

# English Essay

Title 'The Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion and Democracy'

## Outline

1. Introduction

2. The Correlation of Social Media with Public Opinion and Democracy

- How Social Media plays an optimistic role in shaping public opinion:

a- provides platform to share citizens' concerns

b- increases access to information.

(c) creates diversity in thinking patterns.

d- bridges communication gap between the less knowledgeable/informed and more knowledgeable/informed.

4- How Social Media facilitates

a. Democracy:

a- enhances citizen-government interaction

b- increases responsiveness of government.

c- provides an opportunity for increased transparency and accountability.

Replace enhances increase words

5. How Social Media proves to be detrimental in shaping public opinion:

- a- spreads misinformation. (manipulates the discourse)
- b- Emboldens hate speech.
- c- destroys the ability to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong.

6. How Social Media threatens democracy?

- a- promote polarization.
- b- promotes political extremism
- c- elevates breach of privacy.

7: Social Media can foster a positive shift in public opinion and strengthen democracy by:

- a- properly regulating the websites, applications and softwares.
- b- Increasing media literacy among public.
- c- Enacting laws for cyber bullying and disinformation campaigns.
- d- utilizing social media for

collective action and positive changes in a society.

e. Empowering citizens to identify misinformation and develop healthy online behaviour.

8. Conclusion

Think of social media as a giant megaphone. In the past, only a few people had access to it, but now everyone does. One loud voice can now reach millions, changing opinions and sparking big changes in the society. Social media has now given access to every individual using it, on every matter of life. It's an open space for all to express and connect. It has spread its roots in every corner of the globe, ~~etc~~ constructing public opinion and giving voice to the most acceptable form of government - democracy. It is a double-edged sword; proving to be both <sup>and detrimental as well</sup> ~~optimistic~~ in shaping public discourse and democracy. ~~and~~ It provides a platform for citizen engagement, enhanced access to information, and bridges the communication gaps between

U r good in rhetoric building

Avoid so much cutting

the unlearned and a learned one,  
whi It fosters critic engagement  
and responsiveness on the part  
of governments, which <sup>depict</sup> ~~are~~  
~~as a~~ constructive <sup>entity</sup> ~~features~~.

However, it threatens the public  
discourse and democracy by  
spreading misinformation, brea  
ching privacy, <sup>and</sup> manipulating  
public opinion. To make it a  
productive tool in the society,  
the governments and individuals  
~~must~~ play their roles effective  
ly and wisely. In a nutshell, social  
media holds the power to sway  
public opinion and influence  
democratic norms within a  
society under some limits and  
regulated mechanisms.

Social media is a modern  
day tool, which emerged as media  
for the sake of communication.

and was eventually given in the hands of a social animal - the human being. This creature made this tool favourable for his benefits in every walk of life. The most significant contribution of the social media is that it gave voice to individual thoughts. It became a platform for shaping and sharing of public opinion by a click. It has developed in such a manner that everyone can bring their views, issues, and desires to the light, regardless of their age, gender or class. The general public actively involves and engages on this platform and build their perspective on the ~~con~~cern, thus building their narrative. For example: the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter was used over 48 million times

on Twitter between May 2<sup>nd</sup> and June 7, 2020, following the murder of George Floyd, highlighting the movement's influence on social media (CNN, June 2020). Social media not only shapes public narrative but also shapes democracy. It also unveils the effects and consequences of the acceptable, and sometimes the pessimistic aspects of forms of governments, whether they are public-friendly or not. In this way, social media ~~becomes~~ direct ly or indirectly <sup>becomes</sup> the voice of an individual residing in any corner of the globe, according to Abraham Lincoln:

'Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people. In this manner, social media is ~~is~~ a powerful instrument to give voice to their thoughts, and the leadership type they demand

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, opinions find their way to screen quickly and do become the word-of-mouth of every individual out there. Indeed, social media has emerged as a puppeteer due to its enormous outreach, as it gives room to every citizen out there to express, communicate and share their stories and grievances and for its promotion, success and betterment. This is, to a greater extent, an optimistic picture of social media, where it is used to comfort the public whenever they are in a state of conflict, chaos or indecision. It provides a space to redress their grievances through multiple websites and applications including Meia, X (Twitter), Instagram and many others. People are heard now, consoled and



resolved with their disputes in the blink of an eye. For example the hashtag #MeToo was used by the survivors of sexual harassment to share their stories. It sparked a global movement, leading to increased awareness, policy changes, and accountability of perpetrators. This is how, social media provides a platform to public for sharing their concerns and their voices are morphed into actions and bring historical changes.

In the era of information technology - it is called so as it is actually the era of social media - the social media has made it handy to acquire and access information for public. Now a person is just a click away from the news of latest advancements in any part of the world, as he has access to the <sup>every</sup> minute

pi. bit of information and any  
 happening across the world. This  
 helps in building public narra-  
 tive regarding any pursuit of  
 life; catering the issues in the  
 world, identifying their problems  
 and current needs, how to  
 behave in that scenarios and  
 much more like that. Hence, there  
 is a bulge of information  
 regarding every domain, happ-  
 ening and sector to indulge  
 into. Examples include, in 2016  
 the number of UK Twitter users  
 is estimated at 15.8 million, while  
 the number of US Twitter users is  
 about 67 million. Thus, the data from  
 Twitter could give a broader picture  
 about public opinions during EU  
 Referendum in UK, and 2016 US  
 Presidential Election (European  
 Economic Review, 2021). This is how,  
 not even people, but also govern

ments are sometimes in need of data to take important decisions based on public sentiments and opinions.

Furthermore, social media also serves as a forum for networking and communication among individuals. It bridges the gaps between the distanced and far-flung sources enriched with information, knowledge or reform-based ideology and those who ~~aren't~~ are not fully aware of their rights, roles and the influence of their voice. It promotes the building of ties to give one's vision a collective voice and thus becomes the mouthpiece of public. Public built their opinion based on the information and the more discussioned debate in that course of time, giving rise to a collective action. Take Greta Thunberg, a

9  
teenager whose lone school strike against climate ~~inaction~~ sparked a global movement as Fridays for Future — which afterwards turned the Global community towards this debate of COPs (COP 26) and climate concerned (BBC, 9 May 2024). Through such different movements by different activists urged the whole world to think about the concerns they were blind and deaf to. In this manner, social media brings diversity in the viewpoints of public by bridging the communication gaps and <sup>among individuals</sup> broadening the linkages in every corner of the globe.

The people-driven ~~form~~ of government is also facilitated by social media, as it enhances the interaction between the citizens and government. Through this way, the government frames their <sup>its</sup>

policies according to the needs of the public, does law-making, catering to its own current challenges. This gives a boom to the economies catering the needs of public, facilitating them at firsthand, ~~to~~ creating opportunities for them. It promotes the countries' socio-economic and political conditions, and eventually they prosper. Social media highlights and makes the people aware about such examples from the world their circumstances, history and fosters prosperity and stability. It is ultimately a two-way relationship, where individuals support the government, enables mass participation and provide instant feedbacks <sup>where</sup>. On the other hand, governments invest and work for the betterment of citizens, keeping aside their own personal interests. Barack Obama's historic win, as the first African-

American President of USA, got immense <sup>Public</sup> people feedback from his online voters through Facebook and Twitter, as young voters rely more on social media. He also ran his Presidential Campaign (2008) on media platforms to instigate the young voters.

(Central European University, 2022)

In this way, the citizens choose their representatives collectively to meet the needs of public and social media serves as a valuable asset.

§ Digital media promotes democracy by increasing responsiveness on the shoulders of the government. The government is more public-centered rather than self-centered, catering their interests, needs and challenges in a tactful manner. It holds strong control

on the managerial, monitorial  
 and facilitative roles in a country.  
 Social media plays the role  
 of a bridge connecting public  
 concerns with <sup>that of</sup> the governments  
 agenda, and <sup>the</sup> governments become  
 more concerned and ~~linked~~  
 with ~~the task~~ of making it  
 more transparent and community  
 oriented. Media provides strengthens  
 the ties, and governments  
 work tirelessly for promoting  
 public good. Denmark's example  
 in this regard is well suited,  
 as it is one of the world's  
 finest democracies. Denmark  
 effectively uses ~~social~~ social  
 media to enhance government  
 transparency, citizen engage-  
 ment, and responsiveness. The  
 Danish government ensures real-  
 time communication, share feed-  
 back and news regarding country.

U r knowledgeable person good

13  
progress and address the queries of public (Journal, 2023). This is how, media backs democracies by making governments more responsible and public-oriented.

In a democratic setup, the media plays a significant role in holding the leadership accountable for their actions and words. This technological era brings every aspect of one's life to the light, especially the politicians, who are the guardians of state, and gives opportunity to the public to have a complete outlook of the socio-economic conditions of the country, thus commenting on governments' roles and their effectivity. The transparency ultimately gains trust of public on politicians and institutions, which paves way for prosperity.



and stability of the countries. Every year Transparency International issues its annual report and Scandinavian countries, including Finland and Sweden leads the ladder by trusting the free and fair election system and voting rights provide to them. The state institutions prove to be the beacons of trust...

(Dawn, 2022). In such circumstances transparency and accountability, which are the core pillars of any democracy are strengthened by the digital display of every report and statistics on these media platforms to keep it on the record and in public's

Despite all its positive impacts, media also plays an infamous role in this century. With the development of internet technology and different social

media platforms, the misinformation once spread by the word-of-mouth is now rapidly spread through social media platforms with a wide range of influence and impact. A large amount of false information and spread of rumors have become part of the society, narrated even by the educated and civilized class of people. It distorts their psychological health and misinterprets their role in society. It ultimately contributes to sowing discord among the societies, individuals and maligning the state's image in the eyes of international community. An example of misinformation during COVID-19 pandemic, regarding its evolution, surge, symptoms and death toll was all taking rounds on social media, out of which

most of it was regarded 'entirely inaccurate or completely made-up claims' by American Research labs.

This is how social media has become a malignant tool that becomes the spreads the fake and fabricated information to a greater extent, which later on becomes the public narrative, thus distorts the national image and hampers prosperity.

In addition to misinformation, social media also contributes in erasing the hate-speech. The scattered tweets and facebook posts coalesce to bring mass protests that result in toppling regimes and re-writing political manifestos such as # Arab Spring. Such social movements galvanize supporters across geographical and ideological divides and push for long overdue societal shifts.

This ability to potentiate collective action represents the true muscle of social media's influence that transforms isolated opinions into resounding voices of change.

# Arab Spring started from Tunisia, which was the result of extreme fury of ~~the~~ Tunisian public on their government, causing political upheaval and regime change in many Mediterranean countries, including Egypt, Libya, Morocco and others. (European Institute of Mediterranean (IAEMed), 2013). This is how, social media builds ~~but~~ shapes public opinion aggressively, and <sup>can</sup> result in mass disturbances and turbulence.

Social media erode the capacity to discern between right and wrong, thus undermining informed decision-making within the society. Multiple social media trends and tweets regarding ~~of~~ happening

make public double-minded regarding the authenticity of the news, or sometimes makes them a blind follower and advocate of such chaotic events, thus deterring their abilities to distinguish between right and wrong. The media holds influential character, but it brutally impacts the decisive capabilities among the public to support or restrain any incident. They just adopt a single motto and "bring chaos and disruption" in the society.

#Aurat March in Pakistan is one such example. The agenda is to support the less dominant gender, but the ill-usage of social media and the slogan was got so strong that it leads to the disruption of public discourse through biased judgement

Dawn,  
2023

... "In this way, people driven by emotions, when see any new debate, jump into the pool with

out sound understanding, thus remain ~~to~~ remain lost between actuality and fantasy. Therefore, social media holds immense political to shape public opinions broadly by determining the ability of conformism and decision-making.

In addition to playing a devastating role in public opinion, democracy also lags behind in this century due to the impacts of social media as it promotes polarization. Media platforms give rise to increased risk of online radicalization due to different political doctrines and increased polarization for or one side or group. This potentiates violence and threatening of individual and societal well being. In this way, the state-survivors ~~and~~ become rebels in front of the leaderships and hinders the development and

sustainability. For example: Many Analysts regarded Donald Trump's Election Campaign of 2020 as a social media war. #USElection2020 and #RealDonaldTrump got 1.2 million retweets at the time of US elections and he was crowned as the 45th President of United States of America. (Ballot Pedia 2020). This is how, via increased popularity, democracies just become a ~~man-m~~ one man show, sidelining the competitors and falling of regimes built on social media fronts.

Furthermore, digital media creates political extremism, threatening the democracies in the nations holding it. When the ~~mismatched~~ <sup>misleading</sup> information and the actual information ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> jumbled, it gives rise to aggression and antagonism. It leads to propaganda formation against one particular group, thus agita-

ting the masses. Media, now considered the fourth pillar of democracy, when shows biasness or distorted speech <sup>itself</sup> attracts invites riots and anarchy. Political extremism is one of the worst <sup>activities</sup> ~~forms~~ that bring push the democracies to the brink of disaster and threatens their ~~ext~~ existence. Extremist groups like ISIS use social media for propaganda. According to <sup>India New Bank</sup> 2/10/16 ISIS Hyderabad module case, the ISIS used Facebook to spread propaganda including <sup>Indian</sup> Youth. Through these <sup>such</sup> ~~these~~ <sup>promoting</sup> ~~extremism~~ nexuses, the democracies are at chaos as Winston Churchill famously said; Democracy is the worst political system in the world, except for all others. What make it the worst are ~~ex~~ definitely the factors.

Social media undermines democratic principles by breaching the privacy of users; thus



damaging the roots of democracy.  
The sharing of data and information about peoples' personal lives has proved to be the biggest disadvantage of social media. It is not ~~also~~ with the public but with leaders and experts and institutions have <sup>also</sup> fallen prey to this <sup>vicious</sup> ~~trap~~ of social media. This digital age has exposed <sup>to</sup> each and every aspect of the lives of people, eroding trust on institutions and politicians.

For example, the political rivals in Pakistan try to hack the data and expose the ~~private~~ <sup>private</sup> data of other party's personals, <sup>in</sup> <sup>which</sup> include their audio or video leaks. Such cases are quite common for general public and officials whose <sup>users</sup> data is used to threaten the other and this hinders the democratic activities and democracy to flourish.

Digital Media can foster a positive shift in public opinion and strengthen democracy when it is regulated properly. The When proper checks are posed on websites, applications and softwares, it promotes social good too. A balance of <sup>positive</sup> content and hateful content within the limits is crucial. The programming of softwares and applications can be controlled <sup>by authorities</sup> to this very level, that it ~~does not~~ hamper the democratic process by shaping such a narrative of ~~p~~ which is contemptuous, illegally uploaded and now up graded, including abusive material, hate speech, incitement to violence and so on. This could promote a healthy and democratic environments for national growth. Social networks such as Face book, Instagram and Twitter,

now X, if regulated and managed could become worthy revolutions for the pioneers of this generation (Dr Marian-Alexandra Rizoiu - University of Sydney - Aug 23). This is how, nations can thrive if digital space is regulated.

Another fundamental key of promoting a united and healthy, democratic public opinion is educating the people to this much extent that they can differentiate what to follow and what not to. This sense of ~~public~~ literacy would make them sensitive to prejudice and learn to appreciate diversity, in terms of choosing their representatives. Ultimately, they could eagerly promote wisdom and could handle the leadership crisis. They ~~can~~ <sup>Public</sup> promote ~~the~~ ~~use~~ of e-governance which helps them enhance the overall image of ~~power~~

their societies/countries. Finland is one such country, which has integrated media literacy into its education system, focussing on critical thinking and digital literacy from a young age. which is why, it is among the happiest countries in the world.

Increasing media literacy is a significant measure in strengthening public democracy.

Sir g why reflecting so much confusion

A proper law-and-order mechanism to counter cyber bullying and disinformation campaigns aids in promoting public good and good governance.

An accountability mechanism should be enacted on its use for public safety, and deterring blasphemy and criminal activities. Proper checks for social media age limit for children, content management and controlled duration to certain

applications is imperative in this regard. This would ultimately lessen the cyber crimes and disinformation campaigns. The Digital Services Act is a groundbreaking law in EU digital operations forcing them to be legally accountable for everything from fake news to manipulation... (The Guardian, Aug 23) This is how, such laws can definitely ensure public safety, trust on leaders and institutions.

Promoting positive changes in society through social media movements and propogates collective action and healthy changes in the society. Democracy flourishes and prospers where first public and governments join hands for public benefit. This induces positive change in society and it is through social

media. Digital platforms aggravate individuals to take part in campaigns for non-interest serving public interest and it supports the nations on every scale. A Youth Social-Political Movement in Nigeria was propagated by social media to encourage the preservation of our ecosystem through planting trees. It mobilized people from all over the state for a walk through social media platforms.

(Methew Tegha - Connect Us - 2022)

Through social media, such positive activities can be strengthened for public and social good.

Along with other practices for bringing a positive shift in the public narrative and people-government coordination is the ability to identify misinformation by empowering citizens.

A healthy online behaviour with a distinction between what is wrong and what is right is necessary for boosting a democratic environment in a nation. Via multiple checks and regulated content insurance, the entangled misinformation can be rooted up from society. Citizens being apt and able enough to distinguish between the fabricated and actual information can better boost the democracy. The Scandinavian countries are rich in their social values as they are more civilized in the usage of media platforms to tackle their problems. This is how, empowering citizens and developing a strong sense of online information can pave way for success and dignity of the nations.

In a nutshell, social media helps to influence.

public opinion and strengthen democracy in a society if properly used and regulated.

It plays both beneficial and drastic roles in shaping the public opinion and democracy, but under controlled conditions.

It can, on one hand, address the public concerns, <sup>provides</sup> gives room for gaining information and bridges gap between the sectors. It facilitates democracy by enhancing public-government interaction, governments responsibilities and opportunity for accountability via various platforms and tools.

On the other hand, it plays a drastic role by spreading misinformation, hate speech and public dissatisfaction and confusion. It also threatens democracy by promoting polarization, political extremism and breach of privacy. It can be managed by proper

Rather than repeating g word by word it is better to give essence of outline



law and order, control and increasing media literacy. Therefore, social media can promote public good when it is regulated and monitored effectively.