

Role of social media in shaping public opinion and democracy

Outlines:-

1. Introduction

Thesis statement: Social media plays significant role in shaping what people think and how they engage in democratic processes, making it a crucial factor in modern politics and society.

2. How does social media shape public opinion and democracy - An Overview

3. Benefits of social media regarding public discourse and democracy:-

- a) Spreads of political awareness
- b) Assist in political decision making
- c) Rapid news sharing
- d) upgrading living standard
- e) Boost up the citizen's engagements
- f) election campaigns through social media

4. Demerits of social media in context of public discourse and democracy:-

- a) spoil of moral values

- b) misleading information
- c) promotion of biased views
- d) revealing of national secrets
- e) spoil mental health of people

5. Remedies to eradicate demerits of social media:

- a) application of proper central mechanism
- b) launching awareness of campaigns
- c) balancing free expression and curbing harmful content
- d) effective role of regulatory authority
- e) independent role of judiciary
- f) promotion of unbiased political views

6. Conclusion

Kevin Gross says that Technology can improve or undermine democracy depending on how it is used and who controls it. Right now, it is controlled by too few. Social media plays a two edge sword role in society. Social media has been utilized as a potent tool by

politicians, and even people to achieve their aims once it became clear that social media has the most impact on public opinion of a ~~s~~ and democracy. Social media spreads public awareness, filter out political decision making, and boost up the engagements of people. It is also a platform for electoral campaigns and source for news sharing. At the same time, many social evils and propagandas also spread through social media. But some measurements can make social media more powerful tool for upgrading social behavior and ^{can} shape democratic society. Social media plays a significant role in shaping what people think and how they engage in democratic processes, making it a crucial factor in modern politics and society.

Social media refers

to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. The major social media platforms are Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp, Tiktok, Youtube and Twitter. Social media is a tool that can be used to engage public and communities. An estimate views reveals that over 75 percent people use social media in the world. It has made easier to manipulate and divide people, but also see it informs and raises awareness. According to Pew Research Network 34 percent of U.S. adults think social media has been good for democracy, it has a large positive impact on public behavior and democracy. So, it has concluded that social media is an essential important part of life.

As mentioned

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above, social media spreads public awareness in society. The public spheres is made up of a gathering of persons who engage in discourse on various topics. Numerous valuable content shapes people ideas and diversify their thinking. According to Lamia Kamel in CC Plus, the younger generation realized that social media platforms were not just created for amusement but also played a significant part in the emergence of social movements, helping them to accomplish their objectives and shift political perspectives. Therefore, social media is a good use of public opinion's shaping platforms

As like public awareness, it has also impact on decision making of political authorities. Political decision making have made revisions to traditional model of political decisions because the popularity of online social

networks as a tool for exchanging information, connecting with others, and displaying affective reactions. Public reactions on social media shapes the policy making approaches. As Abraham Lincoln said that democracy is a government in which people make decisions for the people by the people. The role of information through social media rationalizing preferences of policy makers and directly linked with public.

From decision making to share of news, social media role works as a bridge between among nations. Accessibility of news is just another most advantage of social media. According to Forbes survey, social media has become the main source of news with more than 2.4 billion internet users, nearly 64.5 percent receive

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breaking news through social media.

That is a huge number of people and these news shapes their critical thinking. People analyzes through social media that which party is doing a good work for public as they share on social media. The political persons reshape the public's ideologies through news on social media.

There is another important role of social media which is upgrading living standard of society. as a Modern innovation has changed the patterns of socializing. Advanced forms of communication are paving ways for people to convey their ideologies to other. On the survey of Global Science Review, 2019 result show that Social Media correlate with Political awareness at 594, Political Efficacy at 587 and correlate with Political Participation

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at 500 usage of social media. It is mobilizing the citizens and inspires them to actively participate. Thus, Social Media is shaping people's living standard and reshaping their priorities towards democratic system.

Social media is not only inspiring but boosting the citizen's engagements. People active more politically on social media. World democratic countries like Sweden, Norway, Iceland, New Zealand, Canada, America, Pakistan and India allow their citizens for equal political participation. According to report of Khan Shehbaz, 2015, it is easy for Pakistani citizens to politically socialize with policy makers through social media. Therefore, social media earned this credit to win the people's engagement on these platforms.

As people's engagement has increase, election campaigns started on these platforms. Many political leaders raises their campaigns through Twitter, Facebook streams or Podcast. People can demand their needs through social media. In this scenerio, Arab league is the true example for this. Moreover, electoral campaigns connects people from every corner of country and social media spreads the awareness of free and fair elections. Thus, social media enhance the dignity of vote and election campaigns.

Besides above positive sides of social media role in public discourse and democracy, there are some misuses of social media. Through

these, some negative impacts and 'spoil of moral values' is one of them. These tools become lethal for our social and family norms if used for maligning and targeting others, and promoting false and malicious religious, ethical and political propagandas. Sultan Ahmed, an IT expert, says said that no doubt social media is a useful facility ensuring access to valley of information but if misused, it becomes lethal for our society and political situations. Excessive use of uncontrolled social media badly damages moral values by breaking social and domestic bonds. So, connectivity has a marvelous role but it has negative impacts on behavior and democratic society.

Another, negative use

is misleading information through social media. Fake news about any political member is so common. Members of opposite parties and international establishment use this tool for uprising against the governments. An innocent scene, photograph can be reshaped used for abusive trolling and spread of misinformation.

Biased religious-political content is another main problem on social media. Through this, extremists shape public's minds and urge them to become extremists. Experiments have shown that media bias affects behavior and more specifically influences the readership's political ideology. More generally, biased articles and sharing on Whatsapp, Twitter, Facebook can be an unfair representation

of people or country, which can lead to negative stereotypes and eroding social biasness. Therefore, social media has a very large effect on society and democracy.

There is another threat arising through social media which is secret revealing about national interests.

Documents include national secrets sharing is key international concern for social media. US based agency 'The Pentagon' reveals that over 100 images marked with "Top secret" were posted in social media app around march 1, 2023. Additionally, some parties — leading ^{parties} also involves in these conspiracies. More or less, they shape people's minds and sometime hateful thoughts begins. Hence, the social media shows the sensitiveness thro in regard

of national secrets.

Above mentioned negative aspects leads not to only to reshape people's thinking and affecting govt policies but spreads mental problems. Sickness through social media affect highly cognitive skills. A positive mind can do positive work for nations but sick & mentality spreads negativism only. Social media has been considered the fourth pillar of democracy. Some people take things fake news too seriously. This can harm people health reshape their ideas from positive to negative. So use of social media needs some remedies cautions also.

One of the best strategy can follows that is enhancement of

application of central mechanism.

A centralized social media platform is basically a social media platform that is owned and controlled by a central or singular entity.

A big example of centralized social media platforms are Twitter which is a social media for posting short posts known as tweets. There can be used proper filtration modes and people solely get less affected.

Awareness campaigns can also boost engagement on social media in proper way. The problem is that these social media apps available to everyone who has mobile phone and internet. Children and even elders can use but no one very few knew what is

actual purpose of social media. Launching campaigns about safe use of social media can protect privacy concerns of democratic societies and nations. Therefore, fair use of social media campaigns can eradicate the negative impact of

There should be limit to express views about sensitive topics or areas of society. Encryption or authentication can safe ~~peo~~ public from harmful content. As people uses fake identification and spread misinformation among people nations, This should completely banned on social media. So, the political views or unbiased views only share or express through these digital apps.

Making laws about use of social media can help to lead effective democracy. Social media platforms, regulators and participants must ensure fair and equal access to public political discussion. This means giving everyone equal legal rights to participate in public debate, to stand for public office and to vote. In short, practical reforms of filter can bring effective role of social media in democracy.

One of most dominant issue is hate speech or biased political views. To sort out this problem, there must be some kind of censorship or filtering in posts of social media. As Jack Goldsmith, CEO, Harvard University wrote

that Anyone on internet can speech on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. In social media, there is freedom of speech but ~~the~~ sometime issues of 'bad' speech arises. They stress that how difficult it is to develop remedies given that about bad speech. There Federal agency set-up and experts can sort this issue. Hence, a complete set-up and censorship may safe the participant of social media about biased and hatred speech.

To sum up, all above ^{good} causes and ^{bad} effects of social media has wide relation to democracy. Democratic societies can take benefits like political awareness, decision making, urgent news sharing and upgrading living standard, they

can also campaigning on social media about elections and boosting citizen engagements.

Meanwhile, there are some demerits of social media.

But these are solveable and can eradicate through proper management.

Hence, social media has role in shaping public opinion and democracy.