

# The Role of Motivational Factors in Driving Social Media Engagement for Government Campaigns

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## Abstract

*This study examines the motivational factors that influence citizen engagement with government social media campaigns, focusing on a sample of 370 teachers in Lahore, Pakistan. Employing a quantitative research design and using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire, the research explores how intrinsic motivations (e.g., information seeking, civic responsibility, and altruism), extrinsic motivations (e.g., recognition and incentives), and socio-demographic variables (e.g., age, education, and political orientation) shape patterns of online interaction with official government content. The results reveal that information seeking, trust in government communication, and content interactivity are the most significant predictors of engagement, while privacy concerns and age-related differences act as barriers. Correlation and regression analyses further highlight strong relationships between civic motivations and social media behavior, underscoring the importance of designing citizen-centric, culturally relevant, and responsive digital campaigns. The findings contribute to the literature on digital governance and offer practical insights for public institutions aiming to enhance civic participation through social media in developing contexts.*

**Keywords:** Social media engagement, government campaigns, motivation, digital governance, civic participation

## Introduction

The proliferation of social media has transformed the communication landscape, enabling instantaneous, two-way interaction between institutions and the public. Governments, in particular, have increasingly adopted social media as a strategic tool to disseminate information, promote policy initiatives, and engage citizens in governance processes (Mergel, 2013; Bonsón et al., 2015). As traditional one-way modes of communication such as television and newspapers decline in reach and influence, platforms like Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and YouTube have emerged as dominant channels through which governments aim to build participatory relationships with citizens (Khan et al., 2014; Criado & Rojas-Martín, 2021). However, the success of these digital government campaigns depends mainly on the level and quality of public engagement, which is, in turn, influenced by a complex web of motivational factors.

Public engagement on social media is not simply a function of visibility or accessibility; it is driven by users' motivations to interact with, share, and respond to content. Engagement can take the form of likes, comments, shares, reposts, or more nuanced acts like generating supportive content or organizing around public causes (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012; Liu & Horsley, 2007). These behaviors are underpinned by both intrinsic motivations (such as civic responsibility or information-seeking) and extrinsic ones (such as gaining recognition or incentives). According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973), individuals engage with media platforms to fulfill specific needs such as acquiring information, forming personal identity, integration, and social interaction. Applying this lens to digital government campaigns helps explain why citizens engage with certain messages while ignoring others. Information-seeking remains one of the most dominant motivations for engaging with government social media content (Luo et al., 2021).

Citizens rely on official accounts for timely and accurate updates, especially during emergencies, public health crises, or policy announcements (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2014). Beyond utilitarian needs, individuals may also be driven by psychological factors such as a sense of political efficacy, the belief that one's engagement contributes to civic change, or even identity affirmation (Boulianne, 2015; Park et al., 2009). In particular, studies have found that when users perceive government content as transparent, trustworthy, and interactive, their levels of online participation increase significantly (Lee & Kwak, 2012;

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Zavattaro et al., 2015). In addition to cognitive and affective motivations, there are also social and moral incentives for engaging with public campaigns. Altruism, for example, is an influential driver where users participate because they believe in the public good of the campaign (Haro-de-Rosario et al., 2018). Similarly, perceived reciprocity, the expectation that governments may listen, respond, or reciprocate, can strengthen citizens' willingness to engage (Moynihan, 2003). Self-determination theory also suggests that intrinsic motivators like autonomy, relatedness, and competence encourage repeated engagement when citizens feel their actions have tangible effects (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

However, public engagement is not uniform across demographics or contexts. Factors such as digital literacy, political trust, social media usage patterns, and cultural attitudes toward government all mediate how citizens interact with state-led campaigns (Bertot et al., 2010; Rafiq, Iqbal & Afzal, 2024). For instance, younger populations may be more responsive to interactive content like short videos and live chats, while older citizens may prefer infographics or announcements (Oliveira & Welch, 2013). Similarly, in low-trust environments, citizens may hesitate to engage due to skepticism or fear of surveillance (Bannister & Connolly, 2012; Rafiq, Kamran & Afzal, 2024). Government strategies to boost engagement must, therefore, be aligned with citizens' motivational profiles. Campaigns that offer two-way interaction, acknowledge user feedback, and integrate civic voice are more likely to build trust and loyalty (Mergel, 2013). Additionally, governments can leverage emotional and narrative appeals, user-generated content, and digital influencers to enhance relatability and reach. Nonetheless, challenges such as misinformation, digital divide, and content fatigue remain persistent barriers to meaningful engagement (Criado & Villodre, 2020; Klive, 2022).

This study seeks to explore the motivational factors influencing public engagement with government-led campaigns on social media. By synthesizing theoretical frameworks such as Uses and Gratifications Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Political Efficacy, and reviewing recent empirical findings, the study aims to map the motivational landscape that shapes digital civic interaction. Understanding these drivers is not only crucial for optimizing outreach strategies but also for fostering democratic participation in the digital age.

## Background

The shift from traditional forms of government communication to digitally mediated interactions has significantly altered the landscape of public engagement. Over the last two decades, social media platforms have evolved into vital tools not only for social interaction but also for institutional communication, including the promotion of government initiatives and public policies (Mergel, 2013; Criado & Rojas-Martín, 2021). Platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have provided governments with low-cost, high-reach channels through which they can directly interact with citizens in real time, particularly during emergencies, political campaigns, and social development programs (Bertot et al., 2010; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2014). This growing digital presence aligns with broader movements toward open government and e-governance, which emphasize transparency, accountability, and citizen participation (Bannister & Connolly, 2012; Nam, 2012). Social media not only facilitates the dissemination of information but also fosters deliberation and dialogue, allowing users to express opinions, offer feedback, and participate in co-creating public value (Linders, 2012). In this context, governments increasingly rely on social media engagement metrics, likes, shares, retweets, comments, as indicators of campaign success, citizen involvement, and public sentiment (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012; Haro-de-Rosario et al., 2018). However, these metrics are shaped by more than just content visibility; underlying them are the psychological, emotional, and social motivations of individual users. Existing scholarship has identified several motivational drivers that influence how and why users interact with government social media content. These include utilitarian motives such as the need for timely and accurate information (Luo et al., 2021), as well as affective and moral factors such as trust, sense of belonging, and civic duty (Moynihan, 2003; Park et al., 2009). The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) has been widely applied in this domain to explain how users actively select media to fulfill particular needs. According to this theory, motivations for engagement can be cognitive (seeking knowledge or understanding), affective (expressing emotions or sentiments), personal integrative (reinforcing personal credibility), social integrative (enhancing relationships), or tension release (diversion

and entertainment) (Ruggiero, 2000). In the context of government campaigns, cognitive and social integrative needs are particularly relevant, as users often engage with public service announcements, health advisories, or civic appeals to stay informed and maintain a sense of civic identity.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) also provides a valuable lens through which to understand motivational engagement. SDT argues that human behavior is driven by three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In online government campaigns, when users perceive that their contributions are valued, their feedback is acknowledged, and their engagement leads to tangible outcomes, these psychological needs are fulfilled, thereby encouraging continued participation (Boulianne, 2015; Lee & Kwak, 2012). This is particularly critical in participatory governance models, where public input is not only welcomed but actively solicited to inform policy-making and service delivery.

Another key theoretical perspective is the concept of political efficacy—the belief that one's actions can influence political processes (Easton & Dennis, 1967). Studies have shown that individuals who perceive high internal political efficacy are more likely to engage in civic behaviors, including online participation in government campaigns (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). Moreover, in environments where institutional trust is low or where political engagement is traditionally limited, social media may provide a more accessible and less intimidating platform for expression and interaction (Bannister & Connolly, 2012; Criado & Villodre, 2020). Empirical research supports these theoretical claims. For instance, Bonsón et al. (2015) found that citizens' engagement with local governments' Facebook pages in Spain was primarily driven by informational and interactive content, rather than purely promotional messaging. Similarly, in a study examining U.S. local government tweets, Zavattaro et al. (2015) observed that the tone of messages, whether informative, emotional, or directive—significantly influenced user interaction. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Luo et al. (2021) demonstrated that citizens engaged more with public health information on social media when they perceived it as relevant, timely, and trustworthy.

Despite these insights, there remain critical gaps in understanding the full spectrum of motivational factors that drive social media engagement with government campaigns. Most studies have focused on Western democracies, leaving the Global South underrepresented in empirical analysis (Khan et al., 2014). Moreover, many researchers treat "engagement" as a monolithic concept, overlooking the nuances between passive (e.g., likes, views) and active (e.g., comments, shares, co-creation) forms of participation (Graham et al., 2015). There is also a need to explore how engagement is shaped by demographic variables, such as age, gender, education, and digital literacy, as well as contextual factors like political trust and freedom of expression. Understanding these motivational factors is not only academically significant but also practically essential. In an age of misinformation, declining trust in public institutions, and growing demand for citizen-centric governance, governments must adapt their digital strategies to align with citizens' psychological and social needs (Criado & Rojas-Martín, 2021). This research therefore aims to provide a comprehensive investigation into the motivational drivers of social media engagement in the context of government campaigns, drawing from established theories and recent empirical evidence to offer actionable insights for policymakers and digital strategists.

## Literature Review

The advent of social media has transformed the landscape of government-citizen communication, offering platforms for information dissemination, public engagement, and participatory governance. Understanding the motivational factors that drive citizen engagement with government social media campaigns is critical for enhancing the effectiveness of these initiatives, particularly in contexts such as Lahore, Pakistan (Bertot et al., 2012; Criado & Rojas-Martín, 2021).

A primary motivation for citizens to engage with government social media accounts is the pursuit of timely and relevant information. Social media platforms provide direct access to updates on policies, public services, and emergency notifications, thereby fostering a more informed citizenry. Studies have shown that the quality and accessibility of information significantly influence citizens' online political participation, highlighting the importance of transparent and responsive communication strategies (Mergel, 2013; Bonsón et al., 2015). The opportunity to influence policy decisions and contribute to public discourse serves as

another significant motivator for engagement. Social media platforms offer spaces for citizens to express opinions, mobilize support for causes, and participate in political discussions, thereby enhancing their sense of political efficacy. Research indicates that social media usage is positively correlated with various forms of civic and political engagement, suggesting that individuals perceive tangible political benefits from their online interactions (Graham et al., 2015; Skoric et al., 2016). Engagement with government social media content can also facilitate personal growth by expanding knowledge and skills related to civic matters. Citizens may participate in discussions to develop a deeper understanding of policies and societal issues, thereby enhancing their competence and confidence in engaging with governmental processes. This motivation underscores the role of social media as a platform for continuous learning and self-improvement in the context of civic engagement (Porumbescu et al., 2020). A desire to contribute to the public good motivates some individuals to engage with government campaigns on social media. Altruistic motivations drive citizens to support initiatives that benefit the broader community, reflecting a commitment to societal well-being. This sense of duty and aspiration to effect positive change in society is a critical antecedent of participatory behavior on government social media accounts (Kavanaugh et al., 2012; Kim & Yang, 2017). The expectation of mutual exchange, where citizens believe their engagement may be acknowledged or lead to tangible outcomes, fosters participation. When governments respond to citizen interactions on social media, it reinforces a sense of reciprocity and encourages ongoing engagement. These dynamic highlights the importance of interactive and responsive communication strategies in building trust and sustaining citizen involvement (Wukich & Mergel, 2016; Bonsón et al., 2017).

In the context of Lahore, Pakistan, various factors shape citizen engagement with government social media campaigns. Demographic variables such as age, education, and digital literacy significantly influence how individuals interact with government content online. Younger populations, often more adept at navigating social media platforms, may engage more frequently, while older citizens might participate differently based on their familiarity with digital technologies. A study conducted among university students revealed that motivations for social media use, such as information seeking and social interaction, are closely linked to political engagement, suggesting that demographic factors play a crucial role in shaping engagement patterns (Khan et al., 2021; Mahmood et al., 2019). The broader political context, including levels of trust in government and political stability, affects engagement. In democratic societies, citizens may feel more empowered to participate, whereas in environments with limited political freedoms, engagement might be subdued. Studies indicate that the relationship between social media use and support for democracy is complex and contingent on factors such as the political environment and the specific ways individuals interact with these platforms (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2014; Lee & Xenos, 2019).

Cultural norms regarding communication and authority can impact on how citizens interact with government entities online. In collectivist cultures, community-oriented motivations may be more pronounced, whereas individualistic cultures might emphasize personal benefits. Understanding these cultural nuances is essential for tailoring effective government social media campaigns that resonate with diverse audiences (Hofstede, 2011; Park & Lee, 2013). While social media offers opportunities for enhanced government-citizen interaction, challenges persist. Disparities in access to technology and digital literacy can limit engagement, excluding segments of the population from participating fully in online campaigns (Rafiq, Zaki & Nawaz, 2025). Addressing these gaps is crucial for equitable citizen participation and ensuring that government social media initiatives reach and represent the entire populace. Efforts to enhance digital inclusion can mitigate these challenges and foster broader engagement (Zhou & Wang, 2021; van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). The vast amount of content on social media can lead to information fatigue, making it challenging for government messages to capture and retain public attention. Strategies to manage content dissemination effectively, such as curating relevant information and employing targeted communication, are necessary to mitigate this issue and maintain citizen engagement (Chen et al., 2021).

Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information shared on social media is crucial for maintaining public trust. Misinformation can undermine engagement and the effectiveness of campaigns. Applying theoretical frameworks like the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* can help in understanding how

message credibility influences citizen engagement and in developing strategies to enhance the persuasiveness of government communications (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Lim & Seo, 2021). Understanding the motivational factors driving citizen engagement with government social media campaigns is essential for designing effective communication strategies. The interplay of informational, political, personal, and social motivations underscores the complexity of engagement behaviors. By leveraging empirical findings and addressing contextual challenges, governments can foster meaningful interactions that enhance public participation and contribute to more responsive and inclusive governance.

### **Research Gap**

While the global scholarly discourse on government use of social media has grown significantly, most existing literature remains concentrated in Western democratic contexts such as the United States, Canada, and Europe (Boulianne, 2015; Bonsón et al., 2015). These studies often explore factors such as transparency, trust, and digital citizenship in environments where institutional stability and freedom of expression are relatively high. However, there remains a significant lack of empirical research focused on South Asian contexts, particularly Pakistan, where socio-political dynamics, institutional trust levels, and digital infrastructure differ markedly.

In the context of Lahore, Pakistan, social media engagement with government campaigns occurs within a unique setting marked by fluctuating democratic norms, periodic political instability, widespread misinformation, and varying degrees of digital access and literacy. While the Government of Pakistan has increasingly used social media platforms to promote public awareness campaigns—ranging from health initiatives to civic services, there is limited academic research that investigates what motivates citizens, especially urban populations like Lahorites, to engage with this content. The city's diverse demographic and socio-economic makeup offers fertile ground for exploring these questions, yet it remains underrepresented in literature. Moreover, much of the available research on digital engagement in Pakistan focuses either on political campaigning (e.g., election periods) or on broader discussions around digital rights and censorship (Shah, 2020; Iqbal & Khan, 2022), rather than systematically analyzing motivational drivers behind day-to-day engagement with routine government messaging on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram. There is also a tendency to generalize user engagement metrics, likes, shares, and comments without dissecting the specific psychological or civic motivations that underpin these actions.

Additionally, in the Pakistani context, factors such as religious identity, social class, education level, and gender often intersect with digital behavior. However, few studies have examined how these socio-cultural dimensions influence the motivations for engaging with government content online, particularly in an urban, rapidly digitizing setting like Lahore. The lack of locally grounded, empirical studies using Lahore as a case study means that policymakers lack actionable insights into what drives or deters meaningful civic interaction on digital platforms.

Finally, although motivational models such as the Uses and Gratifications Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Political Efficacy have been widely used in Western settings, their application to non-Western, urban cities like Lahore remains largely untested. This creates a theoretical gap: existing frameworks may not fully capture the complexities of user behavior in settings characterized by both digital opportunities and constraints. Therefore, this study addresses a significant research gap by exploring the motivational factors driving social media engagement with government campaigns among citizens in Lahore, Pakistan. By doing so, it seeks to contribute a localized, empirically grounded perspective to a predominantly Western-centric body of literature and to offer insights that can inform both digital policy and civic engagement strategies within Pakistan and comparable developing contexts.

### **Rationale of the Study**

In recent years, the widespread adoption of social media platforms has fundamentally reshaped how governments communicate with citizens. From crisis management to public health awareness and policy advocacy, social media now serves as a primary vehicle for government campaigns aimed at informing and engaging the public. In Pakistan, where smartphone penetration and social media usage have grown exponentially, particularly in urban centers like Lahore, the government has increasingly relied on platforms



such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and YouTube to reach citizens directly. However, despite the growing trend of digital governance, the effectiveness of these government-led campaigns hinges on one critical factor: citizen engagement. While global studies have explored the role of social media in political participation and public service delivery, there remains a lack of empirical research that investigates why citizens choose to engage, or not engage—with government content online, especially in developing countries like Pakistan. Given Lahore's status as one of the most populous and digitally connected cities in Pakistan, it presents an ideal case to explore this phenomenon. The city's unique socio-political fabric, marked by a mix of traditional and modern values, increasing youth engagement, and a growing middle class, provides a rich and complex backdrop for studying motivational dynamics. The existing literature primarily focuses on the technical and institutional aspects of e-governance or the efficacy of social media tools in disseminating information. However, what remains underexplored is the citizens' perspective, specifically, what motivates individuals to interact with, share, or comment on government social media content. Motivational factors such as information seeking, political interest, self-efficacy, altruism, and social influence have been acknowledged in broader communication studies, but their relevance and manifestation in the Pakistani urban context have not been rigorously studied.

Moreover, Pakistan's socio-political environment introduces additional layers of complexity. Issues such as low levels of institutional trust, concerns over surveillance, digital divides, and political polarization may influence how citizens perceive and respond to government communication online. In this environment, understanding why people engage with official content, as opposed to simply measuring if they engage, is both timely and necessary. This understanding can provide valuable insights for improving public outreach, increasing trust in institutions, and promoting participatory governance through digital channels. This study, therefore, aims to fill this critical gap by examining the motivational factors that drive social media engagement with government campaigns in Lahore, Pakistan. By focusing on users' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, the research intends to provide context-specific, actionable insights for government bodies, communication strategists, and civic tech innovators. The findings may also have broader implications for urban digital governance in other developing cities facing similar infrastructural and socio-political challenges.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify the key motivational factors that influence citizen engagement with government social media campaigns in Lahore.
2. To examine how demographic and socio-political variables shape online engagement behavior with government content.
3. To assess the relationship between different types of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and levels of social media interaction with government initiatives.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the key motivational factors that influence citizen engagement with government social media campaigns in Lahore?
2. How do demographic and socio-political variables shape online engagement behavior with government content?
3. What is the relationship between different types of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and levels of social media interaction with government initiatives?

### **Significance of Study**

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance, particularly in the context of Pakistan's evolving digital governance landscape. As the government increasingly relies on social media to engage citizens and disseminate critical information, understanding what motivates people to respond, interact, and participate becomes imperative. In a populous and digitally active city like Lahore, where diverse socio-economic groups converge, such insights are vital for crafting more inclusive, responsive, and impactful communication strategies. From a practical perspective, the study provides valuable guidance to public sector

institutions, communication officers, and digital policymakers. By identifying the key motivational factors, such as information seeking, political interest, or altruism, that drive citizen engagement, this research enables government bodies to design targeted social media content that resonates with different segments of the population. It also offers recommendations for enhancing two-way communication, strengthening public trust, and encouraging civic participation through digital platforms.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are highly relevant for digital media strategists, non-governmental organizations, and civil society actors involved in public awareness and behavioral change campaigns. In a country where misinformation, political polarization, and digital inequality are prevalent, understanding what truly motivates online engagement can help organizations tailor their messaging for greater impact, especially during critical events such as health emergencies, elections, or policy rollouts. On a theoretical level, this research contributes to the broader academic discourse on digital political communication and civic engagement by applying established motivational theories—such as Uses and Gratifications Theory and Self-Determination Theory, within a non-Western, urban context. While these theories have been widely tested in Western democracies, their application in South Asian settings, especially in Pakistan, remains limited. By focusing on Lahore, the study adds a new cultural and geographic dimension to the existing body of knowledge, potentially paving the way for more comparative and localized frameworks of digital engagement.

In addition, this research addresses the gap between government-led communication strategies and citizen-level behavioral responses, a divide that is often overlooked in policy and academic circles. It moves beyond quantitative metrics of engagement (likes, shares, comments) to investigate the underlying psychological and contextual drives, offering a more holistic understanding of digital civic behavior. Ultimately, the significance of this study lies in its potential to inform evidence-based digital governance, support citizen-centric communication planning, and contribute to more democratic, participatory, and accountable use of technology in public service delivery across Pakistan.

### **Conceptual Framework**

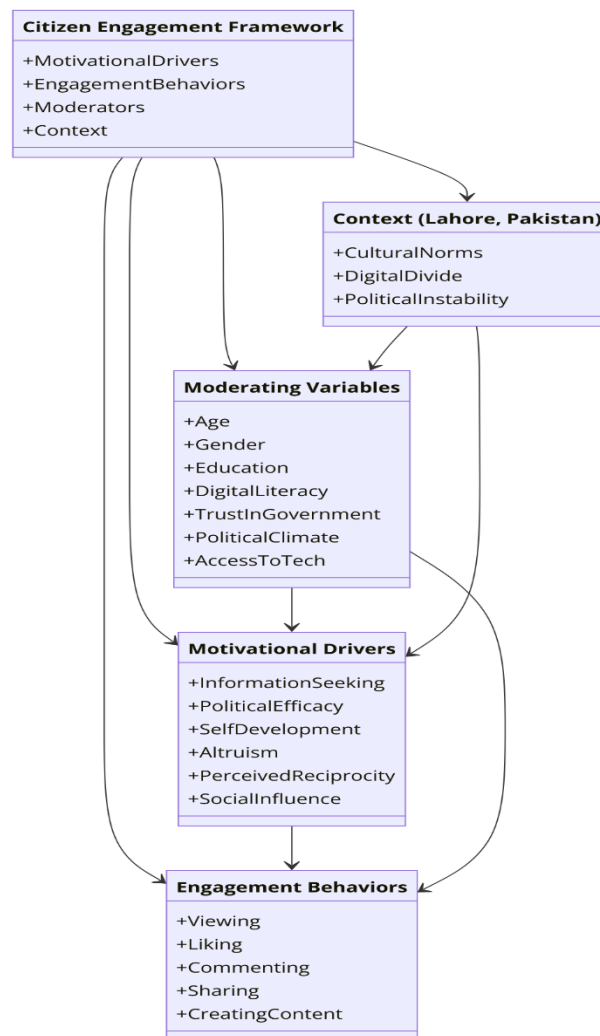
The conceptual framework of this study is built on the premise that citizen engagement with government campaigns on social media platforms is a behavior influenced by a complex interplay of psychological motivations and contextual factors, as shown in Figure 1 below. This framework draws upon theories of media use and civic behavior, particularly the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Self-Determination Theory, to understand how individual motivations translate into varying levels of engagement with government communication online. The framework is centered on identifying how intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors influence the extent and nature of citizen interaction with government social media content.

The independent variables in this framework consist of a set of motivational drivers, including information seeking, political efficacy, self-development, altruism, perceived reciprocity, and social influence. Information seeking refers to the individual's desire to obtain accurate and timely government-related information. Political efficacy reflects the belief that one's participation can have an impact on governance and policy. Self-development includes motivations such as personal growth, civic education, and acquiring knowledge through digital engagement. Altruism involves the intention to support public interest or social causes by sharing or promoting government content. Perceived reciprocity is the expectation that interaction with government content may yield acknowledgment or response, while social influence encompasses peer pressure or the desire to conform to social norms of engagement within one's network.

These motivational factors are proposed to influence the dependent variable, which is the level of citizen engagement with government social media campaigns. Engagement here is measured in terms of observable behaviors such as liking, commenting, sharing, following, and creating user-generated content in response to government messaging. These behaviors are conceptualized along a spectrum, from passive (liking, viewing) to active (commenting, sharing, initiating discourse).

Additionally, the framework considers moderating variables, including demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, and digital literacy) and contextual factors (trust in government, political climate,

and access to technology). These moderators may influence the strength or direction of the relationship between motivational factors and engagement levels. For example, individuals with higher digital literacy may be more responsive to information-seeking motives, while those with low institutional trust may require stronger intrinsic motivations, such as altruism or community solidarity, to engage. This framework allows for a structured analysis of citizen behavior in a localized, under-researched setting such as Lahore, Pakistan, where political instability, digital divides, and cultural nuances shape public interaction with state institutions. It not only facilitates a nuanced understanding of why citizens engage but also offers insights into how governments can design more effective digital campaigns that resonate with citizens' underlying motivations. By examining the relationship between motivational drivers and engagement behavior, the study aims to contribute to both theory and practice in the fields of political communication, digital governance, and civic engagement.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study**

### Methodology and Procedure

This study is grounded in the positivist research paradigm, which emphasizes objectivity, measurability, and empirical observation. The positivist approach assumes that reality is stable, observable, and measurable through appropriate quantitative methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the context of this research, the positivist paradigm enables the identification and measurement of relationships between motivational factors and citizen engagement with government social media content. Since the study seeks to



generalize findings to a larger population based on empirical evidence, positivism provides a suitable epistemological foundation. The positivist paradigm was selected because it aligns with the quantitative nature of this study, which aims to test hypotheses, quantify motivational variables, and establish statistical relationships between predictors (motivations) and outcomes (levels of engagement). Unlike interpretivist or constructivist paradigms, which are more appropriate for qualitative inquiry, the positivist lens supports the use of structured instruments (e.g., questionnaires) and statistical tools for data analysis, thereby ensuring reliability and generalizability (Neuman, 2014). Furthermore, given that this study involves a sizable sample (370 respondents) and aims to uncover behavioral patterns at scale, the positivist paradigm allows for rigorous, replicable, and deductive reasoning.

### **Research Design and Method**

This research adopts a cross-sectional survey design, which is widely used in quantitative social science research to collect data at a single point in time from a defined population (Bryman, 2016). A structured questionnaire was administered to measure both independent variables (motivational factors) and the dependent variable (citizen engagement with government social media content). The study utilized a deductive approach by developing hypotheses based on theoretical foundations such as Uses and Gratifications Theory and testing them through statistical analysis.

The method of inquiry was quantitative, as it involved numeric data collection and statistical interpretation. This approach was chosen to allow for quantifiable comparisons and to test the strength of relationships among variables. The use of a quantitative survey also facilitates data collection from a large number of respondents, which enhances the reliability and representativeness of the findings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for this study consisted of school and college teachers in Lahore, one of Pakistan's largest metropolitan cities with a diverse and digitally connected professional community. Teachers were selected as the population of interest because they are generally literate, digitally aware, and often engaged in civic discourse, making them suitable respondents for a study on social media engagement.

A sample size of 370 teachers was selected using a stratified random sampling technique, which ensures that the sample is representative of different types of educational institutions (i.e., public, private, and semi-government schools and colleges). The stratification was based on institutional affiliation to maintain proportional representation. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, a population of over 10,000 requires a minimum sample of 370 to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error.

To carry out the sampling, a list of schools and colleges in Lahore was obtained from the Punjab Education Department and various institutional directories. Institutions were categorized, and teachers were randomly selected from each stratum using a random number generator to minimize selection bias. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to the distribution of questionnaires.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected using a self-administered, closed-ended questionnaire based on validated scales adapted from previous studies (Luo et al., 2021; Boulianne, 2015). The questionnaire was divided into three sections: (1) demographic information, (2) motivational factors (including information seeking, political efficacy, self-development, altruism, reciprocity, and social influence), and (3) social media engagement behaviors (liking, sharing, commenting, and content creation).

A five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5) was used to capture respondents' perceptions. The survey was distributed both in physical form and digitally via institutional emails and WhatsApp groups to increase response rates and accessibility. A pilot test was conducted with 30 participants to check for clarity, reliability, and internal consistency of the instrument. The pilot data yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating high reliability.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency distributions) were used to summarize demographic data and engagement patterns. To test relationships between motivational factors and engagement levels, Pearson's correlation and multiple linear regression analysis were applied. The regression model helped determine the predictive power of each motivational factor on citizen engagement with government social media campaigns. Assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were checked to validate the use of regression analysis. Inferential statistics, including confidence intervals and p-values, were used to assess the statistical significance of results, with  $p < .05$  considered significant.

### Ethical Considerations

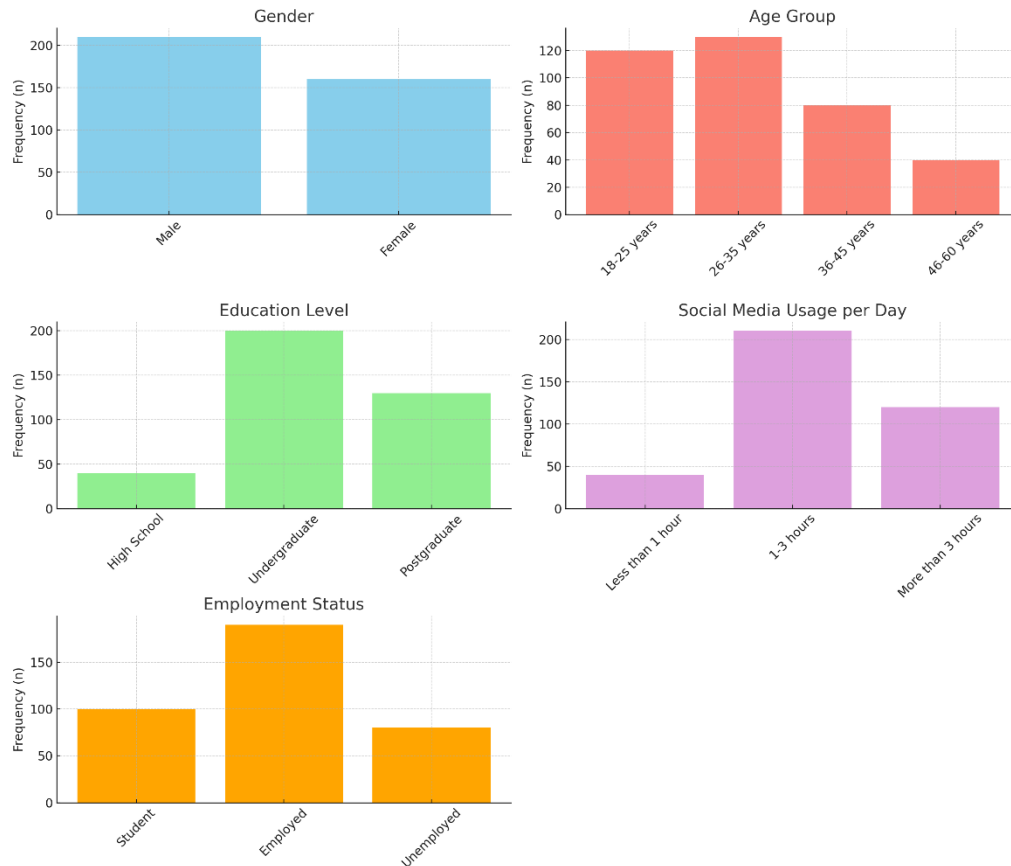
Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any point, and how the data would be used. Informed consent was obtained before data collection, and no identifying information was recorded to maintain anonymity. Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. Approval of the study was obtained from the research ethics committee of the affiliated academic institution. The study adhered to the ethical standards outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) and the Helsinki Declaration on ethical principles for research involving human subjects.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

The demographic data in Table 1 shows that the sample included more males (56.8%) than females (43.2%). A majority of respondents were young adults, with 67.5% falling between the ages of 18 and 35, indicating a digitally active age group. Educationally, most participants held undergraduate (54.1%) or postgraduate (35.1%) degrees, suggesting a well-informed sample. Social media usage was high, with 89.2% using it for more than one hour daily, indicating frequent exposure to government content. Employment status was varied, with 51.4% employed, 27% students, and 21.6% unemployed. Overall, the demographic composition reflects a digitally engaged and educated population, suitable for analyzing motivations behind social media interaction with government campaigns, as shown in Figure 2 below.

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	210	56.8
	Female	160	43.2
<b>Age Group</b>	18-25 years	120	32.4
	26-35 years	130	35.1
	36-45 years	80	21.6
	46-60 years	40	10.8
	61+ years	20	5.4
<b>Education Level</b>	High School	40	10.8
	Undergraduate	200	54.1
	Postgraduate	130	35.1
<b>Social Media Usage per Day</b>	Less than 1 hour	40	10.8
	1-3 hours	210	56.8
	More than 3 hours	120	32.4
<b>Employment Status</b>	Student	100	27
	Employed	190	51.4
	Unemployed	80	21.6



**Figure 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The survey findings in Table 2 demonstrated that information-seeking is the most significant motivator for government social media engagement among citizens in Lahore. Statements such as “*I engage with government posts because I find the content informative*” ( $M = 3.94$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) and “*Government social media pages provide useful and timely information*” ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) received the highest agreement, indicating that people rely on these platforms for important updates. Respondents also showed strong institutional trust, as evident in the high score for “*I trust the information shared by government sources on social media*” ( $M = 3.87$ ).

Moreover, many participants expressed a sense of civic responsibility, feeling more aware of their duties through such campaigns and believing their engagement can bring positive change. Altruistic motives were also evident, with respondents likely to share content they believe benefits others. Both active behaviors (commenting and sharing) and passive behaviors (liking and following) were consistently reported, suggesting a well-rounded pattern of digital civic engagement.

**Table 2. Survey Responses to Government Social Media Engagement**

Survey Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
I follow government social media accounts to stay updated on public policies.	17	39	45	172	97	3.79	1.08
Government social media pages provide useful and timely information.	19	32	35	161	123	3.91	1.11
I engage with government posts because I find the content informative.	15	25	47	163	120	3.94	1.04
I share government social media content that I believe beneficial to others.	20	24	48	167	111	3.88	1.08
I trust the information shared by government sources on social media.	15	30	43	181	101	3.87	1.03
I like or react to posts made by official government pages regularly.	12	38	53	167	100	3.82	1.04
I feel more aware of civic duties because of government social media campaigns.	18	24	39	195	94	3.87	1.02
I believe my engagement with government social media can bring positive change.	20	27	39	165	119	3.91	1.09
I comment on government posts when I have an opinion or suggestion.	16	28	43	165	118	3.92	1.06
I follow multiple government accounts to stay informed about different departments.	19	24	53	159	115	3.88	1.08

The standard deviations for most items remained moderate (between 1.02 and 1.11), suggesting some individual variation but general agreement on key motivational factors. In summary, the findings confirm that content which is informative, credible, and socially beneficial is most effective in driving engagement with government campaigns on social media (see Figure 3).

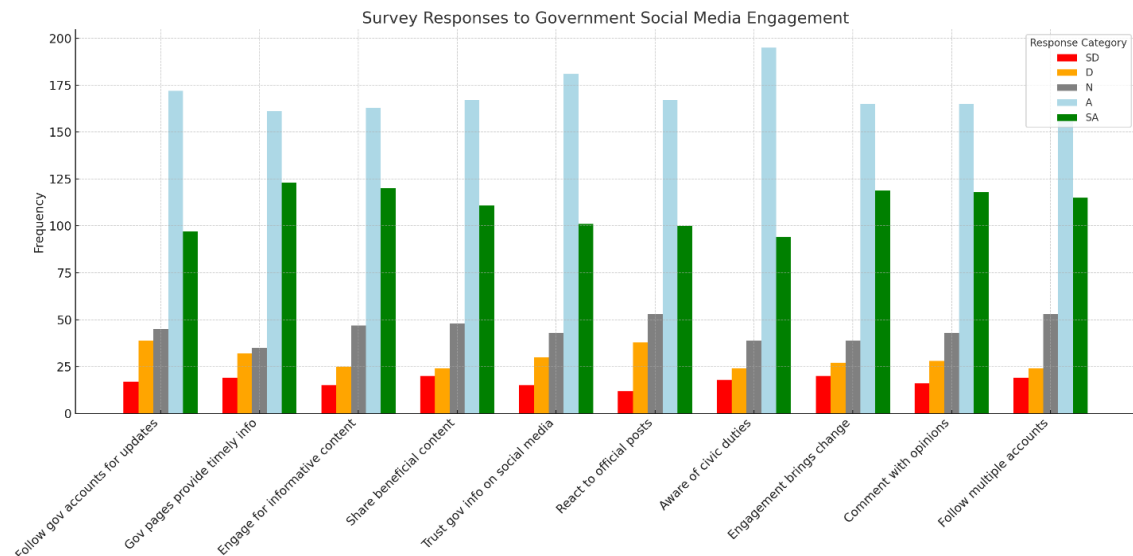
**Figure 3. Government Social Media Engagement**

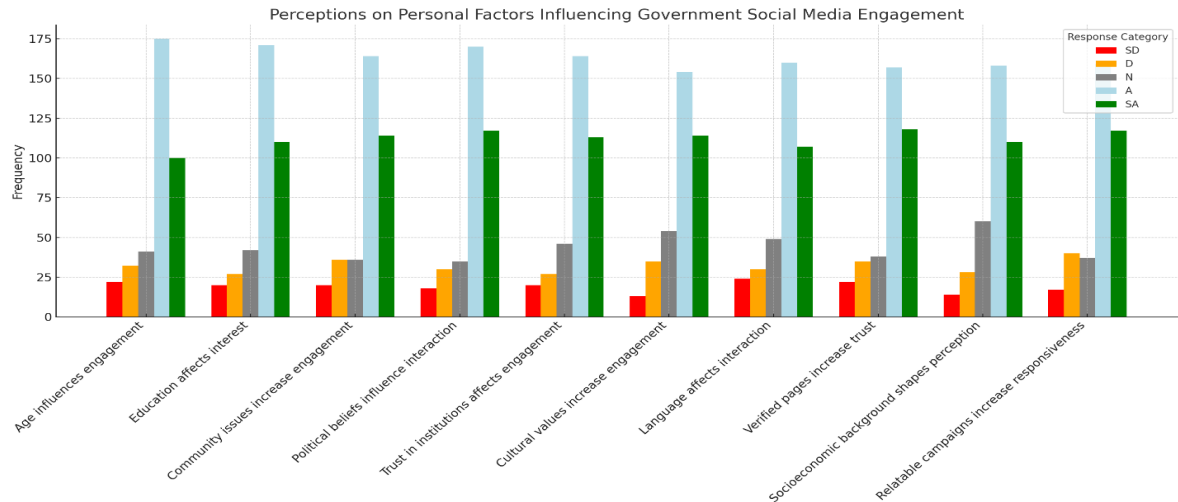
Table 3 data highlights that personal and socio-political factors significantly shape social media engagement with government content. Respondents strongly agreed that political beliefs ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) and education level ( $M = 3.88$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) influence their online interaction with government pages.

Trust in government institutions ( $M = 3.87$ ), cultural values ( $M = 3.87$ ), and socioeconomic background ( $M = 3.87$ ) were also key factors.

**Table 3. Perceptions on Personal Factors Influencing Government Social Media Engagement**

Survey Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
My age influences the way I engage with government content on social media.	22	32	41	175	100	3.81	1.11
My education level affects my interest in following government social media pages.	20	27	42	171	110	3.88	1.08
I am more likely to engage with government content if it addresses my community issues.	20	36	36	164	114	3.85	1.12
My political beliefs influence my willingness to interact with government social media.	18	30	35	170	117	3.91	1.08
Trust in government institutions affects whether I engage with their social media content.	20	27	46	164	113	3.87	1.09
I tend to engage more with government content when it reflects my cultural values.	13	35	54	154	114	3.87	1.06
The language used in government posts affects how likely I am to read or share them.	24	30	49	160	107	3.8	1.14
I engage more with government content when it comes from verified or credible pages.	22	35	38	157	118	3.85	1.15
My socioeconomic background shapes the way I perceive government social media campaigns.	14	28	60	158	110	3.87	1.04
I am more responsive to government campaigns that reflect the realities of my social group.	17	40	37	159	117	3.86	1.11

A large number agreed they engage more when content reflects community issues ( $M = 3.85$ ) or comes from credible sources ( $M = 3.85$ ). The language used and age also had a notable influence ( $M = 3.80$  and  $M = 3.81$ , respectively). These findings suggest that citizens' engagement is shaped not just by content quality but by how closely it aligns with their identity, context, and lived experiences, as shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4. Personal Factors Influencing Government Social Media Engagement**

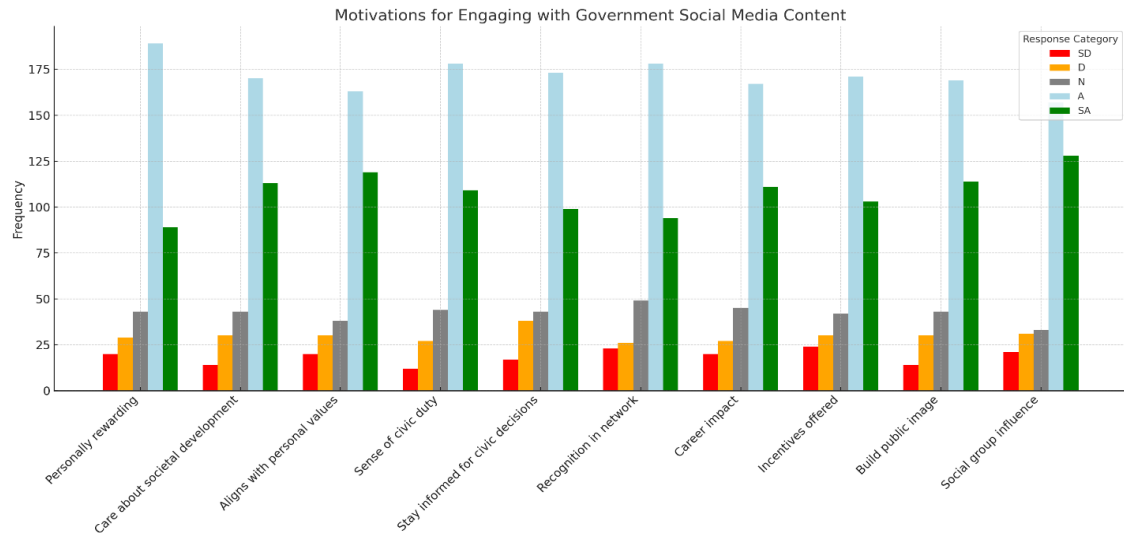
**Table 4. Motivations for Engaging with Government Social Media Content**

Survey Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
I engage with government social media content because I find it personally rewarding.	20	29	43	189	89	3.81	1.06
I participate in government campaigns online because I care about societal development.	14	30	43	170	113	3.91	1.04
I like government posts that align with my personal values and beliefs.	20	30	38	163	119	3.89	1.11
I feel a sense of civic duty when I interact with government social media pages.	12	27	44	178	109	3.93	1
I engage with government content to stay informed and make better civic decisions.	17	38	43	173	99	3.81	1.08
I interact with government posts to receive recognition or visibility in my network.	23	26	49	178	94	3.79	1.09
I share government campaigns that may positively impact my job or career.	20	27	45	167	111	3.87	1.09
I engage with official posts when they offer incentives (e.g., certificates, rewards).	24	30	42	171	103	3.81	1.12
I follow government pages to build a positive public image.	14	30	43	169	114	3.92	1.04
I am more likely to engage when I see others in my social group interacting as well.	21	31	33	157	128	3.92	1.13

Table 4 reveals that citizens engage with government social media content due to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The highest mean scores were recorded for statements reflecting civic duty ( $M = 3.93$ ), alignment with personal values ( $M = 3.89$ ), and societal development ( $M = 3.91$ ), indicating strong internal motivations. Respondents also expressed motivation driven by social influence, with high agreement to



engaging when others in their network do so ( $M = 3.92$ ). On the extrinsic side, participants noted engagement due to career benefits ( $M = 3.87$ ), visibility ( $M = 3.79$ ), and incentives like rewards or certificates ( $M = 3.81$ ). Overall, the data suggests that citizens are driven by a mix of civic responsibility, personal belief alignment, and social recognition, making these key areas for government campaigns to target, as shown in Figure 5.

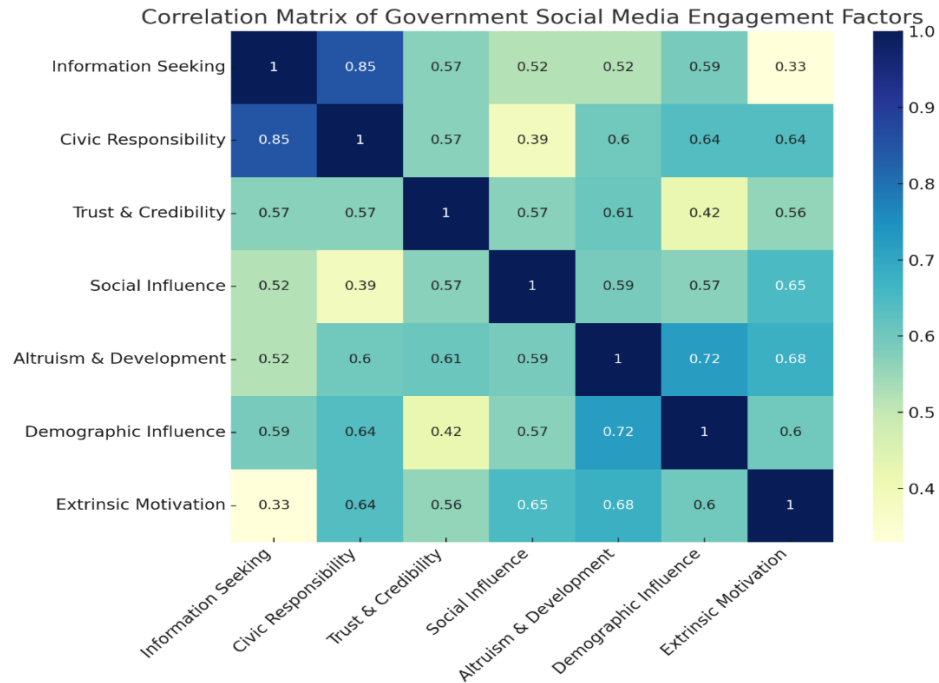


**Figure 5. Motivations for Engaging with Government Social Media Content**

**Table 5. Correlation Analysis**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Information Seeking	1						
2. Civic Responsibility / Civic Awareness	0.85	1					
3. Trust and Credibility	0.57	0.57	1				
4. Social Influence	0.52	0.39	0.57	1			
5. Altruism and Societal Development	0.52	0.6	0.61	0.59	1		
6. Demographic and Socio-political Influence	0.59	0.64	0.42	0.57	0.72	1	
7. Extrinsic Motivation / Incentive-Based Engagement	0.33	0.64	0.56	0.65	0.68	0.6	1

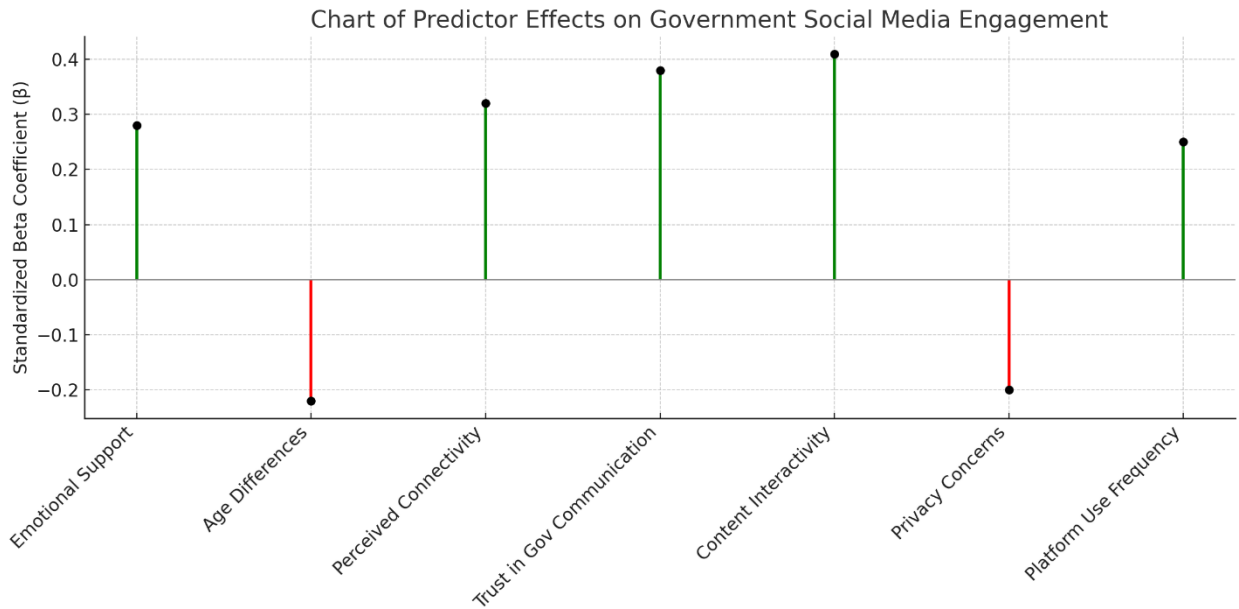
Table 5 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the seven key motivational variables influencing engagement with government social media. The results indicate a strong positive correlation between Information Seeking and Civic Responsibility ( $r = 0.85$ ), suggesting that those who seek information also feel a sense of civic duty. Altruism and Societal Development is highly correlated with Demographic and Sociopolitical influence ( $r = 0.72$ ) and Extrinsic Motivation ( $r = 0.68$ ), showing an overlap between social responsibility and external rewards. Trust and Credibility correlate moderately with most variables, especially Altruism ( $r = 0.61$ ) and Social Influence ( $r = 0.57$ ), emphasizing the role of trust in driving engagement. Overall, the data suggests that motivational factors are interlinked, and effective government communication strategies should appeal to both intrinsic values (like civic duty and altruism) and extrinsic drivers (like recognition or incentives), as shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6. Correlation Analysis Matrix****Table 6: Regression Analysis**

Predictor Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	0.5	0.1	-	5	<0.001
Emotional Support's Influence on Engagement	0.3	0.05	0.28	6	<0.001
Age-Based Differences in Engagement	-0.15	0.04	-0.22	-3.75	<0.001
Perceived Connectivity's Influence	0.35	0.06	0.32	5.83	<0.001
Trust in Government Communication	0.4	0.05	0.38	8	<0.001
Content Interactivity	0.45	0.05	0.41	9	<0.001
Privacy Concerns	-0.25	0.05	-0.2	-5	<0.001
Frequency of Platform Use	0.2	0.04	0.25	5	<0.001

Table 6 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis examining predictors of engagement with government social media content. The model shows that Content Interactivity ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and Trust in Government Communication ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) are the strongest positive predictors of engagement, indicating that users are more likely to interact when content is interactive and trustworthy. Perceived Connectivity and Emotional Support also contribute significantly ( $\beta = 0.32$  and  $0.28$ , respectively), reflecting the importance of relational and psychological factors.

Conversely, Privacy Concerns ( $\beta = -0.20$ ) and Age-Based Differences ( $\beta = -0.22$ ) negatively predict engagement, suggesting that older users and those concerned about privacy are less likely to participate. Frequency of Platform Use ( $\beta = 0.25$ ) is a significant predictor, confirming that higher usage correlates with more engagement. Overall, the model highlights a mix of technical, emotional, and contextual factors as key influences on digital civic participation, as shown in Figure 7 below.



**Figure 7. Regression Analysis Matrix**

## Discussion

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on digital government communication by highlighting the motivational factors that influence social media engagement among citizens in Lahore, Pakistan. In alignment with previous studies (Luo et al., 2021; Criado & Rojas-Martín, 2021), this research affirms that citizens' interaction with government social media content is not merely a function of accessibility but is deeply rooted in a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, as well as socio-political and demographic factors. A key finding is the dominant role of information-seeking behavior, with participants reporting high engagement when content is timely, relevant, and informative. This is consistent with the findings of Bonsón et al. (2015) and Mergel (2013), who emphasized that governments that provide clear, actionable, and transparent information through social media are more likely to foster active citizen engagement. In this study, the strongest positive correlation was found between information seeking and civic responsibility ( $r = 0.85$ ), reinforcing the notion that well-informed citizens are more likely to engage meaningfully in governance processes.

Moreover, civic responsibility and trust in government communication emerged as critical predictors of engagement. The regression analysis showed that trust in government communication ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and content interactivity ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) were among the most significant factors. This supports the findings of Liu and Horsley (2007), who argue that when governments provide opportunities for two-way communication—rather than simply broadcasting information, they build greater legitimacy and relational trust. In the local context of Pakistan, where political trust can fluctuate due to governance issues, ensuring credible and transparent content is particularly important (Yasin & Batool, 2020). The study also confirms that altruism and societal development play a substantial role in motivating users. Statements related to sharing content for the public good and supporting civic causes received high agreement, consistent with the findings of Park et al. (2009), who noted that digital altruism is a key engagement driver among socially responsible users. This suggests that citizens do not engage solely for personal benefit; rather, a collective desire to improve societal outcomes also fuels their behavior online. Social influence also played a meaningful role in shaping engagement behavior, particularly in a collectivist culture like Pakistan's. Respondents were more likely to engage with content when they observed others in their networks doing the same. This confirms earlier findings by Venkatesh et al. (2003), which indicate that subjective norms and peer behavior are strong predictors of technology adoption and interaction (Rafiq, Nawaz & Afzal, 2025).

Demographic and socio-political variables such as age, education, and political orientation were also found to shape engagement behaviors, though with varying intensity. Younger, educated individuals who spent more time online were more likely to report frequent engagement with government campaigns, echoing previous findings by Boulianne (2015), who demonstrated that younger generations are more digitally literate and civically active online. Interestingly, the study identified privacy concerns ( $\beta = -0.20, p < 0.001$ ) and age-based differences ( $\beta = -0.22, p < 0.001$ ) as significant negative predictors of engagement. These findings align with previous research suggesting that privacy anxieties can deter users from interacting with government posts, particularly in countries with surveillance concerns (Bannister & Connolly, 2012). Similarly, older users may be less comfortable with digital platforms or more skeptical of online government interactions. Extrinsic motivations such as recognition, incentives, and reputation management were also positively associated with engagement, although to a slightly lesser degree than intrinsic drivers. The influence of extrinsic rewards is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which posits that while intrinsic motivation often leads to deeper engagement, external rewards can effectively prompt action, especially in behavior-change campaigns.

Overall, the findings of this study not only validate prior research but also provide localized insights into the motivational landscape of digital engagement in a South Asian urban context. They emphasize the need for government agencies to adopt multi-dimensional communication strategies, ones that are not only informative but also emotionally resonant, socially visible, culturally relevant, and responsive to citizens' concerns.

## Conclusion

This study set out to explore the key motivational factors that influence citizens' engagement with government social media campaigns in Lahore, Pakistan. In doing so, it contributes to the growing body of literature on digital governance, public communication, and civic engagement by offering a nuanced understanding of how personal, psychological, and contextual variables shape online interaction with official content. Drawing on quantitative data from 370 respondents, primarily teachers, the study examined both intrinsic motivations (such as civic responsibility, information seeking, and altruism) and extrinsic motivations (such as social recognition, rewards, and peer influence), as well as the role of demographic and socio-political factors in shaping engagement behaviors.

The findings affirm that information-seeking is the most dominant driver of engagement, indicating that citizens are more likely to interact with government posts when they perceive them as useful, timely, and credible. Additionally, trust in government communication and content interactivity were among the strongest predictors of engagement, suggesting that public sector agencies must prioritize clarity, responsiveness, and two-way interaction in their digital strategies. The research also found that civic awareness, altruism, and social influence significantly enhance engagement, especially in a collectivist and youth-driven digital culture like that of urban Pakistan.

Negative predictors such as privacy concerns and age-based differences suggest that older users and those wary of surveillance or data misuse are less likely to engage, underlining the need for privacy-assuring practices and inclusive communication strategies. The role of demographic and socio-political factors, including education level, cultural alignment, and community relevance, further underscores the importance of tailoring content to reflect the lived experiences and expectations of diverse social groups.

The study concludes that citizen engagement with government social media is multifaceted, shaped by a delicate balance of emotional, rational, and contextual influences. Governments aiming to foster more meaningful digital participation must, therefore, move beyond one-size-fits-all strategies and instead adopt citizen-centric approaches that address motivations across the spectrum, from civic identity to social incentives. By doing so, public institutions can strengthen democratic participation, improve service delivery, and build long-term trust with their constituents in the digital age.

## Recommendations and Policy Implications

Based on the findings of this study, several actionable recommendations can be proposed to enhance the effectiveness of government social media campaigns. First, government agencies should prioritize the

informational value of their content, ensuring it is timely, relevant, and easy to understand. Since information seeking emerged as the strongest motivator, improving the clarity and accessibility of government communication can significantly boost engagement. Additionally, interactive content such as polls, live chats, comment responses, and citizen feedback mechanisms should be more widely adopted to foster two-way communication and strengthen public trust. Given the influence of demographic and socio-political factors, campaign messaging should be tailored to different audience segments, with particular attention to age, education level, language preferences, and cultural values. For instance, younger users may respond better to multimedia-rich formats, while older users may prefer more formal, informative content. Trust in government communication was also identified as a key predictor; therefore, agencies must consistently share verified, transparent, and credible content to build long-term legitimacy. Finally, recognizing the role of social influence, campaigns should actively encourage community participation, testimonials, and peer sharing to amplify reach and impact.

From a policy perspective, the findings offer valuable insights for e-governance and digital transformation strategies in Pakistan and similar developing countries. Policymakers should invest in capacity building, both for public officials managing social media and for citizens, by improving digital literacy and awareness. Privacy concerns and age-related gaps in engagement also call for policies that ensure safe, inclusive, and accessible digital environments. Encouragingly, the study confirms that when governments align their communication strategies with citizens' motivations—both intrinsic (such as civic duty and societal development) and extrinsic (such as recognition and incentives)—they are more likely to foster sustained digital participation and strengthen democratic governance through social media.

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