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The Role of Social Media in Political Reform in Ethiopia: The Case of Somali Region

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between social media and political reform in Ethiopia: the Case of Somali Region. With the advent of digital technologies, social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for communication, mobilization, and advocacy. In the context of political reform, social media has played a significant role in amplifying voices, fostering civic engagement, and challenging traditional power structures. The objectives of this study are to examine the challenges of political reform, identify the role of social media in political reform, and investigate the impacts of social media on political reform in the Somali region. This study was conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively. Research The design of this study was a cross-sectional survey design, and the and the types and sources of data were both primary and secondary. The total sample size of this study was 399 participants selected by using simple random sampling. The findings of this study indicate that the most popular social media is Facebook in the Somali Region, followed by YouTube. Social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for mobilization, information dissemination, and citizen engagement, playing a crucial role in shaping political discourse and driving social change. The study recommends encouraging digital literacy and critical thinking, fight false information and fake news, increase internet accessibility, encourage discussion and positive interaction, bolster digital rights and freedom of speech, and assist citizen journalism and local content production. This research thrilling future direction examines how social media affects political reform in a particular area of Ethiopia. Studying social media's impact on political dynamics is essential as it becomes more and more popular as a forum for political mobilization and discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Social media is claimed to have an impact on communication and public debate in the twenty-first century (Adamu, 2020). Specifically, the use of social media is growing. Amestoy *et al.* (2019) state that it is an essential component of our daily lives and is utilized for social media discussion boards, academic platforms, religious stages, employment portals, and internet marketing across the world. Dictionary (2012) states that websites and programs used for social networking are referred to as "social media." In addition, social media is defined as electronic communication channels, including websites where users build online conversations to exchange ideas, information, private messages, and other types of content (Rouse, 2019).

Popular social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube are said to have the ability to improve political engagement in the modern day (Adamu, 2020). Political institutions, such as political parties, political foundations, etc., have started using Facebook pages, even though Twitter is a great way for users to publicly share information and political viewpoints through their networks (Brenner and Smith, 2013). Some organizations use social media to engage in direct communication with the public and promote increased political dialogue (Stieglitz *et al.*, 2016).

Chibuzor *et al.* (2017) stated that there has been a steady increase in the usage of social media in politics in recent years. During the US presidential elections of 2008 and 2012, Barack Obama set a record for the most social media usage for political purposes worldwide (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015). Social media platforms have been widely used by governments and politicians worldwide to encourage citizens and candidates to actively engage in the political process.

In the Arab world, social media is also being utilized more and more to educate, inspire, and raise public awareness of topics like democracy, human rights, and corruption. The Sedra's Report to the states that social media and blogs have been heavily utilized by pro-democracy movements and groups in Egypt, including Kefaya (enough), "We are all Khaled Said," Shayfeencom (We're Watching You), and others (Sedra, 2014).

The 2011 general elections in Nigeria served as the first practical test of using social media for political engagement Chibuzor *et al.* (2017). The initial web-based identifiable social network named SixDegrees.com was established in 1997. Next are the standard social media networks Facebook, established in 2004, twitter, and You Tube, established in 2006 and 2005, respectively. Currently, they are used by billions of users around the world (Eke & Odoh, 2014).

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Social media had a positive impact by playing a major role in energizing the youth and bringing about the anticipated political reform. Numerous politicians are realizing that this is a new and effective way to engage the public, encourage their participation, and improve communication and situational understanding. Indeed, a number of Ethiopians are criticizing the influence of social media on our current political revolution. These organizations only highlighted the detrimental effects that are truly brought about by careless or dishonest users of social media who share false information and incite conflict in society. This study was conducted at social media's contribution to political change in the Somali Region.

Since 2015, there have been protests by popular social movements in Ethiopia. Furthermore, social media proved to be a more effective substitute for state-owned or public media during the protest for political dialogue Zere (2020). The government started filtering political content on the internet and intensified its repressive measures against journalists following the 2005 election dispute. In addition, the parliament imprisoned journalists and opposition leaders and issued various declarations (Runhanya, 2014).

Social media platforms have proliferated throughout the Somali Region, and their impact on political processes has been steadily growing. It is imperative to comprehend the function of social media in the context of political reform in the Somali Region, though. Examining the ways in which different stakeholders, political activists, civil society organizations, and marginalized communities use social media platforms to advance political engagement, push for reform, and deal with governance-related issues is part of this (Agyemang *et al.*, 2020)

An important area of research is how social media is influencing political reform in the Somali region. Despite the increasing adoption of social media platform in the region, there remains a dearth of research specifically focusing on how these platforms are utilized in political mobilization, advocacy, and reform efforts. Understanding the impact of social media on political dynamics in the Somali region is essential for policymakers, researchers, and activists seeking to harness the potential of these platforms for positive political change (Chonka, 2021).

Despite the growing interest in the role of social media in political reform globally, there is a notable research gap when it comes to understanding its specific impact on political reform in the Somali region. Existing literature on the topic is limited and does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics and challenges of social media's influence on politics in this particular context (Bekaj and Antara, 2018).

The research gap can be identified as Limited Case Studies since there is a lack of in-depth case studies focusing specifically on the Somali region. Most existing research on the role of social media in political reform in Ethiopia tends to be broad and does not specifically examine the unique political dynamics and reform efforts in the Somali

region. Consequently, the specific experiences, challenges, and successes of social media in driving political reform in this region remain understudied (Thomson, 2022).

Understanding local context, the Somali region has its own distinct cultural, historical, and political context, which may shape the role and impact of social media on political reform differently compared to other regions. However, There is a lack of research that investigates the specific role of social media on political reform and how it intersects with social media usage and its influence on political reform (Spawls, 2022).

There is a need for more research that explores the perspectives of various stakeholders involved in political reform in the Somali region. This includes studying the views and experiences of political activists, civil society organizations, marginalized communities, and government actors on the role of social media in driving political change. Understanding these perspectives can provide valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with social media's impact on political reform (Ebrahim, 2020).

Since social media is used to influence speech, movements, and mobilizations, there is a lack of social awareness created by using social media regulations. To fill the above-mentioned gaps, the researcher intends to examine the role of social media in political reform in the Somali region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description of the Study Area

Somali Region is located eastern part of Ethiopia. It shares border with Djibouti to the northeast, Somalia to the east and Ethiopian regions of Afar and Oromia to the north and west, respectively. Geographically, the Somali Region is characterized by vast plains, arid and semi-arid landscapes, and occasional mountain ranges. It covers an area of approximately 279,252 km², making it the second-largest region in Ethiopia in terms of land area.

According to CSA (2007), the region has a total population of 7,445,219 consisting of 3,472,490 men and 3,972,729 women; urban inhabitants number 1,489,044 or 20% of the population; and a further 5,956,175 or 80% are pastoralists and farmers. With an estimated area of 327,068 square kilometers, this region has an estimated density of 20.9 people per square kilometer. For the whole region 1,685,986 households are counted, which results in an average for the region of 6.8 persons per household, with urban households having on average 6 and rural households having 6.5 people (Kassa, 2021).

The region is characterized by low and erratic rainfall. The region experiences a dry season that lasts for most of the year, with the majority of the rainfall occurring during two short rainy seasons. The main rainy season is the Gu (April to June), and the short rainy season is the Deyr (October to December). The average annual rainfall in the region ranges from 200 to 600 millimeters, with significant variations across different locations.

The major city and capital of the Somali Region is Jigjiga,

which serves as the administrative center. The region is further divided into eleven zones, namely, Fafan, Jarar, Koraha, Nogob, Siti, Dollo, Afder, Shabele, Dawo, Erer, and Liben, each with its own capital and local government structure.

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was employed, collecting data from the sample population at a single point in time. Although this design does not capture changes over time, it is efficient and practical for assessing the current status of the study variables. To achieve the study objectives, a mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires to capture measurable variables such as respondents' age, gender, and attitudes. Qualitative data were obtained via key informant interviews and focus group discussions to explore non-quantifiable aspects, including challenges and perceptions regarding social media's role in political reform (Philips, 1990). This integrated approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study, ensuring that both numerical trends and contextual insights were captured.

Types and Source of Data

To gather relevant data, the researcher used primary and secondary sources. Primary and secondary data are two types of data used in research, each with its own characteristics and sources. Primary data sources included data to be collected and processed directly by the researcher. Primary data is original data collected firsthand by researchers for a specific purpose. It is gathered directly from the source through methods like in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaires. Secondary data is information that is collected by someone else for a different purpose. Researchers used secondary data to supplement their own research to analyze trends over time. Furthermore, relevant secondary sources were books, documents, articles, journals, and research theses.

Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaires

Structured questionnaires were administered to collect quantitative data from journalists, activists, government officials, and civil society actors. The questionnaires included both open-ended questions, allowing detailed responses in participants' own words, and closed-ended questions, providing pre-coded response options. To ensure comprehension, the questionnaire was prepared in English and translated into Somali. This instrument complemented qualitative methods by capturing measurable trends and demographic information.

Interview

Unstructured interviews were conducted with key informants to explore the role of social media in political reform in the Somali Region. This approach enabled

the researcher to capture participants' attitudes, beliefs, experiences, and perceptions in depth. A total of 15 respondents participated, including 5 social media users, 5 journalists, 3 government officials, and 2 activists. This method allowed for flexibility in questioning and the collection of rich qualitative data from multiple perspectives (Dawson, 2007).

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Two FGDs were conducted to generate group-level insights on social media and political reform. The first FGD included 8 participants, and the second included 12 participants. FGDs facilitated interaction among participants, allowing the emergence of diverse perspectives, idea development, and in-depth discussion of issues related to social media functions and challenges (Dawson, 2007). The discussions were semi-structured, allowing participants to freely express views beyond the prepared guide, enhancing the richness of qualitative data.

Sampling Design and Sample Size Determination

A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. Three zones - Jarar, Fafan, and Korahay—were purposively selected based on the influence of social media on political reform in the Somali Region. Within each zone, respondents were selected using simple random sampling, with proportional allocation according to the population size of each zone.

The total population of the three zones was 1,911,238. Using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% precision, the sample size was calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{1,911,238}{1 + 1,911,238(0.05)^2} \approx 399$$

Where n is the sample size, N is the total population, and e is the desired level of precision (5%).

Proportional allocation of the sample to each zone resulted in approximately 100 respondents from Jarar (25% of the sample), 249 respondents from Fafan (62%), and 51 respondents from Korahay (13%), ensuring representativeness across the study area.

Data Analysis

Data from multiple sources was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. As Creswell (2005) notes, qualitative analysis begins during data collection; thus, focus group discussions, interviews, observations, and audio-visual records were documented and later transcribed. Quantitative data from the survey were coded, categorized, and analyzed using SPSS version 20 for basic statistical operations such as frequency distributions. Finally, qualitative and quantitative findings were integrated to provide comprehensive conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

Every participant was asked for their consent by the researcher. With their permission, all interviews and two

focus group discussions were recorded. However, for the second focus group discussion that was held in Jigjiga, Letters from the universities are required. The informant was coded by the researcher using a combination of letters and numbers during the analysis phase to protect their identity. The other activist journalists were given the code for the first key informant, which was designated as a key for the second key informant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

According to Table 1, 62.9% of the respondents were males, who are the most dominant, followed by females with 37.1%. So that it indicated that the majority of the respondents were males. The gender inequality is not likely to mark the study as the nature of the research and questions asked were not gender sensitive, and any unlikely error as a result of the gender inequality may be accepted. However, given that most of the responses to the research questions relied on opinions and perceptions, the gender distribution is expected to accommodate the opinions and sentiments of either gender.

As revealed table 3, 42.1% of the respondent were Married which are the most dominant than Unmarried with 40.4% (164), 9.1% of the respondent were Divorced, 6.7% of the respondents were also Widowed. So that the researcher revealed that the most of the respondent was Married.

According to Table 4., the age of respondent is 11.3%, which is the lowest age group that is above 50, while the majority of the respondents are between 20 and 30, which is 40.1%. With the age of 31–40 are 32.6%. With the age range of 41–50 are 16.0%. Because the study included respondents of different ages, it is likely that the respondents were at different stages of socialization and progress. These symbols might have highlighted the study’s findings, which exposed the thoughts and

viewpoints of various respondent categories. Therefore, when the researcher considers the effects of discussing, sharing, liking, commenting, and posting content on online social media, the age group that uses social media the most those in the 20–30 age range dominates, followed by the 31–40 age group, which also happens to be the largest age group. It’s possible that the reason stems from the fact that those age groups have the greatest exposure to and knowledge of technology.

As the below table indicates, most of the respondents are generally highly educated: the majority of the respondents are degree holders, with 45.1%, followed by a master’s degree, which is 29.8%, a diploma, which is 11.8%, a certificate, which is 11.0%, and a doctorate in philosophy, which is 2.3%. As the researcher indicated in the findings of this discussion, all the findings the findings from the doctorate may give strength for the fining.

The experience of the participants, as indicated in Table 1, reveals that the highest number is 6–9 years’ experience. 38.6% respondents, followed by the 1–5-year-years’ experience of 31.3% of respondents. Over 10-year experience were 30.1% of respondents. These representations may strengthen the study, given that the findings reflect the ideas and opinions of different occupation categories of respondents.

According to the occupation of the participants, Table 1 indicates that the highest were the government workers, with 31.3% respondents. 25.6% of respondents were journalists. 26.1% of the respondents are activists, and 17% of the respondents are also members of civil society. Even though the majority of the respondents are governmental workers, the researcher tries to gather all that is initial from activists, government workers, journalists, and civil society. that include political parties). These demonstrations could emphasize the study, given that the findings reflect the ideas and opinions of different occupation categories of respondents.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	251	62.9
Female	148	37.1
Marital Status		
Married	171	42.1
Unmarried	164	40.4
Divorced	37	9.1
Widowed	27	6.7
Age		
20-30	160	40.1
31-40	130	32.6
41-50	64	16.0
> 50	45	11.3
Qualification level		
Certificate	44	11.0
Diploma	47	11.8

Degree	180	45.1
Master's degree	119	29.8
PhD	9	2.3
Experience		
1-5 years	125	31.3
6-9 years	154	38.6
> 10 years	120	30.1
Occupation		
Journalist	102	25.6
Government worker	125	31.3
Activist	104	26.1
Civil society	68	17

The Role Social Media in Political Reform in the Somali Region

Perceptions of the Role of Social Media In Political Reform in the Somali Region

According to the results and discussion in Table 2, the majority of the respondents agree that social media platforms have played a crucial role in raising awareness about political reform in the Somali region. 35.8% of the respondents are agreeing, 22.1% of the respondents are neutral, 22.3% of the respondents are strongly agreeing, 11.8% (47) of the respondents are disagreeing, and 8.0% of the respondents are strongly disagreeing. Due to the above analysis, the findings of the social media platforms play a significant role in raising awareness about political reforms.

The study looked at how social media is used in politics and social movements. The researcher clarified that social media has given important elements of the formation of social movements, not just the business, entertainment, and others. In terms of politics and social movements, social media has offered numerous opportunities Lopes (2014).

Social media has the capacity to simultaneously reach millions of people worldwide, which has been highlighted as an advantage in terms of mobilization and other areas. Social media eliminates the need for pamphlets, posters, and faxes while introducing speed and interaction that were absent from traditional mobilization tactics Spasojevic (2017).

Table 2 above reveals that 34.1% of the respondents are agreeing, 23.3% of the respondents are neutral, 18.5% of the respondents are strongly agreeing, 13.8% of the

respondents are disagreeing, and 10.3% of the respondents are strongly disagreeing. So that it shows that social media plays a central role in mobilizing and organizing political reform movements in the Somali region, it is important to recognize that offline efforts, such as community organizing and face-to-face interactions, also contribute significantly to the success of such movements. Social media should be seen as a tool that complements and enhances traditional forms of activism rather than a sole determinant of their effectiveness.

As stated in the above findings, it is indicated that 25.3% of the respondents are agreeing, 25.3% of the respondents are neutral, 18% of the respondents are disagreeing, 17% of the respondents are strongly disagreeing, and 14.3% of the respondents are strongly agreeing. Some of the respondents are against the platforms for citizens to express their opinions and engage in political discourse, and they complained to the government for controlling the expression of individuals. Some others agree that there is freedom of expression in the Somali Region.

According to Table 20, 28.8 of the respondents agree, 22.8 of the respondents are neutral, 17.8% of the respondents strongly agree, 16.5% of the respondents strongly disagree, and 14.0% of the respondents strongly disagree. This finding's strength is that social media's widespread reach and accessibility enable it to influence how people perceive political events and issues. Overall, social media's influence on public perception and the political agenda in the Somali region, as in many other parts of the world, is undeniable. It has fundamentally altered the dynamics of information dissemination, political discourse, and activism.

Table 2: Perceptions of the role of social media in political reform in the Somali region

Statement	Strong Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strong Agree	Total
Platforms have played a crucial role in raising awareness about political reform	32 (8.0%)	47 (11.8%)	88 (22.1%)	143 (35.8%)	89 (22.3%)	399 (100%)

Social media has facilitated the mobilization and organization of political reform movements	41 (10.3%)	55 (13.8%)	93 (23.3%)	136 (34.1%)	74 (18.5%)	399 (100%)
Social media has provided a platform for citizens to express opinions and engage in political discourse	68 (17.0%)	72 (18.0%)	101 (25.3%)	101 (25.3%)	57 (14.3%)	399 (100%)
Social media has influenced public perception and shaped the political agenda	56 (14.0%)	66 (16.5%)	91 (22.8%)	115 (28.8%)	71 (17.8%)	399 (100%)

Impact of Social Media on Political Engagement and Accountability in the Somali Region

As indicated in Table 3, most of the respondents answered “yes.” 59.4%, and 40.6% of the respondents said “no.”. Due to the above findings, social media platforms have had a huge impact on political reform in the Somali region. These online forums have given people a forum to express their thoughts, rally support for political causes, and demand transparency from public officials. People can now plan protests, exchange information, and have political conversations thanks to apps like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. Social media has also made it easier for activists, journalists, and officials to communicate with one another, which has sped up the spread of information. Another hands It’s crucial to remember, though, that social media can also be used as a vehicle for the dissemination of false information and propaganda, which can thwart attempts at political reform. In general, there are advantages and disadvantages to political reform associated with the Somali region’s present use of social media platforms. Table 3 shows that social media holds political leaders

accountable for their actions. Since the majority of the respondents are reflected as “yes,” 59.6% and 40.4% of the respondents are “no.”. Social media has indeed played an essential role in holding political leaders accountable for their actions in the Somali region. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have provided citizens with a direct means of communication to express grievances, share evidence of misconduct, and demand transparency from their leaders. Through social media, individuals can expose corruption, human rights abuses, and other wrongdoing by political figures, leading to increased inquiry and pressure for accountability.

As revealed in Table 3, social media contributes to the democratization process. 57.9%, of the respondents, say “yes,” and 42.1%, say “no.”. However, it’s important to recognize that while social media has the potential to contribute to the democratization of political processes, it is not without its challenges. Issues such as the spread of misinformation, online harassment, and the digital divide must be addressed to ensure that social media platforms can fulfill their democratic potential in the Somali region.

Table 3: Respondents’ views on the impact of social media on political engagement and accountability in the Somali Region

Statement	Yes	No	Total
Current usage of social media platforms in the context of political reform	237 (59.4%)	162 (40.6%)	399 (100%)
Social media has helped in holding political leaders accountable for their actions	238 (59.6%)	161 (40.4%)	399 (100%)
Social media contributes to the democratization of political processes	231 (57.9%)	168 (42.1%)	399 (100%)

Source: Field survey, 2022

Social Media Impacted Political Dialogue and Public Opinion in Recent Years

The researcher conducted starting from here qualitative section and discussed on Focus Discussion Group interviews. social media’s influence on public opinion and political discourse, Social media is an instrumental in organizing political activism and mobilizing grassroots movements. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook have been used to coordinate protests, rallies, and advocacy campaigns, allowing individuals to establish connections with like-minded people and intensify their voices on a global scale.

...on this participant indicated that the social media

impacted political dialogue and public opinion in recent years”? information spread rapidly on social media, often without thorough fact-checking. This has led to the rapid dissemination of both accurate and inaccurate information, shaping public opinion in real-time. Political messages that resonate with users can quickly go viral, intensifying their impact and reach. (FGD interview: April 13, 2024, Jarar Zone).

Tools for Social Media Platform for political Activism and Reform.

As participants reveals on these examples, how social media sites have developed into effective instruments

for political reform and activism, enabling individuals and communities to connect, organize, and advocate for change on Somali region, Ethiopia and rest of the world. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were used by activists to organize protests, disseminate information, and mobilize support for political change.

...on this interviewer reveals that the social media tools like Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp are most prominent that spread on information, News and reports. (FGD interview: April 15, 2024, Fafan Zone).

Another participant indicated for political reform that being used for political movements like Arab Spring uprisings that removed across several countries in the Middle East and North Africa in 2010 and 2011. Additionally, there is the Black Lives Matter movement, which started in the US in reaction to racial injustice and police brutality has utilized social media to raise awareness, organize protests, and advocate for policy reform. During the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2019, Social media networks were very important in organizing demonstrations, documenting police actions, and garnering international support. Protesters used platforms like Telegram, Twitter, to coordinate their efforts and circumvent government censorship. All this finding reveals that any political movement can easily spread for social media as deliver parts of the world.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Social Media for Political Activism and Reform Efforts

According to advantage of social media platforms provide a low-barrier entry point for individuals to engage in political activism. Anyone with internet access can participate, which helps in mobilizing a larger and more diverse group of people. Social media allows messages to spread rapidly and reach a wide audience. Content can go viral, amplifying the impact of political activism efforts and increasing awareness about specific issues.

...on this participant indicate that the social media provides tools for organizing and coordinating activism efforts, such as event pages, hashtags, and group messaging, this makes it easier to plan and execute protests, rallies, and additional group activities. Social networks facilitate connection between activists and supporters around world, enabling the exchanges of ideas, resources and solidarity across others. (FGD interview April 17 2024, Korahay Zone)

On another hand the participants were discussed about the Dis-advantage of the social media indicated that individuals are only exposed to like-minded perspectives. This can exacerbate polarization and hinder constructive dialogue. False or misleading information can be disseminated via social media platforms, which damages the legitimacy of political activism initiatives and increases public ignorance or apathy.

...on this participant showed that social media can be an effective instrument for reform initiatives and political activism. It is important for activists to be aware of these advantages and disadvantages and to navigate them

strategically in pursuit of their goals. That mean on this interviewer displayed that social media has own advantage and dis-advantage (FGD interview 22 April 2024, Jarar Zone).

Ethical Concerns with The Use of Social Media In Political Reform

According to ethical considerations, social media users must consider the ethical implications of accessing and utilizing, this data in their political reform efforts, ensuring that individuals' privacy rights are respected. However, addressing these ethical concerns requires careful consideration, transparency, and a commitment to upholding democratic values and human rights principles in social media's role in political reform initiatives.

...on this participant indicated during interview that the social media has own ethical consideration, spreading of information must be accurate, relevant and fact that means must has owns sources, final recommendation of this respondent that he raised "must respect on perspective on others, must check their news and information before spreading. (FGD participant 15 April 2024, Fafan Zone). Added to other participant on his interview based on ethical concerns of social media "Political actors and activists using social media must uphold principles of transparency and accountability in their communications and actions". This includes unveiling connections, sources of funding, and potential conflicts of interest to ensure that their messaging and advocacy efforts are credible and trustworthy.

While participants showed that political expression can be expressed on social media and activism, there are ethical considerations surrounding the balance between freedom of expression and preventing harm, such as hate speech, incitement to violence, or the spread of harmful misinformation. Activists must navigate these tensions responsibly, advocating for freedom of speech while also working to mitigate the negative impacts of harmful content.

How Citizens Can Become More Critical Consumers of Political Information on Social Media?

As participants said, becoming a more critical consumer of political data via social media involves developing a set of skills and habits to evaluate and separate the credibility, accuracy, and bias of the content encountered.

...on this participant revealed that must social media consumers check their source of the information before sharing or believing it. Look for reputable news outlets, official government sources, or credible research organizations. Be wary of information from unknown or unreliable sources. Don't rely solely on one source for news and information but Cross-check facts and claims with multiple sources to ensure accuracy and verify the credibility of the information. (FGD interview 17 April 2024, Korahay Zone).

Additionally, interviewers indicated that must aware of your potential bias of the sources you're consuming.

Consider the political leanings or agendas of news outlets, organizations, or individuals sharing the information, and critically assess how this may influence the framing or presentation of the content.

...on this participant revealed as you are social media consumer must aware of your own biases and preconceptions when consuming political information. Challenge yourself to seek out diverse perspectives and consider viewpoints that may differ from your own. Engage in constructive dialogue with others to broaden your understanding of complex issues. (FGD interview 18 April 2024, Fafan Zone).

As participant said, be wary of content that relies heavily on emotional appeals or provocative language to evoke a response. Emotional manipulation can cloud judgment and divert from the underlying facts or issues at hand. Take proactive steps to limit your exposure to misinformation on social media. Unfollow or mute accounts that consistently share false or misleading information, and be mindful of the algorithms that may prioritize sensational or divisive content.

The Influence of Social Media on Political Reform Effort

This is a under qualitative section on study specifically key informant interview related questions. Social media's impact on political reform initiatives is a complex and multifaceted matter that intersects technology, communication, and governance. This discussion and analysis marked various characteristics like accessibility and participants of social media platforms have significantly lowered the barriers to participation in political discourse and activism. Individuals can now easily express their opinions, organize movements, and engage with political issues regardless of geographical location or social status. Rapid Spread of Information also marked that Social media facilitates the rapid dissemination of information, enabling political reform movements to reach a global audience in real-time. However, this discussion indicated the influence of social media.

...social media has the potential to enhance democratic engagement by fostering dialogue between citizens and policymakers. Elected officials and government agencies often use social media to communicate with constituents, gather feedback, and address concerns directly. This direct interaction can promote transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in the political process. (interviewer April 17, 2024 Korahay Zone)

Additional discussions identified that influence of social media marked on challenge of misinformation and polarization are parts of effect Despite its benefits, social media also presents significant that challenges to political reform efforts. The proliferation of misinformation and echo chambers on platforms can distort public discourse, reinforce existing biases, and fuel political polarization. This can hinder efforts to build consensus, compromise, and implement meaningful reforms.

...participant said that Social media has an influence

on political reform efforts is a dynamic and evolving phenomenon with both positive and negative implications. While it has the potential to democratize political participation and foster positive social change, it also poses challenges related to misinformation, polarization, and manipulation that must be addressed through collective action and responsible governance. (interviewer April 17 2024, Korahay Zone).

Strategies and Practices for Reliable and Unreliable Information on Social Media of Political Matters

According to participant's discussion and analysis indicate that Reliable information is based on credible sources, facts, and evidence, and it can be verified through independent means. Unreliable information, on the other hand, lacks credibility and may be inaccurate, biased, or based on opinions rather than facts. Throughout on this results it's matter to follow and practice on reliable information in orders to get fact and accurate news.

...participant reveals that the age of digital media and the internet, it is crucial to critically evaluate the information we encounter and assess its reliability before accepting it as true. Fact-checking, consulting multiple sources, and relying on reputable institutions can help differentiate between reliable and unreliable information. (interviewer April 20, 2024, Jarar Zone)

Other participant added on his perspective towards how to applying these strategies and best practices, individuals can better discern between reliable and unreliable information on social media, particularly when it comes to political matters. Developing a critical mindset, seeking diverse perspectives, and verifying information through multiple sources are essential steps in navigating the complex and often contentious landscape of online information.

...participant identified that Practice responsible sharing and engagement on social media. Before reposting or sharing content, take a moment to verify its accuracy and consider the potential consequences of spreading misinformation. Be mindful of the role you play in shaping public discourse and contributing to the spread of reliable or unreliable information. (interviewer April 15, 2024 Fafan Zone).

Measures or Regulations to Implement Social Media on Political Reform

As stated on participant's measures and regulations of social media on political reform from a policy perspective requires a multifaceted approach that balances the principles of free speech, democratic participation, and protection against harmful content and manipulation and Implement transparency requirements for social media platforms regarding political advertising, Strengthen data privacy regulations to protect users' personal information from exploitation by political campaigns, advertisers, and third-party entities. This could involve enacting comprehensive data protection laws, imposing restrictions on the collection and use of personal data

for political purposes, and empowering users with greater control over their privacy settings.

...interviewer showed that These measures and regulations should be designed in consultation with relevant stakeholders and tailored to the specific contexts and challenges facing different countries and regions. By adopting a proactive and collaborative approach, policymakers can help mitigate the social media's detrimental effects on politics reform while preserving its potential to promote democratic engagement, transparency, and accountability. (interviewer, April 15, 2024 Fafan Zone)

Other interviewer identified that Raise multistakeholder cooperation and communication between governments, tech firms, academic researchers, and civil society organizations to handle the intricate problems that social media presents for political reform initiatives. This could involve convening forums for discussing policy solutions, sharing best practices, and coordinating efforts to promote responsible and ethical use of social media for democratic purposes.

Advices to Individuals or Organizations Seeking to Utilize Social Media for Political Reform

As participants strongly advice the social media consumers to have always clearly define their objectives and goals for using social media in political reform. Whether it's raising awareness, mobilizing supporters, or influencing policy change, having a clear sense of purpose will guide their strategy and messaging. Another claim to understand their target audience and modify their messaging to resonate with their interests, values, and concerns and conduct audience research to identify key demographics, preferences and communication channels to effectively engage with your supporters and stakeholders.

...Participant claim that Focus on building authentic relationships with their followers and supporters on social media. Engage in two-way communication, listen to feedback, and respond to inquiries and comments in a timely and respectful manner. Building trust and credibility is essential for garnering support and mobilizing action. (interviewer, April 21, 2024 Jarar Zone)

Added on other point on advice said, uphold ethical standards and principles of transparency in your use of social media for political reform. Be honest, accurate, and accountable in your communications, and disclose any affiliations, funding sources, or conflicts of interest that may impact your credibility and integrity. Respect user privacy and adhere to relevant laws and regulations governing online behavior and political activity. By following these pieces of advice, individuals and organizations can harness the power of Using social media to promote political reform efforts and bring about positive change in an ethical, effective, and sustainable manner.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of social media in political

reform in Ethiopia, focusing on the Somali Region. The findings reveal that Facebook is the most widely used platform, followed by YouTube and WhatsApp, serving as key tools for mobilization, awareness creation, and citizen engagement. Social media has significantly influenced political discourse, shaped public opinion, and accelerated reform by providing a space for activism, accountability, and grassroots mobilization. Over half of respondents affirmed that social media holds leaders accountable, supports democratization, and enhances political participation. It has enabled citizens to expose corruption, organize protests, and demand transparency more effectively than traditional media. However, challenges such as misinformation, polarization, and ethical concerns, including hate speech and fake news, remain critical barriers. Despite these challenges, social media continues to complement traditional activism, strengthen democratic processes, and broaden civic participation in the Somali Region. The study concludes that while social media is not without risks, its transformative potential in advancing political reform is undeniable. Strengthening digital literacy, ensuring responsible use, and expanding internet access are essential for maximizing its positive impact and minimizing negative consequences.

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