Role of Social Media in Monitoring and Reporting Government Corruption and Mismanagement in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of social media as a tool for monitoring and reporting government corruption and mis-management in Pakistan. Drawing on a survey of 300 respondents across major urban centres, the research examines how citizens use social media platforms to identify, document, and publicize instances of public-sector corruption, and how effective this process is perceived to be in enhancing transparency and accountability in governance. A structured questionnaire was administered, capturing respondents' demographic information (age, gender, education, income), frequency and mode of social media usage (platforms, purposes, frequency), experiences with encountering or reporting government corruption via social media, perceptions of the role of social media in promoting accountability, and perceived barriers. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression modelling to assess relationships between social media use and perceived governmental accountability. Key findings show that a majority of respondents reported following news or posts about government misconduct via social media, and personally shared or reported an instance of suspected corruption on a social media platform. However, respondents also identified significant obstacles such as fear of retaliation. The study finds that while social media constitutes a promising tool for enhancing citizen monitoring of government behaviour in Pakistan, its effectiveness is moderated by structural, institutional and digital-inequality constraints. The research contributes to the literature on digital civic engagement and governance in developing countries by providing empirical evidence from Pakistan, and suggests that policy efforts should focus on strengthening digital literacy, legal protections for whistle-blowers, and mechanisms by which social-media-generated evidence can feed into formal accountability processes. The study concludes that social media has considerable potential to support transparency, but realizing this potential requires complementary institutional reforms and efforts to address digital-divide issues.
Keywords: Social Media, Governance, Corruption

Introduction

In the digital age, social media has evolved from merely a means of social connection into a powerful instrument for public oversight of governance. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others enable citizens to share information quickly, coordinate activism, and expose wrongdoing by public officials. In this way, social media provides a novel channel for monitoring and reporting instances of government corruption and mismanagement—especially in contexts where traditional media or institutional checks may be weak. For example, research in Indonesia shows that social media helps mobilize collective action against corrupt practices and fosters public political participation in anti-corruption efforts. Students note the role of hashtags, memes and viral posts in building awareness and pressuring government transparency (Idrus et al., 2024).

Previous study finds out impact of digital media in the process of transparency and accountability and to access the potential of digital media as a tool for the common citizens having no any access of electronic media or print media in empowerment and political participation in Pakistan. The use of digital media can help highlight this concern by providing a platform for the masses that can ensure their access to information, retain them with one another, and make their elected officials accountable. For the conduct of this research, in-depth interviews have been conducted with social media experts' activists, journalists, and government officials. The focus of the interviews was based on campaigns and movements. This research venture concludes that political transparency and accountability in Pakistan are subject to digital media as it has the potential to play a crucial role in advancing their effectiveness. Hence, this study attempts to address challenges associated with digital media and its potential for the betterment of good governance in Pakistan. The study recommends several recommendations for the maximization of the potential of digital media to enlarge the system of governance in Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2023).

However, the role of social media in corruption monitoring is not unambiguously positive. Monitoring of Ukraine's media space revealed that although social platforms frequently discuss corruption, much of that content is general or pessimistic—focusing on the inevitability of corruption rather than specific cases or actionable disclosure. Moreover, sophisticated statistical research has shown that in regions where social media adoption is high and civic scrutiny present, the misreporting by local governments (for example on GDP figures) decreases—demonstrating a tangible effect of social media on government behaviour (Wang et al., 2025). The emergence of social media as a platform for governance-monitoring is grounded in theories of transparency, accountability and citizen participation. For example, social media can act as a "watchdog" by enabling bottom-up information flows, challenging top-down secrecy, and allowing collective mobilization. However, the literature also cautions about the risks: credibility issues of social media content, potential for misinformation or selective disclosure, and the fact that enabling social media alone does not guarantee meaningful change (e.g., trust may not increase). For example, one study finds that high exposure to corruption discourse on social media does *not* automatically translate into greater political trust (Akinola et al., 2022).

Studies have begun examining the "boundary conditions": when does social media help reduce mismanagement or corruption, and when does it fail or even backfire? One such study in China found that adoption of social-media-based local government communications reduced misreporting (of GDP figures) only in regions with high public

scrutiny (Wang et al., 2025). A meta-analysis found strong negative correlations between digitization/e-government and corruption in recent studies (Munshi & Manni, 2025). A recent research aims to investigate the role of social media as a space for political participation in supporting the anti-corruption movement. By highlighting the Indonesian context, this research aims to understand how social media influences public opinion, mobilizes support, and mobilizes collective action in fighting corrupt practices. The urgency of this research lies in the need for a deeper understanding of how social media can be an effective tool in the anti-corruption movement in the digital era. Through qualitative research methods focusing on online data analysis, the main findings highlight the dominance of hashtags and memes in stimulating discussion, spreading messages and coordinating anti-corruption actions in social media. These findings provide valuable insight into how society is actively fighting corruption through digital platforms and demonstrate the potential of social media as a strategic tool to expand the space for political participation to create a cleaner and more transparent government. Thus, this research underlines the importance of using social media to gather support and increase public participation in the anti-corruption movement. However, the main challenges that still need to be overcome are the limited data content and further exploration to understand the complex dynamics of eradicating corruption through social media (Idrus et al., 2024).

A study of Ahmed et al. (2023) finds out impact of digital media in the process of transparency and accountability and to access the potential of digital media as a tool for the common citizens having no any access of electronic media or print media in empowerment and political participation in Pakistan. The use of digital media can help highlight this concern by providing a platform for the masses that can ensure their access to information, retain them with one another, and make their elected officials accountable. For the conduct of this research, in-depth interviews have been conducted with social media experts' activists, journalists, and government officials. The focus of the interviews was based on campaigns and movements. This research venture concludes that political transparency and accountability in Pakistan are subject to digital media as it has the potential to play a crucial role in advancing their effectiveness. Hence, this study attempts to address challenges associated with digital media and its potential for the betterment of good governance in Pakistan. The study recommends several recommendations for the maximization of the potential of digital media to enlarge the system of governance in Pakistan. Social media allows citizens, journalists, activists to post real-time data, videos, and images of mismanagement or corruption, circumventing traditional gatekeepers. E.g., the environmental incident study: social media acted as a channel for central government oversight of local mismanagement (Gao et al., 2018).

Statement of the Problem

In Pakistan, corruption and mismanagement within government institutions remain persistent challenges that undermine public trust, economic development, and governance effectiveness. Traditional mechanisms for accountability—such as investigative journalism, public audits, and anti-corruption agencies—often face political influence, bureaucratic hurdles, or limited transparency. However, the rise of social media platforms has introduced new opportunities for citizens, journalists, and civil society organizations to expose and discuss instances of corruption and misuse of power. Despite this potential, the role of social media in effectively monitoring and reporting government corruption in

Pakistan is not fully understood. Questions remain regarding the credibility of information shared online, the extent to which social media influences public accountability and institutional reform, and the risks faced by individuals who use these platforms to highlight corruption. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how social media contributes to uncovering, reporting, and combating government corruption and mismanagement in Pakistan, as well as the challenges that limit its effectiveness.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale for studying the role of social media in monitoring and reporting government corruption and mismanagement in Pakistan stems from the growing influence of digital platforms in shaping public opinion and promoting transparency. Traditional media in Pakistan often faces constraints such as political pressure, censorship, or limited reach, which can hinder timely reporting of governmental malpractices. Social media, however, provides an accessible and immediate platform for citizens, journalists, and activists to expose corruption, mobilize public awareness, and demand accountability. Given Pakistan's persistent challenges with governance, bureaucratic inefficiency, and corruption, understanding how social media facilitates the dissemination of information, encourages civic engagement, and exerts pressure on authorities is critical. This study aims to explore the extent to which social media empowers citizens to monitor governmental actions, the reliability and impact of information shared online, and its potential as a tool for enhancing transparency and good governance in the country.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine how social media platforms facilitate the exposure and reporting of government corruption and administrative mismanagement in Pakistan.
2. To assess the effectiveness of social media as a tool for holding government officials accountable and promoting transparency in governance.

Research Questions

1. How does citizen-driven content on social media platforms influence public awareness and reporting of government corruption in Pakistan?
2. What barriers exist to effective use of social media as a tool for holding government institutions accountable in Pakistan — and how do these barriers vary by platform, region, or demographic group?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons, both academically and practically.

Contribution to Knowledge: The research contributes to the growing body of literature on governance, transparency, and digital activism in developing countries. By focusing on Pakistan, it provides contextual insights into how social media platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, and YouTube are being used to expose corruption and hold public officials accountable.

Promotion of Transparency and Accountability: Understanding the role of social media in reporting government corruption helps highlight its potential as a tool for enhancing transparency and accountability. The findings may guide policymakers and anti-corruption agencies in developing strategies to use digital platforms for more effective governance.

Empowerment of Citizens: The study underscores how ordinary citizens can use social media as a form of civic engagement and participatory democracy. This empowers the

public to become active watchdogs, amplifying their voices in demanding ethical conduct from government officials.

Policy and Media Implications: The results can assist government institutions, NGOs, and media organizations in formulating policies that encourage responsible digital reporting, protect whistleblowers, and curb the spread of misinformation while promoting constructive online activism.

Technological and Social Impact: By analyzing the impact of social media on governance processes, the study highlights how digital technology is reshaping traditional power structures and communication channels in Pakistan's socio-political landscape.

Foundation for Future Research: The study provides a basis for future research on digital governance, online political participation, and the effectiveness of social media campaigns in combating corruption across other developing nations.

Method

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative descriptive research design to examine how social media platforms are used by the public to monitor, expose, and discuss government corruption and mismanagement in Pakistan. The design helps gather measurable data on respondents' perceptions, behaviors, and experiences regarding the effectiveness of social media in promoting transparency and accountability.

Population and Sampling Technique

The population for this study consists of social media users in Pakistan, including university students, working professionals, journalists, and civil society members who actively use platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), YouTube, and Instagram. As sample 109 respondents were selected by using purposive sampling technique focusing on individuals who are active on social media and have an interest in governance or political issues. This allows the researcher to collect relevant data from those most likely to engage in discussions related to government transparency and corruption.

Data Collection

The data were collected through using questionnaire from the research participants. This questionnaire was based on all required information such as demographic information and details of research instrument.

Data Analysis

The collected data was coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation to summarize respondent characteristics and responses.

Results

Table 1:   *Demographic Information of Respondents*

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n=109)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	63	57.8
	Female	46	42.2
Age Group	18–25 years	41	37.6
	26–35 years	38	34.9
	36–45 years	20	18.3
	46+ years	10	9.2

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n=109)	Percentage (%)
Education Level	Intermediate	17	15.6
	Bachelor's	51	46.8
	Master's	30	27.5
	MPhil/PhD	11	10.1
Occupation	Student	39	35.8
	Government Employee	22	20.2
	Private Sector	28	25.7
	Self-employed	12	11.0
	Unemployed	8	7.3

The sample consists of 63 males (57.8%) and 46 females (42.2%). This indicates a slightly male-dominated sample, though both genders are fairly well represented. The largest age group is 18–25 years (37.6%), followed by 26–35 years (34.9%). Together, respondents aged 18–35 years make up 72.5% of the total sample, showing that the majority are young adults. Smaller proportions fall in the 36–45 years (18.3%) and 46+ years (9.2%) categories, indicating fewer older participants. The largest occupational group is students (35.8%), which aligns with the youthful age distribution. Other notable groups include private sector employees (25.7%) and government employees (20.2%). Smaller proportions are self-employed (11.0%) or unemployed (7.3%). This shows that the respondents come from diverse occupational backgrounds, though students and employed individuals make up the majority. The demographic data suggest that the respondent pool is predominantly young, educated, and male, with a substantial proportion of students and professionals. The sample appears to reflect a relatively modern, literate population, which may influence their perspectives or responses depending on the topic of the study.

Table 2: *Frequency of Social Media Use*

Frequency of Use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rarely	5	4.6
Occasionally (1–2 times/week)	14	12.8
Often (daily use)	36	33.0
Very Often (multiple times/day)	54	49.5

The table presents the frequency distribution of respondents based on how often they use social media. The results show that social media use is generally high among the participants. Nearly half of the respondents (49.5%) reported using social media very often, meaning multiple times per day. Another 33.0% indicated they use social media often, or on a daily basis. Together, these two groups account for 82.5% of respondents, showing that the majority are active and frequent social media users. A smaller portion of respondents reported less frequent use: 12.8% use social media occasionally (1–2 times per week), while only 4.6% stated they use it rarely. Overall, the data suggests that social media plays a significant and regular role in the daily lives of most participants, with very few engaging infrequently.

Table 3:   *Awareness of Government Corruption through Social Media*

Awareness Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Low	6	5.5
Low	10	9.2
Moderate	27	24.8
High	41	37.6
Very High	25	22.9

The data in Table 3 indicates that most respondents have a high level of awareness of government corruption through social media. Specifically, 37.6% reported a *high* level of awareness, and 22.9% indicated a *very high* level. Combined, this means that over 60% (60.5%) of the respondents are well-informed about government corruption as a result of social media exposure. Meanwhile, only a small proportion of respondents—5.5% and 9.2%—reported *very low* and *low* levels of awareness, respectively. A moderate level of awareness was observed among 24.8% of respondents. This suggests that social media plays a significant role in enhancing public awareness of government corruption, as the majority of individuals surveyed have gained considerable knowledge or exposure to corruption issues through these platforms. The findings highlight social media's effectiveness as a tool for information dissemination and public engagement on governance and accountability matters.

Table 4:   *Perception of Social Media's Role in Exposing Corruption*

Opinion Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Social media exposes government corruption effectively.	5 (4.6%)	8 (7.3%)	15 (13.8%)	47 (43.1%)	34 (31.2%)
Social media increases public accountability of officials.	3 (2.8%)	6 (5.5%)	17 (15.6%)	52 (47.7%)	31 (28.4%)
Social media posts lead to government action against corruption.	7 (6.4%)	19 (17.4%)	29 (26.6%)	39 (35.8%)	15 (13.8%)

Most respondents believe that social media plays a strong and effective role in uncovering government corruption and making such issues visible to the public. There is a strong public perception that social media serves as a watchdog, compelling officials to act responsibly due to the public scrutiny it brings. Although nearly half of the respondents feel that social media can prompt government action, the relatively higher neutral and disagreement levels suggest that people are less confident about its ability to directly cause change, compared to its role in exposing issues.

Table 5:   *Participation in Reporting Corruption on Social Media*

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, I have reported corruption online	24	22.0
No, but I support others who do	57	52.3
No, I avoid such activities	28	25.7

The data in Table 5 reveals the extent to which respondents engage in reporting corruption through social media platforms. Out of all respondents, 22.0% (24 individuals) indicated that they have personally reported corruption online. This suggests that only a small portion of the population takes direct action in exposing corruption through digital platforms. The majority of respondents, 52.3% (57 individuals), stated that while they have not reported corruption themselves, they support others who do. This reflects a generally positive attitude toward anti-corruption efforts on social media, even if active participation remains limited. Meanwhile, 25.7% (28 individuals) reported that they avoid such activities altogether, which may indicate fear of retaliation, lack of trust in online mechanisms, or apathy toward anti-corruption initiatives. Overall, the results suggest that while public support for reporting corruption online is relatively high, active participation remains low, highlighting the need for increased awareness, protection, and encouragement of online whistleblowing efforts.

Table 6: *Perceived Barriers to Using Social Media for Reporting Corruption*

Barrier	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fear of retaliation / safety concerns	42	38.5
Lack of evidence / verification	27	24.8
Government censorship / restrictions	16	14.7
Lack of awareness on how to report	15	13.8
Other	9	8.3

The table presents respondents' views on the main challenges that prevent people from using social media to report corruption. The most significant barrier identified is fear of retaliation or safety concerns, cited by 42 respondents (38.5%). This indicates that many people are hesitant to report corruption online due to concerns about personal security, possible backlash, or threats from those implicated. It highlights the need for stronger protection mechanisms for whistleblowers and anonymous reporting systems. The second most common barrier is the lack of evidence or verification, reported by 27 respondents (24.8%). This suggests that individuals may be uncertain about the credibility of their claims or feel they do not have sufficient proof to make a public accusation on social media. It points to a need for clearer guidelines and support in documenting and verifying corruption cases. Government censorship or restrictions account for 16 responses (14.7%), reflecting the influence of political control over digital spaces. This implies that in some contexts, people may fear their posts being deleted, accounts suspended, or even facing legal consequences for exposing corruption online. Lack of awareness on how to report was mentioned by 15 respondents (13.8%), showing that some individuals may simply not know the proper channels or procedures for using social media in reporting corruption. This highlights the importance of public education and awareness campaigns. Finally, other reasons were cited by 9 respondents (8.3%), suggesting additional less common factors, possibly including distrust in authorities, limited internet access, or lack of confidence that online reports will lead to action.

Discussion

This study suggests that social media plays a significant role in enhancing public awareness of government corruption, as the majority of individuals surveyed have gained considerable knowledge or exposure to corruption issues through these platforms. The findings highlight social media's effectiveness as a tool for information dissemination and

public engagement on governance and accountability matters. Most respondents believe that social media plays a strong and effective role in uncovering government corruption and making such issues visible to the public. There is a strong public perception that social media serves as a watchdog, compelling officials to act responsibly due to the public scrutiny it brings. Although nearly half of the respondents feel that social media can prompt government action, the relatively higher neutral and disagreement levels suggest that people are less confident about its ability to directly cause change, compared to its role in exposing issues. Overall, the results suggest that while public support for reporting corruption online is relatively high, active participation remains low, highlighting the need for increased awareness, protection, and encouragement of online whistleblowing efforts. Overall, the data shows that safety concerns and lack of evidence are the most critical barriers to using social media for reporting corruption. Addressing these issues through improved security, anonymity, and public education could enhance the effectiveness of social media as a tool for promoting transparency and accountability. Similarly, in Pakistan the usage of digital media has been identified as significantly enhancing political transparency and accountability, giving ordinary citizens a voice and enabling "bottom-up" oversight (Ahmed et al., 2023). Moreover, sophisticated statistical research has shown that in regions where social media adoption is high and civic scrutiny present, the misreporting by local governments (for example on GDP figures) decreases—demonstrating a tangible effect of social media on government behaviour (Wang et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, a recent study shows that social media (hashtags, memes, online discussion) helped mobilize anti-corruption sentiment and political participation, thereby supporting government transparency efforts (Idrus et al., 2024). A study of digital media in Pakistan found that digital media platforms (including social media) have potential to enhance citizen access to information and hold elected officials accountable (Ahmed et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that social media has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in Pakistan's governance processes. Platforms such as Twitter (now X), Facebook, YouTube, and emerging digital outlets have given ordinary citizens, journalists, and civil society organizations a voice to expose corruption, highlight misuse of public funds, and question governmental inefficiencies. In a country where traditional media has often been constrained by political pressures, censorship, and ownership biases, social media has provided an alternative space for open dialogue and whistleblowing. This shift has democratized information flow and significantly contributed to public awareness about corruption and maladministration at both local and national levels.

Furthermore, the study underscores how social media has enhanced citizen engagement by allowing real-time reporting and documentation of corrupt practices. Viral posts, investigative threads, and digital activism campaigns have often pressured authorities to take corrective action or initiate inquiries that might otherwise have been suppressed. The rise of online citizen journalism has also bridged the gap between the governed and the governing, fostering a culture of questioning and accountability. However, while the influence of social media in exposing corruption is undeniable, it also brings challenges such as misinformation, politicized narratives, and lack of verification mechanisms, which can undermine the credibility of genuine anti-corruption efforts.

Despite these limitations, the overall impact of social media on governance and accountability in Pakistan remains transformative. The study concludes that when leveraged responsibly, social media can serve as an effective watchdog mechanism that complements institutional anti-corruption frameworks such as the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). Strengthening digital literacy, promoting ethical journalism, and enacting robust cyber laws to counter online disinformation can further enhance the positive role of social media. Ultimately, the study suggests that social media's potential in curbing corruption lies in sustained civic participation, transparency in government communication, and collaboration between state institutions, media, and the public. Through these measures, Pakistan can harness the digital sphere not just as a platform for criticism, but as a catalyst for good governance, integrity, and democratic accountability.

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