



Credit: Nepal24Hours.com

The role of Twitter in the Local Election of Nepal (2079 B.S / 2022 A.D.)

UFCFJJ-15-M - Social Media And Web Science – Student Number: 21065142



Credit: Toronto Star Newspaper

Introduction & Research

The local level election(<https://election.gov.np/>) of Nepal was held on 13th May, 2022. Altogether 79 political parties were contesting the elections at local level and there were 145,011 candidates for various positions in 753 local governments (Pradhan and Ghimire, n.d.).

The three most well-known party in context of Nepal's politics are Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, and CPN. They have been around the longest in the political scene of Nepal. It seems almost like a tradition for one of these political parties to win the election rather than independent candidates. Independent candidates are generally assumed unimportant compared to any well known political parties (Kapoor and Magesan, 2018).

This research is focused on what role twitter plays in context of Nepal's local level Election.

Research Question: Investigate sentiments directed towards political independent parties and can Twitter be used to predict election outcomes and capture public reaction to the candidates?

Methodology

TAGS V6.1 was used to collect tweets over a period of a week. The term used to incorporate tweets was #NepalElection2079, #ElectionCommissionNepal, and #IndependentParty.

To understand how people tweet on independent parties (**figure 1**), I chose the name of Balen Shah as my search term, who is one of the independent candidates from Kathmandu Metropolitan city. The total number of tweets collected was around 2k. However, during the final processing phase, I filtered out the duplicate values and only used 999 distinct tweets to analyse people's response. The categorisation of theme was done via Google sheets.

In order for the data to not be biased on only one candidate, I collected new tweets that were focused on other candidates around the country. For this, the terms used were #NepalElection2079 OR #ElectionCommissionNepal OR #IndependentParty. The total number of tweets collected via this method was 2,294. I used relevant tweets for data analysis.

Even though the data from twitter were collected after election, the election results was still unknown at the time. I have analysed how people were expressing their sentiments through emojis (figure 2), and the terms they used to express their sentiments towards the candidates (figure 3). This data was also used to identify the most popular candidates on Twitter (Figure 4)

Findings

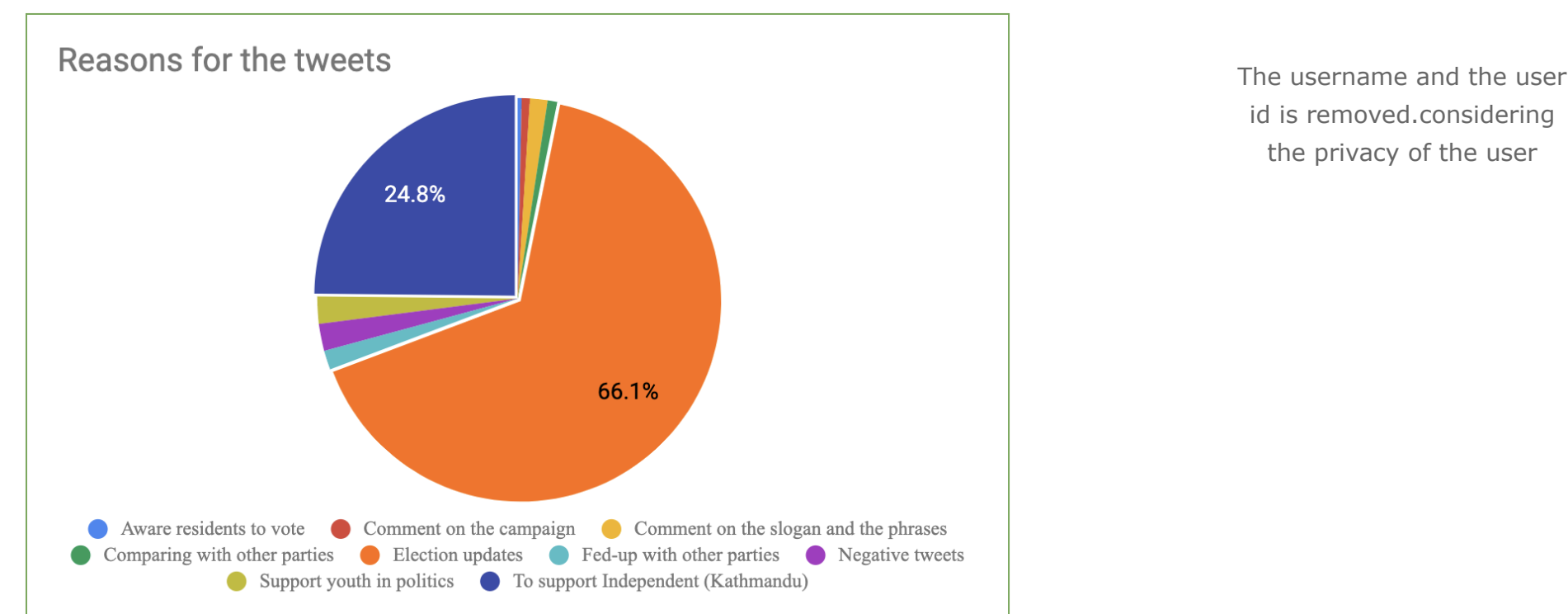


Figure 1: Reasons why people tweets on independent parties.

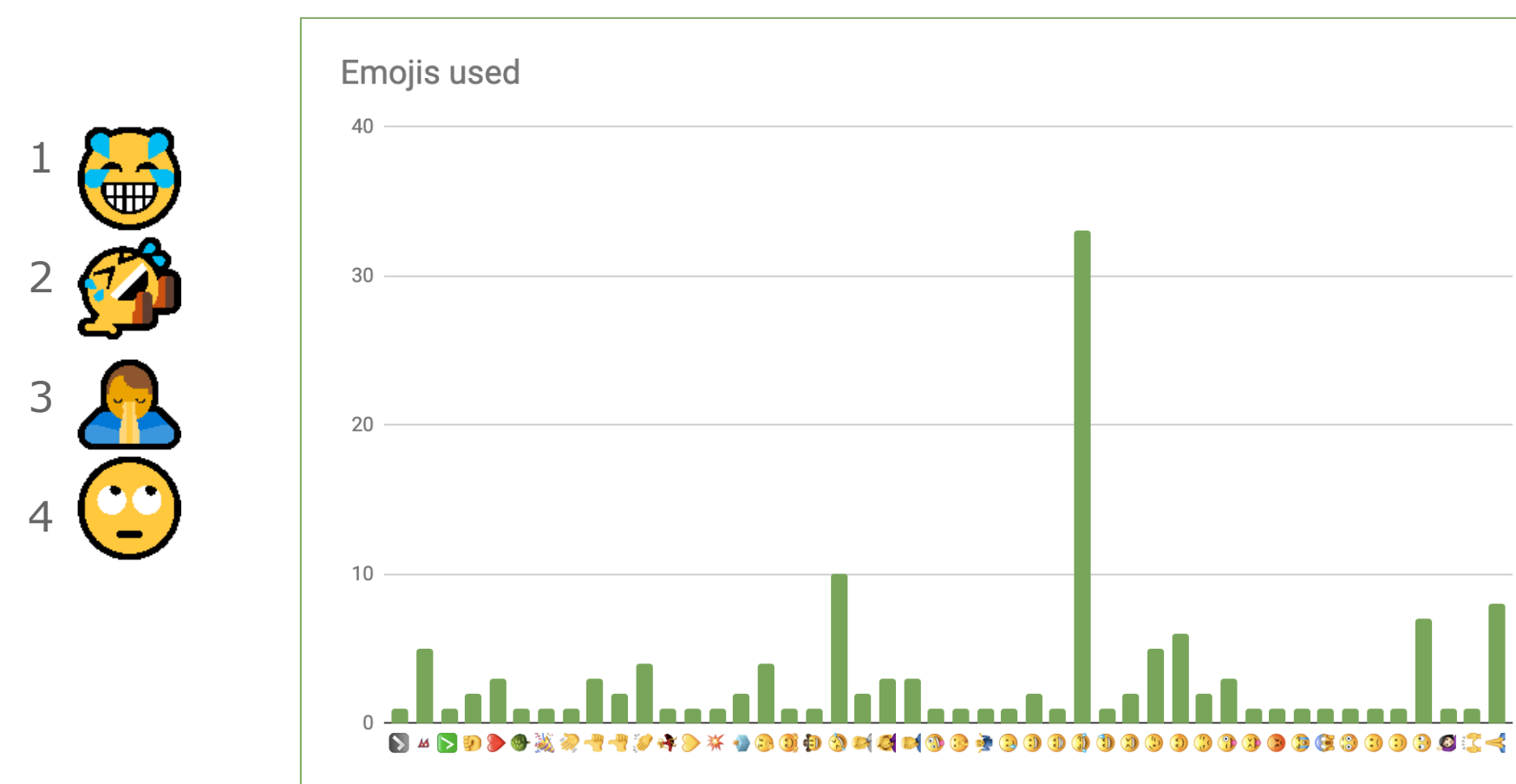


Figure 2: Emojis used to express sentiments

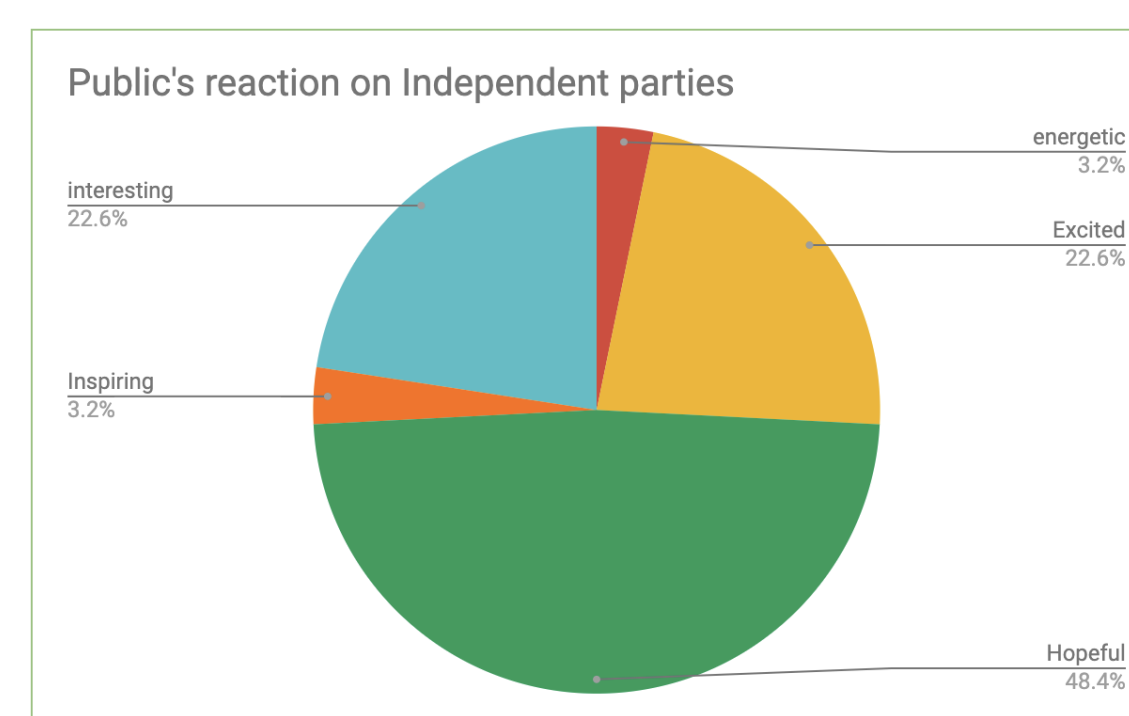


Figure 3: Sentiment words used

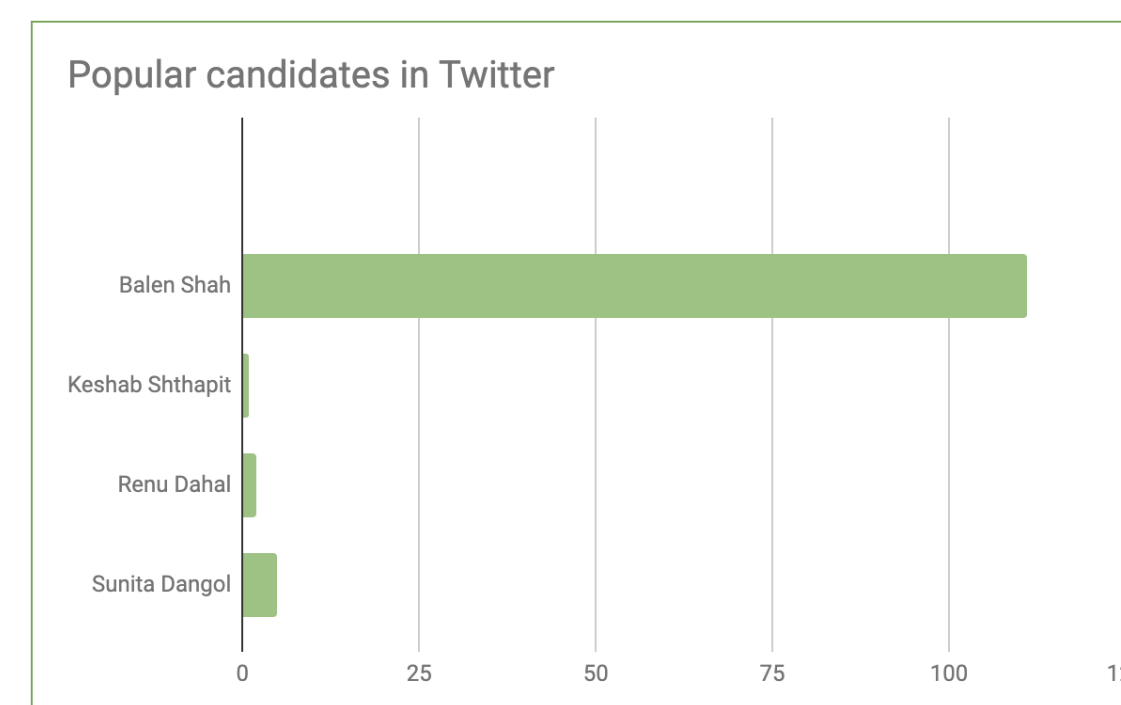


Figure 4: Polupar candidates in Twitter

Discussion and Conclusion

In general, people tweeted to either share their opinion or ask information on the topic of election. Most of the comments on twitter related to independent parties were made to either support them, opine on their slogan/phrases, or campaign. One common and popular theme was "support for youth in politics". While the positive tweets and comments were about encouraging youths, the negative comments mostly expressed frustrations with current ruling political parties. There were also some generic tweets whose intentions were to raise awareness among citizens/residents about the importance of casting ones vote.

The most commonly used emoji was a face with tears of joy, followed by rolling on the floor laughing, folded hands and rolling eyes. Similarly, figure 3 shows positive reaction of public towards the independent candidacy. Majority of them were hopeful and people found this to be interesting and inspiring. They were excited and believed in the capabilities and energy of independent candidates to bring change. Figure 4 shows Balen shah as the most popular candidate among public on Twitter along with four other popular candidates that followed after him.

Surprisingly, most people were using faces with "tears of joy" and "rolling on the floor laughing" emojis to react to the election situation. This could mean that they wanted to show positive emotions. The folded hand emojis means praying for the right person to win the election. While the use of rolling eyes emoji shows the frustration level of people or it could also mean the lack of awareness. Result shows that people had positive attitude towards independent party as they were frustrated with the past and current situation. Thus, they expressed willingness to give chance to new candidates and felt more hopeful about it. To obtain a non-biased result, some of the tweets got avoided.

Limitations

The term used for gathering the tweets was biased focusing only on a single individual candidate and due to the limited time for the second research, only relevant data from 2,294 tweets were used for further analysis. Through the terms which are in the tags and which are the hashtags presented, there should be high consideration of tweets that are not relevant to the research.

Since the data was collected after the election and before the results were published, most of the tweets collected were related to election results updates and the relevant information could not be gathered to understand how and why people tweet on the independent parties. Similarly, filtering the duplicate or similar tweets may have made the results inaccurate.

References

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