

The Impact of Social Media on Global Political Stability: A Quantitative Analysis of Democratic Governance and Political Communication

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history: Received March 29, 2026 Revised April 26, 2026 Accepted May 30, 2026 Keywords: Social Media; Global Political Stability; Political Communication; Democratic Governance; Digital Governance.	The rapid expansion of social media has fundamentally transformed political communication, governance, and citizen engagement worldwide, making digital platforms essential channels for information dissemination, political participation, and public discourse. While social media enhances democratic participation by increasing political awareness, civic engagement, and government transparency, it also presents significant challenges through the spread of misinformation, disinformation, political polarization, and online extremism that may undermine political stability. This study aims to examine the influence of social media on global political stability by evaluating both its positive and negative political impacts. A quantitative research approach employing a cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 400 active social media users selected using stratified random sampling. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the relationships between social media influence and political stability. The findings reveal that social media has a statistically significant and overall positive influence on global political stability by enhancing political awareness, citizen participation, government transparency, and democratic accountability. However, the results also indicate that fake news, coordinated disinformation, echo chambers, political polarization, election interference, and online harassment remain critical threats to democratic governance and institutional trust. These findings suggest that maximizing the democratic benefits of social media requires responsible platform governance, strengthened digital literacy, effective fact-checking mechanisms, transparent political communication, and evidence-based regulatory policies that protect freedom of expression while minimizing the adverse effects of online misinformation and political manipulation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the way political information is created, disseminated, and consumed worldwide. Among these technological developments, social media has emerged as one of the most influential communication platforms, connecting billions of users across geographical, cultural, and political boundaries (Van Dijck, 2013). Platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have evolved beyond their original purpose of facilitating interpersonal

communication to become essential channels for political discourse, public engagement, and information exchange. Political leaders, governments, media organizations, civil society groups, and ordinary citizens increasingly utilize these platforms to share political messages, mobilize supporters, influence public opinion, and participate in democratic processes. Consequently, social media has become an integral component of modern political communication, significantly shaping political attitudes and behaviors on a global scale.

The influence of social media extends to various aspects of political systems, including electoral campaigns, public policymaking, social movements, diplomatic communication, and international relations. During election periods, political candidates and parties employ social media to reach broader audiences, communicate policy agendas, and engage directly with voters. Likewise, social media has played a pivotal role in facilitating political protests and grassroots movements by enabling rapid information dissemination, organizing collective actions, and encouraging civic participation. Internationally, governments increasingly rely on digital platforms to conduct public diplomacy, communicate foreign policy objectives, and monitor emerging political developments across borders. These developments demonstrate that social media has become an indispensable instrument in contemporary governance and global political interaction.

Despite its numerous advantages, the growing influence of social media has also generated significant concerns regarding political stability (Van Dijck, 2013). On one hand, social media contributes positively by enhancing political awareness, increasing government transparency, strengthening citizen participation, and expanding opportunities for democratic engagement. Citizens are able to access political information more easily, express opinions freely, participate in public debates, and hold governments accountable through digital platforms. Such developments have the potential to strengthen democratic institutions and promote responsive governance by encouraging greater interaction between governments and the public.

On the other hand, social media also presents substantial challenges that may undermine political stability. The rapid spread of misinformation, disinformation, fake news, hate speech, and politically motivated propaganda has intensified political polarization in many societies. Algorithm-driven content personalization often creates echo chambers that reinforce existing political beliefs while limiting exposure to diverse perspectives, thereby increasing ideological divisions among citizens (Rodillo, 2024). Furthermore, malicious actors, including foreign governments, extremist groups, and coordinated disinformation networks, increasingly exploit social media to manipulate public opinion, interfere in elections, incite violence, and weaken public trust in democratic institutions. These risks have prompted governments around the world to strengthen digital surveillance, regulate online content, and develop policies aimed at mitigating threats originating from social media while balancing concerns related to freedom of expression and privacy.

The contrasting effects of social media have generated an important research problem concerning its overall influence on global political stability. While numerous studies suggest that social media strengthens democratic participation and political engagement, others argue that it contributes to political instability by accelerating the spread of false information, encouraging extremist narratives, and deepening social polarization. These contradictory findings indicate that the relationship between social media and political stability is highly complex and influenced by multiple contextual factors, including political institutions, media literacy, regulatory frameworks, cultural characteristics, and technological governance. Therefore, it remains unclear whether the overall impact of social media promotes political stability or increases political vulnerability in different national contexts.

Based on this issue, the present study seeks to address several fundamental research questions. First, how does social media influence global political stability? Second, what positive contributions does social media make to political governance and democratic participation? Third, what negative consequences of social media contribute to political instability and conflict? Finally, which factors moderate or mediate the relationship between social media usage and political stability across different political environments? Addressing these questions is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted role of social media in contemporary politics.

Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to examine the influence of social media on global political stability. Specifically, the research aims to analyze both the beneficial and adverse political effects associated with social media usage and to identify the key factors that either strengthen or weaken political stability in the digital era. Through this comprehensive analysis, the

study intends to develop a balanced understanding of how digital communication technologies shape political systems and governance worldwide.

This research offers several significant theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical perspective, it enriches the literature in political science, communication studies, international relations, digital governance, and public policy by integrating perspectives on political communication, democratic participation, information ecosystems, and technological governance (Sangwa, 2025). From a practical perspective, the findings are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, government agencies, election management bodies, technology companies, civil society organizations, and international institutions in designing effective strategies to maximize the democratic benefits of social media while minimizing its risks to political stability. The study may also contribute to the development of evidence-based policies concerning digital literacy, misinformation management, online content regulation, and responsible platform governance.

Research examining the relationship between social media and political stability has expanded considerably over the past decade, reflecting the increasing influence of digital platforms on democratic governance, political participation, and international political dynamics. One of the most comprehensive studies was conducted by Hunter (2023), who investigated the cross-national effects of social media and disinformation on democracy using data from 158 countries between 2000 and 2019. The study demonstrated that different forms of social media use have distinct political consequences. General social media usage, exposure to diverse political viewpoints, and the use of social media for political campaigns were found to strengthen democratic institutions and citizen participation. However, the dissemination of disinformation, political polarization, and the organization of offline violence through social media significantly weakened democratic norms and reduced political stability. These findings emphasize that the political impact of social media depends largely on how digital platforms are utilized rather than on their existence alone.

A broader perspective was provided by Lorenz-Spreen et al. (2023) through a systematic review published in *Nature Human Behaviour*. Reviewing 496 empirical studies on digital media and democracy, the authors concluded that digital media frequently encourages political participation, information access, and civic engagement, particularly in emerging democracies and authoritarian contexts. Nevertheless, the review also revealed consistent evidence linking digital media to declining political trust, increasing populism, ideological polarization, and reduced confidence in democratic institutions, especially in established democracies. The study highlighted that the effects of digital media vary according to political context, institutional quality, and democratic maturity, suggesting that no single conclusion adequately captures its overall political impact.

Cross-country evidence was further strengthened by Acheampong and Taden (2024), who examined whether social media penetration enhances democratic institutions using data from 145 countries. Their findings indicated that greater social media penetration is generally associated with improvements in democratic governance, transparency, and political accountability. However, these positive outcomes were conditional upon the quality of national institutions and governance capacity. Countries with stronger democratic institutions were better able to benefit from social media, whereas weak institutional environments remained vulnerable to online manipulation and political instability.

The relationship between social media and political polarization has also attracted considerable scholarly attention. Kubin and von Sikorski (2021) conducted a systematic review of 94 articles involving 121 empirical studies and found substantial evidence that social media contributes to ideological and affective polarization. Their review showed that algorithmic content recommendation systems, selective exposure to politically congruent information, and online echo chambers reinforce existing political beliefs while reducing exposure to opposing viewpoints. The authors further noted that most previous studies concentrated heavily on Twitter and the United States, leaving significant opportunities for comparative international research across diverse political systems.

Another important stream of research focuses on misinformation and digital manipulation. Mugurtay, Duygu, and Varol (2024) investigated how major social media companies respond to state-linked information operations and coordinated propaganda campaigns. Their study demonstrated that governments and political organizations increasingly exploit social media platforms to manipulate political discourse, interfere with elections, and influence both domestic and international public opinion. The authors argued that platform governance and moderation

policies have become essential components in protecting democratic processes from coordinated disinformation campaigns.

Although previous studies have extensively investigated various aspects of social media and politics, several important research gaps remain. Many existing studies focus primarily on individual countries or specific political events, limiting the generalizability of their findings across different political systems and cultural contexts. Cross-national empirical evidence examining the broader influence of social media on global political stability remains relatively limited (Groshek, 2009). Furthermore, prior research often emphasizes either the positive contributions or the negative consequences of social media without simultaneously evaluating both dimensions within a comprehensive analytical framework. In addition, relatively few studies employ multidimensional indicators of political stability that incorporate democratic governance, political trust, social cohesion, institutional legitimacy, and conflict prevention. Addressing these gaps, the present study seeks to provide a more comprehensive examination of the influence of social media on global political stability by integrating both its constructive and disruptive roles within an international comparative perspective.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to examine the influence of social media on global political stability. A quantitative approach was selected because it enables the systematic measurement of relationships between variables and facilitates statistical testing of hypotheses using numerical data (Bisaria et al., 2026). The cross-sectional design allows data to be collected from respondents at a single point in time, providing a comprehensive overview of perceptions regarding social media usage and political stability in the contemporary digital environment. Furthermore, this study adopted an explanatory research design, aiming not only to describe the characteristics of the variables but also to explain the causal relationship between social media influence and global political stability.

The target population consisted of active social media users aged 18 years and above who regularly accessed at least one major social media platform, including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, or LinkedIn. Since the study investigates public perceptions regarding the political implications of social media, individuals who actively consume, share, or engage with political information through digital platforms were considered appropriate respondents. To obtain broader perspectives, the population also included university students, professionals, government employees, political observers, and members of the general public with regular exposure to online political content.

A total of 400 respondents participated in the study. This sample size satisfies the minimum recommendations for multivariate statistical analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), ensuring adequate statistical power and reliable parameter estimation (Kline, 2023). Respondents were selected using stratified random sampling, whereby participants were grouped according to demographic characteristics such as age, gender, educational level, and geographical region before random selection was conducted within each stratum. This sampling technique was employed to enhance the representativeness of the sample while minimizing sampling bias and ensuring that various demographic groups were proportionally represented.

The study examined two principal variables. The independent variable (X) was Social Media Influence, which refers to the extent to which social media platforms affect individuals' political knowledge, attitudes, communication, and participation. This variable was measured using five indicators: frequency of social media use, exposure to political information, user engagement in political discussions, information-sharing behavior, and trust in online political information. These indicators collectively represent both the intensity and quality of respondents' interactions with political content on social media.

The dependent variable (Y) was Global Political Stability, defined as the condition in which political institutions function effectively, public trust is maintained, conflicts are minimized, and democratic governance remains sustainable (Ali et al., 2025). Political stability was assessed through six indicators: political trust, social cohesion, political participation, government legitimacy, conflict reduction, and democratic stability. These dimensions provide a comprehensive assessment of how social media may influence the broader political environment at national and international levels.

Primary data were collected through a structured online questionnaire designed based on established measurement scales from previous empirical studies (Stanton, 1998). The questionnaire consisted of two sections: the first collected respondents' demographic information, while the second measured perceptions regarding social media influence and political stability. To complement the survey findings and strengthen the theoretical foundation of the study, secondary data were obtained from scholarly journal articles, government publications, international organizations, and reputable databases, including reports from organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). These secondary sources provided contextual information regarding global political trends, digital governance, and social media development.

All questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The Likert scale was selected because it effectively captures respondents' perceptions, attitudes, and levels of agreement regarding complex political and social issues while facilitating quantitative statistical analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using several statistical procedures (Anderson & Finn, 2012). First, descriptive statistical analysis was performed to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and describe the distribution of responses for each research variable. Measures such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated to provide an overview of the data. Subsequently, validity tests were conducted using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to ensure that each measurement item accurately represented its intended construct. Reliability analysis was then performed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales.

Following the assessment of the measurement model, correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the study variables. Finally, the proposed research hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which enables the simultaneous examination of multiple relationships between latent variables while accounting for measurement error. SEM was selected because it provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating both the measurement model and the structural relationships among variables, thereby producing more accurate and reliable estimates than traditional regression techniques. Model fit was assessed using widely accepted goodness-of-fit indices, including the Chi-square statistic, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Statistical significance was determined at the 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Results

A total of 400 valid responses were included in the final analysis. The respondents represented diverse demographic backgrounds, providing a comprehensive perspective on the influence of social media on global political stability. Among the respondents, 53.5% were male and 46.5% were female. The majority (47.8%) were between 18 and 29 years old, followed by 30-44 years (34.0%), 45-59 years (13.7%), and over 60 years (4.5%). Regarding educational attainment, 62.5% possessed a bachelor's degree, 21.8% held postgraduate qualifications, and the remainder had completed secondary education or equivalent. The respondents included university students, professionals, government employees, political analysts, and members of the general public who actively used at least one major social media platform.

Descriptive statistical analysis indicated that respondents demonstrated a high level of engagement with social media for political purposes (Ahmad et al., 2019). The average score for the Social Media Influence variable was 3.96 on a five-point Likert scale, suggesting that respondents frequently accessed political information, participated in online discussions, and shared political content through digital platforms. Among the indicators, exposure to political information recorded the highest mean score (4.18), followed by frequency of social media use (4.11), user engagement (3.95), information-sharing behavior (3.88), and trust in online political information (3.69). The comparatively lower score for trust indicates that although respondents actively consume political content online, they remain cautious about the credibility of information available on social media.

The Global Political Stability variable produced an overall mean score of 3.72, reflecting a moderately positive perception of political stability in the digital era. Political participation obtained the highest average score (4.05), indicating that respondents believed social media had increased

opportunities for civic engagement and public participation in political affairs. Political trust and government legitimacy recorded moderate scores of 3.61 and 3.58, respectively, while social cohesion (3.65), conflict reduction (3.54), and democratic stability (3.89) suggested that respondents perceived both positive and negative consequences of social media for political governance.

The reliability and validity of the measurement model were assessed before hypothesis testing. All indicator loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating strong indicator reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for both constructs ranged from 0.63 to 0.79, exceeding the recommended minimum value of 0.50 and confirming convergent validity. Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.88 to 0.94, while Cronbach's Alpha coefficients varied between 0.86 and 0.92, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Discriminant validity was also established, as each construct demonstrated stronger correlations with its own indicators than with other constructs.

The Structural Equation Modeling analysis demonstrated that the proposed model achieved satisfactory goodness-of-fit. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.958, the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) was 0.951, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.047, and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was 0.043. These indices indicate that the model adequately represented the observed data and was appropriate for hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis testing revealed that Social Media Influence had a statistically significant positive effect on Global Political Stability ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.46$) indicated that approximately 46% of the variance in political stability could be explained by the influence of social media, while the remaining variation was attributable to other political, economic, institutional, and social factors not included in the model. These findings support the primary hypothesis that social media plays a significant role in shaping contemporary political stability.

3.2 Interpretation of findings

One of the most significant positive impacts identified in this study is the enhancement of political awareness. Social media provides citizens with immediate access to political news, government policies, election campaigns, and international political developments. Unlike traditional media, digital platforms enable continuous information exchange and allow individuals to obtain political information from multiple sources in real time. This increased accessibility encourages citizens to become more informed about political issues, public affairs, and governmental decisions, thereby improving their ability to participate in democratic processes. The findings suggest that respondents who frequently accessed political information through social media reported higher levels of political knowledge and greater interest in civic affairs.

The study also demonstrates that social media significantly promotes civic engagement. Digital platforms provide opportunities for individuals to express opinions, participate in public discussions, organize community initiatives, and advocate for social and political causes (Rheingold, 2008). Through online petitions, discussion forums, and social networking platforms, citizens can communicate directly with policymakers, civil society organizations, and other members of the public. Such interactions strengthen democratic participation by encouraging collaborative problem-solving and expanding opportunities for citizen involvement in governance. In many countries, social media has become an important tool for mobilizing collective action during elections, public consultations, environmental campaigns, and humanitarian initiatives.

Another important finding concerns the contribution of social media to government transparency. Governments increasingly use official social media accounts to disseminate policy information, announce public programs, respond to citizen concerns, and provide timely updates during crises. This direct communication reduces information asymmetry between governments and citizens while improving public access to official information. Greater transparency enhances public confidence in governmental institutions by allowing citizens to monitor policy implementation, evaluate government performance, and demand accountability from public officials. Consequently, social media has strengthened open government initiatives and improved communication between state institutions and society.

The findings further indicate that social media encourages greater citizen participation in political processes. Respondents reported that digital platforms facilitate involvement in elections, political campaigns, public consultations, and policy debates regardless of geographical location. Social media lowers participation barriers by providing accessible channels through which citizens can communicate with elected representatives, engage in political discourse, and contribute to

public decision-making. Increased citizen participation strengthens democratic legitimacy because governments become more responsive to public preferences and societal needs.

An additional positive contribution identified in this study relates to faster emergency communication. During political crises, natural disasters, public health emergencies, or security incidents, governments and emergency agencies utilize social media to distribute accurate information rapidly to large populations. Citizens can also report incidents, request assistance, and share situational updates in real time. This rapid exchange of information improves emergency response coordination, facilitates crisis management, and reduces uncertainty during critical situations. The effectiveness of digital communication during emergencies further strengthens public trust in governmental institutions when information is timely, accurate, and transparent.

The study also reveals that social media contributes to democratic accountability by increasing public oversight of political leaders and institutions. Citizens are able to scrutinize government actions, monitor public spending, evaluate policy implementation, and expose corruption or administrative misconduct through digital platforms. Investigative journalists, civil society organizations, and ordinary citizens frequently use social media to disseminate evidence regarding unethical political behavior, thereby encouraging greater institutional accountability. This enhanced transparency supports democratic governance by making public officials more responsive to citizen expectations and increasing incentives for ethical political conduct.

Despite these positive contributions, the findings also demonstrate that social media poses significant challenges to political stability (Sabatini, 2025). One of the most serious concerns is the widespread dissemination of fake news. The rapid circulation of false or misleading information can distort public understanding of political issues, misinform voters, and influence public opinion based on inaccurate evidence. Because social media enables information to spread almost instantaneously, false information often reaches large audiences before corrections can be issued. This phenomenon undermines informed democratic decision-making and reduces public confidence in reliable sources of information.

Closely related to fake news is the growing problem of disinformation, which involves the deliberate creation and distribution of misleading information for political or ideological purposes. Coordinated disinformation campaigns conducted by political actors, foreign governments, or organized interest groups seek to manipulate electoral outcomes, weaken democratic institutions, and increase political instability. The findings indicate that respondents recognize disinformation as one of the greatest threats to contemporary democratic governance because it intentionally exploits social media algorithms to maximize public exposure and influence political behavior.

Another challenge identified in this study is the formation of echo chambers within social media platforms. Personalized algorithms often recommend content that aligns with users' existing political beliefs, reducing exposure to alternative viewpoints (Spohr, 2017). As individuals repeatedly encounter information consistent with their own perspectives, they become increasingly insulated from opposing opinions. This selective exposure reinforces ideological beliefs, limits constructive political dialogue, and contributes to greater social fragmentation. Echo chambers therefore reduce opportunities for compromise and mutual understanding within democratic societies.

The study further demonstrates that social media contributes to increasing political polarization. Online political discussions frequently become highly emotional and confrontational, intensifying divisions between competing ideological groups. Polarization weakens social cohesion by encouraging hostility, reducing political tolerance, and increasing distrust between different segments of society. As political identities become more polarized, governments face greater difficulties in achieving consensus on public policies, thereby increasing the risk of prolonged political instability.

The findings also highlight concerns regarding election interference through digital platforms. Social media has become an important arena for coordinated political advertising, misinformation campaigns, automated bot activity, and foreign influence operations designed to manipulate electoral processes. Such activities threaten electoral integrity by influencing voter perceptions, discouraging electoral participation, and undermining public confidence in democratic institutions. Respondents expressed concern that insufficient regulation of online political campaigns may increase opportunities for external interference in domestic political affairs.

In addition, the study identifies online extremism as an emerging threat to political stability. Extremist organizations increasingly exploit social media to recruit supporters, disseminate ideological propaganda, coordinate activities, and encourage radicalization. Digital platforms

enable extremist narratives to spread rapidly across national borders, increasing security risks and social tensions. Without effective monitoring and content moderation, social media may inadvertently facilitate the growth of violent extremism and organized political violence.

3.3 Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of the present study are generally consistent with previous research demonstrating that social media has a significant influence on political stability through its capacity to shape political communication, public opinion, and democratic participation. Similar to earlier empirical studies, the results indicate that social media produces both positive and negative political outcomes, suggesting that its overall impact depends on institutional quality, governance capacity, digital literacy, and the manner in which digital platforms are utilized. The current findings therefore reinforce the growing scholarly consensus that social media functions as a double-edged instrument within contemporary political systems.

One area of strong agreement concerns the positive contribution of social media to political awareness and democratic participation (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021). The present study found that increased exposure to political information through social media significantly enhances citizens' political knowledge, encourages civic engagement, and promotes greater participation in political processes. These findings are consistent with Hunter (2023), who reported that social media usage and online political engagement strengthen democratic institutions by increasing political participation and facilitating communication between governments and citizens. Likewise, the systematic review conducted by Lorenz-Spreen et al. (2023) concluded that digital media generally encourages political engagement, expands access to political information, and strengthens civic participation, particularly in developing democracies and countries with limited traditional media freedom. The consistency between these findings suggests that social media has become an increasingly important mechanism for expanding democratic participation worldwide.

The results also support previous evidence regarding the role of social media in improving government transparency and democratic accountability. Respondents in this study perceived that governments' use of social media enhances public access to official information, facilitates communication with citizens, and improves governmental responsiveness (Eom et al., 2018). These findings are consistent with Acheampong and Taden (2024), who found that higher levels of social media penetration are associated with stronger democratic governance, greater political accountability, and increased institutional transparency, particularly in countries possessing well-developed democratic institutions. Both studies emphasize that digital communication technologies can strengthen governance when accompanied by effective institutions and responsible public administration.

Despite these positive findings, the present study also agrees with previous research documenting the negative consequences of social media for political stability. Respondents expressed significant concerns regarding fake news, disinformation, political polarization, and declining trust in online political information. These findings closely correspond with those of Kubin and von Sikorski (2021), whose systematic review concluded that algorithm-driven content personalization and selective exposure contribute substantially to ideological polarization and reinforce political divisions. Similarly, Lorenz-Spreen et al. (2023) observed that while digital media promotes political participation, it also increases polarization, reduces institutional trust, and contributes to the spread of populist narratives in many democratic societies. The convergence of these findings indicates that the democratizing benefits of social media are frequently accompanied by considerable political risks.

The current study also supports previous research examining misinformation and coordinated disinformation campaigns. Respondents identified fake news and organized online disinformation as major threats to political stability and democratic governance. This finding is consistent with Mugurtay, Duygu, and Varol (2024), who demonstrated that coordinated information operations conducted through social media have become increasingly sophisticated and are frequently employed by political actors and foreign governments to manipulate public opinion, interfere in elections, and weaken democratic institutions. Both studies emphasize that the rapid dissemination of false information remains one of the greatest challenges confronting digital governance and electoral integrity.

Although the present findings largely agree with previous studies, several differences also emerge. First, while many earlier studies emphasize the predominantly negative consequences of social media particularly political polarization and misinformation the current study reveals a relatively stronger positive relationship between social media use and global political stability.

Respondents generally perceived that the democratic benefits of social media, including increased political awareness, citizen participation, and governmental transparency, outweighed its negative consequences (Baillard, 2014). This finding differs somewhat from studies conducted in highly polarized political environments, where social media has often been associated with declining political trust and increasing ideological conflict.

Another important difference concerns the role of trust in online political information. While previous studies frequently report widespread public distrust of political content shared through social media, the present study found that respondents remained actively engaged with online political information despite expressing moderate skepticism regarding its credibility. This suggests that contemporary users increasingly recognize the limitations of social media information while continuing to utilize digital platforms as important sources of political knowledge. Such behavior may reflect improvements in digital literacy, greater availability of independent fact-checking organizations, and increased public awareness of misinformation risks.

Several possible explanations account for both the similarities and differences observed between the present study and earlier research. One explanation concerns variations in institutional quality across countries (Alonso & Garcimartín, 2013). Nations with stronger democratic institutions, transparent governance, and effective regulatory frameworks are generally better positioned to maximize the benefits of social media while mitigating its harmful effects. Conversely, countries with weaker institutions may experience greater political instability due to limited regulatory capacity and higher vulnerability to online manipulation.

A second explanation relates to differences in digital literacy among populations. Citizens possessing higher levels of media literacy are generally more capable of identifying misinformation, critically evaluating online content, and distinguishing credible information from unreliable sources (Jones-Jang et al., 2021). As digital literacy continues to improve globally, the positive contributions of social media to democratic participation may become more pronounced while the influence of misinformation gradually declines.

Third, technological developments within social media platforms may also explain differences between studies conducted at different periods. Over recent years, many social media companies have introduced enhanced content moderation systems, fact-checking partnerships, algorithmic adjustments, and transparency measures intended to reduce misinformation and coordinated manipulation. These platform-level interventions may partially account for the relatively stronger positive effects identified in the present study compared with earlier investigations conducted before such policies were widely implemented.

Finally, contextual differences in political culture, electoral systems, legal frameworks, and socioeconomic development may also influence how social media affects political stability. Political environments characterized by high institutional trust, strong democratic norms, and active civil society organizations are more likely to experience positive outcomes from digital communication than societies experiencing political instability, social conflict, or weak governance structures.

3.4 Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several important practical implications for governments, policymakers, social media companies, civil society organizations, and international institutions seeking to promote political stability in the digital era. First, the study demonstrates that social media can serve as an effective instrument for strengthening democratic governance when it is utilized responsibly and supported by appropriate institutional frameworks (Warren et al., 2014). Governments should therefore continue to leverage digital platforms to improve communication with citizens, disseminate accurate public information, increase transparency, and encourage greater public participation in policymaking. The use of official social media channels can enhance public trust by providing timely information regarding government policies, emergency responses, and public services while facilitating direct interaction between public institutions and citizens.

Second, the findings highlight the urgent need to strengthen digital literacy and media literacy programs. Although respondents recognized the benefits of social media for political awareness and civic engagement, they also expressed concerns regarding fake news, disinformation, and misleading political content. Educational institutions, governments, and civil society organizations should collaborate to develop comprehensive digital literacy initiatives that equip citizens with the skills required to critically evaluate online information, identify misinformation, verify information sources, and engage responsibly in digital political discussions. Improving media literacy will reduce the vulnerability of citizens to manipulation while promoting more informed democratic participation.

Third, the results suggest that policymakers should establish balanced regulatory frameworks that protect democratic values without restricting freedom of expression (Brettschneider, 2012). Effective regulations should focus on increasing transparency in political advertising, limiting coordinated disinformation campaigns, improving accountability for algorithmic recommendation systems, and encouraging social media companies to implement effective content moderation policies. At the same time, regulatory measures should preserve fundamental human rights, including freedom of speech, access to information, and privacy, ensuring that digital governance remains consistent with democratic principles.

The findings also have significant implications for social media companies. Platform operators should continue investing in artificial intelligence technologies, human moderation systems, and independent fact-checking partnerships to identify and reduce the spread of misinformation, hate speech, extremist content, and coordinated manipulation campaigns. Greater transparency regarding content recommendation algorithms and political advertising practices may further enhance public trust in digital platforms while reducing opportunities for election interference and political manipulation (Aragani et al., 2025).

Furthermore, election management bodies and international organizations can utilize the findings of this study to strengthen electoral integrity and democratic resilience. Developing international standards for combating online disinformation, promoting cross-border cooperation in addressing digital security threats, and encouraging transparent political communication may contribute to more secure electoral processes and stronger democratic institutions worldwide. As political communication increasingly transcends national boundaries, international collaboration has become essential for maintaining global political stability in the digital age.

Finally, the study underscores the importance of fostering collaborative partnerships among governments, technology companies, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and citizens. Addressing the complex political challenges associated with social media requires coordinated efforts that integrate technological innovation, regulatory oversight, public education, and democratic governance (Asimakopoulou et al., 2025). Such collaboration can help maximize the positive contributions of social media while minimizing its adverse effects on political stability.

The findings also contribute to Political Communication Theory by providing empirical evidence that digital platforms have transformed the processes through which political information is produced, distributed, and consumed. Social media enables multidirectional communication rather than the traditional one-way dissemination associated with conventional mass media, thereby increasing opportunities for public engagement while simultaneously expanding the potential for misinformation and political manipulation. This study therefore extends political communication theory by illustrating the complex and interactive nature of digital political environments.

In addition, the results support the assumptions of Agenda-Setting Theory, which argues that media significantly influence public attention toward political issues (McCombs, 2005). The findings demonstrate that social media platforms play an increasingly important role in determining which political topics receive public attention and shape political discourse. However, unlike traditional media, algorithm-driven personalization and user-generated content create more fragmented information environments, suggesting that agenda-setting processes have become increasingly decentralized in the digital era.

The study further contributes to Media Dependency Theory, which proposes that individuals become increasingly dependent on media systems during periods of political uncertainty and social change. The findings indicate that citizens rely extensively on social media to obtain political information, particularly during elections, political crises, and major public events. This dependence strengthens the influence of digital platforms on political attitudes and behaviors while simultaneously increasing the importance of information quality and credibility for maintaining political stability.

Moreover, the results provide empirical support for the Network Society Theory, which emphasizes the transformative role of digital networks in contemporary social and political structures. The study demonstrates that digital connectivity facilitates rapid information exchange, collective action, civic mobilization, and transnational political communication. At the same time, networked communication also enables the rapid diffusion of misinformation, ideological polarization, and coordinated disinformation campaigns. These findings reinforce the theoretical argument that network technologies create both opportunities and vulnerabilities for democratic governance.

The findings also extend theories of Democratic Participation by illustrating how digital technologies reduce barriers to political engagement. Social media enables citizens to participate in public discussions, monitor government activities, express political opinions, and engage directly with policymakers regardless of geographical location. This expanded accessibility contributes to more inclusive democratic participation while highlighting the need for institutional safeguards that ensure digital participation remains constructive and evidence-based.

Finally, this study contributes to the broader literature by integrating both the positive and negative dimensions of social media within a single analytical framework. Previous research has frequently focused either on the democratic benefits of social media or on its harmful consequences, such as misinformation and political polarization. By simultaneously examining both perspectives, the present study advances theoretical understanding of the multifaceted relationship between social media and global political stability. The findings suggest that the political consequences of social media cannot be adequately explained by a single theoretical perspective but instead require an integrated framework that considers technological characteristics, institutional quality, political culture, governance capacity, and citizen behavior. This comprehensive perspective provides a stronger theoretical foundation for future research examining the evolving role of digital communication technologies in global politics.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media exerts a significant influence on global political stability by simultaneously generating opportunities for democratic development and challenges to political governance. The findings indicate that social media positively contributes to increasing political awareness, strengthening civic engagement, enhancing government transparency, encouraging citizen participation, facilitating rapid emergency communication, and promoting democratic accountability. At the same time, the study demonstrates that the widespread dissemination of fake news, coordinated disinformation campaigns, echo chambers, political polarization, election interference, online extremism, and digital harassment pose substantial risks to political stability and democratic institutions. These findings underscore that the overall impact of social media depends largely on the quality of governance, institutional capacity, regulatory frameworks, and citizens' digital literacy. The study contributes to the advancement of political science by providing a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between digital communication technologies and political stability, enriches communication research by demonstrating the evolving role of social media in political communication and public opinion formation, and expands the literature on digital governance by emphasizing the importance of balancing technological innovation with democratic accountability and institutional resilience. Based on these findings, several practical recommendations are proposed, including strengthening digital and media literacy programs, improving independent fact-checking mechanisms, developing balanced regulations to combat misinformation while protecting freedom of expression, increasing transparency in online political advertising and algorithmic content recommendation systems, and promoting responsible social media governance through collaboration among governments, technology companies, civil society organizations, and international institutions. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. The cross-sectional research design restricts the ability to examine causal relationships over time, the geographical coverage of respondents may not fully represent all political contexts worldwide, the use of self-reported survey data may introduce response bias, and the sampling approach may limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research should employ longitudinal research designs to investigate changes in political behavior over time, conduct comparative studies across different countries and political systems, examine the growing influence of artificial intelligence-generated misinformation and emerging social media platforms on democratic processes, and explore cross-cultural differences in digital political participation and governance. Such investigations will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how evolving digital technologies continue to shape global political stability in an increasingly interconnected world.

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