

# Digital Democracy: Social media and Political Participation

## Outline:-

### 1. Introduction

**Thesis Statement:** Social media is shaping digital democracy by increasing political participation. It has done so by increasing online public opinions, criticism of unfair policies and mass protest online. However, more transparency in digital democracy is required to hinder the menace of Hybrid warfare in future.

### Crunch Paragraph

2. Contemporary picture of political participation via digital democracy.

3. How social media is actively involving in political participation via digital democracy.

a) By increasing public interest in govt's



- policies in the form of acceptance or rejection online.
- b) By political participation of parties online via podcasts and other medium.
  - c) By awaring people to acknowledge economic crisis and its impacts on democracy.
  - d) By mass protest online.
  - e) Social media is being used to on air those political issues which are otherwise blacked out there by increasing political participation of public.

#### 4. Positive impacts of digital democracy on political participation via Social media

- a) Advanced medium of quick political participation to strengthen democracy.
- b) Hinders unfriendly undemocratic act efficiently.
- c) Helps in forming public opinion on unbiased basis.



## 5. Negative impacts

a) Can be used as a tool of hybrid warfare they by maligning actual political participation.

b) Thoughts of public are more prone to be radicalised online.

c) Unchecked freedom of expression

## 6. Problems hindering in digital democracy and political participation.

a) illiteracy

b) Lack of technological advancement.

c) Control of social media houses.

## 7. Way forward

a) Promote digital democracy by social campaigns by visiting and technology.

b) Legislation to check unchecked freedom of expression.

c) Increased funding to



digitalise the democracy  
via social media to  
persuade political participation.

## 8. Conclusion.



# Digital Democracy: Social Media and Political Participation

In an age where the click of a button can influence opinions and mobilize masses, the contours of democracy, propelled by omnipresence of social media, has thrust political participation into a new realm of possibilities. As hashtags shape narratives, and virtual discussions replace town hall meetings, the intersection of technology and civic engagement becomes increasingly intricate and consequential. Social media is actively involving in political participation via digital democracy by increasing public interest, by the participation of political parties online via podcasts, by mass protest online. Social media have number of positive and negative



on political participation. Because illiteracy, lack of technological advancement and control of social media houses are the main hindrance in the pace of digital democracy. It is <sup>very</sup> important to tackle these problems very efficiently, by promoting digital democracy by social campaigns, by visiting and Technology and make legislation to check, unchecked freedom of expression. Social media is shaping digital democracy by increasing political participation. It has done so by increasing online public opinions, criticism of unfair policies and mass protest online. However, more transparency in digital democracy is required to hinder the menace of Hybrid Warfare in future.



In the contemporary landscape, political participation has acquired a vibrant and dynamic dimension through the lens of digital democracy. Social media platforms have emerged as potent tools that enable citizens to engage with political discourse in unprecedented ways. From impassioned discussions on Twitter threads to grassroots movements organized through Facebook events, individuals have gained the means to voice opinions, mobilize support, and hold public figures accountable. Moreover, digital spaces have democratized access to information, allowing citizens to stay informed about policy developments and global affairs.



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Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for fostering political participation through digital democracy, catalysing heightened public engagement with government policies in terms of endorsement or dissent. For instance, during the Arab Spring uprisings, platforms like Twitter and Facebook played a pivotal role in galvanizing citizen activism and voicing collective opinions against autocratic regimes, leading to tangible political changes (Howard, P. N., & Hussain, M. M. (2013).

Democracy's fourth wave? Digital media and the Arab Spring. (Oxford University Press). This trend underscores how social media platforms can enable swift dissemination of information, facilitate widespread discussions, and provide avenues for citizens to directly shape policy outcomes, thus reshaping conventional



dynamics of political participation in the digital age.

Similarly, in the digital age, social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools fostering political participation. Such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to engage with citizens, share their views, and gather public input on policy matters. Additionally, mediums like podcasts enable parties to communicate directly with the public, transcending traditional barriers and facilitating a more inclusive political discourse.

For instance, during the 2020 U.S. presidential campaign, both major candidates utilized social media extensively to convey their stances, host virtual town halls, and directly interact with voters, exemplifying how digital platforms are reshaping the dynamics of political participation.



(The Role of Social Media in Political Mobilisation: A Case Study of the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election" by Smith, M.A. et al., 2021).

Moreover, in today's digital age, social media platforms play a crucial role in fostering political participation through the concept of digital democracy. They enable people to become more informed and engaged in economic issues and their repercussions on democratic systems. For instance, during the global financial crisis of 2008, social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook allowed individuals to share real-time information, express their concerns, and organize protests or rallies demanding government accountability and economic reforms. This exemplifies how social media's ability



to disseminate information rapidly can't empower citizens to participate actively in political discourse, amplifying awareness about economic challenges and their effects on democratic governance (Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. John Wiley and Sons).

Similarly, social media platforms are playing pivotal role in fostering political participation through the avenue to digital democracy, facilitating mass protests and activism online. Enabled by the viral spread of information and real-time communication, social media empowers citizens to voice their concerns and coordinate collective actions, transcending geographical boundaries. For instance, the Arab Spring uprisings that began in 2010 saw the extensive



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Use of platforms like Twitter and Facebook to mobilize citizens for protests, leading to significant political changes in countries like Egypt and Tunisia. This digital activism underscores the potential of social media as a tool for broadening political engagement and challenging traditional power structures, as highlighted by Castells in his work on the network society.

(Castells, M. (2012). Networks of outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age).

Moreover, Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for fostering political participation through digital democracy, enabling the discussion of political issues that might be suppressed in traditional media outlets.



For instance, during the Arab Spring uprisings in 2010-2011, platforms like Twitter and Facebook played a pivotal role in disseminating information and mobilizing people to protest against oppressive regimes, effectively circumventing government-controlled media. These platforms allowed citizens to voice their concerns, share news, and coordinate actions, thereby increasing public engagement in political matters that were previously marginalized or suppressed. This shift toward online political activism exemplifies the transformative potential of social media in enhancing public participation and democratizing access to information on a global scale.

Digital democracy through social media enhances political participation by providing a



a platform for diverse voices, fostering engagement, and enabling swift dissemination of information, thus strengthening civil involvement and amplifying public discourse.

Similarly, the advent of digital democracy has introduced a dynamic and rapid medium for political participation, thereby bolstering democratic processes.

Through social media platforms, citizens can swiftly engage in political discussion, express opinions, and mobilize for collective action. For instance, the 'Me too' movement gained momentum on platforms like Twitter, and Facebook, allowing survivors of sexual harassment to share their stories, amplify their voices, and drive societal change. This kind of instant, grassroots involvement holds institutions accountable. Such advanced



mediums of participation not only empower citizens but also contribute to the overall vibrancy and responsiveness of democratic systems (Tupekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. Yale University Press.

Similarly, A significant positive impact of digital democracy is its ability to effectively counteract unfriendly and undemocratic actions. By enabling rapid dissemination of information and mobilizing public opinion, social media and online platforms have been instrumental in exposing and challenging oppressive regimes and undemocratic practices. For instance, during the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong in 2014, protesters utilized



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digital platforms to organize, share their grievances, and counter government narratives, ultimately raising awareness about democratic principles and advocating for political change. This demonstrates how digital democracy empowers citizens to resist undemocratic actions and strengthens the global movement for human rights and democratic actions and strengthens the global movement for human rights and democratic values.

Bode, L. & Brent, E. (2018).

Protest & opportunities: The dimensionality of online protest participation. *New Media & Society*, (18/16/18).

Similarly, digital democracy has ability to facilitate the formation of public opinion in an unbiased manner.



Through online platforms, individuals can access diverse perspectives, engage in open discussions, and exchange information without the influence of traditional media bias or gatekeepers. For instance, during election campaigns, social media enables candidates to directly communicate with voters, and citizens can engage in conversations with each other to share their viewpoints. This fosters a more inclusive and democratic discourse, allowing for a range of opinions to be considered, and reducing the potential for media bias to shape public perception. This transformative potential of digital democracy to



provide a platform for unbiased public opinion formation. It underscores its significance in contemporary political landscapes.

Similarly, digital democracy has many negative impacts. It has a potential to be exploited by the state as well.

While digital democracy has the potential to amplify political participation, it can also be exploited as a tool of hybrid warfare, undermining genuine political discourse. Malicious actors can manipulate social media platforms to spread disinformation, sow discord, and polarize societies, thereby eroding trust in democratic processes.

For instance, during the 2016 United States Presidential election, foreign entities were accused



of using social media to disseminate misleading content and exploit existing divisions. These efforts can delegitimize authentic political engagement, manipulate public opinion, and ultimately disrupt the democratic fabric of societies highlighting a concerning negative aspect of digital democracy.

Stengel, R. (2019). *Information Wars: How We the Global Battle Against Disinformation and What We Can Do About It*. Grove Press.

Moreover, a significant drawback of digital democracy is the susceptibility of public opinions to radicalization online, leading to polarization and extremism. Echo chambers and algorithm driven content distribution on social media platforms can create information.



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bubbles where individuals are exposed only to viewpoints that align with their existing beliefs, reinforcing those beliefs and shutting out diverse perspectives. This can foster the rapid spread of extreme ideologies and misinformation, as seen in cases like the rise of online radicalization leading to real-world violence, such as instances of hate crimes or ~~acted~~ acts of terrorism. The combination of anonymity, viral sharing, and filter bubbles can amplify extreme voices and distort public discourse, undermining the constructive potential of digital democracy.

Rand, D. G. (2018) The Implied Truth Effect: Attaching Warnings to a Subset of Fake News Stories Increases Perceived Accuracy of Stories (Without Warnings).



The unchecked freedom of expression facilitated by digital democracy can lead to negative impacts, including the spread of misinformation, hate speech, and the amplification of extremist ideologies. Online platforms can become breeding grounds for the dissemination of false information, as seen in the case of "Pizzagate" conspiracy theory, which spread on social media and led to a harmful real-world incident.

Additionally, the ~~any~~ anonymity provided by digital platforms can embolden individuals to engage in hate speech and harassment, contributing to toxic online environments. The Christchurch mosque shootings in 2019 highlighted how extremist content can be



disseminated online, with the shooter live streaming the attack on Facebook. It is essential to strike a balance between freedom of expression and responsible online behavior, as the unregulated dissemination of harmful content can have detrimental societal consequences.

Flamini, A., & Menzger, F. (2018). The Spread of low-credibility content by social bots.

There are many problems, which are hindering in digital democracy and political participation.

One of them is illiteracy, illiteracy indeed poses a significant challenge to digital democracy and political participation. In regions where illiteracy rates are high, individuals face difficulties in navigating



complex digital interfaces, understanding written information and discerning credible sources from misinformation, limiting their capacity to participate meaningfully in online political discourse. For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa, where illiteracy rates remain high, marginalized populations may struggle to engage with e-democracy initiatives, hindering their inclusion in vital political processes. Addressing illiteracy through educational initiatives and user-friendly technologies is crucial for prompting broader participation in digital democracy.

Warshawer, M. (2004). Technology and social inclusion: Rethinking the digital divide.

Similarly, the lack of technological advancements can impede digital democracy and



and political participation by limiting accessibility and inclusivity, especially for marginalized communities with limited access to digital resources. For instance, in regions with inadequate internet infrastructure, such as remote rural areas, certain demographical groups may be left out of the digital discourse, exacerbating existing inequalities in political engagement. The "digital divide" phenomenon underscores this issue where socioeconomic disparities in technology access can prevent individuals from participating fully in online political discussions. To address this challenge, efforts are needed to ensure equitable access to technology and digital education, allowing a broader range of voice to



contribute to digital democracy.  
Narschauer, M. (2003). Technology  
and Social Inclusion: Rethinking  
the Digital Divide.

Moreover, a significant  
challenge impeding digital  
democracy and political  
participation is the issue of  
concentrated control over  
social media platforms. When  
a few powerful entities  
hold sway over these  
platforms, they can  
influence content visibility,  
algorithmic curation, and  
even censor certain viewpoints,  
potentially undermining the  
diversity of opinions and  
impeding open political discourse.  
An illustrative example is  
the case of Facebook's  
content moderation policies,  
which have faced criticism  
for favoring specific political  
narratives or suppressing



content from marginalized groups. Such control over social media can limit the potential for genuine democratic engagement by shaping the information landscape in ways that align with the interests of these platforms or their owners, thereby impacting the broader political conversation.

Roberts, M. E. (2017) How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction. Not engaged Argument. American Political Science Review.

The way forward to promote digital democracy involves a dual approach of social campaigns and technological advancements. Social campaigns should focus on raising awareness



about the importance of inclusive online participation, educating citizens about their digital rights and encouraging active engagement in digital processes. Concurrently, leveraging technology enables the development of user-friendly platforms that enable transparent and accessible online voting, deliberation, and policy discussions. For instance, the "e-Estonia" initiative in Estonia has successfully integrated digital signatures, e-voting, and online governance tools, enhancing citizens' participation and government responsiveness. (L.A. Nguyen 2019, "Electronic Participation", Government Information.)

Through this combined strategy, a synergistic effect can be achieved,



empowering citizens to contribute meaningfully to the decision-making process and ensuring robust digital democracy.

Similarly, in crafting legislation to curb unchecked freedom of expression lies in striking a balance between safeguarding individual rights and preventing harm to society. This entails defining clear boundaries for speech that incites violence, spreads hate, or disseminates false information, while still preserving the core principles of free speech. For instance, the German Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) can serve as a reference as it requires social media platforms to promptly remove illegal content, including hate



## Speech

their potential societal harm. Adopting a similar approach globally, while incorporating safeguards to prevent undue censorship would help address the challenges posed by unbridled freedom of expression while upholding democratic values.

Moreover, allocating increased funding towards digitalized democracy through social media platforms to enhance and encourage political participation. By leveraging the expansive reach and engagement potential of social media, governments and organizations can disseminate information, foster discussions, and



mobilize citizens for active involvement in political processes. For instance, during the 2020 U.S. presidential election, social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter played a pivotal role in disseminating candidates' policies and encouraging voter registration, thereby amplifying citizen engagement.

This approach aligns with the growing digital landscape and could lead to more inclusive and informed democratic practices. (The New York Times, "How Social Media is Ruining Politics," October 2020).

In a nutshell, the advent of digital democracy, facilitated by social media, has ushered in a transformative era



of political participation. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and technology-driven, harnessing the power of social media to engage citizens in the democratic process is both a prudent and progressive approach. By leveraging these platforms to disseminate information, encourage debates and mobilize individuals, governments and organizations can bridge gaps, amplify voices, and cultivate a more inclusive and informed citizenry. However, this evolution also demands a cautious approach, as the unchecked spread of misinformation and the potential for polarization remain critical challenges. As we move forward, it is imperative to foster an



environment where the  
benefits of digital democracy  
are maximized, while  
safeguards are put in  
place to uphold the  
integrity and vitality of  
democratic ideals in this  
evolving landscape.