A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION

Dissertation submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) Ernakulam, Affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University in partial completion of
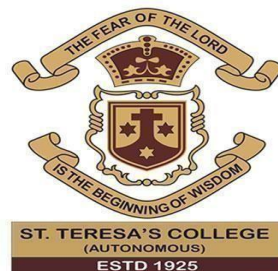
PGDM – BUSINESS ANALYTICS

Submitted by

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Under the Supervision and Guidance of

Ms. PARVATHY P S

ST. TERESA'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), ERNAKULAM

COLLEGE WITH POTENTIAL FOR EXCELLENCE

Nationally Re-Accredited At 'A++' Level (Fourth Cycle)

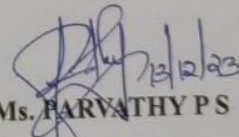**Affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University Kottayam-686560**

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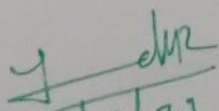# ST. TERESA'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), ERNAKULAM

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION** " is a bonafide record of the project work carried out by **DONNA SUNIL** (Reg: SM22PGDM002) final year student of **PGDM - Business Analytics** under my supervision and guidance during the academic year 2022-2024. The project report represents the work of the candidate and is hereby approved for submission.

Ms. **PARVATHY P S**

Assistant Professor

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Countersigned

Principal

13/12/20

Dr. Jrshad. 𝔪. 𝔯

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project entitled "**A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION**" submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam, is a record of an original work done by me under the guidance of **Ms. Parvathy P S, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam,** and this project work is submitted in the partial fulfilment of the requirement of the award of the Degree of **PGDM-Business Analytics.** The result embodied in this project report has not been submitted to any other University or Institute for the award of any Degree or Diploma.

13/12/23

Donna Sunil

Place: Ernakulam

Date: 13-12-2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

An undertaking of work life - this is never an outcome of a single person; rather it bears the imprints of some people who directly or indirectly helped me in completing the present study. I would be failing in my duties if I don't say a word of thanks to all those who made my training period educative and pleasurable one.

First of all, I thank almighty God for his mercy and love which kept me in good health and sound mind and helped me to complete the project work successfully, and gave me strength and inspiration for making this project work a great success.

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Finally, I would like to thank all lecturers, friends, and my family for their kind support and all who have directly or indirectly helped me in preparing this project report. And at last, I am thankful to all divine light and my parents, who kept my motivation and zest for knowledge always high through the tides of time.

DONNA SUNIL

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

Social media's role in shaping public opinion is multifaceted and impactful. Firstly, it serves as a powerful medium for rapidly disseminating information, allowing users to access a wide array of news stories, opinions, and content on various issues, influencing their perceptions. Moreover, social media platforms often set the agenda for public discussions, with trending topics and hashtags reflecting what captures public attention, effectively shaping the focus of discourse.

Another key aspect is the amplification of voices. Social media democratizes communication, enabling individuals, organizations, and influencers to reach broad audiences. This inclusivity empowers marginalized voices and promotes the spread of diverse perspectives and opinions. However, it's important to note that social media can also create filter bubbles and echo chambers, as algorithms often show users content that aligns with their existing beliefs, reinforcing opinions and limiting exposure to alternative viewpoints.

Additionally, social media's role in spreading viral content, including misinformation, cannot be understated. False or misleading information can quickly gain traction, influencing public opinion and leading to misconceptions. It's also crucial for political campaigns and elections, as candidates leverage these platforms to connect with voters, share their platforms, and target specific demographics, significantly impacting public opinion and voter behavior.

Moreover, social media facilitates activism and mobilization for social and political causes, and it empowers citizens to hold institutions, public figures, and corporations accountable, ultimately influencing public opinion and policy changes. Finally, the continuous exposure to certain ideas, narratives, and opinions on social media can have long-term effects on individuals' beliefs and attitudes, making it a powerful force in shaping public opinion on a wide range of issues.

Social media platforms also serve as valuable tools for monitoring public sentiment and opinions in real-time. Researchers and organizations can use the data generated on these platforms for activities such as polling, sentiment analysis, and gauging public reactions to events and policies. This real-time feedback loop allows for a better understanding of evolving public opinion.

Furthermore, social media plays a critical role in accountability and transparency. Citizens can use these platforms to expose wrongdoing, share evidence, and demand accountability from governments, institutions, and corporations. This aspect of social media can lead to significant shifts in public opinion and even policy changes when widespread issues come to light.

In the realm of international affairs, social media can be a catalyst for global discussions and solidarity. Events in one part of the world can quickly capture international attention, shaping global public opinion and influencing responses to crises, humanitarian issues, and geopolitical conflicts.

Additionally, social media can contribute to social and cultural trends. It can popularize ideas, lifestyles, and products, thus influencing public preferences and values. Celebrities, influencers, and content creators on these platforms have the power to shape fashion, consumer choices, and societal norms.

Lastly, the role of social media in shaping public opinion is not static but continually evolving. As platforms develop new features, algorithms, and content moderation policies, their influence on public opinion may change. Additionally, societal perceptions of social media's role can also evolve, leading to shifts in how people trust and engage with information on these platforms.

In summary, social media is a multifaceted force that significantly shapes public opinion in various ways, from disseminating information to influencing agendas, amplifying voices, spreading viral content (both accurate and inaccurate), facilitating political campaigns, promoting activism, enabling public accountability, and contributing to cultural and societal trends. Its dynamic nature ensures that its impact on public opinion remains a topic of ongoing discussion and research.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The role of social media in shaping public opinion has become increasingly influential in recent years. This study aims to explore and analyse how social media platforms impact public opinion formation and dissemination. Specifically, it will investigate the mechanisms through which social media influences individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour, as well as the potential consequences of this influence on society, politics, and various other domains. Additionally, the research will examine the role of algorithms, echo chambers, fake news, and the spread of

misinformation in shaping public opinion on social media. By addressing these key issues, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between social media and public opinion, shedding light on the broader implications for informed decisionmaking, democracy, and the information ecosystem.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Walter Quattrociocchi, Antonio Scala, and Cass R. Sunstein (2016): In their paper "Echo Chambers on Facebook," the authors discuss how social media can lead to the creation of echo chambers where individuals are exposed to like-minded opinions, potentially reinforcing existing beliefs. They examine the impact of these echo chambers on public opinion.

Pew Research Center (2019): The Pew Research Center regularly publishes reports on social media and its influence on public opinion. Their research explores how social media platforms are used for news consumption, political engagement, and the spread of misinformation.

Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. (2020): In their study "The Implied Truth Effect," the authors investigate how attaching warnings to fake news stories on social media can influence the perceived accuracy of those stories. They highlight the role of social media in shaping perceptions of truth and misinformation.

Zizi Papacharissi (2015): In her book "Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics," Papacharissi discusses how social media platforms enable the expression of emotions and sentiments, which can, in turn, influence public opinion and collective action.

Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts (2018): In their book "Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics," the authors explore how social media platforms have been used to spread propaganda, disinformation, and polarizing content, affecting public opinion in the United States.

Andrew Chadwick (2017): In the book "The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power," Chadwick discusses the evolving media landscape, including the role of social media, in shaping public opinion and political communication.

Pablo Barberá (2015): In the paper "Birds of the Same Feather Tweet Together," Barberá examines the role of social media in political polarization by analyzing the online behavior of Twitter users during political events.

Pamela Rutledge (2017): In her article "The Impact of Social Media on Social Movements: The New Opportunity and Mobilizing Structure," Rutledge discusses how social media has facilitated the mobilization and organization of social movements, shaping public opinion on various social and political issues.

Philip N. Howard (2010): In his book "The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy," Howard explores the role of social media in both reinforcing and challenging authoritarian regimes, demonstrating its influence on public opinion and political change.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of social media in shaping public opinion is profound and multifaceted. In today's digital age, these platforms serve as dynamic hubs of information dissemination, enabling the swift spread of news, perspectives, and narratives, often in real time. They empower individuals and groups, democratizing the ability to have a voice and influence public discourse. Moreover, social media can set the agenda for public conversations, elevate issues, and steer discussions toward specific topics or events. Yet, the personalized algorithms and filter bubbles prevalent on these platforms can also create echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs, making it pivotal to understand their role in both shaping and potentially distorting public opinion. The ability of social media to catalyse viral content, mobilize social and political movements, and impact politics and activism underscores its far-reaching impact on how societies perceive and respond to the world around them. Additionally, social media serves as a feedback loop, enabling direct interaction between the public and institutions, driving accountability, and influencing perceptions of various entities, from businesses to governments. Lastly, its global reach transcends borders, making it a potent tool in shaping international perceptions and cross-cultural understanding. In sum, social media's significance in shaping public opinion is undeniable, shaping the way information flows, narratives emerge, and collective attitudes evolve in our interconnected world.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of social media's role in shaping public opinion is vast and includes influencing political beliefs, social attitudes, consumer preferences, and more. It amplifies voices, democratizes information, but also poses challenges like echo chambers and misinformation.

Understanding this impact is crucial in today's digital age.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To provide timely, accurate, and relevant information to the public.

- To shape public perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs on various issues.

- To analyze the content and dynamics of public discussions on social media platforms related to specific topics or events, and identify patterns, trends, and key influencers.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study made use of the primary data collection method for collecting data from online surveys. Questionnaires were designed and disseminated to respondents over social media platforms to be filled in by them. The source of secondary data is journals, articles, research papers, online sites and websites of online and offline education website. The sample size for this research is one Hundred and eighty (180), who were selected purely based on convenience and support the purpose of the study. The sample area is selected as Ernakulam district and data is collected through the close-ended questionnaire through the mail. For the analysis of data, chi-square test is used to compare the dependency in various hypothesis framed for achieving the objectives of the study and used descriptive statistics. SPSS and Excel research tools have been used to analyse the data.

1.8 STATISTICAL PACKAGES
M S EXCEL

Microsoft Excel is a popular spreadsheet software used for managing, analyzing, and visualizing data. It features a grid layout for data entry, supports formulas and functions for

calculations, offers charting and graphing tools, and has features for sorting, filtering, and data validation. Excel is versatile, used in various industries, and supports collaboration and advanced capabilities like macros and scripting.

In Microsoft Excel, charts and graphs are visual representations of data that make it easier to understand and analyze information. They help convey trends, comparisons, and patterns in data by presenting it in a graphical format, such as bar charts, line graphs, pie charts, and more. Excel provides tools to create, customize, and format these visual representations directly from your spreadsheet data.

SPSS SOFTWARE

SPSS, or Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, is a software program used for statistical analysis and data manipulation. It's commonly used in social science research to perform tasks like data entry, analysis, and visualization. SPSS provides a user-friendly interface for researchers to input, analyze, and interpret data. It offers a wide range of statistical techniques, making it a popular tool for conducting surveys, experiments, and other datadriven studies in fields like psychology, sociology, and economics. SPSS allows users to perform various statistical tests, including t-tests, ANOVA, regression analysis, and factor analysis. It also facilitates data cleaning, transformation, and visualization through charts and graphs. SPSS is widely used in academia, market research, and social sciences for its robust data analysis capabilities.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- **Echo Chambers:** Users often see content that aligns with their existing beliefs.

- **Misinformation:** False information can spread rapidly and widely.

- **Polarization:** Social media can amplify extreme viewpoints and deepen divisions.

- **Manipulation:** Malicious actors can use fake accounts and disinformation to influence opinion.

- **Accountability:** It's challenging to hold individuals and platforms accountable for harmful content.

- **Short Attention:** Social media encourages quick, emotional reactions over thoughtful analysis.

- **Privacy Concerns:** User data is collected and used for targeted content and ads.

- **Limited Access:** Not everyone has equal access to social media platforms.

- **Temporal Bias:** Opinions can be influenced by temporary trends and cultural factors.

CHAPTER 2

INDUSTRY AND COMPANY PROFILE

2.1 OVERVIEW

Social media platforms have profoundly transformed communication and information dissemination in the digital era. Facebook, founded in 2004, remains one of the largest platforms, enabling connections and content sharing among friends and interest groups. Instagram, acquired in 2012, is celebrated for its visual appeal, drawing younger users and influencers through photo and video sharing. Twitter, established in 2006, excels in concise communication with 280-character tweets, often serving as a real-time news source. However, alongside their numerous benefits, social media platforms have faced challenges with the spread of fake news and their entanglement with politics. False information can propagate rapidly on these platforms, influencing public opinion and even election outcomes. The ease of sharing unverified or misleading content has prompted calls for increased content moderation and fact-checking measures. Algorithms designed to maximize user engagement sometimes inadvertently prioritize sensational or divisive content, contributing to the polarization of political discourse. LinkedIn, founded in 2002, has focused on professional networking, job searching, and industry-related content sharing, largely staying clear of these controversies. Snapchat, introduced in 2011, has thrived with ephemeral photo and video messages, particularly popular among younger demographics. YouTube, a 2006 Google acquisition, serves as a versatile video-sharing hub, though it has grappled with concerns about the spread of extremist and misleading content. TikTok, born in 2016, captivates users with short, creative videos, largely avoiding overt political involvement. WhatsApp, acquired by Facebook in 2014, excels in private messaging, though it has faced criticism for its role in spreading misinformation. While these platforms serve various social and informational needs, the challenge of combating the spread of fake news and their involvement in politics remains an ongoing concern, prompting increased scrutiny, regulation, and calls for responsible content management. The social media landscape continually evolves with new entrants and shifting user preferences, adding further complexity to these issues.

talent. With over 774 million users as of my last knowledge update in September 2021, LinkedIn continues to play a pivotal role in shaping careers and facilitating professional connections on a global scale.

2.2 COMPANY PROFILE

FACEBOOK

Facebook, founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and his colleagues, is a social media giant that has evolved into one of the world's largest and most influential networking platforms. It provides users with the ability to create personal profiles, connect with friends and family, share content, and engage in various forms of online communication. Over the years, Facebook has expanded its reach through acquisitions like Instagram and WhatsApp, making it a dominant force in the social media and messaging space. Its primary source of revenue is advertising, with businesses using the platform to reach a global audience. However, Facebook has faced significant controversies, particularly concerning user privacy, data security, and the spread of misinformation. In a major rebranding move in 2021, the company changed its name to Meta Platforms, Inc., reflecting a strategic shift towards developing the metaverse, a virtual shared space. Under its umbrella, Meta also owns Oculus VR, with a focus on virtual reality technology. Despite these developments, Facebook continues to be a global hub for social interaction, boasting billions of monthly users across various age groups. Mark Zuckerberg has been a central figure in the company's leadership, serving as CEO. Alongside its core Facebook platform, Meta Platforms, Inc. oversees products and services such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Messenger, and Workplace
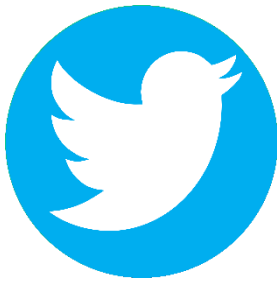
TWITTER

Twitter is a prominent social media platform that revolutionized online communication with its microblogging format. Launched in 2006, Twitter allows users to share short posts called "tweets" of up to 280 characters, making it a platform for concise and realtime information exchange. Over the years, Twitter has played a pivotal role in shaping public discourse, enabling users to follow and engage with a diverse range of topics, individuals, and organizations. It has also become a powerful tool for news dissemination, activism, and marketing. Twitter's influence extends beyond its user base, as tweets often make headlines and drive conversations in various media outlets. With millions of active users worldwide, Twitter continues to be a vital platform for expressing opinions, sharing news, and connecting people globally.

INSTAGRAM

Instagram is a popular social media platform that has revolutionized the way people share and consume visual content. Launched in 2010, it initially gained fame as a photo-sharing app and has since evolved into a comprehensive platform for sharing photos, videos, and stories. Instagram allows users to connect with friends, family, and even celebrities by following their profiles and engaging with their posts through likes, comments, and direct messages. Its userfriendly interface, creative features like filters

and stickers, and the introduction of IGTV for longer videos have contributed to its widespread appeal. Instagram has also become a hub

for businesses and influencers, providing opportunities for marketing, brand promotion, and monetization. Despite facing occasional controversies related to privacy and mental health, Instagram remains a powerful tool for self-expression, community-building, and visual storytelling in the digital age.

TIKTOK

TikTok, launched in 2016, is a viral video-sharing platform famous for its short, engaging videos of 15 to 60 seconds. It boasts a young user base and an algorithm that rapidly learns and serves personalized content, catapulting many users to social media stardom. While it encourages creativity, TikTok has also faced privacy and content moderation concerns.

Nevertheless, it has undeniably transformed how we engage with bite-sized video content in the digital age.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn, founded in 2002, is a leading professional networking platform that has fundamentally changed the way people connect and engage within the business world.

Unlike most social media platforms, LinkedIn is primarily focused on professional development, job searching, and career networking. Users create detailed profiles highlighting their work experience, skills, and education, aiming to connect with colleagues, mentors, and potential employers. LinkedIn offers a valuable space for individuals to showcase their expertise.

2.3 ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION:

Social media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion in today's digital age. Several key aspects highlight its impact:

Information Dissemination: Social media platforms allow for the rapid spread of information, news, and ideas. Users can share and consume content quickly, making it a powerful tool for disseminating information and influencing public perception.

Amplification of Voices: Social media provides a platform for individuals, groups, and organizations to amplify their voices and express their opinions. This allows marginalized or underrepresented groups to have a greater say in public discourse.

Filter Bubbles and Echo Chambers: Social media algorithms often show users content that aligns with their existing beliefs and preferences. This can create filter bubbles and echo chambers, where individuals are exposed primarily to information that reinforces their existing opinions, potentially polarizing public discourse.

Viral Trends and Memes: Social media can create viral trends and memes that capture public attention. These trends can influence public opinion on various topics, from social issues to political candidates.

Real-Time Feedback: Public figures, politicians, and businesses use social media to gauge public sentiment in real-time. This feedback can inform their decisions and strategies, leading to adjustments in policies, marketing, or communication.

Influence Campaigns: Social media platforms are susceptible to influence campaigns, including misinformation and disinformation efforts. These campaigns can manipulate public opinion by spreading false or misleading information.

Mobilization and Activism: Social media has been a catalyst for various social movements and activism efforts. It helps organizers mobilize supporters, raise awareness, and galvanize public opinion on issues such as climate change, racial justice, and gender equality.

2.4 CONCLUSION

In summary, social media platforms have revolutionized global communication, enabling instant connections and creative expression. However, they also raise concerns about privacy, misinformation, and mental health. Balancing their benefits with these challenges remains a key task as social media continues to shape our personal and professional lives. In conclusion, social media has a multifaceted role in shaping public opinion. While it offers opportunities for information dissemination, democratic participation, and amplifying diverse voices, it also poses challenges related to filter bubbles, misinformation, and manipulation. As social media continues to evolve, its impact on public opinion will remain a subject of ongoing debate and study.

CHAPTER 3

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

3.1.1 GENDER

● Table 3.1 shows the frequency and percentage of respondents

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
MALE	81	45
FEMALE	99	55
TOTAL	180	100.0

Table 3.1
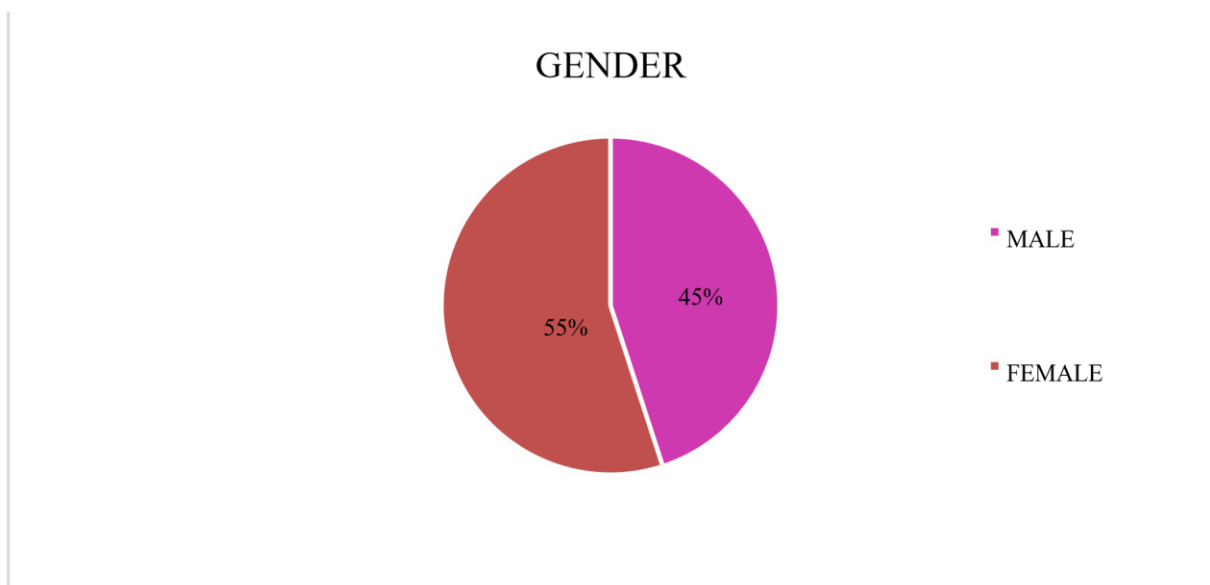
Figure 3.1

INTERPRETATION:

From the above figure, of all the respondents, 45% of them are male and 55% are female.

3.1.2 USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

● Table 3.2 shows the frequency of using social media platforms

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Multiple times a day	69	38.3
Once a day	37	20.6
A few times a week	41	22.8
Rarely or Never	33	18.3
TOTAL	**180**	**100.0**

Table 3.2

FREQUENCY OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS
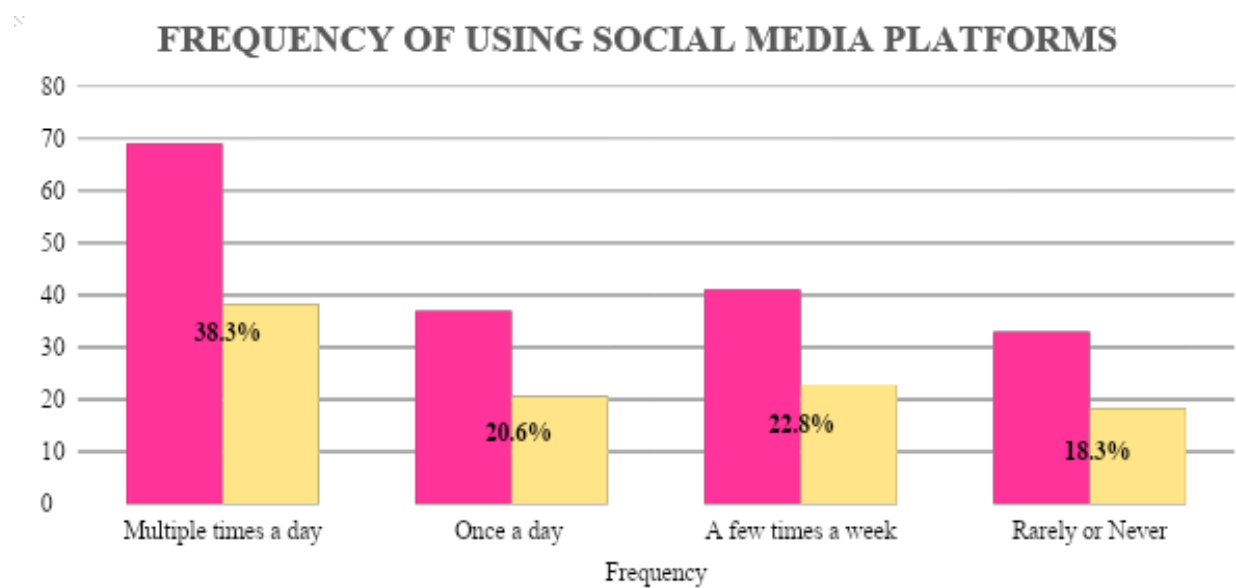
Figure 3.2

INTERPRETATION:

From the figure, we can infer that among all the respondent's majority, 38.3% of respondents use social media platforms multiple times a day, 20.6% use once a day, 22.8% a few times a week and 18.3% rarely or never use.

3.1.3 ENCOUNTERING OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS

• Table 3.3 shows the frequency of encountering opposing viewpoints

	FREQUENCY	**PERCENTAGE(%)**
Very Often	14	7.8
Often	39	21.7
Sometimes	88	48.9
Rarely	30	16.7
Never	9	5
TOTAL	**180**	**100.0**

Table 3.3

FREQUENCY OF ENCOUNTERING OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS

- Very Often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

5% 7.8%
16.7%
21.7%
48.9%
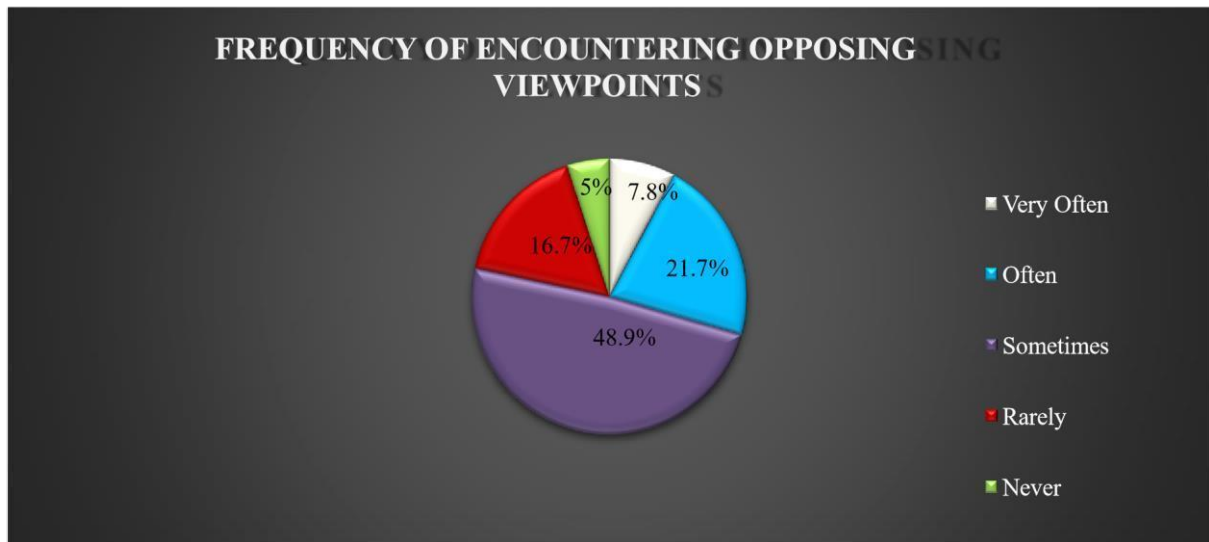
Figure 3.3

INTERPRETATION:

From the pie diagram we can infer that 48.9% of the respondents sometimes encounter opposing viewpoints on social media platforms, 21.7% often encounter, 16.7% rarely, 7.8% very often and 5% never encounter opposing viewpoints on social media platforms that challenge their own opinions.

3.1.4 SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICS

● Table 3.4 shows the frequency of social media in politics

	FREQUENCY	**PERCENTAGE(%)**
Highly influential	59	32.8
Moderately influential	75	41.7
Minimally influential	31	17.2
Not influential at all	15	8.3

20

TOTAL	**180**	**100.0**

Table 3.4
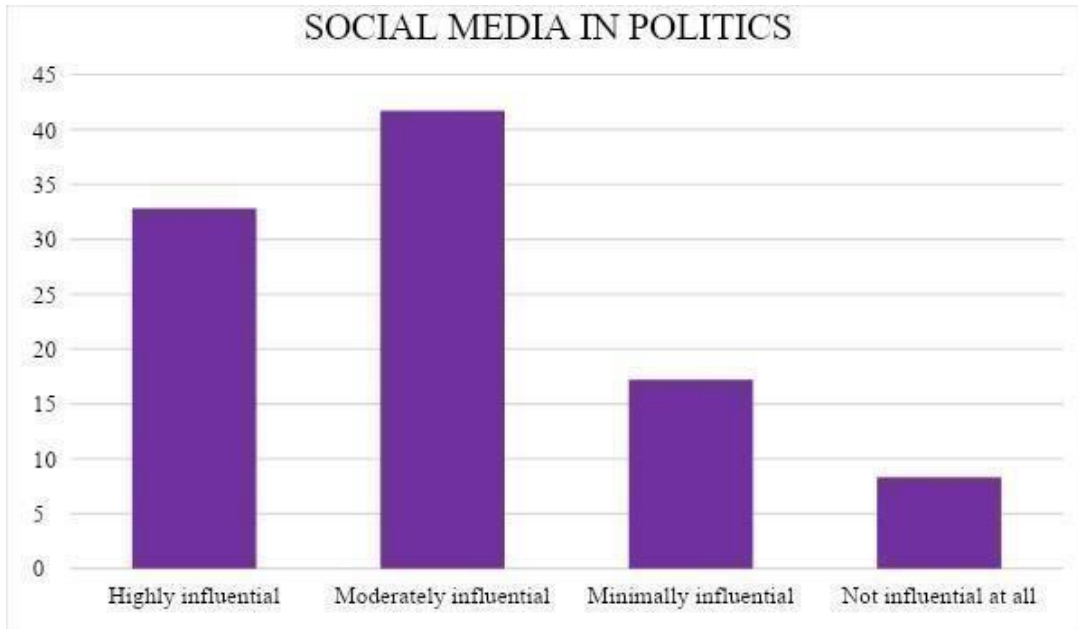
Figure 3.4

INTERPRETATION:

From above, it is clear that 32.8% of the respondents are highly influential, 41.7% moderately influential, 17.2% minimally influential and 8.3% are not influential by social media in politics.

3.1.5 IMPACT OF WITNESS OF FAKE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

● Table 3.5 shows the impact of fake news on social media

	FREQUE NCY	**PERCENTAGE(%)**
Yes, it had a significant impact	64	35.6
Yes, but it had a minimal impact	73	40.6

No,I haven't witnessed it	31	17.2
Unsure	12	6.7
TOTAL	**180**	**100.0**

Table 3.5
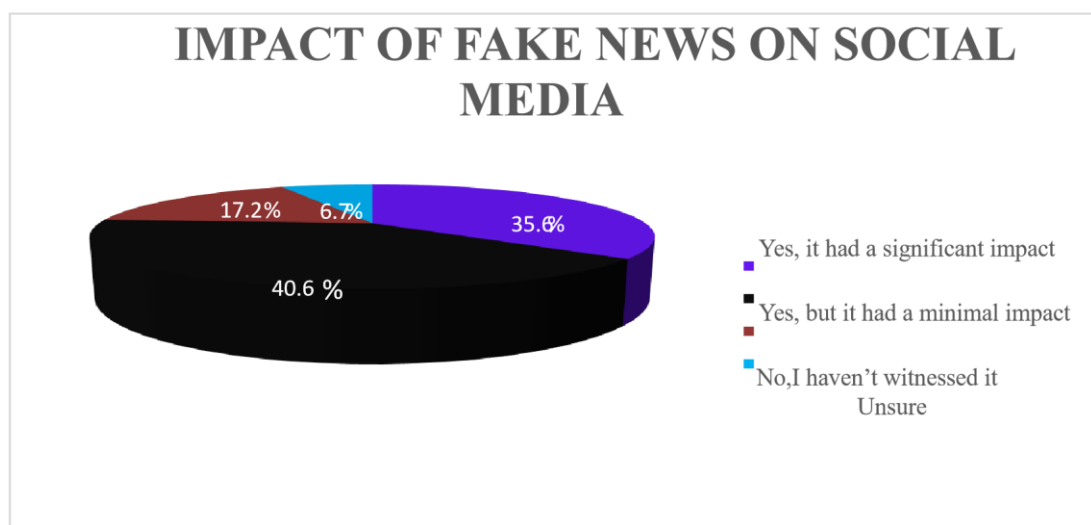
Figure 3.5

INTERPRETATION:

From the figure, it is understood that 35.6% of the respondents witnessed a significant impact on the spread of misinformation, 40.6% witnessed but it had a minimal impact, 17,2% haven't witnessed it and 6.7% are not sure.

3.1.6 ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CONTENT SHARED ON PLATFORMS

● Table 3.6 shows the frequency for accountability for content shared on social media platforms

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE(%)
Strongly Agree	63	35
Agree	57	31.7
Neutral	34	18.9
Disagree	14	7.8
Strongly Disagree	12	6.7
TOTAL	180	100.0

Table 3.6
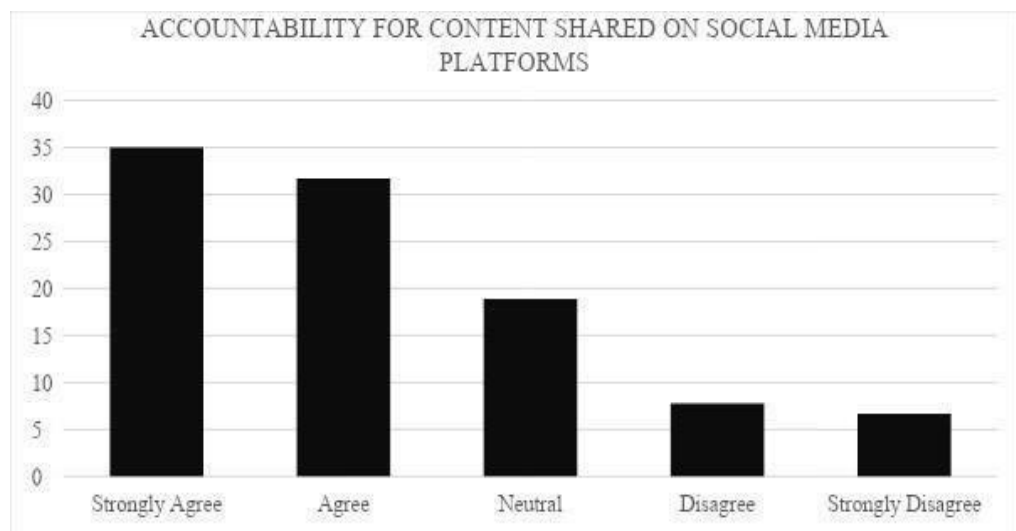
Figure 3.6

INTERPRETATION:

It can be inferred that 35% strongly agree that social media platforms should be held accountable for the content shared on their platforms, 31.7% agree , 18.9% neutral, 7.8% disagree and 6.7% strongly disagree.

3.1.7 SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS IMPACT PUBLIC OPINIONS

• Table 3.7 shows the frequency of social media interactions impact public opinions

	FREQUE NCY	PERCENTAGE(%)
Strongly Agree	52	28.9
Agree	65	36.1
Neutral	35	19.4
Disagree	18	10
Strongly Disagree	10	5.6
TOTAL	**180**	**100.0**

Table 3.7
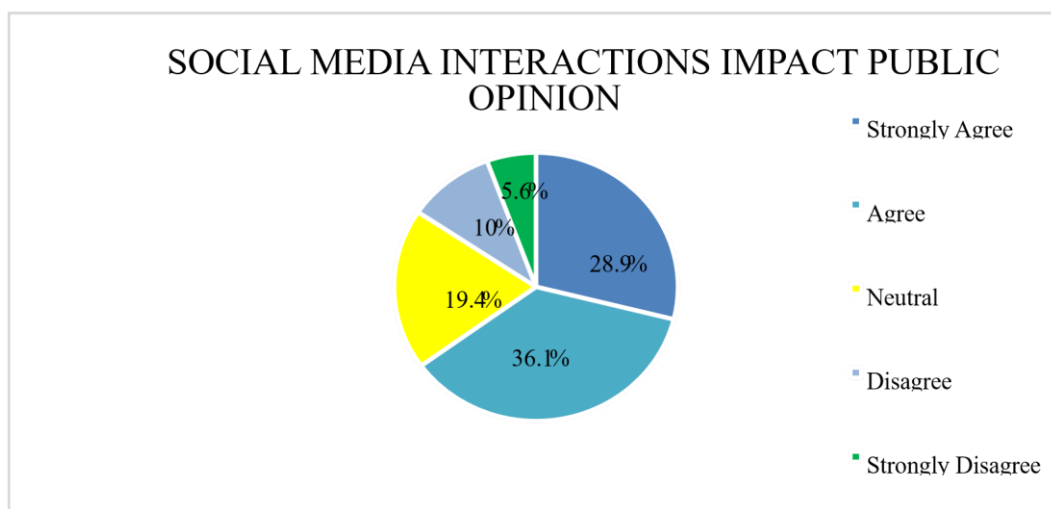
Figure 3.7

INTERPRETATION:

24

From the above table, it is understood that 28.9% of the respondents strongly agree, 36.1%
agree, 19.4% are neutral, 10% disagree and 5.6% strongly disagree that social media
interactions impact public opinion.

3.1.8 SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND PUBLIC OPINION

● Table 3.8 shows how perceived by the relationship between social media
influencers and public opinion

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE(%)
Significant Impact	51	28.3
Moderate Impact	95	52.8
Minimal Impact	24	13.3
No Impact	10	5.6
TOTAL	**180**	**100.0**

Table 3.8
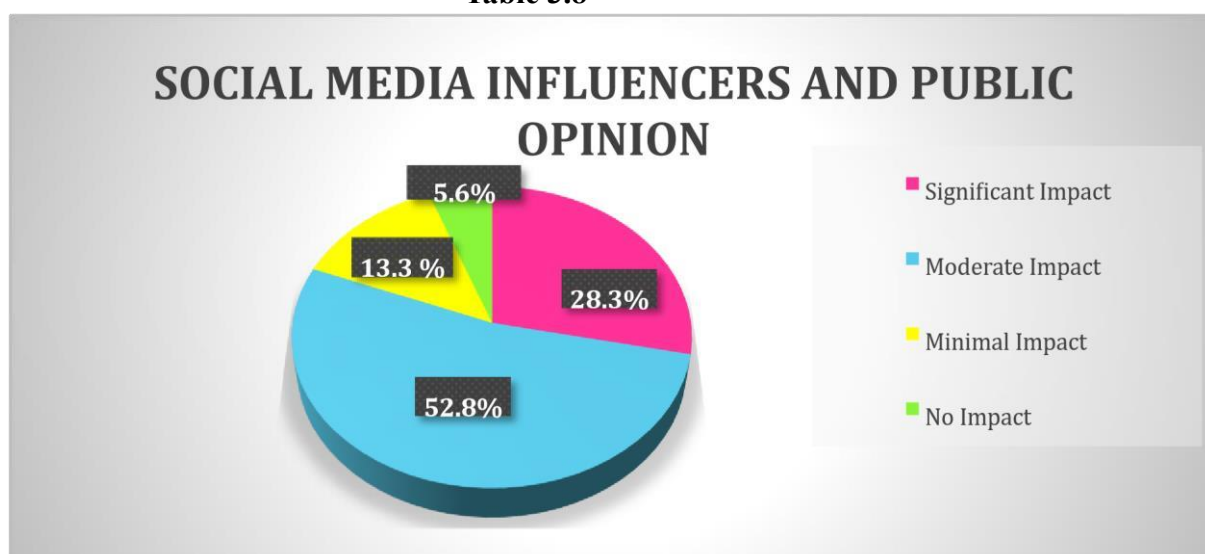
Figure 3.8

INTERPRETATION:

From above, we can infer that 28.3% of the influencers have a significant impact,

52.8% have a moderate impact, 13.3% have minimal impact and 5.6%

influencers have no impact on public opinion.

3.1.9 ROLE IN RAISING AWARENESS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES

● Table 3.9 shows the role respondents believe social media platforms play in
  raising awareness of social and political issues

	FREQUE NCY	**PERCENTAGE**
Crucial role	59	32.8
Moderate role	77	42.8
Limited role	32	17.8
No role	12	6.7
TOTAL	**180**	**100.0**

Table 3.9
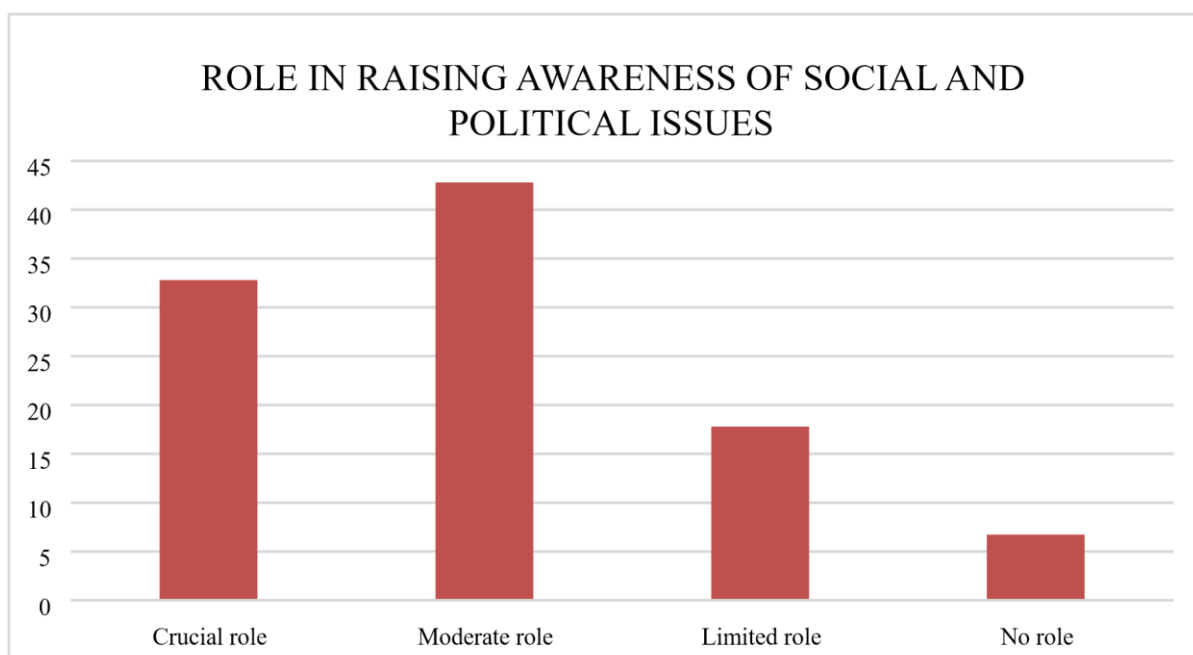
Figure 3.9

INTERPRETATION:

It is understood from the graph above that social media platforms played a crucial role for 32.8% respondents, moderate role for 42.8% , limited role for 17.8% and no role for 6.7% respondents in raising awareness of social and political issues.

3.1.10 SOCIAL MEDIA INFORMATION DEMOCRACY

● Table 3.10 shows the frequency of social media information democracy among respondents

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE(%)
Democratized access	64	35.6
No democratized access	46	25.6
Unsure	70	38.9

TOTAL	180	100.0

Table 3.10
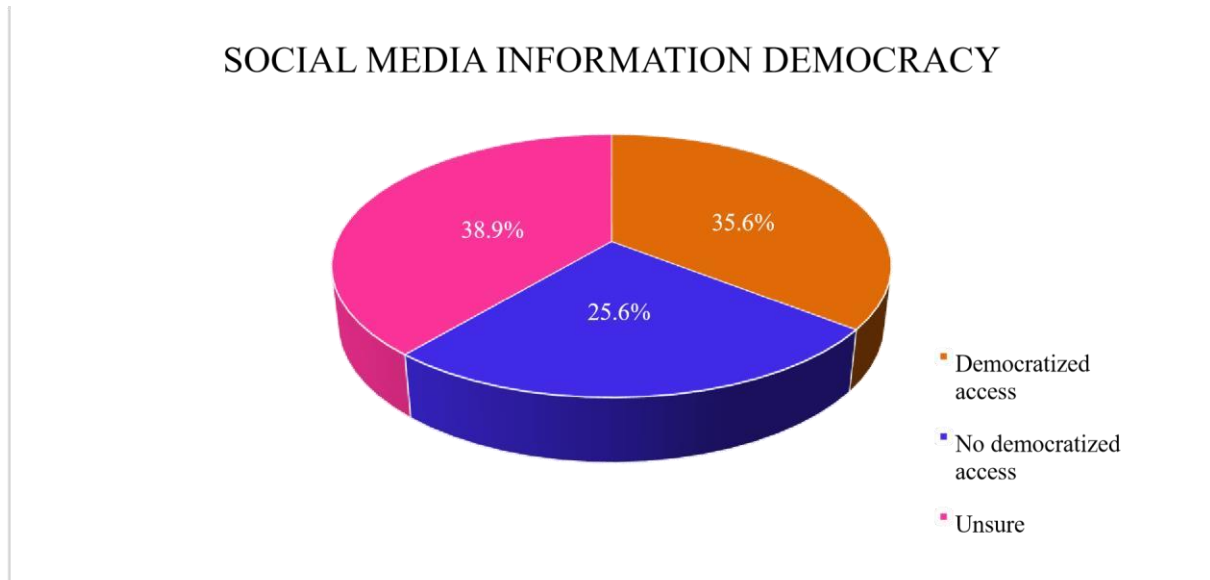
Figure 3.10

INTERPRETATION:

From the data above, it is observed that 35.6% of the respondents think social media has democratized access to information and public discourse, 25.6% think no democratized access and 38.9% are not sure. Most of the respondents are not sure if social media has democratized access to information.

3.1.11 REGULATING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR FAIR INFORMATION

Table 3.11 shows the respondents' opinions on regulating social media for information fairness.

	FREQUEN CY	**PERCENTAGE(%)**
Strongly Agree	29	16.1
Agree	29	16.1
Neutral	47	26.1

Disagree	32	17.8
Strongly Disagree	43	23.9
TOTAL	**180**	**100.0**

Table 3.11
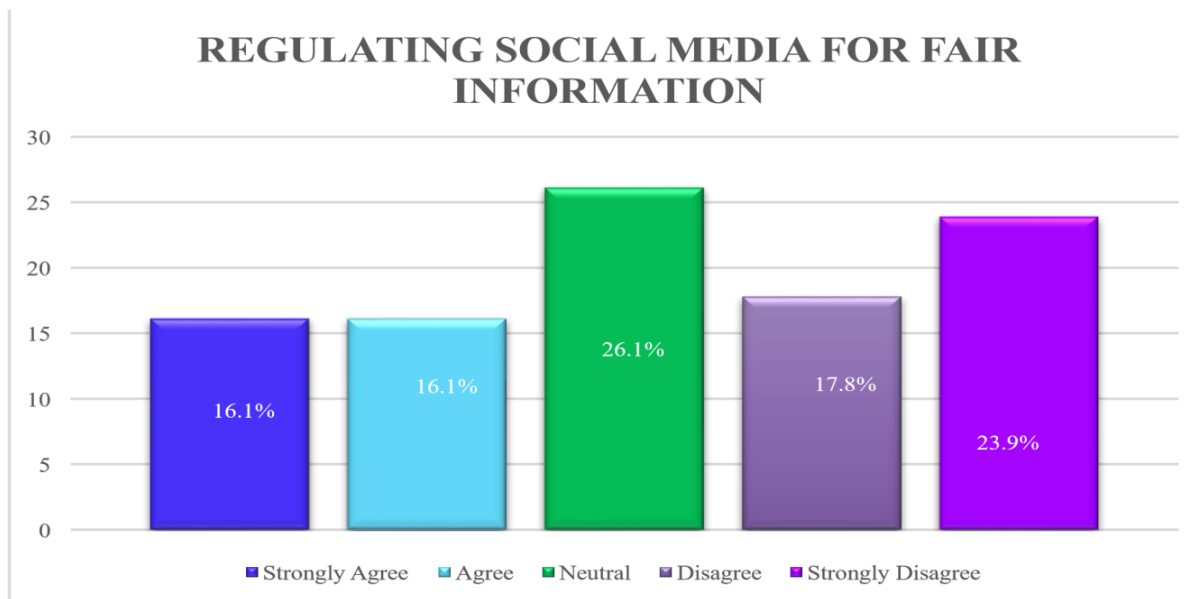
Figure 3.11

INTERPRETATION:

From above, it shows that 16.1% of the respondents strongly agree, 16.1% agree, 26.1% are neutral, 17.8% disagree and 23.9% strongly disagree on regulating social media for information fairness.

3.2 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

3.2.1 CHI-SQUARE TEST : SOCIAL MEDIA'S INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC OPINION AND FREQUENCY OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

H0: There is no association between frequency of using social media platforms and its

influence on public opinion

H1: There is association between frequency of using social media platforms and its influence

on public opinion

Social media influence public opinion * Frequency of using social media platforms Crosstabulation

			Frequency of using social media platforms				Total
			Multiple times a day	Once a Day	A few times a week	Rarely or Never	
Social media's influence on public opinion.	Greatest Influence	Count	27	6	5	5	43
		Expected Count	16.6	8.6	9.8	7.9	43.0
	2	Count	24	14	15	7	60
		Expected Count	23.1	12.1	13.7	11.1	60.0
	3	Count	14	11	8	12	45
		Expected Count	17.3	9.1	10.3	8.3	45.0
	4	Count	3	2	12	5	22
	Least Influence	Expected Count	8.5	4.4	5.0	4.1	22.0
Total		Count	1	3	1	4	9
		Expected Count	3.5	1.8	2.1	1.7	9.0
		Count	69	36	41	33	179
		Expected Count	69.0	36.0	41.0	33.0	179.0

Table 3.12

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	37.114[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	35.466	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	19.598 179	1	.000
N of Valid Cases			

Table 3.13

The key result in the Chi-Square Tests table is the Pearson Chi-Square.

- The value of the test statistic is 37.114 ˚
- The footnote for this statistic pertains to the expected cell count assumption (i.e. 6 cells(30.0%) have expected cell count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.66).
- The corresponding p-value of the test statistic is p= 0.001(0.001< α = 0.05).

INTERPRETATION:

Since the p-value 0.001 is lesser than our chosen significance level α=0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. Therefore we can conclude that there is a relationship between influence of social media on public opinion and frequency of using social media platforms.

3.2.2 CHI-SQUARE TEST : THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC OPINION

H0: There is no association between Role Of Social Media In Politics And Its Influence On Public Opinion

H1: There is association between Role Of Social Media In Politics And Its Influence On

Public Opinion   **Role of social media in political discourse and election campaigns * Influence on public opinion.**

Crosstabulation		Influence on public opinion					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
	Count	26	19	9	2	3	59
Highly influential				14.8		3.0 2	
Expected Count		14.2	19.8	10	7.3	1.6	
Count				7.8		1	59.0
Minimally influential Expected Count		5	8		6		31
		7.4	10.4	18 18.6	3.7 3		31.0
Role of social media in politics Moderately influential	Count	11	33	8 3.8	3.8 11	.8	74
Expected Count		17.8	24.8		9.1		74.0
Not influential at all Expected Count		1	0	45 45.0	3		15
Count		3.6	5.0		1.8		15.0
Total Expected Count		43 43.0	60 60.0		22 22.0	9 9.0	179 179.0

Table 3.14

Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	46.123ᵃ	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	48.544	12	.000
N of Valid Cases	179		

Table 3.15

The key result in the Chi-Square Tests table is the Likelihood Ratio.

- The value of the test statistic is 48.544
- The footnote for this statistic pertains to the expected cell count assumption (i.e. 8

    cells(40.0%) have expected cell count less than 5. The minimum expected count is

0.75).

- The corresponding p-value of the test statistic is p= 0.001(0.001< α = 0.05).

INTERPRETATION:

Since the p-value 0.001 is lesser than our chosen significance level α=0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. Therefore we can conclude that there is a relationship between role of social media in politics and how social media influence public opinion.

3.2.3 CHI-SQUARE TEST : MISINFORMATION OR FAKE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND TRUST ISSUES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

H0: There is no association between Misinformation Or Fake News On Social Media And

Trust Issues On Social Media

H1: There is association between Misinformation Or Fake News On Social Media And Trust

Issues On Social Media

Misinformation or fake news on social media *   Trust issues on social media Crosstabulation

		Trust issues on social media					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
No, I haven't witnessed it	Count	0	7	13	6	5	31
	Expected Count		9.7				31.0
Unsure							12
		2.9		13.0	3.6	1.7	12.0
Yes, but it had a minimal impact							72
	Count	4	2	3	2	1	72.0
Yes, it had a significant impact	Expected Count						64
	Count			5.0			64.0
Misinformation or fake news on social media	Count	1.1	3.8		1.4	.7	
		5	27	33	6	1	
	Expected Count	6.8	22.5	30.2	8.4	4.0	
Total							

Count		8	20	26	7	3	
Expected Count			20.0		7.5	3.6	
		6.1		26.8			
Count		17	56	75	21	10	179
Expected Count		17.0	56.0	75.0	21.0	10.0	179.0

Table 3.16

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26.014[a]	12	.011
Likelihood Ratio		12	.014
N of Valid Cases	25.099 179		

Table 3.17

The key result in the Chi-Square Tests table is the Likelihood Ratio.

- The value of the test statistic is 26.014 [a]

- The footnote for this statistic pertains to the expected cell count assumption (i.e. 9

  cells(45.0%) have expected cell count less than 5. The minimum expected count is

0.67).

- The corresponding p-value of the test statistic is p= 0.011(0.011>α = 0.05).

INTERPRETATION:

Since the p-value 0.011 is greater than our chosen significance level α=0.05, we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternate hypothesis. Therefore we can conclude that there is no relationship between misinformation or fake news on social media and trust issues on social media.

CHAPTER 4

INFERENCES

4.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Majority of the respondents are female. 55% of them are female and the remaining 45% are male.

- Among the 180 respondents, majority of them i.e 38.3% use social media platforms multiple times a day, 20.6% once a day, 22.8% a few times a week and 18.3% rarely or never use social media platforms.

- Most of the respondents (77.2%) participated in social media campaigns or movements related to a social or political cause and 22.8% have not.

- Majority respondents (41.7%) moderately trust information shared on social media, 31.7% slightly trust information, 11.7% trust to a large extent ,9.4% do not trust at all and 5.6% completely trust information shared on social media to form their opinions.

- Most respondents (47.2%) changed their opinion and 52.8% have not changed their opinion on a certain topic due to social media exposure.

- Among the 180 respondents, most of them (48.9%) very often encounter, 21.7% often, 16.7% rarely,7.8% very often and 5% never encounter opposing viewpoints on social media platforms that challenge their own opinions.

- Many of the respondents (40.6%) had a minimal impact, 35.6% had a significant impact, 17.2% haven't witnessed and 6.7% are not sure on whether they have witnessed the spread of misinformation or fake news on social media.

- Majority respondents (41.7%) are highly influential, 32.8% moderately influential, 17.2% minimally influential and 8.3% are not influential at all on the role of social media in political discourse and election campaigns.

- Majority i.e 44.4% of the respondents strongly agree, 24.4% agree, 17.2% neutral, 15% disagree and 5.6% strongly disagree that social media platforms should take more responsibility in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information shared on their platforms.

- Most of the respondents (33.9%) have great influence, 25% neutral, 23.9% have greatest influence, 12.2% less influence and 5% have least influence on social media in their opinion.

- Major respondents(36.1%) have great influence, 24,4% greatest influence, 24.4% neutral, 10% less influence and 5% least influence on social media in the traditional method like newspapers and magazines.

- Most of the respondents(35%) strongly agree, 31.7% agree, 18.9% neutral, 7.8% disagree and 6.7% strongly disagree that social media platforms should be held accountable for the content shared on their platforms.

- Majority of the respondents(36.1%) agree, 28.9% strongly agree, 19.4% neutral, 10% disagree and 5.6% strongly disagree that there should be regulations or laws to govern social media platforms' impact on public opinion.

- In this study among 180 respondents, most of them (52.8%) perceive that influencers have a moderate impact, 28.3% that influencers have a significant impact, 13.3% that influencers have a minimal impact and 5.6% that influencers have no impact on public opinion.

- Most respondents (56.7%) haven't participated in online discussions or debates, 23.3% have participated but they have a limited influence, 11.1% have participated and influence public opinion significantly and 8.9% are not sure whether participation in online discussions or debates on social media platforms influence public opinion.

- Majority of the respondents (42.8%) believe that social media platforms play a crucial role, 32.8% a moderate role,17.8% a limited role and 6.7% no role in spreading awareness about social and political issues.

- Most respondents (38.9%) are not sure, 35.6% think social media has democratized access and 25.6% think it has not democratized access to information and public discourse.

- Among the 180 respondents, most of them (36.7%) strongly agree, 27.8% agree, 24.4% neutral, 8.3% disagree and 2.8% strongly disagree that social media platforms should be more actively regulated to ensure the fairness and accuracy of information presented to the public.

- Most of the respondents (26.1%) are neutral, 23.9% are very unlikely, 17.8% are somewhat unlikely, 16.1% very likely and 16.1% are somewhat likely to share or repost content on social media without verifying its accuracy.

4.2 SUGGESTIONS

Social media serves as a powerful force in shaping public opinion. It acts as a lightning-fast conduit for information dissemination, enabling users to share news, opinions, and insights that can significantly influence how people perceive a wide range of issues. Moreover, it amplifies the voices of marginalized communities and causes, bringing their concerns into the mainstream. Social media also has the power to set the agenda for public discussions through trending topics and hashtags. However, it's essential to be aware of the filter bubbles and echo chambers that can reinforce existing beliefs. On the positive side, it fosters public engagement, encourages activism, and serves as a platform for public feedback and opinion polling. While it can be a source of fact-checking and countering misinformation, it's also a channel for influence campaigns and celebrity endorsements. Furthermore, data analytics and targeting on these platforms play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion. Responsible usage, critical thinking, and media literacy are essential for harnessing the positive aspects of social media in shaping public opinion while guarding against its potential pitfalls.

4.3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the role of social media in shaping public opinion is undeniable and multifaceted. It serves as a dynamic platform for information dissemination, amplifying voices, and setting public agendas. Social media encourages public engagement, fosters activism, and provides valuable feedback channels. However, it is not without its challenges.

Filter bubbles, misinformation, and the potential for manipulation pose significant threats. The influence of celebrities and the power of targeted content further underscore its impact. To harness its potential for positive change while mitigating its risks, individuals, organizations, and societies must prioritize media literacy, critical thinking, and responsible usage, ensuring that social media continues to be a force for informed and balanced public discourse in an increasingly interconnected world.

CHAPTER 5

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APPENDIX

1. Name

_____

2. Gender

Male☐   Female☐   Others☐

3. How frequently do you use social media platforms?

Multiple times a day ☐   Once a day ☐   A few times a week ☐   Rarely or never ☐

4. Which social media platforms do you use the most?

Facebook☐   Twitter☐   Instagram☐   TikTok☐ LinkedIn☐   Other (please specify) _____

5. Have you ever participated in any social media campaigns or movements related to a social or political cause?

Yes☐   No☐

6. How much do you trust information shared on social media to form your opinions?

Do not trust at all   Slightly trust   Moderately trust   Trust to a large extent   Completely trust

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

7. Have you ever changed your opinion on a certain topic due to social media exposure?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. How often do you encounter opposing viewpoints on social media platforms that challenge your own opinions?

   Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Very often

      ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

9.Have you ever witnessed the spread of misinformation or fake news on social media?

   Yes, it had a significant impact☐   Yes, but it had a minimal impact☐

No, I haven't witnessed it☐   Unsure☐

10. How would you describe the role of social media in political discourse and election campaigns?

Highly influential☐   Moderately influential☐

Minimally influential☐   Not influential at all☐

11. Do you feel that social media platforms should take more responsibility in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information shared on their platforms?

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

12. In your opinion, what measures should social media platforms take to improve the role they play in shaping public opinion?

☐Implement stricter content moderation policies

☐ Provide more transparent information about content algorithms

☐ Partner with fact-checking organizations to verify information

☐ Increase efforts to promote diverse viewpoints

☐ Other (Please specify)

13. Rate on a scale of 1-5 on how do you think social media influence public opinion. Social media

has greatest influence   Social media has least influence

    1☐   ☐ ☐ ☐   5 ☐

14. Rate on a scale of 1-5 on how do you think social media influence the traditional method like newspapers and magazines .

Social media has greatest influence   Social media has least influence

    1☐   ☐ ☐ ☐   5 ☐

15. Do you believe social media platforms should be held accountable for the content shared on their platforms?

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

☐   ☐ ☐   ☐   ☐

16. In your opinion, should there be regulations or laws to govern social media platforms' impact on public opinion?

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

☐   ☐ ☐   ☐   ☐

17. How do you perceive the relationship between social media influencers and public opinion?

☐ Influencers have a significant impact on public opinion

☐ Influencers have a moderate impact on public opinion

☐ Influencers have a minimal impact on public opinion

☐ Influencers have no impact on public opinion

18. Have you ever participated in online discussions or debates on social media platforms? How do you think these interactions influence public opinion?

☐ Yes, they influence public opinion significantly

☐ Yes, but they have a limited influence

☐ No, I haven't participated in online discussions or debates

☐ Unsure

19. What role do you believe social media platforms play in spreading awareness about social and political issues?

☐ They play a crucial role

☐ They play a moderate role

☐ They play a limited role

☐ They play no role

20. Do you think social media has democratized access to information and public discourse?

☐ Yes, it has democratized access

☐ No, it has not democratized access

☐ Unsure

21. How do you think social media platforms can promote healthy discussions and reduce hostility among users?

☐ Enforce strict community guidelines and policies

☐ Promote respectful dialogue and discourage hate speech

☐Provide tools to filter out offensive content

☐Introduce features to foster constructive debates

☐ Other (Please specify)

22.In your opinion, should social media platforms be more actively regulated to ensure the fairness and accuracy of information presented to the public?

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

   ☐   ☐   ☐ ☐   ☐

23.How likely are you to share or repost content on social media without verifying its accuracy?

Very Likely   Somewhat Likely   Neutral   Somewhat Unlikely   Very Unlikely

   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

24. Would you recommend any changes or regulations regarding the role of social media in shaping public opinion? Why?

ANS: _____