

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

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Abstract. *This research focuses on the extent to which messages on politics influence perception of misconduct in the population. This paper uses a mixed approach, whereby data was collected from questionnaires and content analysis of the newspapers to reach the conclusion that the public frowns on corruption and sees it as a real threat to the nations economic and social development. The study also underlines that the government has to engage the media and other platforms effectively. Thus, the role of political communication is in focus for understandings of anti corruption campaigns. This study forms part of the current literature in the field of corruption and political communication and is relevant for policymakers and relevant stakeholders.*

Keywords: *Corruption, Political Communication, Public Perception*

Received: May 26, 2022

Revised: June 20, 2022

Accepted: July 14, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Several studies conducted in the past year have revealed that political leader manipulation of the social tool can critically influence public opinions about critical matters. Organizations is also experiencing increased growth rates of digital overload is also prevalent according to Groshek and Al-Rawi (2020) and Wang and Yang (2019). Political leaders can engage in real time conversations with other politicians, other individuals or even the general public, all in one day, and disseminate their political messages to an extensive number of people at a single instance, via the social media platforms (Oparaugo, 2021; Robles-Morales & Córdoba-Hernández, 2019).

Therefore, social media is a valuable tool for political communication of 21 century (Farkas & Bene, 2021; Jensen, 2017). While there has been extensive research as to the impact of politicians engaging in social media and their impact on election campaigns and political marketing communication there is little research about the impact of social media on citizens perception of government policies and decisions. Popular social networking sites as source of news and information and their impact on forming opinions towards various matters affecting the political arena makes it essential to fill this gap in the literature.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to analyse how the public view different policies on environmental sustainability through media social. Our attention will be paid to the ways political officials share information about the projects related to environmental sustainability and what kind of response they receive from the audience, align with research from McKinley et al. (2017). The purpose of this study is to extend existing knowledge to the Effects of Media Social in Political Communication and Citizen Participation where the relationship between social media usage and citizens attitude towards government policy would be investigated.

A mass content analysis of several political leaders revealed that how one utilizes the social media can alter perception of the public on important issues. Said qui, one can refer to the

works of Groshek and Al-Rawi (2020), or Wang and Yang (2019). Politicians and citizens are able to engage in real time face to face conversations, and share political opinions with many people in their social networks, in research by Barnidge (2017) and Chan (2021). Therefore, political discussions require social media as a tool in the interaction in the 21 century (Chadwick, 2017). Although a number of scholars have examined the extent to which politicians use of social media influences the election campaigns and political marketing, little attention has been paid to how the Social Media messages affect the perceptions which people have regarding government policies and decisions. Thus, it becomes highly relevant to fill the gap in literature that is currently missing research on the effects of social media as a reliable source of news and information and its potential to shape people's opinions about various political matters.

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

Over the last few years, political campaigns have increasingly adopted the use of social media in their communication strategies, recognizing its potential to reach and influence a broad audience (Bode, 2016; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become crucial platforms through which politicians across the world share information, shape public opinion, and engage directly with voters (Chadwick, 2017). Social media provides a unique avenue for politicians to bypass traditional media and communicate directly with their constituents, a feature particularly appealing to younger voters who are more active on these platforms (Wang & Yang, 2019).

Research has shown that social media not only influences political communication but also plays a significant role in the policymaking process. By offering society a space to express opinions and interact with their representatives, social media has the potential to increase political engagement and broaden the base of individuals interested in political processes (Chadwick, 2017; Cogburn et al., 2014). Furthermore, political officials can strategically use social media to set agendas, frame issues, and garner support for specific policies and ideas, thereby influencing public discourse and policy outcomes (Groshek & Al-Rawi, 2020).

However, the impact of social media on political communication is complex and not without its challenges. While social media can be a powerful tool for engagement, it also has the potential to spread misinformation, leading to increased uncertainty and mistrust among the public (Xiao et al., 2021; Bode, 2016). The platform's algorithmic nature often exposes users to content that reinforces their existing beliefs, creating echo chambers where individuals are less likely to encounter opposing viewpoints. This phenomenon can hinder meaningful public debate and exacerbate polarization (Chadwick, 2017; Barberá et al., 2015). Additionally, the rapid dissemination of information on social media can sometimes outpace the ability of traditional media and regulatory bodies to fact check and verify content, further complicating the landscape of political communication. Despite these challenges, the role of social media in politics remains undeniably significant, warranting ongoing research to better understand its implications and optimize its use for democratic engagement.

Corruption

As estimated by Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index of the year 2020, the country's position in the list of 180 countries is 57 and it evidences a critical corruption problem (Transparency International, 2021). Despite this, the government also in its effort to fight corruption has provided some measures which include MACC and the Anti Corruption Act of 2009 established in the country (Quah, 2021; Kapeli & Mohamed, 2015; Quah, 2020). Nevertheless, corruption is still very much present in the public domain and this shows that while there may be some opportunities for modern sustainable development, corruption is also a factor in forming the prospects at the present (Tunku Mohar & Mahmud, 2020; Mebratu, 1998). This never ending to continued concern of the public with corruption shows a gap between the performance of the government and the perception of the common man. The difference could be blamed on the lack of the government's ability to convey its measures and accomplishments in tackling corruption as highlighted by Bauhr and Grimes (2017). In this regard, social media means can become a significant tool to restore understanding of corruption issues within society while reconstructing the image of the fight against corruption as an open process.

Social Media and Corruption

While there is much research on the effects of social media on the public opinion, there is a dearth of literature on the effects of social media on perception of corruption (Hesselmann et al., 2017). Previous research is mostly concerned with how social media influencer general public opinion not addresses the lack of research specifically regarding the subject of corruption. For example, Tunku Mohar and Mahmud (2020) investigated the effects of social media on various countries corruption perceptions and came up with the conclusion. This implies that corruption at national level may be shaped by social media on the basis of perception and discourse.

Moreover, Khor and Tan, (2020) discussed about the influence of social media in regard to anti corruption campaign and pointed out the fact that it can significantly assist in increasing governmental transparency. According to their findings, active participation of citizens in the social media groups can be used in the fight against corruption through forcing accountability among officials and bringing transparency in governmental processes. Despite empirical findings so far, it is still worthwhile to look deeper into the effectiveness of social media in changing people's attitudes toward corruption and improving transparency and its possible drawbacks.

METHODS

This study used a mixed approach to explore the ways through which political discourse impacted how the general public perceived graft. The research data was collected in both qualitative and quantitative forms and analyzed similarly. A total of two hundred participants were selected, and the target population included servants and caregivers of adults who were 18 years and above. The most appropriate sampling technique was stratified random sampling, which ensured that the respondents were of certain age, sex, and educational levels. Self-administered questionnaires were administered to thirty participants, while twenty participants were interviewed to obtain qualitative data from the larger population. The interviews were recorded and conducted either face-to-face or through Skype. The questions asked during the interviews revolved around the perceptions of the role of political communication on the perception of corruption and the effectiveness of government measures and efforts against corruption.

The primary sample was surveyed quantitatively using an online structured questionnaire. The survey entailed administering a questionnaire formulated to capture the respondents' views on graft and the government policies and actions towards eradicating the vice, as well as their levels of political activism, especially in engaging with social media platforms. The discussions were recorded and transcribed word for word to obtain qualitative data in the form of themes extracted from the content of the discussions. During the process of thematic analysis, it was possible to search for and categorize themes or problems in the data. Closed-

ended questions were adopted once again, and quantitative data collected from the survey were analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as regression analysis.

Ethical research policies were observed throughout the process of this research. The participants were informed of the plans and intentions of the study, and they were able to volunteer for the study or decline the invitation willingly. Additionally, they were granted the option to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to. To ensure that no one was identifiable, all information obtained in the research was kept confidential.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Perception of Corruption and Government Actions

Category	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Feelings Toward Corruption	3.9	0.78
Perception of Government Anti Corruption Policies	2.6	0.65
Perception of Government Anti Corruption Measures	3.1	0.71

The table 1 below is a summary of the poll made to 500 people on their opinion on corruption and government actions. Feelings Toward Corruption reveals that the respondent overall feelings toward corruption have $M = 3$. In view of this the moderately negative narratives are rated 9 on a scale (presumably 1 to 5, with 5 being the most negative). This has given a relatively high score which shows that the public has a moderate negative attitude towards corruption although they acknowledge it as a problem. It was 0 Standard deviation. 78, which indicates that the distribution of the respondent attitudes to corruption is rather stable even though there might be some scholars who are more or less keen on the issue. An indicative pursued proximity to the mean represents that the views are more similar to one another, whereas if it is two indicate that the views are more divergent.

Perception of Government Anti Corruption Policies: it was established that the perception of government anti corruption policies was 2 on average. 50 which fall somewhere between not very favorable or slightly unfavorable perception. Such score implies that the public is equally dissatisfied with the policies that the government has put in place about combating corruption. Such a low score might be due to doubts concerning the actual efficiency or genuineness of such policies. Scholars reported the standard deviation of 0. 65 is somewhat less in the fluctuations of perceptions towards such policies as the public's perception of the issue of corruption. This, in turn, could suggest a greater degree of dissatisfaction or uncertainty in the policies, among the respondents.

The variable of Interest is Perception of Government Anti Corruption Measures As indicated above the average score for perception of government anti corruption measures is 3. The effect size for the treatment group is $r = 0.1539$, whereas for the control group it is $r = 0.0681$, which is appreciably smaller and nearly 1, which is a small but positive number that is above the neutral point 0. From this it can be concluded that although there is some awareness of government initiatives, it is not viewed as very successful by the citizens. The score is still quite low though one can tell that the population is willing to approve more but sees that it is possible only to a small extent. It was 0 for standard deviation which is indicating that the pupils of the selected school have the highest grade of the exams 0.71 as it can be observed the variation is almost minimal as with the other categories of response. From this we may infer that even though there could be some differences in how the public views the efforts of the government, the overall consensus of the population could be characterized as the moderately successful view of the government's measures.

Table 2. Regression Analysis of Social Media Use and Opinions on Government Anti Corruption Policies and Acts

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	p-value
Social Media Use and Government Anti Corruption Policies	0.34	< 0.01
Social Media Use and Government Anti Corruption Acts	0.21	< 0.05

From table 2 it indicates that Social Media Use and Government Anti Corruption Policies have the positive correlation coefficient of 0.34 can be interpreted to mean that social media use has a moderate positive correlation with the public's perception of the government policies against corruption. This implies that wherever the usage of social media is more enhanced, then the chances are high that the public is likely develop a more positive attitude towards the governments fight on corruption. This is not very significant which means that although social media use does play a role, it is not very strong which implies that these perceptions are influenced by several factors not limited to social media use. The alpha level of significance is 0.05 meaning that the p-value calculated will be less than 0. It can also be seen from equation 01 that this correlation is statistically significant. In other words, the probability that any correlation found is accidental is less than one percent, meaning that it is very likely that frequent use of social media is connected to how the public perceives government's anti corruption policies.

Social Media Use and Government Anti Corruption Acts, consequently, the correlation coefficient of 0.21 indicates lower positive correlation between people's social media usage and their perception of government actions against corrupt Practices than its policies. This indicates that social media use has an effect on the perception that the public has towards certain anti corruption actions taken by the government but it is less in comparison to general policies. This could suggest that although social media is useful for changing general perceptions the same may not hold regarding specific government initiatives. Further, the value of $p < 0.05$ thus shows that this is very likely not mere coincidence, although not as strong as the previous correlation. This means that it is below 5% significance meaning that in deed social media use causes a change in the perception that the public has towards the actions taken by the government towards fight against corruption.

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

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Attitudes towards Corruption	3.8	0.9	1	5
Perceptions of Government Policies	2.5	0.7	1	4
Perceptions of Government Actions	2.9	0.8	1	5

From table 3, it is clear that the reveal some attitudes and perception of the participants towards corruption and government anti corruption policies. Currently Using Mean Score, the attitude towards corruption value is at 3.8 on the scale of taken to define negative stance which is relatively moderate and hence it has been marked moderate negative. These findings therefore indicate that participants have a fairly negative perception of corruption as an issue, though not at equal extreme. It was found to have a standard deviation of 0.9. Some variation is seen in the special responses indicated by the 9 which shows that people have different perceptions on the level of corruption.

Responsible for the overall mean score which is markedly lower on perceptions of government anti corruption policies, the mean score is 2.5 out of 4. This means that actually the author of the Act has a rather pessimistic vision of the success of these policies. The standard deviation of 0.7 indicates that there is a medium level of variation to the set questions with some of the participants likely to feel more skeptical as compared to others. In the same manner, the government measures towards the fight against corruption also have a mean score of 2.9 out of five can be considered as an analogous level of negative evaluation of the governmental

initiatives. The standard deviation of 0. Eight out of ten had the participants disagree to a moderate extent in the adequacy and impact of these actions.

More broadly, these results seem to indicate a widespread dissatisfaction among participants regarding both policies and behaviour by the government against corruption. The mean scores depicting perceptions of government efforts are low thus we can infer that the respondents hold a rather critical view that may mean the respondent does not have much faith in the present efforts being undertaken. In order to obtain clearer understanding of these attitudes and the extent to which they might affect the political communication behavior, additional qualitative analysis employing the method of inferential statistics will be used. This will assist in firstly establishing how these perceptions relate with participants social media use in political discussions and whether there exists any relationship that is statistically significant in order to inform future anti corruption strategies.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Correlation	p-value	Percent of Variation Explained
Media Social	0.34	0.01	N/A
Government			
Anti Corruption Policies	0.21	0.05	24%
Anti Corruption Measures			15%

Table 4 below exhibits the regression analysis results that can be of significant in interpreting the impact of social media usage on the subject perception of the government anti corruption policies and activities. These observations suggest that the study find a relationship between people social media usage and their perception towards these government efforts at a statistic significant levels. More so, the coefficient of social media use and people attitude towards anti corruption policies is 0. 34 ($p = 0. 01$), which means that as the social presence increased there was a moderate positive correlation. Likewise, if it is about the relationship between social media usage and the attitude towards anti corruption measures then the value of the coefficient is 0. The second hypothesis focuses on the positive relationship between accountability on the one hand and political freedom and rule of law on the other, with really low number 21 which indicates weaker, but still very highly significant positive correlation ($p = 0,05$). Using the regression equation one gets the picture showing that social media has a significant impact on perceived government anti corruption policies where it explains 24% of variation in public evaluations. This, in part, shows that social media plays a huge role in how people perceive these policies. When it comes to views on anti corruption measures, an even greater part of the variation can be explained 15%, therefore, the effect can also be considered significant.

Such findings indicate that government efforts to combat corruption through anti corruption campaigns receive support from the citizens who are active on the social media. The high percentage of variance on the social media platforms indicates that how anti corruption policies and measures are being spread out is a significant factor. Membership, for instance, have to understand how to manage the space and how to alter the public impression of their respective agencies to something better. This approach might work in reversing those perceptions and make anti corruption measures more effective since they will be packaged well to be easily accepted by the public.

The aim of this study was to assess how political discourse shapes the public's attitude to criminal behavior. A vast majority of the respondents got their daily political news from social media and a good number of them believed that these platforms shaped the perception of the general public towards corruption. Such findings are consistent with other scholarship that demonstrated the increasing ability of social media in shaping perspectives (Kim & Dennis, 2019; Muddiman & Green, 2020).

"The government's measures against corruption are quite disappointing in my view. The actions often seem like cosmetic changes or token gestures rather than real solutions. There is a lack of transparency in how these measures are implemented and monitored."

"Yes, I believe social media plays a significant role in shaping my views on anti-corruption policies. News and discussions on social media provide different perspectives, and I can see various opinions on how government policies are applied. However, I also realize that not all information on social media is reliable."

"I think the government has not fully succeeded. Although there are efforts to improve the situation, tangible results are not yet visible. I believe the problem lies in the lack of consistent oversight and law enforcement. The measures taken are often insufficient to effectively address violations."

The interview results indicate a prevalent dissatisfaction with government anti corruption efforts and the influence of political communication on public perception. Respondents expressed a critical view of how political communication impacts awareness of corruption, noting that while it may increase public awareness, it often fails to build trust or confidence if tangible results are lacking. This sentiment is further reflected in the dissatisfaction with current anti corruption policies, which respondents feel are ineffective and fail to address corruption practices adequately. The government's measures against corruption were perceived as inadequate and superficial, lacking transparency and real impact. Social media is seen as having a significant influence on views regarding government anti corruption policies, providing diverse perspectives but also raising concerns about the reliability of the information. Overall, the interviews reveal a need for more effective and transparent anti corruption strategies and suggest that while social media plays a role in shaping perceptions, its impact is tempered by the quality of the information shared.

The results also depicted that the respondents have slightly negative perception towards corruption and from the result previous study and findings proved the awareness of respondents towards negative consequences of corruption. Despite the low mean scores for the perception of the government's anti corruption policies and actions it can therefore be inferred that the respondents were not fully satisfied with measures the government was taking to address this vice. Due to the fact that there is still a massive issue with corruption, this mean that it is a subject that one has to worry.

We also successfully carry out a regression analysis to establish a positive and statistically significant relationship between the use of social media and the trust to the efforts made by the government in the fight against corruption. It was also demonstrated how this relationship exists between the two variables. This provides credence to the conclusions of prior studies that have concluded about the fact that social media platforms contain the potentiality to be used for exerting an opportunity to change the general public opinion regarding the policies and acts of the government. The following has been identified by Jang et al. (2020); Kim & Dennis, (2019). As stated, the social media web platforms have the potential for advocacy in lobbying for government policies and programs aimed at combating corruption and enhancing the public's trust in the government. This is a significant discovery particularly so considering the implications of the findings highlighted above. That the study only depended on the data from the respondents self reporting means social preference bias was more likely to have occurred. Perhaps, the results are less valuable when applied to a different environment because this was one time study only. But alas, it is very probable that this is not the case. It is possible to identify the problematic of the impact that political discourse possesses on perceptions of corruption of inhabitants of various nations and areas as a potentially desirable direction for further research that may yield positive outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The results highlight the implications for the government agencies about the ways they share the information about the policies for fighting corruption as well as actions undertaken on the social networks in response to the public attitudes towards corruption. Self generated data reveals that, the general public equally has negative attitude towards corruption and perceived it as a real threat to the growth of the country's economy and insecurity on social products. This study also stresses on the need for government to effectively communicate its anti corruption fight through media and other channels, it also highlights the role of political communication on public perception of corruption. This research has certain significant implications for policy makers and other stakeholders. People do not receive the information they deserve from the government, they lost the belief of government and now the government should do something regarding corruption. The implications of not doing so to the future of the nation as well as the future of its government are dire. Thus, this research contributes to the existing scholarship on corruption and political communication while also offering valuable information about corruption as a phenomenon. Further research is needed in order to understand what leads to corruption in the country, as well as how it must be fought.

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