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Influence of Social Media on Political Activism: A critical Review

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Abstract: *This study examines how social media have accelerated the political activism especially the political campaigning, voting, mobilizing masses and political advertising. A desk review including qualitative approach was followed to conduct this study. The analysis reveals that social media platforms such as Face book and Twitter amplify civic engagement in a political system by facilitating swift information diffusion and coordinated collective actions. The social media has accelerated the political activism. The findings reveal that in the current era the political campaigning is increasingly data driven, leveraging real-time analytics to target specific voter segments and shape public discourse in a less time. This review found that previous studies show that social media influences voting by increasing voter turnout through peer pressure and thus enhanced the political activism. Social media plays a role in organizing protests, by spreading information, coordinating actions, and mobilizing large groups, which directly has increased the speed and reach of public issues within a political system. In democratic countries like India, social media have become pivotal catalysts that democratize participation by enabling rapid mobilization and widespread dissemination of political messages. Further studies are required to assess the effectiveness of digital campaigning on political activism through voter behavior and policy formulation. This study also stress on identifying the major challenges faced by the social media in enhancing the political activism.*

Keywords: *Social Media, Political Activism, Digital Campaigning, Voter Behavior, Policy Formulation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is an integral part of the 21st century, transforming communication, business, and culture by providing platforms for connection, information sharing, and community building**.** The emergence of different social media platforms has profoundly reshaped the landscape of modern society. Social media has now become an essential part of our lives, and billions of people across the globe are using different platforms of social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. One of the primary benefits of social media is its capacity to facilitate widespread information dissemination and foster rapid public discourse, thereby influencing various societal domains (Kanchnawongpaisan & Kulachai, 2023). Social media allows individuals to communicate easily across geographic and socio-political boundaries, thereby amplifying the reach and impact of activist movements (Kharel, 2024). This dynamic digital environment fosters collective identity and decentralized leadership, enabling swift mobilization and inclusivity within social and political movements (Chakma, 2025). This includes the instantaneous dissemination of information, real-time communication, and dynamic organization, all of which are instrumental in enabling activists to orchestrate protests, raise awareness, and mobilize support for critical issues (Keith, 2023).

The political scenario of every democratic country refers to the current state of political affairs, which can include elections, major policy debates, and the dynamics between different political parties and groups. The modern political system has now being changed, as the people across the globe are getting actively engaged in political discourse and

activism (Venus et al., 2025). People day by day are getting mature and educated politically, and they get involved in the political system more frequently and fervently than ever before, to amplify their voices and influence public opinion (Chakma, 2025). The political awareness among the people has been significantly enhanced, which provide unprecedented access to political information and foster dynamic discussions (Adila et al., 2023; Afyare, 2025). Political awareness of an individual refers to the degree to which an individual understands and is informed about political institutions, policies, and events, which in turn influences their engagement and participation in politics. Political awareness helps in developing political activism among people.

Political activism are the the action taken to influence political reform or activities. Political activism is action taken to promote or oppose political change through various methods, including voting, campaigning, and lobbying, but often extending beyond conventional politics to include more passionate or unconventional actions like protests, demonstrations, and online campaigns. The goal is to raise awareness, influence public opinion, and pressure officials or corporations on issues like civil rights, environmental protection, and other social concerns. Before the internet and social media, political activism relied on physical, face-to-face organizing and traditional media like pamphlets, newspapers, and television to mobilize people. Common methods included public demonstrations, marches, boycotts, and civil disobedience, which required extensive on-the-ground efforts for planning and execution. Organizing often took place in community centers or homes, focusing on personal connections and word-of-mouth communication. After the evolution of social media the political activism has transformed, enabling individuals to voice opinions, organize movements, and influence policy with unprecedented directness and speed (Ariestandy et al., 2024). This digital transformation has demonstrably lowered barriers to participation, making it easier for individuals to access information and mobilizes collective action (Venus et al., 2025; Adila et al., 2023). Its essential to understand the role of social media in shaping political discourse, fostering citizen engagement, and potentially influencing governmental policies (Venus et al., 2025; Sharma et al., 2021). The present study aims to explore the dynamic role of social media as a political arena, specifically examining how it facilitates political activism. This research delves into the intricate mechanisms through which digital platforms enable citizens to engage with political content, express their views, and mobilize for collective action.

2. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative content analysis to systematically examine the complex dynamics of political discourse and information dissemination within prominent social media platforms. The qualitative component involve an in-depth review of academic literature concerning network society, political participation, and collective action theories to establish a foundational understanding of digital activism. The secondary data was collected from reputable sources such as scientific journals, books, government and non-governmental reports, as well as dissertations and conference papers published within the last decade. These sources were meticulously selected to ensure their relevance to social media's impact on political mobilization and activism, thereby providing a comprehensive theoretical and empirical basis for the investigation. The review was conducted by following the PRISMA guidelines, ensuring a systematic and transparent approach to literature selection and synthesis. Finally the results were presented according the themes which govern the political activism.

3. Discussion

The present review was conducted to explain the role of social media in political activism. In modern society, political activism is characterized by the widespread use of digital technology for mobilization and communication, the rise of youth-led, often leaderless movements, and a focus on diverse issues beyond traditional class conflicts, such as climate change, racial justice, and gender equality. in the current era we observe that the people across the globe are connected through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. The political activism has reshaped the landscape of contemporary social movements by providing unprecedented avenues for individuals to participate in political discourse and collective action (Jafari & Jafari, 2022). This shift democratizes participation, allowing diverse voices to contribute to movements, yet it also presents challenges such as the ephemeral nature of online engagement and the risks associated with reliance on centralized platforms (Phillips, 2024). Furthermore, the pervasive influence of social media on political activism extends to its capacity for shaping public opinion and facilitating mass mobilization, particularly among younger demographics and historically marginalized communities (Ariestandy et al., 2024). Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Blackberry Messenger have proven instrumental in driving socio-political

movements by enabling active citizen political engagement (Ajaegbu & Ajaegbu, 2024). These platforms have become indispensable tools for political movements, enabling faster and broader dissemination of information, and fostering inclusive engagement by reducing barriers to participation. However, despite these advantages, challenges such as political polarization and the spread of disinformation pose significant impediments to the effectiveness of digital engagement. In the present study we have collected the information regarding the role of social media on political activism. The social media has both positive and negative role in political activism.

4. Positive impacts of social media on political activism.

- **Amplifying voices**: Social media gives a platform to individuals and groups to broadcast their views to a global audience, bypassing the traditional media's gatekeepers. This amplification is particularly impactful for marginalized communities, allowing their concerns to gain widespread visibility and support (Shah & Khan, 2023). This digital empowerment fosters a more inclusive political landscape where diverse perspectives can contribute to public discourse and policy-making. The visual and video features of platforms like Instagram and TikTok are particularly effective for showcasing political messages and building strong narratives, further extending reach through hashtags and targeted campaigns (Hendrawan et al., 2024). Furthermore, these platforms foster immediate communication, enabling activists to disseminate urgent calls to action and coordinate responses with remarkable efficiency, thereby circumventing traditional organizational hurdles. These platforms also facilitate direct engagement with public figures, enabling real-time dialogue and accountability that was previously unattainable through conventional media (Al-odat et al., 2023).
- **Mobilization and organization**: Activists use social media to organize protests, rallies, and other collective actions by quickly spreading information and galvanizing support. This facilitates rapid response to political events and enables coordination across geographical boundaries, significantly enhancing the logistical capabilities of social movements (Hussain et al., 2023). Moreover, these platforms enable the formation of ephemeral yet impactful online communities that can quickly coalesce around specific causes, facilitating rapid dissemination of information and coordination of actions among participants (Phillips, 2024). This digital infrastructure allows for agile and decentralized organizing, making movements more resilient and responsive to evolving circumstances (Al-odat et al., 2023). Social media tools also enable activists to circumvent traditional power structures, creating direct channels for communication and engagement that can foster a sense of collective identity and shared purpose among participants (Keith, 2023). The social media serves as a critical mechanism for empowering the disenfranchised by providing a platform for voicing shared grievances and organizing resources that may otherwise be unequally distributed (Leong et al., 2018). This is particularly evident in the ability of social networking sites to facilitate the sharing of personal experiences and opinions, thereby linking individuals to broader social causes and enabling support, coordination, and collective response to criticism (Compare et al., 2024). These platforms thus act as a powerful conduit for collective action, transforming individual concerns into widespread social movements (Sanz, 2024).
- **Grassroots fundraising**: Social media platforms facilitate direct, small-dollar donations from supporters, empowering campaigns to fund their activities. This decentralized fundraising model reduces reliance on large donors and traditional financial institutions, thereby increasing the independence and autonomy of political movements and amplifying citizen engagement (Ana et al., 2019). This capacity for widespread micro-donations democratizes financial support for political causes, allowing movements to sustain themselves outside of traditional funding paradigms (Leong et al., 2018). Moreover, the transparency inherent in digital fundraising often builds greater trust with donors, who can see the direct impact of their contributions on campaign activities. This accessibility to funding empowers smaller, community-led initiatives that might otherwise struggle to secure resources, fostering a more diverse and inclusive political landscape (Yadav, 2024). Shift towards direct, public fundraising also cultivates a stronger sense of ownership and commitment among supporters, transforming them from passive observers into active stakeholders in the movement's success. The inherent virality of social media content further amplifies fundraising efforts, reaching wider audiences and generating momentum through shared appeals (Hendrawan et al., 2024). Furthermore, these digital platforms enhance campaign transparency and accountability, as financial contributions and expenditures are often publicly visible, fostering greater trust among supporters and the wider electorate (Rossini et al., 2020).
- **Increased political awareness**: Social media can raise awareness of political issues, especially among young people who might not engage with traditional news sources. This heightened awareness often leads to greater civic participation and a more informed electorate, fostering a dynamic environment for political discourse and

engagement (Kharel, 2024). These platforms act as significant conduits for disseminating information and enabling public responses to governmental activities, thereby promoting greater transparency and accountability in governance (Akbar et al., 2023). Social media serves as a potent tool for digital democracy, enabling citizens to interact directly with government and political processes, thereby reducing the perceived distance between constituents and elected officials (Congge et al., 2023). It allows for the rapid diffusion of political content, often bypassing traditional media filters and enabling citizens to form opinions based on a wider array of perspectives (Velazco et al., 2023).

- **Citizen engagement**: It allows citizens to engage in political discourse, hold leaders accountable, and influence decision-making processes. These platforms facilitate direct communication between constituents and representatives, fostering a more responsive and inclusive political landscape(Hussain et al., 2023). By enabling real-time dialogue and feedback, social media platforms bridge the gap between citizens and policymakers, contributing to a more participatory and representative democracy (Nelimarkka et al., 2020). These digital avenues enable individuals to participate in public discussions, contribute to social movements, and ultimately influence societal decision-making processes (Bell & Reed, 2021). This enhanced engagement also allows for the deconstruction of barriers in the electoral process, enabling even those in rural areas to participate in political debates and access critical information (Okon et al., 2025).

5. Negative impacts of social media on political activism

Despite its potential for positive influence, social media also introduces significant challenges, such as the rapid spread of disinformation and the erosion of democratic discourse (Hobbs, 2020). The pervasive dissemination of fake news and misleading information distorts public sentiment and undermines the legitimacy of political movements, leading to a significant "information crisis" that jeopardizes democratic processes. The major challenges led by social media in political activism include;

- **Spread of misinformation**: False or misleading information can spread rapidly, influencing public opinion and eroding trust in legitimate sources. This phenomenon, termed the "information crisis," is exacerbated by the opaque algorithms of social media platforms and the lack of robust content moderation, which can prioritize sensational or false narratives over factual reporting (Hobbs, 2020). This unprecedented speed and reach of disinformation distinguish the digital era's challenges from past information crises. Moreover, the deliberate creation of websites mimicking authentic news outlets, coupled with automated advertising systems, further facilitates the propagation of fraudulent information designed to serve specific political agendas.
- **Echo chambers**: Algorithms can create filter bubbles where users are primarily exposed to views that align with their own, leading to political polarization. This phenomenon is intensified in contexts like Indonesia, where political campaigns and social movements leverage social media to amplify ideological distinctions, fostering an environment where differing viewpoints are rarely encountered. Consequently, this can lead to a fragmentation of public discourse, hindering constructive dialogue and compromise. Furthermore, the algorithms employed by social media platforms often prioritize engagement, inadvertently promoting content that evokes strong emotional responses, which can include controversial or extreme viewpoints, thereby exacerbating societal divisions (Bell & Reed, 2021).
- **Harassment and abuse**: Activists, particularly those from vulnerable groups, can face online harassment and abuse, which may discourage participation. This hostile online environment can deter individuals from expressing their opinions or engaging in activism, particularly when coordinated campaigns of intimidation are employed. Such digital aggression not only silences marginalized voices but also erodes the democratic principle of free expression within public discourse. Moreover, the lack of adequate filters and controls on these platforms allows for the widespread transmission of false information, further blurring the lines between legitimate news and propaganda. These platforms also allow for the creation and amplification of certain conversations by third parties using advanced instruments, further distorting perceptions and manipulating public opinion .
- **"Slacktivism"**: Some critics argue that online activism (e.g., liking or sharing a post) may not translate into meaningful, offline action. This phenomenon, often termed "clicktivism," suggests that superficial online engagement might substitute for deeper, more impactful forms of political participation. This can lead to a false sense of accomplishment among activists and a diffusion of responsibility, ultimately hindering the effectiveness of social movements and broader political change. The uncritical adoption of digital platforms by

political movements may inadvertently transform these spaces into mere "notice boards" devoid of genuine accountability, as platforms largely evade responsibility for the content they host (Hobbs, 2020). It can consequently lead to a lack of genuine engagement and accountability, transforming platforms into mere conduits for information rather than spaces for substantive action.

6. Conclusion

This research underscores the pivotal role of social media as a dynamic conduit for political activism, influencing everything from the dissemination of information to the orchestration of large-scale movements. The preliminary findings specifically highlight social media's instrumental function in information dissemination, community-building, and activist initiatives, while also acknowledging challenges such as misinformation and polarization. These platforms effectively support movements through rapid information dissemination, micro-mobilization, and awareness campaigns via hashtags, fostering collective identity and decentralized leadership. Moreover, social media facilitates the articulation of diverse critiques and the negotiation of varied viewpoints, thereby enabling individuals to project their ideals into the public sphere. with positive impacts of social media on political activism, its also associated with negative consequences such as political polarization and the proliferation of disinformation, particularly amplified in regions like Indonesia through echo chambers and filter bubbles during political campaigns. To mitigate the negative aspects, policymakers should focus on developing regulatory frameworks that promote digital literacy and critical media consumption, alongside fostering platform accountability regarding content moderation and algorithmic transparency. Such frameworks could include mandating clear labeling for AI-generated content and establishing independent oversight bodies to evaluate content moderation practices, thereby safeguarding democratic discourse. Future research should expand data sets to include a more extensive and diverse range of political content from multiple sources, as well as focus on the effectiveness of digital propaganda detection methodologies in identifying demographic targeting within political content.

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