media for highlighting political issues in KPK, 28.3 percent (N=106) are using new media for academic purposes, 2.9 (N=11) percent are using it for finding new friends, while 38.7 (N=145) percent are using it for spending time.

Table.3 Cross Tabulation (Frequency and Purpose of Media Use)

	Most of the time Digital media is used for				
	Highlighting political issues in KPK	Academics	Making new friends	Time pass	Total
1.Several times a day	93	62	8	114	277
2.About once a day	8	21	1	17	47
3.Every few days	5	8	1	1	15
4.Once a week	6	7	0	6	19
5.Do not check at all	1	8	1	7	17
Total	113	106	11	145	375

Table 4.3 highlights that the majority of the respondents, 73.8 percent (N=277) access digital media several times a day, and they use it for multiple purposes. Most respondents in KPK, use digital media for spending time (N=114), similarly, (N= 93) respondents stated that their priority is highlighting political issues in KPK, while (N=62) respondents are using digital media for academic purposes and (N= 8) respondents stated that they are using digital media for finding new friends. Similarly, total (N=145) respondents in KPK, use digital media for time pass, (N=113) respondents use digital media for highlighting political issues, (N=106) respondents are using it for academics and only (N=11) respondents are using digital media for making new friends.

Table.4 Cross Tabulation (Medium and Purpose of Media Use)

Purpose of use	Medium of use			Total
	Facebook	Twitter	Both Facebook and Twitter	
1.Political issues	48	5	60	113
2.Academics	50	9	47	106
3.Making new friends	6	0	5	11

4.Time pass	91	2	52	145
Total	195	16	164	375

Table 4.4 shows that majority of the respondents, 30.1 percent (N=113) are using digital media for highlighting political issues, 28.2 percent (N=106) are using digital media for academics, 38.6 percent (N=145) are using digital media for time pass while only 2.9 percent are using digital media for making new friends. This table also shows that in KPK, the most popular social media platform is Facebook and it is used for the political issue, academics, and time pass. Similarly, the table also predicts that when the respondents use multiple platforms of new media, their willingness to speak on political issues increases.

Analysis

Correlation

The researchers computed all the variables and applied correlation test to check the correlation between all variables. The correlation is computed between digital media usage for political issues, digital media usage for general issues, fear of isolation, and willingness to speak in KPK. The results of the correlation are presented in the table below.

Table.5 Correlation

Variable	1	2	3	4
1.Digital media usage for political purposes	1	.657**	.506**	.322**
2.Digital media usage for general issues		1	.408**	.264**
3. Fear of isolation			1	.638**
4. willingness to speak				1

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

The digital media usage for political issues is measured by asking questions such as social security systems, political issues, social justice, environmental protection, gender equality, poverty, law and order situation, political stability, and politics. The digital media usage for general issues is measured by asking questions on health-related issues, employment issues, educational disparities, economic issues, and minority problems. Similarly, fear of isolation is measured by asking questions about fear of isolation on digital media when the respondents use it for controversial political issues. While willingness to speak is measured by asking questions regarding sharing an opinion on digital media. After computing the values of all variables, their relationship is measured through Bivariate, Pearson correlation test with fear of isolation and willingness to speak.

The table shows a positive correlation between digital media usage for political purposes and digital media usage for general issues, (r = .657, p< .01), likewise, a correlation between digital

media usage for political purposes and fear of isolation is (r = .506, p< .01), while a correlation between digital media usage for political purposes and willingness to speak is r = .322, p< .01). Similarly, the correlation between digital media usage for general issues and fear of isolation is (r = .408, p< .01) and digital media usage for general issues and willingness to speak is (r = .264, p< .01). Finally, the correlation value between fear of isolation and willingness to speak is calculated which is (r = .638, p< .01).

Discussion

Due to the dominancy of foreign media and propagandas of rivalry countries, a perception exists that Pakistan is not a suitable country for the minorities. Due to a lack of English channels and less representation on the international forums Pakistan is unable to counter this propaganda. In reality, Pakistan is a democratic country and the constitution of Pakistan guarantees freedoms of speech to every citizen of Pakistan and no such discrimination exists.

In this study, researchers collected data from (N=375) respondents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and found that male and female youth, living both in urban and rural areas of KPK are using digital media in the form of Facebook and Twitter. The majority of the respondents are heavy viewers of the media (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2016) and they access their social media account several times a day. In table 4.2 this study also highlights that besides entertainment, time pass and finding friends, most respondents are using digital media for academics and highlighting political issues in KPK. Through cross tabulation, this research also found that the frequency of accessing digital media is correlated with the purpose of its usage. When the frequency of accessing media increases, its usage for political usage also increases.

In the digital era, the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are using digital media through many platforms in which the most popular and dominant are Facebook and Twitter. This research contradicted the previous studies of (Olson & LaPoe, 2018), (Gearhart & Zhang, 2014) that there is a significant relation between digital media usage and fear of isolation.

This research found that there is a significant relationship between digital media usage and willingness to speak. As found by (Liu et al., 2011), willingness to speak on the digital media increases due to the perception of anonymity, people feel safe and secure when they post or share opinion online, particularly when the issue is controversial. Instead of sharing the opinion face to face, the digital media makes it easy to avoid consequences from the opposition. Similarly, (Gearhart & Zhang, 2018) highlighted that people are using digital media for issues, which they were not able to highlight in the traditional era. Due to the usage of digital media, the willingness to speak increases, and now people speak out on education, employment, gender discrimination, and law and order situation without any fear in KPK.

This research found a significant relation between digital media usage and fear of isolation. Those people who use digital media for political issues such as social justice, security, stability, and highlighting other political issues, they feel isolated and they do not share their opinion with

due to fear of isolation. As found by other researchers such as (Hayes, 2007) and (Lee et al., 2014) people's willingness to speak on political issues is affected by fear of isolation.

Interestingly, this research also finds a significant relation of r = .322, p< .01), between digital media usage and willingness to speak. Previous literature supports the assumption that willingness to speak on the digital media increases due to online support and anonymity in the online world (Chang & Kim, 2019).

Previous literature supported that people who use digital media for general issues they did not face the fear of isolation. But unlike previous studies, this research found a significant relation of (r = .408, p< .01) between digital media usage for general issues and fear of isolation in KPK. This research found that when the usage of digital media usage for general issues such as employment, women issues, health, and education in the youth of KPK increase, the fear of isolation also increase. In other words, the people of KPK feel insecure and isolated when they share opinions on the general issues they are facing.

This research found a significant correlation of (r = .264, p< .01) between digital media usage for general issues and willingness to speak in the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This research found that the greater the use of digital media for general issues, the greater will be the willingness to speak. As found by (Goolsby & Technology, 2010), digital media is used for environmental protection and cleaning the earth.

Conclusion

The previous literature on the topic highlighted that the spiral of silence theory was applicable in the traditional era as the minorities were living in a spiral of silence due to the fear of isolation. But now with the passage of time and advancement in technologies people use many platforms such as Facebook and Twitter for communication and sharing information. In the available literature, the researchers found three variants of SOS theory. The researchers found that the spiral of silence exists due to fear of isolation and rejection. Number two the spiral of silence theory does not exist in the digital era, as digital media provide anonymity and security when one wants to share opinion publically. Similarly, the third variant of SOS explains that the nature of the issue decides the willingness to speak. If an issue is controversial e.g. Guy problem, drugs, or abortion then one may not be willing to speak out, but if the issue is not controversial e.g. health, education, and job opportunities then people will actively speak out publically. However, this research found a unique dimension of the spiral of silence theory. Through, testing the SOS theory on the youth of KPK, this research found a positive correlation between digital media usage, fear of isolation, and willingness to speak. The youth of KPK are facing the fear of isolation and rejection in the form of punishments, censorship, and fines however still they speak out on general and politically controversial issues. They did not withdraw their stated opinion and highlight their problems which sometimes create problems for them in the form of punishments and threats to their lives such as the case of Mashal Khan, Qandeel Baloch, and Malala Yousafzai.

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