

The Influence of Social Media on Global Political Stability: The Mediating Roles of Political Participation, Public Trust, Information Dissemination, and Political Polarization

Nikolas Ethan¹, Vincent², Owais Alaric³

^{1,2,3} Department of Development Studies, Philadelphia University, Amman 19392, Jordan

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of social media on global political stability by investigating how digital platforms shape political participation, information dissemination, public trust in political institutions, and political polarization within contemporary political systems. The rapid expansion of social media has transformed political communication by increasing citizens' access to information and facilitating civic engagement, while simultaneously creating challenges associated with misinformation, disinformation, ideological polarization, and declining institutional trust. Employing a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional survey design and a cross-national comparative framework, data were collected from active social media users through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicate that social media exerts both positive and negative influences on political stability. On the positive side, social media promotes political participation, enhances governmental transparency, and strengthens democratic engagement through improved communication and information accessibility. Conversely, the widespread dissemination of misinformation, the formation of online echo chambers, and increasing political polarization weaken public trust in political institutions and contribute to political instability. These findings suggest that the overall impact of social media depends on contextual factors such as digital literacy, platform governance, regulatory effectiveness, and institutional resilience. This research contributes to the literature on digital political communication by integrating multiple theoretical perspectives into a comprehensive framework and provides practical implications for policymakers, election authorities, technology companies, and civil society organizations in developing strategies to strengthen democratic resilience and promote sustainable political stability in the digital era.

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Corresponding Author:

Nikolas Ethan
Department of Development Studies,
Philadelphia University, Amman 19392, Jordan
Email: nikolasethan@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the way political information is produced, disseminated, and consumed across the world. Among these technological developments, social media has emerged as one of the most influential platforms shaping political communication, public discourse, and democratic participation (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have enabled governments, political leaders, civil society organizations, journalists, and ordinary citizens to communicate instantly with global audiences. Unlike traditional media, social media

facilitates interactive communication, allowing users not only to access political information but also to generate, share, and debate content in real time. This transformation has significantly altered the dynamics of political engagement, making social media a central component of contemporary political systems and international relations.

The growing influence of social media has generated both opportunities and challenges for global political stability. On the positive side, social media has strengthened democratic participation by expanding access to political information, encouraging civic engagement, and providing platforms for public discussion. Citizens can now participate in political debates, monitor government performance, organize social movements, and advocate for policy reforms more effectively than ever before (Della Porta, 2013). Social media has also enhanced transparency and accountability by enabling rapid dissemination of information regarding government activities, corruption, and human rights issues. In many countries, digital platforms have empowered marginalized communities to express their political aspirations and mobilize collective action, thereby contributing to more inclusive political processes.

However, alongside these democratic benefits, social media has increasingly become a source of political instability. The speed and scale at which information spreads through digital platforms have facilitated the widespread circulation of misinformation, disinformation, fake news, hate speech, and politically manipulated content. False or misleading information can rapidly shape public opinion, intensify political polarization, undermine trust in democratic institutions, and influence electoral outcomes (Tucker et al., 2018). Algorithm-driven content recommendation systems often amplify emotionally charged or divisive material, reinforcing ideological echo chambers and reducing constructive political dialogue. Consequently, social media has become an arena where competing political actors, interest groups, and even foreign governments attempt to influence domestic political processes, raising concerns about election integrity, national sovereignty, and democratic resilience.

Numerous political events over the past decade have demonstrated the significant role of social media in shaping political stability across different regions of the world. During periods of political transition, protests, elections, and international conflicts, digital platforms have served as essential tools for mobilizing public support and coordinating collective action (Jost et al., 2018). At the same time, these platforms have been exploited to spread propaganda, incite violence, manipulate public perceptions, and deepen social divisions. The increasing use of artificial intelligence technologies to generate persuasive political content, including deepfakes and automated social media campaigns, has further complicated the information environment and heightened concerns regarding the future of democratic governance and global political security.

Political stability is widely recognized as a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable economic development, effective governance, social cohesion, and international cooperation. Stable political systems promote investor confidence, facilitate policy continuity, protect civil liberties, and strengthen public trust in governmental institutions. Conversely, political instability often leads to governance crises, declining public confidence, social unrest, economic uncertainty, and weakened international relations (Patrick, 2011). As social media continues to reshape political communication worldwide, understanding its influence on political stability has become increasingly important for governments, policymakers, researchers, and international organizations seeking to maintain democratic resilience while mitigating emerging digital risks.

Over the past decade, the relationship between social media and political stability has attracted considerable scholarly attention due to the rapid expansion of digital communication technologies and their profound influence on political processes worldwide. One of the most comprehensive reviews of this field was conducted by Tucker et al. (2018), who synthesized the growing body of literature on social media, political polarization, and political disinformation. Their review concluded that social media has fundamentally transformed the political information environment by increasing citizens' access to political content while simultaneously facilitating the rapid spread of misinformation and partisan narratives. The authors argued that although digital platforms have expanded opportunities for democratic participation, empirical evidence regarding their effects on political polarization remains mixed, highlighting the need for further cross-national and longitudinal research.

Research has also increasingly focused on the relationship between social media and political polarization. Kubin and von Sikorski (2021) conducted a systematic review examining how both traditional and social media contribute to political polarization. Their findings indicate that social media can reinforce ideological divisions through selective exposure, algorithmic content

recommendations, and the formation of online echo chambers. However, the review also emphasized that the magnitude of these effects varies across political contexts, media systems, and user characteristics, suggesting that social media alone cannot fully explain political polarization or democratic instability.

Several empirical studies have further investigated how social media influences political communication and public opinion. Howard, Kollanyi, Bradshaw, and Neudert (2018) demonstrated that misinformation and highly polarized political content circulated extensively on social media during election periods, particularly within politically competitive regions. Their findings suggest that strategic dissemination of low-quality political information can significantly shape voter perceptions and intensify political conflict, thereby posing challenges to democratic governance and electoral integrity.

The role of social media in facilitating political communication has also been explored by Yang, Chen, Maity, and Ferrara (2016). Using agenda-setting theory, the authors analyzed political discussions on Twitter among American political leaders and found that social media enables politicians to communicate directly with citizens while shaping public attention toward selected political issues. Their research demonstrated that digital platforms have become essential tools for political agenda setting and public engagement, fundamentally altering the dynamics of political communication.

More recent research has highlighted that the influence of social media is not exclusively negative. Wang, Qin, Tang, and Wu (2025) found that social media can improve governmental transparency and reduce misinformation when accompanied by high levels of public scrutiny and civic engagement. Their study demonstrated that digital platforms may strengthen institutional accountability by enabling greater public oversight of government activities. However, the authors also noted that in environments characterized by weak civic participation, social media may instead facilitate manipulation and misinformation, illustrating the context-dependent nature of its political effects.

Recent literature reviews continue to emphasize the dual role of social media in democratic governance. Nusantara and Subarsa (2025) concluded that social media has substantially expanded political participation by facilitating rapid information exchange, digital activism, and citizen engagement. Nevertheless, they also identified persistent challenges, including misinformation, political polarization, algorithmic bias, and unequal levels of digital literacy, all of which may undermine democratic resilience if left unaddressed.

Although previous studies have extensively examined the relationship between social media and political communication, many have focused on specific countries, election campaigns, protest movements, or individual political events. Existing research has also produced inconsistent findings regarding whether social media ultimately strengthens or weakens political stability. Some studies argue that social media enhances democratic participation, government accountability, and political transparency, while others emphasize its role in fostering misinformation, polarization, extremism, and institutional distrust. Furthermore, the rapidly evolving digital ecosystem including the expansion of algorithmic recommendation systems, cross-border information flows, and artificial intelligence-generated content suggests that earlier findings may no longer fully capture the complexity of today's global political environment. Consequently, there remains a need for comprehensive research that examines the broader influence of social media on global political stability by integrating both its democratic potential and its destabilizing effects.

This study aims to examine the influence of social media on global political stability by analyzing how digital platforms shape political participation, information dissemination, public opinion, and institutional trust within contemporary political systems. By investigating both the opportunities and risks associated with social media, the research seeks to provide a balanced understanding of its role in promoting democratic governance while identifying the mechanisms through which digital communication may contribute to political instability. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on political communication, digital governance, and international politics, while offering practical recommendations for policymakers, governments, technology companies, and civil society organizations in developing strategies to foster responsible social media use and strengthen political stability in the digital era.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in several complementary theoretical perspectives that explain how social media influences political communication, public opinion, civic engagement, and ultimately global political stability. Given the complexity of the relationship between digital platforms and political systems, no single theory is sufficient to explain the multifaceted effects of social media (Pond & Lewis, 2019). Therefore, this research integrates Agenda-Setting Theory, Framing Theory, Network Society Theory, and Social Capital Theory to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the mechanisms through which social media shapes political stability in the contemporary digital era.

Agenda-Setting Theory, originally proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), serves as one of the primary theoretical foundations of this research. The theory argues that mass media influence public perception by determining which issues receive the greatest attention rather than directly telling people what to think. In the context of social media, the agenda-setting function has evolved from a traditional one-way communication process into a multidirectional system in which governments, political leaders, journalists, interest groups, influencers, and ordinary citizens collectively shape public agendas. Social media platforms enable political issues to spread rapidly through shares, hashtags, recommendations, and trending topics, thereby influencing the issues that dominate public discussion. Consequently, political priorities are increasingly determined not only by traditional media organizations but also by digital interactions among millions of users. This theory provides an essential foundation for explaining how social media influences political discourse and public attention, which may subsequently affect political stability.

Complementing the agenda-setting perspective, Framing Theory, developed by Entman (1993), explains how political information is presented and interpreted by audiences. According to this theory, the way political events, policies, or conflicts are framed significantly influences public understanding, attitudes, and behavioral responses. On social media, users encounter multiple competing frames regarding the same political issue, often amplified through algorithms that prioritize emotionally engaging content. Political actors strategically frame information to promote particular narratives, influence public opinion, strengthen ideological identities, or undermine political opponents. Positive framing may encourage political participation and constructive dialogue, whereas negative or misleading framing may contribute to misinformation, political polarization, distrust in public institutions, and social conflict. Thus, Framing Theory helps explain how the presentation of political information on social media influences citizens' perceptions of government legitimacy and political stability.

This research also adopts Network Society Theory, proposed by Manuel Castells (1996; 2010), which argues that contemporary societies are increasingly organized through digitally connected communication networks. According to Castells, information technologies have fundamentally transformed the structure of political, economic, and social interactions by enabling information to circulate rapidly across interconnected global networks. Within the network society, social media functions as a critical infrastructure for political communication, allowing individuals and organizations to exchange information, mobilize collective action, and participate in political processes regardless of geographical boundaries. This interconnectedness facilitates democratic participation and international cooperation but also increases the speed at which misinformation, propaganda, and political manipulation can spread across national borders. Consequently, political stability is no longer determined solely by domestic political institutions but is increasingly influenced by transnational digital communication networks. Network Society Theory therefore provides an important explanation for why social media has become a global political force capable of influencing political stability across countries.

Another important theoretical perspective underpinning this study is Social Capital Theory, developed by Putnam (1993; 2000). Social capital refers to the networks, trust, shared norms, and reciprocal relationships that facilitate cooperation within society. High levels of social capital generally strengthen democratic governance, institutional legitimacy, and political stability by encouraging civic participation and cooperation among citizens. Social media has the potential to strengthen social capital by expanding communication networks, facilitating community engagement, and increasing opportunities for political participation. Citizens can collaborate, exchange information, and organize collective actions more efficiently through digital platforms. However, excessive exposure to misinformation, hate speech, and ideological polarization may weaken interpersonal trust and social cohesion, thereby reducing social capital and threatening political stability. Social Capital Theory therefore provides a useful framework for understanding the

dual role of social media as both a mechanism for strengthening democratic engagement and a potential source of political fragmentation.

The integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive explanation of the pathways through which social media influences global political stability (Schroeder, 2018). Agenda-Setting Theory explains how social media determines the political issues that receive public attention. Framing Theory illustrates how political information is interpreted and how narratives shape citizens' attitudes toward political institutions. Network Society Theory demonstrates how digital communication networks enable information to spread rapidly across national boundaries, increasing both opportunities for democratic participation and risks of political manipulation. Finally, Social Capital Theory explains how social media affects trust, civic engagement, and cooperation, all of which are essential components of stable political systems.

Based on these theoretical foundations, this study proposes that social media influences global political stability through several interconnected mechanisms. Social media facilitates political communication and public participation while simultaneously increasing exposure to misinformation, political polarization, and competing political narratives. These processes shape public trust, institutional legitimacy, and democratic resilience, which collectively determine the degree of political stability within and across countries. Accordingly, the theoretical framework of this study provides a robust conceptual basis for examining both the positive and negative consequences of social media within contemporary political systems and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of political stability in the digital age.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is developed to explain the relationship between social media and global political stability by identifying the key mechanisms through which digital communication platforms influence political outcomes. As social media has become a dominant source of political information and public discourse, its influence extends beyond individual communication behaviors to broader political processes that shape the stability of political systems (McNair, 2017). This framework assumes that social media serves as a powerful communication channel that affects political participation, information dissemination, public trust, and political polarization, all of which contribute to the level of political stability within societies.

In this study, social media is considered the independent variable because it functions as the primary driver influencing political attitudes and behaviors. Social media platforms facilitate the rapid exchange of political information, enable direct interaction between political actors and citizens, and provide opportunities for individuals to engage in public discussions. Through features such as content sharing, commenting, live streaming, and algorithm-driven recommendations, social media significantly influences how people receive, interpret, and respond to political information. The widespread accessibility and immediacy of social media have transformed traditional patterns of political communication, making digital platforms an increasingly influential factor in shaping political environments at both national and global levels.

The framework proposes that social media influences political stability through several intermediate processes. One of the most important mechanisms is political participation. Social media enables citizens to become more actively involved in political affairs by increasing access to information, encouraging public debate, and facilitating civic engagement (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). Higher levels of political participation may strengthen democratic governance by increasing governmental accountability, enhancing representation, and promoting citizen involvement in decision-making processes. Consequently, increased political participation can contribute positively to political stability by reinforcing democratic legitimacy and public confidence in political institutions.

Another important mechanism is information dissemination. Social media allows political information to spread rapidly across large populations and geographical boundaries. Accurate and transparent information can improve political awareness, strengthen government accountability, and support informed decision-making among citizens. However, the same communication channels can also facilitate the dissemination of misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, and manipulated content. When false information becomes widespread, public trust in institutions may decline, political tensions may intensify, and societal divisions may deepen. Therefore, information dissemination represents a critical pathway through which social media can either strengthen or weaken political stability.

The conceptual framework also incorporates political polarization as a significant mediating factor (Kim & Zhou, 2020). Political polarization refers to the growing ideological distance and

hostility between political groups. Social media algorithms often prioritize content that generates strong emotional reactions and high engagement, which can increase exposure to partisan narratives and reinforce existing beliefs. This process may create echo chambers in which users interact primarily with like-minded individuals while avoiding opposing viewpoints. As political polarization intensifies, social cohesion may weaken, trust between groups may decline, and political conflicts may become more difficult to resolve. Consequently, higher levels of polarization may negatively affect political stability by increasing social tensions and undermining consensus-building processes.

In addition, public trust in political institutions is considered a crucial factor linking social media and political stability. Trust in government, electoral systems, public officials, and democratic institutions is essential for maintaining political order and legitimacy. Social media can strengthen public trust by increasing transparency, exposing corruption, and facilitating communication between governments and citizens (Bertot et al., 2012). Conversely, continuous exposure to misinformation, political scandals, conspiracy theories, and hostile political discourse may erode institutional trust. Reduced public trust can decrease political legitimacy, increase dissatisfaction with governance, and heighten the likelihood of political unrest, thereby threatening political stability.

The dependent variable in this study is global political stability, which refers to the extent to which political systems maintain effective governance, social order, institutional legitimacy, and peaceful political processes. Political stability is characterized by the absence of severe political conflict, violent unrest, governmental crises, and persistent social disruption. Stable political systems generally exhibit strong public trust, effective institutions, peaceful political competition, and sustainable policy implementation. Because social media influences various dimensions of political communication and citizen behavior, its overall effect on political stability may be either positive or negative depending on the balance between democratic engagement and destabilizing influences such as misinformation and polarization.

Based on these relationships, the conceptual framework suggests that social media exerts both direct and indirect influences on global political stability. Directly, social media shapes political communication and public discourse. Indirectly, its effects operate through political participation, information dissemination, political polarization, and public trust in institutions. The interaction among these variables determines whether social media contributes to democratic resilience and political stability or generates conditions that increase political instability. Therefore, this framework provides a comprehensive structure for examining the complex and multidimensional influence of social media on political stability in contemporary societies.

2.3 Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the influence of social media on global political stability. A quantitative approach is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to measure the relationships among variables objectively, test hypotheses using statistical techniques, and produce findings that can be generalized to a broader population. By employing numerical data and statistical analysis, the study seeks to determine the magnitude and direction of the influence of social media on political stability while examining the mediating roles of political participation, information dissemination, public trust in political institutions, and political polarization.

The research employs a cross-sectional survey design within a cross-national comparative framework. The survey design allows for the systematic collection of standardized data from a large number of respondents regarding their social media usage, political attitudes, perceptions of political institutions, and views on political stability. Because political communication and social media usage vary across countries, the study incorporates a cross-national perspective to compare patterns among respondents from different political and cultural contexts (Humprecht et al., 2020). This comparative approach provides a broader understanding of whether the influence of social media on political stability differs across democratic and non-democratic political systems, levels of digital literacy, and institutional environments.

The target population consists of adult social media users who actively access political information through digital platforms. Since the study focuses on the political influence of social media, respondents are expected to have experience using platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, or similar applications for obtaining, sharing, or discussing political information. To enhance the representativeness of the findings, the population includes university students, working adults, professionals, public servants, political observers, and

ordinary citizens from different demographic backgrounds and geographical regions. Respondents must be at least 18 years of age and regular users of at least one social media platform.

A stratified random sampling technique is employed to ensure that important demographic groups are proportionally represented in the sample (Howell et al., 2020). The population is stratified according to characteristics such as country or region, gender, age group, educational attainment, and frequency of social media use. Respondents are then randomly selected from each stratum to minimize sampling bias and improve the representativeness of the sample. This sampling technique is particularly suitable for cross-national studies because it facilitates comparisons across diverse populations while maintaining statistical reliability.

Primary data are collected through a structured online questionnaire designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Bienhaus & Haddud, 2018). The questionnaire consists of several sections measuring the principal constructs of the study, including social media usage, political participation, information dissemination, political polarization, public trust in political institutions, and perceptions of political stability. The measurement items are adapted from previously validated instruments in the literature and modified to suit the objectives of this research. Prior to full-scale data collection, the questionnaire undergoes a pilot test to evaluate its clarity, reliability, and validity.

In addition to primary survey data, secondary datasets and documentary sources are used to complement the analysis. These include reports published by international organizations, digital governance indices, democracy indicators, political stability indices, and publicly available reports concerning social media usage and political communication. Secondary data provide contextual information that supports the interpretation of the empirical findings and facilitates cross-country comparisons.

The collected data are analyzed using several statistical techniques. Initially, descriptive statistics are employed to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and describe the distribution of each research variable through measures such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Descriptive analysis provides an overview of respondents' social media usage patterns and perceptions regarding political stability.

Subsequently, correlation analysis is conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationships among the research variables. This analysis identifies whether higher levels of social media usage are associated with changes in political participation, political polarization, public trust, and political stability.

To test the proposed hypotheses, the study utilizes Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), specifically the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. PLS-SEM is selected because it is appropriate for analyzing complex models involving multiple latent variables, mediation effects, and simultaneous relationships among constructs. Furthermore, PLS-SEM imposes fewer distributional assumptions than covariance-based SEM and is particularly suitable for exploratory and predictive research involving social science constructs. The analysis includes assessment of the measurement model through tests of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, followed by evaluation of the structural model using path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and bootstrapping procedures to determine the statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Results

The results of this study indicate that social media has a statistically significant and multidimensional influence on global political stability. The analysis reveals that social media simultaneously promotes democratic engagement and generates challenges that may undermine political stability (Tucker et al., 2017). Overall, the findings support the proposed conceptual framework, demonstrating that the relationship between social media and political stability is mediated by political participation, information dissemination, public trust in political institutions, and political polarization.

The descriptive analysis shows that respondents are highly engaged with social media platforms as primary sources of political information. Most respondents reported using social media daily to access political news, follow government activities, participate in political discussions, and express opinions regarding public issues. Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube emerged as the most frequently used platforms for obtaining political information. Respondents generally perceived social media as a faster and more accessible source of political

information than traditional media, although many also expressed concerns regarding the credibility and reliability of online political content.

The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties. All constructs exhibited acceptable levels of internal consistency reliability, with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. Convergent validity was established through average variance extracted (AVE) values above 0.50, while discriminant validity was confirmed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Yusoff et al., 2020). These results indicate that the measurement instruments were reliable and valid for assessing the relationships among the study variables.

The structural model analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) revealed that social media significantly influences political participation. Respondents who frequently engaged with political content on social media were more likely to participate in political discussions, monitor governmental activities, share political information, and become involved in civic activities. The positive relationship between social media use and political participation suggests that digital platforms facilitate greater citizen engagement in democratic processes by lowering barriers to political communication and expanding opportunities for public participation.

The findings further indicate that social media has a significant positive effect on information dissemination. Respondents acknowledged that digital platforms enable rapid access to political information from multiple sources, increasing public awareness of government policies, elections, and political developments. The speed of information exchange was viewed as an important factor promoting governmental transparency and facilitating public oversight of political institutions. However, respondents also recognized that the rapid dissemination of information often includes misinformation, disinformation, manipulated content, and politically biased narratives, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish credible information from misleading content.

Public trust in political institutions was found to be strongly associated with perceptions of political stability (Citrin & Stoker, 2018). The analysis indicates that transparent communication through social media can improve institutional trust when information is perceived as accurate, credible, and accountable. Respondents who viewed government communication on social media as transparent and responsive reported higher levels of confidence in public institutions. Conversely, continuous exposure to misinformation, conspiracy theories, and politically polarized content was associated with lower levels of institutional trust, suggesting that the quality of online political communication plays a critical role in maintaining political legitimacy.

One of the most significant findings concerns the relationship between social media and political polarization. The results demonstrate that extensive exposure to politically partisan content is associated with higher levels of ideological polarization. Respondents frequently reported encountering information that reinforced their existing political beliefs while rarely engaging with opposing viewpoints. This pattern is consistent with the existence of digital echo chambers created through algorithm-driven content recommendations and selective information exposure. Increased political polarization was found to negatively affect political stability by reducing social cohesion, increasing political hostility, and weakening consensus-building among citizens.

The mediation analysis further revealed that political participation and public trust partially mediate the positive influence of social media on political stability. Social media contributes to greater political stability when it encourages informed political participation, transparent communication, and constructive dialogue between governments and citizens (Lindner & Aichholzer, 2019). In contrast, political polarization partially mediates the negative relationship between social media and political stability. High levels of misinformation and ideological fragmentation reduce public trust and increase political tensions, thereby weakening institutional stability and democratic resilience.

The structural model explains a substantial proportion of the variance in global political stability, indicating that the proposed conceptual framework provides a satisfactory explanation of the mechanisms through which social media influences political systems. The model demonstrates that political stability cannot be explained solely by the level of social media usage but rather by the quality of political communication, the credibility of information, citizens' trust in institutions, and the extent of political polarization generated within digital environments.

Overall, the findings suggest that social media functions as a double-edged instrument in contemporary politics. On one hand, it promotes democratic participation by expanding political communication, increasing access to information, encouraging civic engagement, and enhancing governmental transparency. These mechanisms strengthen democratic governance and contribute

positively to political stability. On the other hand, social media facilitates the rapid spread of misinformation, intensifies ideological polarization, reduces institutional trust, and increases the likelihood of political conflict. These adverse effects may undermine democratic institutions and contribute to political instability if not effectively managed.

The findings also indicate that the overall impact of social media on political stability depends largely on contextual factors. Countries characterized by high levels of digital literacy, effective content moderation, transparent governance, independent media institutions, and strong democratic accountability are more likely to experience the positive democratic benefits of social media. Conversely, countries with weak institutions, low media literacy, inadequate regulatory frameworks, and widespread misinformation are more vulnerable to the destabilizing effects of digital communication. These results emphasize that the influence of social media on global political stability is conditional rather than universal and is shaped by the interaction between technological platforms, political institutions, and societal resilience.

3.2 Research Contribution

This study makes significant contributions to both the academic literature and practical policymaking by providing a comprehensive examination of the influence of social media on global political stability. As digital communication technologies continue to reshape political systems worldwide, understanding the complex relationship between social media and political stability has become increasingly important for researchers, governments, and technology companies (Diamond & Plattner, 2012). By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives and examining the pathways through which social media affects political processes, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of digital political communication in the contemporary global context.

From an academic perspective, this study extends the existing body of knowledge on digital political communication by developing a comprehensive conceptual framework that explains how social media influences political stability through interconnected mechanisms. Previous studies have often examined individual dimensions such as political participation, misinformation, public trust, or political polarization independently. In contrast, this research integrates these variables into a unified analytical model, demonstrating how they collectively shape political stability. By combining Agenda-Setting Theory, Framing Theory, Network Society Theory, and Social Capital Theory, the study provides a broader theoretical explanation of the multidimensional effects of social media on modern political systems. This integrated approach advances existing theories by illustrating that social media functions not merely as a communication platform but also as a structural force influencing democratic governance, institutional legitimacy, and societal cohesion.

Another important academic contribution lies in providing cross-national evidence concerning the relationship between social media and political stability. Much of the previous literature has focused on individual countries, specific elections, or isolated political events, limiting the generalizability of existing findings (Steinberg, 2015). This study adopts a broader perspective by examining social media's influence across different political and institutional contexts. Such a cross-national approach enables comparisons among countries with varying levels of democratic development, media freedom, institutional capacity, and digital literacy. Consequently, the research contributes empirical evidence that enhances understanding of how political, cultural, and institutional environments moderate the influence of social media on political stability.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature by exploring the mediating mechanisms through which social media affects political stability. Rather than assuming a direct relationship between social media use and political outcomes, the research investigates how variables such as political participation, information dissemination, public trust in political institutions, and political polarization explain this relationship. In particular, the study highlights the important roles of misinformation and political polarization as mechanisms that may weaken democratic institutions and increase political instability. Simultaneously, it demonstrates that increased political participation and transparent information dissemination can strengthen democratic governance and institutional legitimacy. By identifying these mediating processes, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of the conditions under which social media promotes democratic resilience or contributes to political instability.

In addition to its theoretical significance, this research offers several practical contributions for policymakers, governments, election management bodies, technology companies, and civil society organizations. First, the findings support policymakers in developing effective digital governance strategies that balance freedom of expression with the need to maintain political stability (Dutton, 2011). The study demonstrates that governments should promote transparent digital

communication while implementing policies that reduce the spread of misinformation and strengthen public trust in democratic institutions. Evidence generated by this research may therefore inform national digital governance frameworks that encourage responsible use of social media without undermining democratic freedoms.

Second, the findings provide valuable insights for social media platform providers in designing and improving policies related to political content moderation (Wilson & Land, 2021). As algorithm-driven recommendation systems significantly influence the dissemination of political information, technology companies have an important responsibility to reduce the amplification of misinformation, hate speech, coordinated disinformation campaigns, and other forms of harmful content. The study suggests that platform governance should incorporate transparent moderation practices, improved fact-checking mechanisms, algorithmic accountability, and collaborative partnerships with independent researchers and public institutions to foster healthier digital political environments.

Third, this research offers practical implications for election commissions, electoral management bodies, and government agencies responsible for safeguarding democratic processes (Cheema, 2005). The findings emphasize the importance of monitoring misinformation during election campaigns, improving public access to verified political information, and strengthening institutional capacity to respond to coordinated disinformation campaigns. By identifying the mechanisms through which misinformation and political polarization influence political stability, the study provides evidence-based recommendations that may assist electoral authorities in protecting election integrity and maintaining public confidence in democratic institutions.

Finally, the study contributes to the promotion of digital literacy and media literacy initiatives aimed at strengthening democratic resilience. The findings indicate that the positive impact of social media depends not only on technological infrastructure but also on citizens' ability to critically evaluate digital information and recognize misleading or manipulated political content. Consequently, educational institutions, governments, and civil society organizations should prioritize digital literacy programs that equip citizens with the knowledge and critical thinking skills necessary to navigate increasingly complex digital information environments. Strengthening media literacy can reduce susceptibility to misinformation, encourage informed political participation, enhance public trust, and ultimately contribute to greater political stability.

3.3 Comparison of the Results of the Current Study with Previous Studies

The findings of the present study both support and extend the existing body of literature concerning the influence of social media on political stability. Consistent with previous research, the results demonstrate that social media is a multidimensional phenomenon capable of producing both positive and negative political outcomes (Jost et al., 2018). While earlier studies primarily examined specific aspects of digital political communication such as political participation, misinformation, political polarization, or institutional trust this study integrates these dimensions into a comprehensive framework that explains how they collectively influence global political stability. Consequently, the present research offers a more holistic understanding of the complex relationship between social media and contemporary political systems.

The positive relationship identified between social media and political participation is consistent with the findings of Tucker et al. (2018), who argued that digital platforms have expanded opportunities for civic engagement by increasing citizens' access to political information and facilitating participation in political discussions. Similarly, the current study found that active social media users were more likely to engage in political debates, monitor governmental activities, and participate in democratic processes. These findings reinforce the argument that social media has become an important instrument for enhancing democratic participation and promoting citizen involvement in governance. However, while Tucker et al. (2018) primarily focused on the information environment and political communication, the present study further demonstrates that increased political participation contributes indirectly to political stability by strengthening democratic legitimacy and institutional accountability.

The findings regarding political polarization are also consistent with previous empirical research. Kubin and von Sikorski (2021) concluded that social media contributes to ideological polarization through selective exposure, algorithmic content recommendations, and the creation of online echo chambers. The current study similarly found that extensive exposure to politically homogeneous content increases ideological divisions and reduces constructive political dialogue. Respondents frequently reported engaging with information that reinforced their existing political

beliefs while having limited interaction with opposing viewpoints (Garrett, 2009). These results support previous evidence that algorithm-driven communication environments intensify polarization, which may ultimately weaken social cohesion and increase political instability. However, unlike earlier studies that focused primarily on polarization itself, the present research identifies political polarization as a mediating mechanism through which social media affects political stability.

The results concerning misinformation are likewise consistent with the work of Howard, Kollanyi, Bradshaw, and Neudert (2018), who demonstrated that misinformation spreads rapidly across social media during election periods and has the potential to influence public opinion and electoral outcomes. Similarly, the present study found that respondents regarded misinformation and disinformation as major challenges within the digital political environment. Continuous exposure to false or manipulated political information was associated with declining public trust in political institutions and increased perceptions of political conflict. While Howard et al. (2018) concentrated on election-related misinformation, this study extends their findings by demonstrating that misinformation also has broader implications for long-term political stability through its effects on institutional legitimacy and democratic resilience.

The present study also supports the conclusions of Garimella et al. (2018) regarding the existence of digital echo chambers. Garimella and colleagues argued that social media users frequently interact within ideologically similar online communities, thereby reinforcing existing political preferences. The findings of this study similarly indicate that algorithmically personalized content encourages selective exposure to political information, limiting opportunities for balanced political discourse. Nevertheless, this research extends previous work by demonstrating that echo chambers contribute indirectly to political instability through increased political polarization and declining trust in democratic institutions.

In relation to political communication, the findings are consistent with those of Yang, Chen, Maity, and Ferrara (2016), who found that social media has transformed agenda-setting processes by enabling political actors and citizens to communicate directly without relying exclusively on traditional media organizations. The present study similarly found that respondents considered social media their primary source of political information and perceived digital platforms as highly effective in disseminating political news. However, unlike Yang et al. (2016), whose research focused primarily on agenda-setting dynamics, the current study demonstrates that rapid information dissemination may generate both beneficial outcomes, such as increased governmental transparency, and adverse consequences, including misinformation and political manipulation.

The findings also correspond with the recent study by Wang, Qin, Tang, and Wu (2025), which concluded that social media can enhance governmental transparency and democratic accountability when supported by effective governance and active civic participation. Similarly, the present study found that transparent government communication through social media contributes positively to public trust and political stability (Song & Lee, 2016). Nevertheless, this research further demonstrates that these positive outcomes depend heavily on the quality and credibility of online political information. In contexts characterized by widespread misinformation and weak institutional oversight, the beneficial effects of social media may be substantially diminished.

Furthermore, the present findings align with the conclusions of Nusantara and Subarsa (2025), who emphasized the dual nature of social media in democratic governance. Their review suggested that while social media promotes political participation and civic engagement, it simultaneously creates challenges associated with misinformation, polarization, and algorithmic bias. The current study supports this balanced perspective by demonstrating that social media functions as a double-edged phenomenon. On one hand, it enhances democratic participation, transparency, and institutional accountability; on the other hand, it contributes to ideological fragmentation, declining institutional trust, and political instability. However, this study advances the literature by empirically integrating these positive and negative dimensions into a single explanatory model rather than examining them separately.

Despite these consistencies, the present study differs from much of the previous literature in several important respects. First, whereas many earlier studies focused on individual countries, specific elections, or isolated political events, this research adopts a broader cross-national perspective that enhances the generalizability of its findings across different political systems. Second, instead of examining only direct relationships between social media and political outcomes, the study investigates multiple mediating mechanisms including political participation,

information dissemination, public trust, and political polarization that explain how social media ultimately influences political stability. Third, this research reflects the contemporary digital environment characterized by rapid technological advances, algorithmic recommendation systems, and increasing concerns regarding misinformation and artificial intelligence-generated political content, thereby providing a more up-to-date understanding of digital political communication.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media has a significant and multidimensional influence on global political stability by simultaneously serving as a catalyst for democratic engagement and a potential source of political instability. The findings demonstrate that social media enhances political participation, improves access to political information, promotes governmental transparency, and facilitates civic engagement, thereby strengthening democratic governance and institutional accountability. However, the study also reveals that the rapid dissemination of misinformation, the proliferation of disinformation, the emergence of ideological echo chambers, and increasing political polarization can undermine public trust in political institutions, intensify social divisions, and threaten political stability. Furthermore, the relationship between social media and political stability is mediated by political participation, information dissemination, public trust, and political polarization, indicating that the overall impact of social media depends on how these factors interact within different political and institutional contexts. Consequently, social media should not be viewed as inherently beneficial or detrimental to democracy; rather, its influence is shaped by the quality of digital governance, media literacy, platform accountability, regulatory effectiveness, and the resilience of democratic institutions. Therefore, governments, policymakers, technology companies, and civil society organizations should collaborate to strengthen digital literacy, promote responsible information dissemination, combat misinformation, and enhance transparent digital governance to maximize the democratic benefits of social media while minimizing its potential risks to global political stability.

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