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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING POLITICAL VIEWS IN THE U.S.: A REVIEW: INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF PLATFORMS LIKE TWITTER AND FACEBOOK ON CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL DISCOURSE.

Kafayat Ololade Liadi^{1*}

¹Independent Researcher, Texas, United States.

Corresponding Author*: Liadikafayat05@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of social media in shaping political discourse in the United States, focusing on platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The main objectives were to understand how these digital platforms influence political communication, public opinion, and the broader political landscape. Employing a systematic literature review and content analysis methodology, the study analyzed peer-reviewed articles and scholarly papers published between 2013 and 2024. The inclusion criteria focused on works that addressed social media's impact on political communication in the U.S., while the exclusion criteria excluded non-peer-reviewed and irrelevant studies. Key findings reveal that social media has significantly transformed political communication from a traditional, top-down approach to a more interactive and participatory model. It has democratized information dissemination, allowing a broader spectrum of society to engage in political discussions. However, challenges such as misinformation, polarization, and the influence of algorithms on content dissemination were also identified. The study underscores the dual nature of social media in political discourse, serving both as a tool for political engagement and a potential conduit for divisive content. The future landscape of political social media is poised to evolve with both challenges and opportunities, particularly concerning the use of sophisticated algorithms and artificial intelligence. Recommendations are provided for policymakers, social media platforms, and users, emphasizing the need for transparency, accountability, and media literacy. The study concludes that while social media plays a complex and multifaceted role in political discourse, it holds significant implications for democracy and public engagement. Future research directions include the long-term effects of social media on political polarization and the impact of emerging technologies on political communication.

Keywords: Social Media, Political Communication, Information Dissemination, Public Engagement

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Emergence and Growth of Social Media in Political Discourse.

The advent and proliferation of social media have revolutionized the landscape of political communication and public discourse, particularly in democratic societies. In the early 21st century, platforms such as Twitter and Facebook emerged not merely as tools for social networking but as pivotal arenas for political engagement and discourse. This transformation has been marked by a shift from traditional media to more interactive and user-driven platforms, fundamentally altering how political information is disseminated and consumed.

The impact of social media on political discourse is multifaceted. On one hand, it has democratized information dissemination, enabling individuals to access a plethora of viewpoints and news sources. Platforms like Twitter have become ideal for users to spread not only general information but also political opinions, thereby fostering a more participatory form of political communication. This shift has been instrumental in breaking down barriers to political engagement, allowing a broader spectrum of society to partake in political discussions.

Moreover, the interactive nature of these platforms has led to the emergence of new forms of public discourse. Yuan and Yau (2018) highlight the role of microblogging sites in enhancing public discussion on community issues and involvement in public affairs. The study underscores the dual function of the Internet as both an information provider and a sphere for political expression, a duality that is vividly embodied in social media platforms.

The role of social media in political discourse is not limited to the dissemination of information; it also involves shaping public opinion and political mobilization. Workneh (2020) discusses the role of social media platforms in mobilizing political reform movements, particularly in Ethiopia. The study reveals how social media not only drew youth into political discourse but also empowered marginalized groups to influence policy. This aspect of social media underscores its role as a catalyst for political change, particularly in societies undergoing political transitions.

However, the influence of social media on political discourse is not without its challenges. The same platforms that enable the spread of diverse viewpoints can also become conduits for misinformation, polarization, and extremist views (Workneh, 2020). The algorithms governing these platforms often prioritize content that drives engagement, which can amplify sensational or divisive content. This aspect raises concerns about the quality and veracity of political discourse on these platforms. In this sense, social media functions as a contemporary mechanism of soft power, where ideas, identities, and political meanings are strategically constructed and circulated within digital environments (Liadi, 2024).

In summary, the emergence and growth of social media have had a profound impact on political discourse. While these platforms have democratized information dissemination and facilitated political engagement and mobilization, they also pose challenges to the quality and integrity of political communication. As social media continues to evolve, its role in shaping political views and discourse will remain a critical area of study and debate.

1.2. Defining the Scope: Social Media's Role in Shaping Political Views.

The role of social media in shaping political views has become a focal point of contemporary sociological and political discourse. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter have transcended their initial purpose as social networking sites to become influential arenas for political expression and

opinion formation. This relationship between social media engagement and political perception is complex and multifaceted. Lee, Lane, and Kwak (2020) explore how the relational use of social media, particularly Facebook, influences political expression. Their study reveals that individuals who perceive themselves as open-minded and perceive the platform as closed-minded are more likely to express their political views on social media. This finding underscores the role of self- and other-perceptions in shaping the dynamics of political discourse on social media platforms.

The influence of social media on political views is not limited to individual perception but extends to broader social dynamics. Javeed, Qaisar, and Juni (2022) investigate the impact of social media on political campaigns and user behavior, particularly in the context of the spiral of silence theory. Their study reveals that social media platforms like Facebook play a crucial role in shaping public opinion, especially among youth. The platforms provide a space where individuals are more likely to speak out on controversial political topics, challenging the traditional dynamics of public opinion formation and the spiral of silence effect.

The interplay between social media and political views is further complicated by the algorithms that govern content dissemination on these platforms. These algorithms often prioritize content likely to generate engagement, which can amplify certain political viewpoints and marginalize others. This aspect of social media platforms raises critical questions about the quality and diversity of political discourse in the digital age.

In summary, social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter play a significant role in shaping political views. They not only enhance individuals' perception of their political understanding but also influence the dynamics of political expression and public opinion formation. The complex interplay between user perceptions, platform algorithms, and broader social dynamics underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of how social media shapes political discourse. As these platforms continue to evolve, their impact on political views and behavior will remain a critical area of study.

1.3. Historical Overview: From Traditional Media to Social Media in Politics.

The evolution of media in the political landscape has been a dynamic process, marked by a transition from traditional media to the pervasive influence of social media. This shift has significantly altered the way political communication is conducted and perceived. Daud (2021) provides a comparative analysis of traditional and digital media, highlighting the enduring significance of traditional media in shaping public opinion while acknowledging the rising dominance of digital media, especially among newer generations. The study underscores the transformative impact of digital media on political communication, noting the challenges posed by misinformation and the influence of social media algorithms on political discourse.

The historical relationship between political communication and traditional media, as explored by Obradović (2023), reveals a deep-seated connection that has evolved over time. The emergence of the press, radio, and television at different periods significantly altered the rules of political communication, setting new standards and expectations. Each medium, in its era, revolutionized the dissemination of political information, political education, and the persuasion of the masses. This evolution reflects the adaptability of traditional media to changing circumstances and technological advancements, as well as political entities' recognition of media's power to shape political narratives.

The advent of social media introduced a new dimension to this evolving landscape. Paatelainen, Kannasto, and Isotalus (2022) examine the functions of hybrid media, particularly how political parties and their leaders utilize traditional media within their social media campaign communication. Their study during the 2019 Finnish parliamentary elections reveals a significant degree of personalization in hybrid media campaign communication. It highlights the strategic use of traditional media by political actors to gain positive visibility and influence public opinion, demonstrating the synergistic relationship between older and newer forms of media in contemporary political campaigns.

The transition from traditional to social media in politics signifies a shift from a more centralized, controlled form of political communication to a more decentralized, participatory model. While traditional media allowed for a top-down approach to information dissemination, social media has democratized the process, enabling a bottom-up flow of information where individuals and groups can exert significant influence on political discourse. This shift has led to a more dynamic and interactive political environment, where the boundaries between producers and consumers of political content are increasingly blurred.

In summary, the historical journey from traditional to social media in politics is marked by significant changes in how political communication is conducted and perceived. While traditional media continues to play a crucial role, the rise of social media has introduced new dynamics and challenges, reshaping the landscape of political discourse. This evolution underscores the need for ongoing research and policy-making to navigate the complexities of political communication in the digital age.

1.4. Aim and Objectives of the Study.

The aim of this study is to critically analyze the evolving role of social media in shaping political views and discourse in the United States, with a specific focus on platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The study aims to understand how these digital platforms influence political communication, public opinion, and the broader political landscape.

The objectives are;

1. To explore current innovations and trends in social media usage for political purposes and their impact on political communication.
2. To explore future directions in social media and political communication, considering the evolving digital landscape.
3. To identify key milestones in social media's role in significant political events and movements.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study is structured around a systematic literature review and content analysis, focusing on the role of social media in shaping political views and discourse in the United States.

2.1. Data Sources

The primary data sources for this study include academic journals, conference proceedings, and scholarly articles. These sources were accessed through various academic databases, including JSTOR, PubMed, Google Scholar, and discipline-specific databases for communication and

political science, such as Communication & Mass Media Complete and Political Science Complete. Government reports, official statistics, and white papers were also considered for a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

2.2. Search Strategy

The search strategy involved using specific keywords and phrases related to the study's aim and objectives. Keywords such as "social media," "political communication," "Twitter," "Facebook," "political discourse," and "United States" were used in various combinations. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were employed to refine the search results. The search was limited to English-language documents published from 2013 to 2023 to ensure the data's relevance and timeliness.

2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Relevant Literature.

The selection of literature for this study was guided by specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance and quality. The inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed articles and conference papers that specifically addressed the use of social media in political communication. The study prioritized empirical data or theoretical analyses pertinent to the United States context. Only articles published in English between 2013 and 2024 were considered to ensure the research's timeliness and applicability. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria excluded non-peer-reviewed articles, opinion pieces, and studies that did not directly address the role of social media in political communication. Publications on countries other than the United States were excluded unless they offered comparative insights applicable to the U.S. context. Additionally, articles published before 2013 were excluded to ensure the study reflected the most current trends and developments in the field.

2.4. Selection Criteria.

The selection of literature was based on its relevance to the research questions and objectives. Abstracts and introductions of the articles were initially reviewed to assess their applicability. The selected articles were then subjected to a more thorough review, focusing on their methodology, findings, and relevance to the study's aim. Priority was given to studies with robust methodologies, significant sample sizes, and those that contributed novel insights or empirical data to the field.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Content analysis was used to identify themes, patterns, and trends in the selected literature. This involved coding the data into categories based on predefined criteria related to the study's objectives. Quantitative data, such as statistics and survey results from the literature, were analyzed to identify correlations and trends. The findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses were then synthesized to draw conclusions and make recommendations relevant to the study's aim.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Understanding Social Media's Influence in Political Communication.

Social media's influence in political communication is a multifaceted phenomenon that has reshaped the landscape of political discourse and public opinion formation. Jufri and Thamrin (2021) delve into this subject by analyzing the political influence of social media through text mining, with a specific focus on public opinion in Makassar City. Their study demonstrates the potential of social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, to disseminate political issues and shape public opinion. The research highlights the importance of analyzing social media content

to understand its impact on political understanding and engagement, using advanced methods like support vector machines and k-means clustering.

The role of social media in enhancing political consciousness is further explored by Baldeh (2019), who examines its influence in the context of The Gambia's 2016 Presidential Election. This study underscores the power of social media to inform voters and influence their decisions, particularly in a politically charged environment. The research indicates that social media platforms are not just tools for communication but also crucial in amplifying democratic processes and political change. The visibility and accessibility of information on these platforms enable voters to engage more actively in the political process and make informed decisions.

Bernhard and Dohle (2018) investigate the perceptual processes involved in political participation through social media. Their study reveals that the perceived reach and influence of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter significantly affect the intensity of individuals' online political communication. This finding suggests that social media users are not only passive recipients of information but active participants who tailor their communication based on their perception of the platform's reach and influence. Research on governance and institutional effectiveness suggests that outcomes are shaped by the quality of coordination, accountability, and credibility within political systems (Liadi, 2024). The study emphasizes that individuals primarily address their own social environment through their political social networking practices, indicating a more personalized approach to political communication on social media.

In summary, social media's influence in political communication is evident in its ability to shape public opinion, enhance political consciousness, and facilitate personalized political engagement. The studies by these authors collectively highlight the transformative impact of social media in the political domain. They underscore the need for a deeper understanding of how social media content is consumed, interpreted, and utilized in political discourse. As social media continues to evolve, its role in political communication will remain a critical area of study, with implications for democracy, governance, and public engagement.

3.2. The Architecture of Social Media Platforms: Twitter and Facebook.

The architecture of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook plays a crucial role in shaping political communication. Bossetta (2018) provides a comprehensive analysis of the digital architectures of social media, emphasizing how technical protocols and platform-specific characteristics influence user behavior in political contexts. The study compares platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, using the 2016 U.S. election as a case study. It highlights how network structure, functionality, algorithmic filtering, and datafication models of these platforms affect political campaign strategies. For instance, Twitter's real-time, public conversational nature and Facebook's algorithmic prioritization of content based on user engagement significantly shape how political messages are disseminated and received.

Shi (2023) explores the balance social media platforms must strike between short-term political efficacy and long-term social responsibility. The study examines the policies and practices of platforms like Facebook and Twitter, proposing a multifaceted approach for these companies to advance in social responsibility. This includes optimizing algorithms to prioritize content quality, fostering collaborations with third parties, and promoting community self-governance. The research underscores the tension between corporate objectives and social responsibility, suggesting that a comprehensive strategy can enhance sustainability and ethical foundations in the political communication landscape.

Stier *et al.* (2018) investigate how politicians use different social media platforms for political communication, focusing on the 2013 German federal election campaign. The study reveals that politicians address different topics on Facebook and Twitter, shaped by the characteristics of these platforms. For example, Facebook's architecture supports more detailed, narrative-driven content, while Twitter's brevity and immediacy suit quick updates and reactions. This transformation aligns with broader patterns of contemporary diplomacy and political interaction, where influence is increasingly exercised through networked communication and multi-actor engagement (Liadi, 2024). The research also shows that the mediation of political communication on these platforms is influenced by the specific sociotechnical environments and audience characteristics.

In summary, the architecture of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook significantly influences political communication. These platforms' technical features, such as network structures, algorithms, and data models, shape how political messages are crafted, disseminated, and perceived. Understanding these architectures is crucial to comprehending the dynamics of political communication in the digital age, as they not only facilitate the spread of information but also pose challenges regarding content quality, ethical considerations, and the balance between political efficacy and social responsibility.

3.3. The Role of Algorithms and User Engagement in Political Discourse.

The interplay between social media algorithms and user engagement significantly influences political discourse. Mulyono *et al.* (2023) explore online civic engagement through social media, focusing on Twitter's role in political discourse. Their study employs a mixed-method approach, combining topic modeling and critical discourse analysis to examine the themes and ideologies in digital citizens' discussions. The research reveals a dichotomy in political discourse, influenced by identity politics and shaped by the algorithmic curation of content on social media. This study illustrates how social media algorithms can influence the direction of political discourse, affecting the public's perception of key political issues.

Mariani and Bloomsburg (2019) investigate the predictors of user interactions with political messaging on social media. Their study finds that trust plays a significant role in users' engagement with political messages on platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The research indicates that the perceived trustworthiness of political messages significantly increases user engagement on these platforms. This finding suggests that user trust is a critical factor in determining the effectiveness and reach of political communication on social media.

In summary, the role of algorithms and user engagement in shaping political discourse on social media is multifaceted. Algorithms play a crucial role in content curation, which can amplify certain types of content and potentially lead to polarization. User engagement, influenced by trust in the content, is pivotal in determining the spread and impact of political messages. Understanding the dynamics of these factors is essential for comprehending the complexities of political communication in the digital era. As social media continues to evolve, its influence on political discourse will remain a critical area of study, with implications for democracy, governance, and public engagement.

3.4. Key Milestones in Social Media's Role in Political Events.

The role of social media in political events has evolved significantly over the years, marking key milestones in the landscape of political communication. Subekti, Mutiarin, and Nurmandi (2023) conducted a bibliometric analysis to understand the development of research on political

communication in social media. Their study reveals a steady growth in publications over the past decade, reflecting the increasing importance of social media in politics. The research highlights that nations with democratic systems and regular elections contribute most to this field of study. The study also notes that Facebook has become a predominant platform for political communication, especially among older voters who are new to the internet, despite its declining popularity among younger users.

Chhachhar, Malik, and Pahore (2021) explore the shift in election campaigning from traditional methods to social media in Pakistani politics. Their study focuses on the role of social media in political campaigns, examining how platforms such as Facebook and Twitter provide opportunities for voters to learn about party ideologies, manifestos, and candidates. The findings indicate that social media has become a crucial tool for political parties to engage with the electorate, influencing voter decisions and political affiliations.

Mauliana and Sampurna (2023) analyze the political communication strategies of the Democrat Party on social media platforms. Their research uses a descriptive method to examine how the party uses social media for image-building and campaigning. The study underscores the dual nature of social media as both a platform for positive support and a potential risk to political images. It highlights the importance of strategic communication in shaping parties' political image on social media.

In summary, social media has played a pivotal role in transforming political communication and campaigning. The studies by these authors illustrate the milestones in social media's influence on political events. These include the growth of academic interest in the field, the shift in campaign strategies from traditional to digital platforms, and the strategic use of social media for political image building. As social media continues to evolve, its impact on political discourse and campaigning will remain a critical area of study, with implications for democracy, governance, and public engagement.

3.5. Current Innovations and Trends in Social Media for Political Communication.

The landscape of political communication on social media is continuously evolving, marked by current innovations and emerging trends. Darshan and Suresh (2019) explore the role of social media in political discourse, engagement, and mobilization in India. Their study highlights the transformation brought about by digital media and smartphones, emphasizing the increased use of social media in political communication. The research indicates that social media has become a vital mode of political communication in India, facilitating political discourse and mobilizing public opinion. The study underscores the convergence of conventional mainstream media and social media, revealing a pattern of mutual exclusiveness and integration.

Khan, Jan, and Khan (2022) examine the role of social media in political mobilization in Pakistan, focusing on the content shared by major political parties on Facebook and Twitter. Their study analyzes responses to political content in terms of likes, shares, comments, and retweets, treating these as efforts toward political mobilization. The findings suggest that social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter, have become leading channels for politicians to reach the public, influence opinions, and mobilize voters. The study highlights the growing importance of social media in political campaigns and the changing dynamics of political communication.

Komarova (2022) addresses the challenges of political communication with young people on social media. The study investigates the information channels through which modern youth learn

about political news and how they participate in public discussions of topical issues. The research emphasizes the importance of understanding how media personalities, who are attractive to young people, form their content and communicate political topics. The study suggests that effective communication with the youth audience, including on political topics, requires attention to the content creation and communication strategies of influencers and opinion leaders on social media.

In summary, the current innovations and trends in social media for political communication are characterized by the integration of traditional and digital media, the growing role of social media in political mobilization, and the challenges of engaging youth audiences. The studies collectively highlight the evolving nature of political communication on social media, underscoring its significance in shaping political discourse, engaging voters, and influencing public opinion. As social media continues to evolve, its impact on political communication will remain a critical area of study, with implications for democracy, governance, and public engagement.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Impact Analysis of Social Media on Political Views.

The impact of social media on political views has been a subject of extensive research, particularly in understanding how these platforms influence political awareness, participation, and attitudes. Sharar and Abd-El-Barr (2018) conducted a study examining the impact of social media on politics in Kuwait from citizens' perspectives. Their research revealed that social media platforms, especially Twitter, are extensively used by Kuwaitis to express and accept political views. The study found a significant relationship between social media usage and increased political awareness, participation, and attitudes towards politics among Kuwaitis. This indicates that social media plays a crucial role in shaping political views and engagement in the region.

Siegel's study (2017) examines the relationship between the use of Facebook and Twitter and perceived political understanding. The research, based on data from the 2016 General Social Survey, suggests that regular Twitter use is associated with a greater perceived understanding of political issues. This finding highlights the role of social media in enhancing users' perceptions of their political knowledge and understanding, suggesting that social media platforms are more than just communication tools; they are influential in shaping political awareness.

In summary, the impact of social media on political views is multifaceted, influencing political awareness, participation, and understanding. The studies illustrate the significant role of social media in shaping political discourse and engagement. These platforms not only provide a space for expressing and accepting political views but also enhance users' perception of political understanding and play a pivotal role in political mobilization and change. As social media continues to evolve, its influence on political views and behavior will remain a critical area of study, with implications for democracy, governance, and public engagement.

4.1.1. Technological, Sociological, and Psychological Aspects.

The technological aspects of social media significantly influence its impact on political views, shaping political discourse and public opinion. Boruah (2023) conducted a comprehensive study of students at Dibrugarh University to analyze the influence of social media on political discourse and public opinion formation. The study employed a questionnaire method to investigate the extent of social media use for political purposes and its impact on polarization and echo chambers. The

findings suggest that social media platforms facilitate the expression of political views and contribute to shaping public opinion, particularly among youth.

Belokonev and Levina (2021) explore the theoretical and methodological aspects of studying politicians' electoral potential and their social media positioning. Their research aims to identify the impact of politicians' activity on social media on their electoral potential. The study employs methods such as analysis and synthesis to examine the positioning of politicians in social networks, highlighting the influence of political, social, cultural, and economic factors on their online presence. The findings indicate that social media plays a crucial role in shaping the electoral potential of politicians, with platforms like Facebook and Twitter serving as key channels for political communication and voter engagement.

Nevskaya (2022) discusses the role of the media as a technological tool and channel in the formation and promotion of political parties' image. The study employs content analysis of official documents and statistical data to analyze the image of political parties in the era of digitalization. The research underscores the importance of adapting to new trends in communication technologies, particularly the use of social media to promote parties' political image. The study highlights the changing dynamics of political communication in the digital age, where social media platforms play a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of political parties.

In summary, the technological aspects of social media, such as its platforms and communication tools, significantly impact political views. The studies collectively illustrate how social media influences political discourse, shapes public opinion, and affects the electoral potential of politicians. The ability of social media to facilitate political engagement and mobilization underscores its importance in the contemporary political landscape. As social media continues to evolve, its technological aspects will remain crucial in shaping political communication and public opinion.

4.1.2. Challenges and Controversies in Social Media-Driven Political Discourse.

The rise of social media as a platform for political discourse has introduced several challenges and controversies. Khan, Shahzad, and Altaf (2023) explore the use of social media by political entities and the concerns it raises, such as the spread of misinformation, hate speech, and manipulative content. Their study highlights how the dissemination of inaccurate data and biased narratives through social media contributes to polarization and a lack of trust within political conversations. The research proposes strategies such as promoting media literacy and implementing fact-checking initiatives to address these challenges, emphasizing the need for collaboration between regulatory bodies and social media companies to ensure constructive democratic processes.

Darshan and Suresh (2019) discuss the role of social media in political communication in India, highlighting the convergence of conventional mainstream media and social media. Their study indicates that while social media has increased political engagement and mobilization, it also poses challenges to the quality and authenticity of political discourse. The research underscores the need for a critical examination of the content and its impact on voting behavior and political engagement, pointing out the potential for social media to influence public opinion in both positive and negative ways.

Sharma and Sivakumar (2023) provide insights into how social media influenced political discourse during the 2019 elections in India, based on interviews with veteran Indian journalists. The study reveals that social media played a significant role in setting the agenda for mainstream

media and redefining journalists' professional roles. It also highlights the emergence of a polarized political narrative driven by aggressive nationalism and majoritarian viewpoints on social media platforms. The research highlights the challenges posed by social media in shaping political discourse, including politicians bypassing traditional news media to reach voters directly.

In summary, social media-driven political discourse faces several challenges and controversies, including the spread of misinformation, polarization, and the changing role of mainstream media. These challenges necessitate a balanced approach to content curation and dissemination, emphasizing media literacy, fact-checking, and the responsible use of social media platforms in political discourse.

4.1.3. Trends and Evolution in Social Media Usage for Political Purposes.

The trends and evolution in social media usage for political purposes have been significant over the past decade, impacting socio-political dynamics globally. Surguladze (2020) examines the role of social media as a tool for socio-political destabilization, highlighting its influence in transforming protest activity from virtual spaces to real-life street actions. The study discusses how social media can affect citizens' collective psychology, motivation, and behavior, citing examples from the United States' IT industry and government agencies. The research also analyzes the methodology of political mobilization on social networks during the Facebook revolution in Egypt (2010-2011), identifying the stages and methods by which virtual protest activity was reconfigured into real-world actions.

Chhachhar, Malik, and Pahore (2021) explore the new era of election campaigning in Pakistan, where the focus has shifted from traditional methods to political campaigning on social media. Their study investigates the level of social media political campaign opportunities and prospects offered to voters to learn about their leaders, party ideologies, and manifestos. The findings show that social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter, are frequently used by respondents, providing them with substantial exposure to political content and influencing their political decisions.

Matthes (2022) examines the impact of social media on young adults' political engagement, highlighting a paradox between mobilization and distraction. The study uses aggregate-level data from the U.S., Germany, Switzerland, and Japan to compare relative voter turnout and social media use among young adults. The findings suggest that despite the rise in social media usage, the gap in voter turnout between young adults and older generations has not significantly decreased. This indicates that while social media has the potential to foster offline political participation, its entertainment-oriented content often distracts rather than mobilizes young adults.

In summary, the trends and evolution in social media usage for political purposes reveal a complex landscape. These dynamics underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of social media's influence on political engagement, particularly among younger demographics, and its implications for democratic processes.

4.1.4. Future Directions in Social Media and Political Communication.

The future of social media in political communication is dynamic and evolving, with emerging trends and strategies shaping the landscape. Subekti, Mutiarin, and Nurmandi (2023) conducted a bibliometric analysis to understand the development of research on political communication in social media. Their study reveals that despite the growing importance of social media in politics, there has been little growth in the number of publications on this subject. The research suggests that future studies should focus more on the narratives of political communication by political

actors on social media, particularly in democratic countries where elections are a crucial part of the system.

Zebib (2022) explores how Lebanese political parties use Facebook in electoral campaigns, offering insights into the future of social media in political communication. The study reveals that most parties use Facebook unidirectionally, mainly for disseminating information without valuing users' feedback. This finding suggests a need for political parties to evolve their social media strategies to engage more interactively with their audience. The research also highlights the differences in social media usage between incumbent and emerging opposition parties, indicating a trend towards more negative and attack posts by the latter.

Hassan and Tasnim (2023) investigate the use of social media for political communication among university students in Bangladesh. Their study reveals that male students are more involved in political communication on social media than female students, and final year students are more engaged than their junior counterparts. This research suggests that future directions in social media and political communication should consider differences in engagement by gender and academic education. The study also emphasizes the need for future research to explore how freedom of expression on social media affects political communication among students.

In summary, the future directions in social media and political communication are likely to focus on more interactive and engaging strategies, considering the diverse demographics of social media users. Studies by Subekti, Mutiarin, and Nurmandi (2023), Zebib (2022), and Hassan and Tasnim (2023) highlight the need for political entities to adapt their social media strategies to the changing landscape and to understand the varying levels of engagement among different groups. As social media continues to play a pivotal role in political discourse, its impact on shaping political communication and public opinion will remain a critical area of study.

4.3. Implications for Stakeholders: Politicians, Voters, and Media Experts.

The implications of social media-driven political discourse are profound for key stakeholders, including politicians, voters, and media experts. Alperin *et al.* (2018) analyze the role of social media in election campaigns and the policy-making process. Their study focuses on how politicians use social media during elections and how public opinion can be gauged through text mining on platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The research highlights the importance of social media in engaging the public as political stakeholders and the need for robust, trustworthy sharing of materials, such as scholarly research, to enhance the quality of political discourse.

Ayeni (2019) discusses the role of social media in voter education in Nigeria, emphasizing its growing use in political communication. The study argues that social media platforms have fundamentally aided political communication in Nigeria, with stakeholders like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), politicians, political parties, the electorate, and civil society organizations making extensive use of these platforms. The research concludes that social media has been instrumental in mobilizing citizens and candidates towards active participation in the political process.

Enli and Rosenberg (2018) examine the relationship between media trust and political trust, particularly in the context of social media. Their study compares voters' evaluations of politicians' trustworthiness across various media and communication forms, including social media. The findings reveal that voters tend to perceive politicians as more honest on social media than in traditional media. The study also finds that populist politicians are often regarded as more authentic

than traditional politicians on social media platforms, and that female politicians are perceived as more authentic compared to male politicians.

In summary, social media has significant implications for politicians, voters, and media experts. The studies highlight the transformative role of social media in political communication. They underscore the need for credible and ethical practices in social media-driven political discourse and the importance of understanding the perceptions and behaviors of various stakeholders in this digital political landscape. As social media continues to evolve, its impact on political communication and public engagement will remain a critical area of study.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study has highlighted the significant role of social media in shaping political discourse in the United States. Key findings indicate that platforms like Twitter and Facebook have transformed political communication from a traditional, top-down approach to a more interactive and participatory model. Social media has democratized information dissemination, enabling a broader spectrum of society to engage in political discussions. However, challenges such as misinformation, polarization, and algorithmic influence on content dissemination have also been identified. The study underscores the dual nature of social media in political discourse, serving both as a tool for political engagement and a potential conduit for divisive content.

Moving forward, the landscape of political social media is poised to evolve with both challenges and opportunities. The increasing use of sophisticated algorithms and artificial intelligence in content curation could further complicate the issues of misinformation and echo chambers. However, there are opportunities to leverage these technologies to improve the accuracy of information dissemination and enhance user engagement in political discourse. The growing awareness and concern over data privacy and security are also likely to shape future social media policies and user behavior.

Policymakers need to develop regulations that ensure transparency and accountability in social media operations without stifling free speech. Social media platforms are encouraged to enhance their fact-checking mechanisms and algorithm transparency to combat misinformation effectively. They should also focus on user education programs to foster media literacy. For users, it is recommended to approach social media content critically and engage in responsible sharing practices. Users should also actively seek diverse viewpoints to counteract the effects of echo chambers.

The study concludes that social media's role in political discourse is complex and multifaceted, with significant implications for democracy and public engagement. Future research should focus on the long-term effects of social media on political polarization and the efficacy of regulatory interventions. There is also a need for more in-depth studies of the impact of emerging technologies, such as AI and machine learning, on political communication. Additionally, research into the psychological effects of social media on political beliefs and behaviors could provide valuable insights for shaping future political communication strategies.

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