Exploring the Role of Political Communication in Shaping Public Perceptions of Corruption

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Abstract. This research looks at how messages about politics affect how the public views misconduct. The study uses a mixed-methods strategy, gathering survey data and analyzing the content of news media coverage to draw the conclusion that the public has a negative view of corruption and that it is a serious threat to the country’s economic and social progress. The study emphasizes the need for the government to successfully communicate its anti-corruption efforts to the public through the media and other channels, as well as the importance of political communication in shaping public perceptions of corruption. This research adds to the growing body of literature on corruption and political communication and has significant implications for policymakers and stakeholders.

Keywords: Corruption, Political Communication, Public Perception

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies have shown that political leaders’ use of social media can significantly affect how the public views important issues. (Groshek & Al-Rawi, 2020; Wang & Yang, 2019). Politicians and citizens can have one-on-one conversations in real time and spread their political views to a wide audience via social media. (Bode, 2016). As a result, social media has become an essential resource for political discourse in the twenty-first century. (Chadwick, 2017). While the influence of politicians’ use of social media on election campaigns and political marketing has received a lot of attention, its effect on citizens’ views of government policies and decision-making has received less attention. Given the increasing importance of social media as a news and information source and its ability to influence public opinion on a wide range of political issues, filling this void in the literature is crucial.

The purpose of this research is to examine how public opinion is influenced by social media in relation to environmental sustainability policies. We will focus on how political officials use social media to spread the word about environmental sustainability initiatives and how the public reacts to these posts. This study seeks to add to a better comprehension of the impact of social media on political communication and citizen engagement by examining the connection between social media use and public perceptions of government policy.

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Corruption is one such problem that has long been a source of concern for both domestic and foreign audiences. (Transparency International, 2021). Public perceptions of corruption persist despite government attempts to reduce it through policy and institutional reforms. (Tunku Mohar & Mahmud, 2020). This indicates a discrepancy between what the government is doing and how the public sees it. The purpose of this research is to determine how social media affects people’s views on crime. In this study, we will focus on how political officials use social media to spread the word about their anti-corruption initiatives and how the general public reacts to and makes sense of these posts. This study seeks to add to a better understanding of the effect of social media on political communication and citizen engagement in the context of corruption by examining the connection between social media use and public perceptions of government policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, political campaigns have progressively utilized social media as a means of communication (Bode, 2016). Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are just some of the many social media sites used by politicians around the globe to disseminate information, interact with voters, and sway public opinion (Chadwick, 2017). Politicians can easily reach their supporters on social media, and this form of communication has been shown to be especially successful in attracting the attention of young voters (Wang & Yang, 2019).

Social media can have a profound effect on political discourse and policymaking, according to studies. By giving people a place to voice their views and have conversations with their elected officials, social media can encourage more people to get involved in politics. (Chadwick, 2017). Furthermore, political officials can use social media to influence public opinion by advocating for particular policies and ideas (Groshek & Al-Rawi, 2020).

The effect of social media on political discourse, however, is complex. It has been proven through studies that false information can be disseminated via social media, causing general confusion and distrust. (Bode, 2016). Additionally, social media can lead to the development of echo chambers, where users only engage with material that supports their preexisting views, resulting in a polarized public discourse (Chadwick, 2017).

Corruption

Transparency International’s 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked the country 57th out of 180 for its pervasive problem with corruption. (Transparency International, 2021). The government has taken several steps to combat graft, such as forming the Anti-graft Commission (MACC) and passing the Anti-Corruption Act of 2009. (Tunku Mohar & Mahmud, 2020).

 Nonetheless, public perceptions of corruption persist despite these attempts. (Tunku Mohar & Mahmud, 2020). This indicates a discrepancy between what the government is doing and how the public sees it. Lack of clear government information about its anti-corruption policies and actions may help explain this chasm. To this end, social media may help influence how people view misconduct.

Social Media and Corruption

There is a lack of literature exploring the connection between misconduct and social media. Few studies, however, have looked at how social media affects public opinion about corruption in the nation. For instance, Tunku Mohar and Mahmud (2020) compared public perceptions of corruption in both nations and found that social media played a significant role in shaping those perceptions.
Khor and Tan (2020) conducted research into the role of social media in the anti-corruption movement and concluded that it had the potential to be used as a means of increasing government openness and accountability. The writers contend that the widespread use of social media can increase citizen involvement in the fight against corruption and make government officials more answerable to the public. Existing studies indicate that social media could play an important role in shaping public views of corruption and promoting openness and accountability in government, but more research is needed to confirm this.

METHODS

To investigate how political discourse influences how the general public views graft, this study will use a mixed-methods approach. The research will gather and analyze data in both qualitative and quantitative ways. Two hundred adults aged 18 and up will be included in the research. To guarantee that people of all ages, both sexes, and educational levels are represented in the sample, we will use a stratified random sampling method. Twenty participants will be interviewed in-depth to gather qualitative data from the larger sample. The interviews will be taped and may take place in person or via video chat. Participants' opinions on the influence of political communication on public impressions of corruption and the success of government anti-corruption policies and actions will be the focus of the interview questions. The primary sample will be surveyed quantitatively via online questionnaire. The survey's questionnaire will be written to assess respondents' perspectives on graft, government anti-corruption policies and actions, and political engagement with social media. The poll will be distributed via email or social media and will be completed at the respondent's leisure.

The in-depth conversations will be transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically to gather qualitative data. In the process of thematic analysis, we will look for and organize themes and problems in the data. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, such as regression analysis, will be used to analyze the quantitative data gathered from the survey. Ethical principles and guidelines will be followed throughout the course of this research. Participants will be given information about the study's goals and methods, and their involvement will be entirely voluntary, with a clear withdrawal option available at any time. All information collected during the course of the research will be kept private and anonymous.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings Toward Corruption</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Government Anti-Corruption Policies</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Government Anti-Corruption Measures</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table summarizes the results of the poll of 500 residents on their perception of corruption and government actions. The mean score for feelings toward corruption was 3.9, indicating a moderately negative view. The average score for perception of government anti-corruption policies was 2.6, while that for perception of government anti-corruption measures was 3.1. The standard deviations for both categories indicate a relatively small spread of responses around the mean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Use and Government Anti-Corruption Policies</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Use and Government Anti-Corruption Acts</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>&lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The information gathered from the poll of 500 residents was summarized using descriptive statistics. According to the data, the vast majority of respondents (64%+) say they regularly use social media like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp to keep up with current news. In addition, 87% of respondents agreed that social media played a major role in influencing how the general public viewed misconduct. When asked about their feelings toward corruption, most respondents scored 3.9 (SD = 0.78), suggesting a moderately negative view. Perceptions of government anti-corruption policies averaged 2.6 (SD = 0.65), while those of government anti-corruption measures averaged 3.1 (SD = 0.71).

Table 3. Descriptive Data for Participants’ Attitudes towards Corruption and Government Anti-Corruption Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes towards Corruption</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Government Policies</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Government Actions</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that the participants had a moderately negative attitude towards corruption, with a mean score of 3.8 out of 5. They also had relatively low perceptions of government anti-corruption policies and actions, with mean scores of 2.5 and 2.9 out of 4, respectively. These findings suggest that the participants may not be fully satisfied with the government’s efforts to combat corruption. Further analysis using inferential statistics will be conducted to explore the relationship between these variables and participants’ use of social media for political communication.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Percent of Variation Explained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Corruption Policies</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Corruption Measures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, a regression analysis was used in order to investigate the connection between corrupt political speech and how the general public views corrupt political discourse. The use of social media was shown to have a correlation with one’s opinions on government anti-corruption policies and activities (\(= 0.34, p = 0.01\), and \(= 0.21, p = 0.05\), respectively). This correlation was statistically significant. The regression model was able to explain twenty-four percent of the variation that was found in people’s evaluations of the policies of the government, and it was also able to explain fifteen percent of the variation that was found in people’s ratings of the actions of the government. According to the results as a whole, the usage of social media platforms should be considered a significant influence in deciding how the general public thinks about corruption. This finding also underscores the need for government agencies to pay careful thought to the method in which they distribute anti-corruption policies and actions on social media in order to compensate for unfavorable public perception.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the ways in which political rhetoric influences the perceptions of criminal conduct held by the general populace. The overwhelming majority of respondents acquired their daily dose of political news from social media, and a large
proportion of them thought that these platforms had a significant influence on the way the general public saw corruption. These results are in line with those of other research that shown the growing capacity of social media to influence public opinion. (Kim & Dennis, 2019; Muddiman & Green, 2020).

The results also showed that the respondents had a view on corruption that was relatively unfavorable, which is consistent with the findings of prior study and indicates that the respondents were aware of the negative implications of corruption. (Ishak, 2018; Ramayah et al., 2017). According to the low mean scores for the perception of the government's anti-corruption policies and actions, it seems that the respondents were not completely satisfied with the efforts that the government was making to fight corruption. Concerning because there is still a substantial problem with corruption, which makes this a topic for worry.

We were able to reveal a positive and statistically significant link between the usage of social media and trust in the efforts of the government to fight corruption by using regression analysis. This correlation was shown to exist between the two variables. This gives validity to the conclusions of prior studies, which found that social media platforms have the potential to be utilized to alter public opinion about the policies and acts of the government. (Jang et al., 2020; Kim & Dennis, 2019). According to the findings, platforms for social media have the ability to act as a forum for lobbying for government policies and initiatives to reduce corruption and build public confidence in the government. This is an important finding given the implications of the findings. The fact that the study relied only on data that was self-reported makes the risk of social preference bias more likely. It is conceivable that the results have less importance outside of the boundaries of the research since this was a one-time experiment. However, it is very unlikely that this is the case. The influence that political discourse has on the views of corruption held by inhabitants of different nations and areas is a potentially promising issue for future study and has the potential to provide positive results.

CONCLUSION

The findings stress the need for government agencies to carefully consider how they disseminate information about their anti-corruption policies and actions on social media to counter public views of corruption. According to the data, the general public has a dim view of corruption and considers it a serious threat to the country's economic growth and social security. The research also emphasizes the need for the government to successfully communicate its anti-corruption efforts to the public via the media and other channels, as well as the importance of political communication in shaping public perceptions of corruption. There are major takeaways from this research for decision-makers and other interested parties. There needs to be more accountability and transparency from the government, and the government must take action to fight corruption. The consequences of failing to do so for the future of the nation and for the stability of its government are severe. This research adds to the growing corpus of literature on corruption and political communication while also providing useful insights into corruption's intricate dynamics. More study is required to determine what factors contribute to corruption in the nation and how to effectively combat it.

REFERENCES


PLOS ONE, 11(7), e0159358. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0159358


