

The Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion and Political Discourse

1 Introduction:

Social media significantly influences public opinion and political discourse by facilitating access to information and amplifying voices, yet it also fosters misinformation and polarization. However, these effects can be mitigated through digital literacy, fact checking, and effective regulation.

"Thesis Statement"

1 Positive Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion and Political Discourse.

2.1: Facilitates rapid access to political information and news

C.P: 2020 US elections (Pew Research)

2.2: Encourages political engagement through campaigns and online debates

C.P: Arab Spring (2011)

2.3: Amplifies marginalized and underrepresented voices

2.4: Empowers citizen journalism enabling real time reporting

C.P: Aljazeera in Palestine

2.5: Mobilizes social movements and activism

C.P: Climate activism

2.6: Raises awareness of social and political issues

C.P: COVID-19

2.7: Promotes education and Political literacy among citizens.

3: Negative role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion and Political Discourse.

3.1: Spreads misinformation and fake news C.P.: 2016 US election

3.2: Creates echo chambers and Polarization

C.P.: ~~Role of facebook in~~ Myanmar (2017)

3.3: Manipulation of content through Algorithms, C.P.: Christchurch Mosque attacker livestreamed fueling emotions

3.4: Facilitates foreign interference and online political manipulation

C.P.: 90% of ISIS Propaganda was distributed online (Europol - 2020)

3.5: Enables manipulation by political parties or interest groups

C.P.: Freedom House Report (2022)

3.6: Limits attention on Complex Political issues C.P.: Gaza Crisis

4: Managing the Impact of Social Media

4.1: Promotion of digital literacy and critical thinking among users

C.P.: Finland's national curriculum on media literacy.

4.2: Encouraging Fact-Check and responsible Share of information.

4.3:- Urge Social media companies to improve content moderation and algorithm transparency. C.P :- EU's digital Services Act (2022)

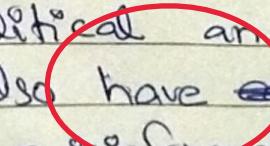
4.4:- Engaging civil society and media campaigns to educate citizens about misinformation

4.5:- Encouraging inclusive and constructive Online Discourse.

5:- Conclusion

In the digital age, Social media has become a powerful tool for reshaping the public opinion and political discourse. As articulated by Mark Zuckerberg, "Social media creates a community by bringing people closer together." As Social media became an arena of political dialogue and significant platform for rapid information and communication between users in 21st century.

No need to add facts and quotes in the introduction except attention grabber

From Twitter Trends to Viral Campaigns, social media has transformed the way societies form opinions and engage in political discourse reaching millions in seconds. As articulated by Mark Zuckerberg, "Social media creates a community by bringing people closer together." The digital community is spreading quickly influencing every sector including education, society and political landscape. Social media benefitted the information and communication process in multiples such as decentralizing information and freedom of speech. According to Data Reportal (2024), around 8.04 billions people use social media worldwide which makes up to 62% of the world's population. This statistic shows that digital platforms are becoming more relevant and significant in individual and social life. The political dimension, however, is greatly influenced by it. Social media is playing a positive role such as decentralizing information from traditional sources and encouraging political and social dialogue, it also has ~~consequences~~ consequences. These include misinformation,  

manipulation of content, and creation of echo chambers resulting in polarization and extremism in a society. As noted by Sherry Turkle (MIT) "social media brings us together and sets us apart." While social media gives voice to marginalized community, it also fosters hate speech and radicalization. However, social media can be a significant source for public diplomacy and governance if these challenges are managed effectively, such as rising digital awareness campaigns and encouraging fact check among society. Social media plays both positive role and negative role in political discourse but it is up to users how responsibly they use it.

Social media plays a significant role such as rapid access of information, encouraging political engagement and amplifying marginalized voices.

Digital revolution facilitates the rapid access of political information by decentralizing it and giving control to normal citizens. Lack of trust on traditional media encouraged the people to trust more on social media platforms. This revolutionized the media industry as citizens are now

engaged in receiving and forwarding the news quickly allowing other users to view ~~unbiased~~ political ~~news~~ updates and information in real time.

Pew research shows that around 60% of ~~voters~~ population was relying on social media ^{for political update} during 2020 US elections. The lack of trust on traditional state operated channels is evident in this report where people trust more on information they ~~receive~~ ^{get} on social media. This decentralization of information encourages political debates in the society.

Increase use of such platforms encourages political engagement and dialogue among people.

~~Political~~ users are now more engaged in political arena than ever in history. ^{by} The freedom of speech fosters political debates on trending issues requiring attention.

Arab spring is one of the result of this political arena where the death of one single person ignited the fire of resistance among many Arab states.

Furthermore, these platforms

Playing an important role in amplifying the voices of the marginalized and underrepresented voices. "Social

media is a powerful tool to give people a voice." This statement of former US President Barack Obama signifies the relevance of social media.

Additionally, Social media empowers citizen journalism, where people now have the power to spread information ~~and~~ report real time events. This approach have uncovered the biased reporting of traditional media sources and enabled users to share information ~~with~~ by livestreaming the events. Palestinian Genocide ~~was~~ by Israel was reported ~~unbiased~~ by citizen journalism uncovering mass atrocities by Israel's army. Where social media gave rights to citizen journalism, it also mobilizes citizens.

Coupled with giving right for uncovering biased news, it also mobilizes citizens ~~and~~ ~~etc~~ against these atrocities and injustices. People are now actively participating in social movement such as Climate activism and human rights movements. The spread of short clips of flood in Pakistan in 2022 encouraged people around the world to recognize climate change as a real ~~as~~ security threat to humanity.

Similarly, it rises awareness of social and political issues enabling citizens to ~~not~~ understand the problem. Many social policies fail due to lack of awareness among people such as Polio vaccines which is facing resistance from rural population. ~~How~~ However, COVID-19 ~~is~~ significantly ~~was~~ a different case study where, by utilizing Social media, people come to know the causes, consequences and SOPs against this pandemic. Ultimately, Social media is a significant source ^{also} for awareness campaigns and can be used to ~~it~~ educate society.

Moreover, Social media promotes political education and literacy among society, enabling them to understand the interests of different political parties. By differentiating and analyzing social and political party's interests, individual can rationally vote bypassing emotional attachment with any political leader or party.

Indeed, Social media is playing an important role in reshaping political discourse. Yet, it has negative uses such as manipulation, misinformation and extremism.

Firstly, Social media

have no control over information spread which results in ~~sp~~ misinformation and fake news clustered with reality. This cloud ~~leads~~ lead people to believe in what they ~~see~~ on social media. Misinformation often spreads faster than the real one. According to MIT report ~~of~~ of 2018 "fake news spreads ~~at~~ six times faster than the real news. The inability of people to differentiate ~~the~~ between information direct ~~from~~ them from the reality.

Secondly, consistent interest in information often which supports their pre-existing beliefs creates echo chambers and resultantly polarizing around the same idea without cons. This limits the mental capacity to think out of the box or consider other perspectives. This polarization often encourages extreme narratives. Facebook Played a huge role in encouraging mayanmars crisis where mass genocide against Rohingya muslims was encouraged by the civilian population who were trapped in the echo chambers.

Thirdly, ~~Political~~ Algorithms also play a significant role in shaping narratives of the user.

The Shooter of Christchurch Mosque claimed that social media made him to do it. Furthermore, the live stream he did during Shootout, ignited the fire among global muslim community.

Subsequently, foreign actors can also ignite hate speech among citizens against established governments. Moreover non-state actors such as terrorists have the access to recruit new members. According to Europol Report - 90% of ISIS propaganda was distributed online.

Ultimately, citizens questions the credibility of government.

Besides foreign interference, Political Parties ~~also~~ also use digital media to propagate good image of its own and ~~by~~ criticizing others. This hate speech against each other creates ~~the~~ "us vs them" mentality often radicalizing youth against each other. According to freedom house report - over 40 governments worldwide manipulate online discussions to control political narratives.

Lastly, ~~excessive~~ extreme coverage of non-relevant event diverge the public attention from complex political issues. Western

media sources divert the public attention away from ~~mass killings~~ sports in Gaza towards ~~events~~, such as football, or movie theaters. These elements along with algorithmic influence ~~lead~~ to results in major cases unheard or uncovered.

Social media is difficult to control ~~but~~ by man. However, states and individuals can manage how they use it.

Promoting digital literacy is the first and foremost solution to manage the risks of social media. By educating ~~youth~~ and public, states can limit the spread of misinformation and fake news. Increased critical thinking before believing on some news can ~~can~~ improve the quality of content. Countries can learn from Finland's national curriculum on media literacy approach to educate the society.

Furthermore encouraging fact checking before sharing an information can significantly reduce the impact of false narratives. As signified by Barack Obama "Social media is a powerful tool to give people a voice - but it is up to us how responsibly we use it".

Responsible use of social media can greatly ~~influence the~~ encourage peace among divergent groups and ideologies.

Moreover, states should urge social media companies to improve content moderation and algorithmic transparency. Companies can ~~not~~ create laws and legislation to control misinformation. Cook AI of "X" formerly known as Twitter, is an example of how companies can adopt certain measures. Besides this EU's digital Service Act which forces tech giants to take responsibility for harmful content, can improve the quality of ~~the~~ content.

Engaging civil society and encouraging inclusive and constructive online discourse can fosters research based discussions.

Antonio Guterres "Technology must be a force for good, not for division." The social must be used to further peace process and mutual understanding over pre-existing beliefs.

Therefore social media must be used to serve the humanity, fosters peace, ~~and~~ and mutual respect. As social media

influences the public opinion and political discourse by both Positive and Negative ways, if it can also help bring the people together ~~and~~

Work on paper presentation.

Avoid cutting

Tenses mistakes

Avoid subject verb agreement

Follow proper structure of body paragraph

Work on articulation

Write a formalized writing style