Impact of Social Media in Making Political Decisions in Developing Countries

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Abstract

Social media is an inseparable factor in everyone's life as it influences everything that is related to human life. Political decision-making is regarded as one of the essential factors impacted by social media. This study thus focuses on the impact of social media in the political decision-making of developing countries including an analysis of the challenges of social media usage in the present time. Consequently the procedures for overcoming the challenges of social media in developing countries have also been evaluated through the study. Over a period of time, the use of social media has increased for these decades and people got more accessibility to share their thoughts and opinions on a larger platform. This study focuses on the factors that are evaluating the development of countries throughout the world. People from different nations can react and share their opinions on any political issues of any nation or county. In this study, Secondary quantitative datasets are collected from different research articles and journals. After the research of this study, the findings and results have been shown through the thematic analysis of the collected data. Hence, there is a detailed discussion about the impacts of social media uses in developing a country and political decision-making and strategy development by using the online platform.

Keywords

Developing Countries, Political Decision-Making, Social Media.

INTRODUCTION

Background

People are using social media to communicate with others, share experiences, information, advice and reviews. Social media has become significant to determine the pulse of the real world; even the popular leaders and policy makers are using social media. Political parties and governments of developing countries are connecting with people through social media. It helps them to collect reviews about the new policies which help the government to understand the people's requirements and consequently it takes part in the development of the country. In 2021, over 4.26 billion people throughout the global world has been identified to use social medi, however, the number is expected to reach upto 6 billion in 2027 [1]. Therefore, it can be stated that social media has the potential to influence the different social factors and political decision making is one of them.

Social media possesses positive as well as negative influence on political affairs all over the world. Governments of different countries are using social media to recognise the problems of individual people that helps them to make policies and also helps to develop the community and the country. Social media often works to change and influence the opinion of the people when it comes to political views due to the circulation of ideas, thoughts and opinions through the social media platforms.

Aim of the study

The aim of this following study is to explore and evaluate the impact of social media in making political decisions of the developing countries. Considering the aim of the study, the objectives can be identified as:

- To evaluate the effect of social media in developing countries
- To determine the effects of social media for taking part in the development of the country
- To understand the influence of social media on political decision making of people in developing countries
- To identify the procedures for overcoming the challenges associated with social media in developing countries

Scope and relevance of the study

Social media is the most significant medium for connecting with people in developing countries and the development of the country is dependent on the policy makers of the country. Governments of different countries are using social media to propagate their political ideologies and views which influences them to make their political decisions. On the other hand, political parties often take reviews and feedback through social media to make policies about people which affects the development of common people. Therefore, evaluation of social media impact on political decision making in a developing country is relevant. Understanding the factors which influence political decision making is important for improving any country's development. Social media implies a significant amount of positive and negative impacts on the political decision making and in the development of a country. In order to overcome the negative impacts a critical evaluation is needed and this study has scope to identify how social media affects the political decision making and influencing the thoughts and ideas of the people. Fake news and different misinformation are circulated through social media which

influence the political decisions of a people. Therefore, the critical evaluation of procedures to overcome the challenges is needed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

Research design refers to the integrated overall strategy to analyse the different components of the study in a logical way [2]. It helps to perform the research study in a very systematic manner and identify the issues more effectively. In this research the *exploratory research design* is chosen for understanding the impact of social media in political decision making in a developing country. The exploratory research design helps to investigate the problem which is not defined properly. In this research the problem associated with social media in political decision making is not defined properly. Therefore the exploratory research design is more effective in this research.

Research philosophy

Research philosophy signifies the thinking of the researcher including selection of research strategy, formulation of the research problem, and collection of data and analysis of the collected data [3]. Research philosophy enables researchers with different types of methodologies and it also helps to avoid inappropriate methods which save time during the research period. In this research, the impact of social media in political decision making is related with community development therefore the *Interpretivism research philosophy* is most suited in this research. This philosophy provides a strategic positive approach in the research which helps to evaluate the issues and identify the possible approaches to overcome the issues effectively and critically.

Research approach

Research approaches are procedures and plans for research which are important to perform an effective and structured research study [4]. The primary objective of the inductive research approach is to allow findings of a research to emerge from the dominant, significant and frequent themes inherent in the raw data sets. Therefore, in this research, the *inductive research approach* is more effective for understanding and analysing the issue. It gives researchers flexibility and attends closely to the context which is important in a successful research study.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria
- Authentic journals, articles, newspapers and government websites will be considered while collecting data
- Journals and articles being published after 2017 will only be included for collecting data regarding this research
- Only English language will be considered while gathering secondary qualitative data

Exclusion criteria
- Conference paper, and doctoral dissertations will be excluded for collecting data regarding this subject matter
- Journals and articles, published before 2017 will be excluded for data collection regarding this research
- No language excluding English will be considered for collecting data

Data collection and analysis process

Data collection and analysis procedure is regarded as the most effective tool in a research paper for critically and logically evaluating the issue and making a decision on the respective issue. Data collection and analysis includes maps, charts and diagrams which give researchers an insight view of the issues and it also helps to make decisions according to the issues [5]. In this research, secondary qualitative data sets are collected from journals and previous research papers. The secondary data collection and analysis save efforts and expenses and it is also time-saving and it makes primary data collection easier. The secondary data collection reduces the data-related controversies that increase the effectiveness of the research and helps to improve the understanding of the problems. The secondary data collection enables comparison that is collected by the researchers and that makes research more convenient.

Thematic analysis is helpful for summarising the key features of a large data set. The mentioned procedure supports the researchers to be well-structured while analysisng the data. Thematic analysis not required any theoretical and advanced technical knowledge to analyse the data sets in consequence it offers a more accessible form of analysis [6]. Therefore, for this research, thematic analysis has been identified to be appropriate to analyse the data. Familiarizing with the data is the first step for performing a successful thematic analysis and generating initial codes, searching for themes and reviewing themes are the most important in the thematic analysis. Accordingly, it gives an insightful overview of the topic and makes it easy for analysing the data. On that account, thematic analysis is the most suitable analysis method for this research.

Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are both about how well the measurements and methods can evaluate the issue of the research. Reliability refers to the consistency of the measures and validity refers to the accuracy of the measure [7]. In this research secondary qualitative data sets are used to analyse the issue which is depending on the previous research works and other sources. Therefore, authentic journal articles and research works are selected to collect the data towards improving the reliability and validity of the study. Different government websites and reliable sources are used to collect datasets for the study and this increases the validity of the research.

RESULTS

Social media and its exposure in contemporary days

Social media becomes an inseparable part of people's life in present times. The usage of social media increases over time and it is increasing exponentially with technological advancement. Due to the increased availability of internet the social media usage increased among people. In 2021 around 56% of people of the global population are using social media and the number is projected to increase upto 74% by 2026 [8]. It indicates a huge number of people are using social media and social media has become a part of life for everyone. The availability of internet services and social media changed the life of people. Social media is playing a significant role in everyday life where people are using social media for communication, entertainment, lifestyle and business.

Different businesses worldwide are present in social media to increase their customer base. A large number of businesses all over the world are spending huge funds on social media for advertisement. In the year 2021, the global social media advertisement spending was around 116 billion U.S. dollars and experts predicted it can become double by the year 2028 [9]. It signifies businesses are taking social media marketing seriously and it is generating revenue for them. Social media is presently a significant medium of communication as a consequence different governments all over the world are promoting new policies on social media that gives them the opportunity to keep connected with the people. Political parties around the world are sharing their ideologies and their views on particular topics on social media which help them to propagate their ideologies and increase their followers. Therefore, it can be stated that social media is playing a significant role in the political decision-making of an individual. In every developing country, social media plays a significant role in the development of the country. Governments of different states and countries are taking public opinion through social media on a particular issue to make and implement policies in favour of the people. It influences the development of the country in a positive way. Therefore, it can be stated that exposure of social media is wide. Social media has a huge advantage in public life and it also has some disadvantages. Spreading of fake news, misinformation and an increasing percentage of cybercrimes are major issues in social media and these issues can be resolved by different government initiatives and regulations.

Effect of social media in developing countries

The use of social media has increased in this decade, which helps the people of rural areas to access education facilities and other facilities that were not possible before. Many social media platforms are available today, and people can connect to anybody or any institute over the phone with just one click. There are many benefits of using these online platforms as they help to gain knowledge and help the world in developing. The uses of these social media platforms are expanding day by day which also helps to expand businesses across the globe and helps to increase advancement in the economy of countries. The digital division of businesses for multi-purposes helps to increase the wealth of the country which helps the growth of the country. As the whole world is using the internet and emerging with new businesses wealthier countries are using more internet and social media to develop the growth of their country [10]. Emerging with new online platforms means more internet users in the country which will increase the financial growth in developing countries.

Social media is one of the most innovative processes that have been evaluated as facilities for connecting with people globally. People can share their thoughts, innovative ideas and important information through these online platforms. People can show their talents on the internet, build their own businesses over these platforms, can make new friends, and connect with their close ones through this social media platform. Apart from this, engagement on these online platforms has both positive and negative impacts on the development of the countries. The increment of internet uses is economically helping countries to grow but by evolving with new online platforms and engaging in these platforms people are not very connected in real-life campaigns. Social media is able to create a community among people across the globe, but it can decrease the productivity levels of individuals. These platforms have impacted geopolitics as it decreases the censorship level and helps to increase the spread of news or important information. However, through a great level of the internet accessibility, the politicians of the countries can influence the people individually [11]. The production of new innovative technologies and devices has increased as the uses of the internet and social media platforms are expanding day by day.

Impact of social media in political decision making of developing countries

Social media platforms are used as a medium for sharing political news widely, and it is the most affordable and adaptable medium for improving the social relationship of politicians with individuals. The positive side of social media is that it is not harmful to sharing the message and thoughts of politicians, also people can be influenced by any political party and support their team worldwide. In the present pattern and situation, social media is a medium for politicians to provide adaptable strategies according to governmental issues, political perspectives, political decisions and many other issues occurring in the nations of the whole world [12]. Digitalisation has changed the ways of observing things and issues related to the politics of any nation worldwide, and people can react to these issues worldwide.

Social media has established links between many cultures and businesses in this rapidly changing world, where digitalisation become a huge part of the development of countries. The youths of every nation are the future developers of countries, and as the world is evolving with new technologies and online platforms day by day people can

easily access or share their political views on any issues that are occurring in the nation [13]. People can share their views or opinions on any issue of other nations through the social media platform and also can help the nation in critical situations. Social media user rates in the developed country are not increasing but in the developing countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Israel are comparatively high. 75% Jordanian are using social media on a daily basis and it indicates that social media can play an influential role in the political decision making in a developing country [14].
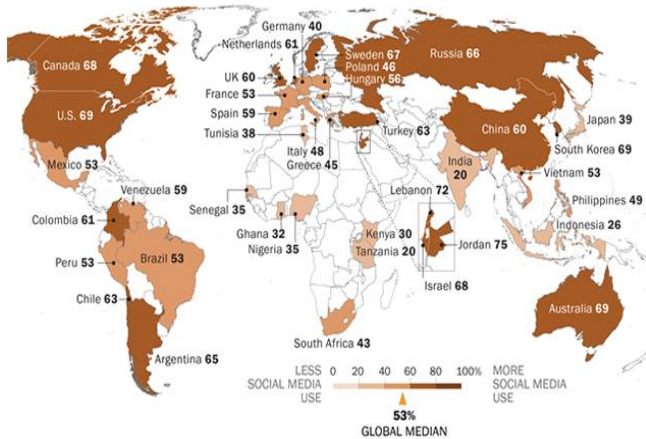

Figure 1: Social media user rate in developing and developed countries[14]

Different indicators such as GDP, per capita income, human development index (HDI) and the Gross national product (GNP) of the country indicates the development of a country. These indicators are depending on the ruling political power of the country and social media play a significant role in the political decision making of the country [15]. Social media is important in a developing country for formulating social protest, social activism and social movements which is important for influencing the development of the country. Presently governments of countries all over the world are using social media for taking reviews and people's views on particular issues that help the government to make policies which affect the country's development. Therefore, it can be stated that social media play a crucial role in political decision making of developing countries and social media also has an effect on the country's development.

Procedures for overcoming challenges of social media in developing countries

Social media has become an inseparable part of human life and social media has different benefits that can influence the development of the country. On the other hand there are different challenges of social media that have a negative effect on the development of the country. Presently fake news and misinformation are most common in social media that can obstruct the development of the country. Hence, governments need to regulate social media usage and also need to make laws to stop spreading fake news and misinformation. Data privacy is one of the issues that is generated with social media and that is a major risk for an individual or a politician. The government can impose valid data protection laws which can be effective to overcome the data privacy issue of social media [16]. Terms of agreement are also a major issue associated with social media. Different social media platforms allow people to open an account after accepting their terms and conditions.

Sometimes these terms and conditions become a cause of privacy and data loss among the people. Therefore, the government has to introduce a regulating body to observe the terms of agreement of the social media platform to protect people from data loss. Cybercrimes are most common in social media and identity of individuals plays a significant role in social media cyber crime. Cyber criminals in social media are creating fake accounts which are a major threat for the users [17]. Therefore, the governments of developing countries can collaborate with the social media organisations to introduce a unique identification tool to remove fake accounts from the social sites. It will help to reduce the cyber crimes rate which is associated with social media. Presently, different companies and brands are posting commercial advertisements and cyber attackers are creating fake advertisements by hacking their social media accounts and stealing money from individuals. Hence, the social media service providers have to restrict commercial advertisements from their platforms to reduce monetary losses of the users.

DISCUSSION

Social media usage around the world is increasing due to technological advancement and digitisation. Social media has positive and negative effects on an individual's life and in the development of a country. Social media usage among the people is increasing due to the availability of the internet. The emerging 5G technologies all over the world play a significant role in social media usage around the world. People use social media to communicate with the people and now different companies are connecting people with the help of social media [18]. Governments and political parties are sharing their policies and ideologies through the internet which influence the political decision making of an individual. Political power of a country can understand people's requirements and views on a specific issue which helps them to make many decisions and that helps the country to develop.

Political parties all over the world are using social media platforms to improve their presence by sharing ideologies and views on different issues and trying to communicate with people through social media which influence the political decision making of an individual. Social media is becoming a useful tool for political parties to improve their reputation; they are sharing good things about the party for increasing reliability among the people. It increases their popularity and also creates a positive attitude among the people towards the specific political party. Opposition political parties around the world are formulating different social protests and

movements through social media which is in the favour of common people [19]. This protest and movements about social issues help the political powers to make a good impression among the people and it influences the political decision making of people.

Social media makes conversation among the people easier and helps to build relationships among the people. People are using social media to discuss any issue and giving opinions about that matter on social media. Political parties are connecting with the people through social media and helping people in an issue which helps them improve trust among the people and influence the political decision making of people. On the other hand, social media also impacted the decision making of political parties. Political parties can understand the requirements of the people and their views on different social issues and it also enables them to make policy more effectively. Through the social media campaign, governments in different countries can identify the problems of the people and make policies and development programmes according to the issue. It improves trust and reliability of the government and also helps them to hold the political power of that country. Therefore, it can be stated that social media has a huge role in influencing the political decision making of people and social media is a significant tool for the political parties to improve reliability and trust among the people.

CONCLUSION

This discussion is focusing on the different positive and negative effects of social media and the impacts of social media in contemporary days are also discussed in this article which shows that social media has positive and negative impacts on the social life of people. Positive impacts improve the development of the countries and negative impacts obstruct the development. This discussion is also focusing on the impact of social media in political decision making of people. From the discussion it can be concluded that the political decision making of an individual is influenced by the increasing rate of social media. Social media users in developing economies all over the world are increasing rapidly with comparison to the developed economy and it signifies that social media has potential to influence the political decision making in developing countries. From this study it can also be stated that the political decision making of an individual can be influenced by different facts that includes the fake news, misinformation and rumours.

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