

The impact of Freedom and Economic Development on the work of Social Media Platforms Across Nations “A Secondary Analysis in the Light of Normative Theories’ Principals”

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Abstract:

Through a secondary analysis of the data provided by the report of International Governance Innovation (IGI) about “**Social media, Fake news & Algorithms**”, this study attempts to reveal whether social media platforms have been able to create a new model for a media system that can work in the same way in all societies? Or does its ability to influence differ from one society to another? The survey is conducted in 25 economies.

The results show that the most prominent aspects of the social media impact across nations are: ease of communication, access to information, Distractions during the day, Freedom of expression and Polarization in politics. The study concluded that the influence of social media is greater in countries governed by non-democratic regimes as well as developing countries. The study proposed a model for the aspects in which social media is most influential through intermediate variables, which are the level of freedom and the state of economic growth in the country. Thus, the impact of social media in different countries can be considered a new normative theory in addition to previous normative theories.

Keywords: normative theories, development media, authoritarian theory, press freedom theory, influence of social media

أثر الحرية والتنمية الاقتصادية على عمل منصات التواصل الاجتماعي عبر الأمم "تحليل ثانوي في ضوء

مبادئ النظريات المعيارية"

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ملخص البحث باللغة العربية:

من خلال تحليل ثانوي للبيانات التي قدمها تقرير الابتكار في الحوكمة الدولية (CIGI) حول

"وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والأخبار المزيفة والخوارزميات"، تحاول هذه الدراسة الكشف عما إذا

كانت منصات التواصل الاجتماعي قادرة على إنشاء نموذج جديد لنظام إعلامي التي يمكن أن تعمل بنفس

الطريقة في جميع المجتمعات؟ أم أن قدرتها على التأثير تختلف من مجتمع إلى آخر؟ تم إجراء الاستطلاع

في ٢٥ اقتصاداً.

وأظهرت النتائج أن أبرز جوانب تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي عبر الدول هي: سهولة

الاتصال، الوصول إلى المعلومات، التثنية خلال اليوم، حرية التعبير، والاستقطاب في السياسة.

وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي يكون أكبر في الدول التي تحكمها أنظمة غير

ديمقراطية وكذلك الدول النامية. واقترحت الدراسة نموذجاً للجوانب التي تكون فيها وسائل التواصل

الاجتماعي أكثر تأثيراً من خلال المتغيرات الوسيطة والمتمثلة في: مستوى الحرية وحالة النمو

الاقتصادي في الدولة. ومن ثم يمكن اعتبار تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في مختلف البلدان نظرية

معيارية جديدة تضاف إلى النظريات المعيارية السابقة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النظريات المعيارية، الإعلام التنموي، النظرية السلطوية، نظرية حرية الصحافة،

تأثير وسائل الإعلام الاجتماعي

The impact of Freedom and Economic Development on the work of Social Media Platforms Across Nations “A Secondary Analysis in the Light of Normative Theories’ Principals”

Introduction:

Through decades, Scholars have asserted that media could affect their audiences. These effects vary according to the individual, society, economy, culture and many other elements (Bonfadelli, 2017; McCombs, 2014). Many of mass communication theories concern with the effects of the mass media on their audiences. (De Mooij M., 2014).

Social media is one of the major communication platforms that have impacted all aspects of our life. With social media anyone can “post” or “tweet” his knowledge, experiences and ideas Crossing borders and communication barriers and creating decentralized communication channel and open the door for all to have a voice. However every coin has two sides, one can’t argue the benefits and bad effects of these platforms without giving attention to the society context.

Every society looks at social media and its impact within a different perception. While democratic countries could see that sharing ideas with others is some kind of freedom of expression, non-democratic countries could see that as destabilization and could lead to foreign meddling in their politics. Rich countries may see social media as a new tool to make global culture other poor countries could argue the cultural invasion. For example, Iran, China (not Hong Kong), Syria, and North Korea, have banned one or more of the social media platforms for political purposes, while in USA and UK all the leaders have social media accounts and talk to folks through them.

This study is trying to examine the impact of freedom and economic development status across nations on the work of social media platforms. It uses the secondary data analysis style in the light of normative theories’ principals.

Literature review

Normative theories:

The normative theories are concerned with the role of the media in different societies. They concern with what the media ought to be doing in a society rather than what they actually do (Ugangu, 2012). By this we mean functions as they should be according to dominant criteria; in some cases, an ideal, in others a necessity; and they constitute guidelines to performance. (Watson, 1998: 90)

Normative theories are the dominant ideas about the obligations of mass media which will be consistent with other values and arrangements in a given society. In the western liberal tradition, this refers to matters such as freedom, equality before the law, social solidarity and cohesion, cultural diversity, active participation, and social responsibility. Different cultures may have different principles and priorities (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2010).

They were first proposed by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm in their book "Four Theories of the Press" in 1956. According to them, "the media takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates" (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956: 1-2). The press and other media, in their view, will reflect the "basic beliefs and assumptions that the society holds". Normative theories focus on the relationship between the media and the Government than the media and the audience. These theories are more concerned about the ownership of the media and who controls the media in the country and what are the political systems in this country. In brief, they try to answer two questions: what is and what should be the role of media in society? And how do we classify media systems and journalistic traditions? McQuail posits six normative theories of media purposes (McQuail, 1994):

- Authoritarian theory
- Free Press theory
- Social Responsibility theory

- Soviet theory
- Development theory
- Democratic-participant theory

Social media

Social media is one of the major communication platforms that has increased the impact of media on all aspects of our life. With social media, anyone can “post” or “tweet” his knowledge, experiences, and ideas crossing borders and communication barriers and creating a decentralized communication channel and open the door for all to have a voice. Thus, social media platforms have become important sources of information for many people (GOTTFRIED & SHEARER, 2016)

Throughout the history of the web, dedicated platforms for user-created content (from Geocities to YouTube) have emerged. While the 1970s and 1980s saw the launch of early avenues for sharing content online, including BBS (bulletin board systems, a precursor to community forums) and MUDs (multi-user dungeons, a precursor to virtual worlds), it was the 1990s which began to bring organization to online communities that were building their own content. Some examples include Six Degrees, and BlackPlanet (Burgess & Darrylwoodford, 2015).

In 2000s social media received a great boost with the witnessing of many social networking sites springing up. This highly boosted and transformed the interaction of individuals and organizations who share common interests. In 2003, MySpace, LinkedIn, lastFM, tribe.net, Hi5 and In 2004, popular names like Facebook Harvard, Dogster and Mixi evolved. During 2005, big names like Yahoo!360, YouTube, cyword, and Black planet all emerged (Edosomwan S. O., Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011). Social media is still a media that is primarily used to transmit or share information with a broad audience (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011).

In traditional media, content is owned by the owner of the medium and gatekeepers can affect what we hear or see. But social media is so different; when you write a post you own it and responsible for it and all of us are potential gatekeepers (Welbers & Opgenhaffen, 2018; Noe, 2017).

Normative theories and social media

Since its emerge people in many countries use social media as a source of information (Bahgat, 2018; AboTaleb, 2013 ; AboHbel, 2018; Pew research center, 2020), (Bimber, 2014 ; Abdul-Razek & Al-Samok, 2011), and it can mobilize, form, shape and direct public opinion (Owen, 2017a).

According to the authoritarian theory, the ruling authority exercises complete control over all forms of communication, which are utilized to serve the interests of that authority (Christians, et al., 2010). On the other hand, the theory of libertarian press stands in direct opposition to authoritarianism, asserting that a free press solely exists to serve the readers by informing, educating, and entertaining them (Watson, 2000). Certain authors argue that the power of authoritarian regimes is weakened by trade and urbanization, thereby enabling the media to function more effectively in economically and politically advanced societies (Christians, et al., 2010).

Between the opposing theories of authoritarian and Libertarian, the theory of social responsibility lies, which posits that the media in developing countries operate on the principle of supporting the ruling regime. However, they also monitor and evaluate the government's performance and yield to its authority on certain matters (Christians, et al., 2010). In a similar vein, the development media theory, proposed by McQuail (1987), presents a distinct perspective; where the media mobilize support for the existing government and its endeavors to achieve social and economic development. McQuail suggests that for a nation to establish itself and progress economically, the media should offer support to the

government rather than criticize it, aiding in the implementation of its policies. However, this approach is primarily applicable to media systems within developing countries.

Research Questions and Hypotheses:

Based on previous proposal, these theories explain the mechanisms of media operation in political and economic systems, which vary according to the level of democracy and economic growth in each country. Therefore, the question raised by the current study revolves around the extent to which social media platforms influence different societies according to the level of freedom available in each of them, as well as the level of economic growth. So, the current study raises the following questions:

RQ1: To what extent do social media platforms affect different aspects, namely: (freedom of expression, censorship, accountability in government, transparency in government, civility in culture, polarization in politics, civility online, ease of communication, overall quality of life, access to information, distractions during the day, foreign meddling in politics and worsened personal privacy) across nations?

RQ2: What aspects are social media platforms most or least influential in different countries?

Additionally, this study hypothesizes that the impact of social media will be more pronounced in non-democratic nations compared to democratic ones. In democratic societies, citizens possess various avenues to express their opinions, which is not available for individuals in non-democratic countries. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the following hypothesis:

H₁: The effects of social media intensify as the level of democracy decreases within a society. In simpler terms, there exists significant differences between nations based on the degree of freedom in the effects of social media.

Furthermore, the economic status of society may affect the conditions that govern the connection between individuals and technology. As a result, this article assumes that the effects of social media vary across nations and societies based on their respective economic levels. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the following hypothesis:

H₂: The effects of social media increase when the development level of a society is high. In other words, there are significant differences between nations based on the development level in the effects of social media.

Additionally, mixing the two indices (freedom/development level) results in four groups of nations as follows: 1) Free Developed countries, 2) Free Developing countries, 3) Partly Free Developing countries, 4) Not Free Developing countries. Therefore, the authors expected different results regarding the effects of social media in each group of economies compared to the other groups. Therefore, this study tested the following hypothesis:

H₃: There are significant differences between nations based on the freedom/development level in the effects of social media.

In the following figure the authors suggest the model to clarify the hypotheses:

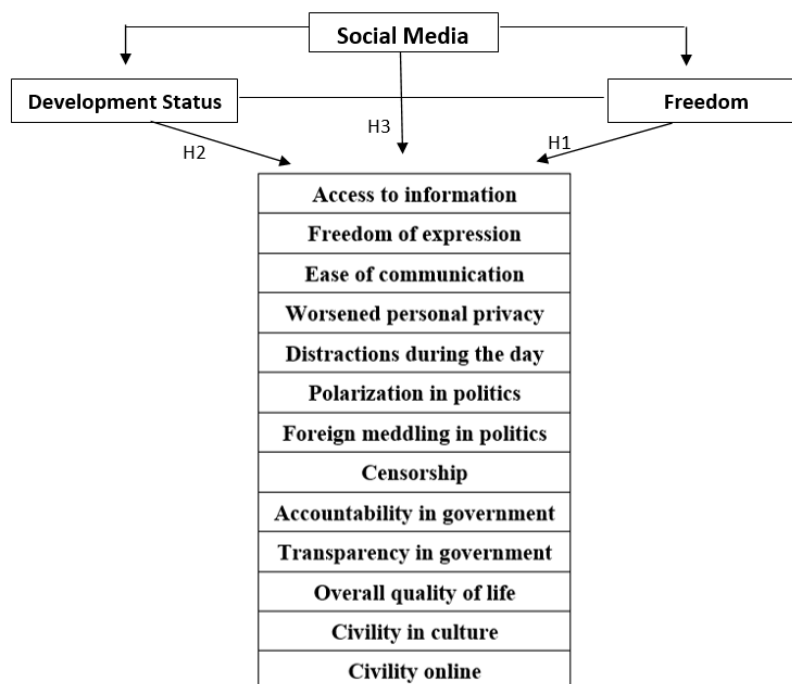


Figure 1: The study Hypotheses Suggested Model

Methodology:

This study applies the secondary data analysis style (Nada, 2018) which refers to the use of existing research data to find answers to other questions that are different from the original work (Tripathy, 2013). Data for this study are taken from Part 3 “**Social media, Fake**

news & Algorithms” conducted by IPSOS on behalf of the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) which is an independent, non-partisan think tank in Canada (CIGI, 2024). This survey conducted between December 21st, 2018 & February 10th, 2019. The survey was conducted in 25 economies—Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong (China), India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey and the United States—and involved 25,229 Internet users. Twenty-one of the economies utilized the IPSOS Internet panel system while four (Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan & Tunisia) utilized face-to-face interviewing. The survey was fielded between December 21st, 2018 & February 10th.

The average LOI (length of interview) of the online survey was 10 minutes. The average LOI for the face-to-face interviews was around 20 minutes, or more. The respondents were aged 18-64 in US and Canada, and 16-64 in all other economies.

At least 1000 individuals were surveyed in each economy and are weighted to match the population in each economy surveyed. The precision of IPSOS online polls is calculated using a credibility interval. In this case, a poll of 1000 is accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points. For the in-person interviews, the margin of error is +/-3.1, 19 times out of 20.

The authors have divided the respondents three times. The first time, according to Economic Development Index which has divided the world into: developed and developing countries. The second time is according to Freedom status Index which has divided the world into: Free, Partly free and Not free countries. The third time is according to Economic Development Index and freedom index together they have divided the world into four groups; Free developed countries, Free Developing countries, Partly Free Developing countries, Not Free Developing countries. The table 1 details this process and the sampling in each country:

Table 1:

List of Countries According to development and Political Freedom status and Sampling:

Country	Development Status*	Freedom Status**	Total score of Freedom	Total N	Final N
Australia	Developed	Free	97	1001	1000
Canada	Developed	Free	98	1000	1000
France	Developed	Free	90	1001	1000
Germany	Developed	Free	94	1001	1000
Great Britain	Developed	Free	94	1001	1000
Italy	Developed	Free	89	1003	1000
Japan	Developed	Free	96	1001	1000
Poland	Developed	Free	84	1001	1000
Sweden	Developed	Free	100	1002	1000
United States	Developed	Free	86	1001	1000
Brazil	Developing	Free	75	1160	1000
India	Developing	Free	71	1002	1000
Republic of Korea	Developing	Free	83	1000	1000
South Africa	Developing	Free	79	1005	1000
Tunisia	Developing	Free	70	1015	953
Hong Kong (China)	Developing	Partly Free	55	1001	1000
Indonesia	Developing	Partly Free	61	1004	1000
Kenya	Developing	Partly Free	48	1001	994
Mexico	Developing	Partly Free	62	1016	1000
Nigeria	Developing	Partly Free	47	1001	952
Pakistan	Developing	Partly Free	48	1009	949
China	Developing	Not Free	10	1001	1000
Egypt	Developing	Not Free	21	1001	1000
Russia	Developing	Not Free	20	1001	1000
Turkey	Developing	Not Free	32	1000	1000
				25229	24848

* Development status is taken from IMF Report: "World Economic Outlook, October 2019: Global Manufacturing Downturn, Rising Trade Barriers". (The full report is on: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2019/10/01/world-economic-outlook-october-2019> (Retrieved on: 16 July 2020))

** Political Freedom status is taken from: Freedom House rates people's access to political rights and civil liberties in 210 countries and territories through its annual Freedom in the World report. Individual freedoms-ranging from the right to vote to freedom of expression and equality before the law-can be affected by state or nonstate actors. (The full report is on: <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores> (Retrieved on: 16 July 2020))

Statistical analysis

Independent sample T. Test and One-way ANOVA test are used to examine the differences between means of test groups according to different indices regarding the effects of social media platforms, followed by Tukey HSD for multiple comparisons. Independent t-test used to compare between developed and developing countries' means in regarding of social media platforms effects. Significant level was set at 0.05 ($\alpha=0.05$). Statistical analysis was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS)

Results:

RQ1: To what extent do social media platforms affect various aspects of life, namely:

(freedom of expression, censorship, accountability in government, transparency in government, civility in culture, polarization in politics, civility online, ease of communication, overall quality of life, access to information, distractions during the day, foreign meddling in politics and worsened personal privacy) across nations?

Table 2: Means of effects of social media across nations

Effects	Means
Ease of communication	2.51
Access to information	2.48
Distractions during the day	2.39
Freedom of expression	2.36
Polarization in politics	2.36
Worsened personal privacy	2.36
Foreign meddling in politics	2.35
Censorship	2.21
Your overall quality of life	2.17
Transparency in government	2.14
Accountability in government	2.1
Civility online	2.02
Civility in culture	2.01

This tables introduces Means of effects of social media across nations, as follows:

A majority of global citizens believe that social media platforms have increased their ease of communication in the first place (M=2.51), then it provides access to information (M=2.48). In third place, study participants believe that social media caused Distractions during the day with an average effect of 2.39.

For three aspects of influence “Freedom of expression”, “Polarization in politics” and “Worsened personal privacy” the global study participants ensure that social media affects these aspects in the same rate (M= 2.36).

Following the effects mentioned earlier, the global study participants rated the influence of social media on "Civility online" and "Civility in culture" to be relatively similar, with average ratings of 2.02 and 2.01, respectively. This suggests that social media has a moderately negative impact on promoting civility both online and in broader cultural interactions.

In terms of political influences, the participants rated "Foreign meddling in politics" (M=2.3529) and "Censorship" (M=2.21) with similar average effects, indicating that social media was perceived to have a moderately negative impact on both aspects. Additionally, the participants rated "Accountability in government" (M=2.1) and "Transparency in government" (M=2.14) similarly, suggesting that social media has a moderately negative influence on these aspects as well.

Regarding the overall quality of life, the participants rated it with an average effect of 2.17, indicating that social media has a moderately positive impact on the overall quality of life globally.

RQ2: What aspects are social media platforms most or least influential in different countries?

Table 3: Means of effects of social media in different countries

	Access to information	Freedom of expression	Ease of communication	Worsened personal privacy	Distractions during the day	Polarization in politics	Foreign meddling in politics	Censorship	Accountability in government	Transparency in government	Overall quality of life	Civility in culture	Civility online
Australia	2.46	2.34	2.45	2.44	2.47	2.34	2.38	2.09	2.11	2.06	2.04	1.89	1.89
Brazil	2.48	2.4	2.48	2.38	2.49	2.37	2.32	2.13	2.23	2.18	2.19	2.18	2.11
Canada	2.46	2.3	2.48	2.33	2.42	2.31	2.34	2.17	2.04	2.05	2	1.83	1.73
China	2.41	0	2.5	2.36	2.3	0	0	0	0	0	2.31	1.28	2.23
Egypt	2.71	0	2.72	2.38	2.41	0	2.42	0	0	0	2.26	2.38	2.39
France	2.33	2.21	2.41	2.44	2.32	2.24	2.27	2.21	2.12	2.04	1.98	1.96	1.88
Germany	2.33	2.27	2.33	2.31	2.32	2.31	2.31	2.12	2.12	2.03	2.04	1.96	2.01
Great Britain	2.43	2.32	2.45	2.45	2.43	2.42	2.49	2.12	2.11	2.03	2.01	1.84	1.76
Hong Kong	2.45	2.19	2.42	2.29	2.31	2.4	2.29	2.36	2.11	2.17	2.12	1.96	1.88
India	2.61	2.48	2.61	2.37	2.46	2.44	2.42	2.3	2.35	2.33	2.32	2.22	2.21
Indonesia	2.67	2.56	2.66	2.43	2.4	2.54	2.48	2.32	2.43	2.44	2.4	2.33	2.57
Italy	2.41	2.34	2.39	2.41	2.36	2.25	2.23	2	2.15	2.18	2.05	2.05	2
Japan	1.66	2.04	2.13	1.71	1.9	1.83	1.85	1.93	1.93	1.89	1.96	1.79	1.78
Kenya	2.87	2.83	2.91	2.56	2.56	2.71	2.63	2.54	2.65	2.6	2.63	2.56	2.64
Mexico	2.58	2.52	2.61	2.43	2.59	2.35	2.41	2.13	2.11	2.1	2.21	2.09	2
Nigeria	2.86	2.82	2.85	2.52	2.6	2.53	2.53	2.57	2.52	2.48	2.73	2.54	2.57
Pakistan	2.58	2.52	2.59	2.38	2.43	2.42	2.43	2.32	2.42	2.41	2.49	2.39	2.34
Poland	2.27	2.05	2.31	1.79	1.85	1.91	1.93	1.85	1.92	1.92	2.04	1.89	1.87
Republic of Korea	2.48	2.47	2.41	2.47	2.34	2.36	2.18	2.2	2.21	2.07	2.05	1.77	1.8
Russia	2.27	1.95	2.39	2.26	2.33	2.2	2.27	2.25	2.06	2	1.95	1.75	1.76
South Africa	2.68	2.6	2.65	2.53	2.57	2.46	2.48	2.16	2.22	2.19	2.25	2.11	2.11
Sweden	2.4	2.15	2.31	2.32	2.38	2.36	2.37	2.2	2.13	2.15	2.08	1.89	1.77
Tunisia	2.65	2.74	2.68	2.48	2.48	2.52	2.6	2.2	2.32	1.93	2.19	2.17	1.72
Turkey	2.41	2.04	2.58	2.48	2.52	2.61	2.42	2.48	2.16	1.91	1.88	1.63	1.65
United States	2.48	2.251	2.49	2.47	2.46	2.44	2.42	2.2	2.08	2.1	2.07	1.83	1.79

Table 3 reflects means of influence of social media platforms in different countries. It shows that:

- Regarding access to information the highest mean is for participants from Nigeria (M= 2.86). this prominence of effect in Nigeria will continue on the top for other five aspects which are: Freedom of expression, Ease of communication, Distractions during the day, Censorship, and Overall quality of life.

- In the same way participants from Kenya see that social media affected more in Polarization in politics, Foreign meddling in politics, Accountability in government, Transparency in government, Civility in culture and Civility online.
- Countries with least influence are: Japan and Poland consistently reported relatively lower mean ratings across various aspects. Turkey also had relatively lower mean ratings, particularly in the aspects of Civility online and Overall quality of life. Russia had a lower mean rating for Freedom of expression.

These findings highlight the varying perceptions of the influence of social media platforms across different countries, with some countries perceiving higher impacts in certain aspects and others perceiving lower impacts. It's important to note that these findings are based on the mean ratings provided by the study participants and may not represent the entire populations of these countries.

H₁: The effects of social media intensify as the level of democracy decreases within a society. In simpler terms, there exists a significant differences between nations based on the degree of freedom in the effects of social media.

Table 4:

Differences between means of social media effects in Free, Partly free and Not free Countries (Freedom Index)

Social Media Effects	Groups	N	Mean	Std. D	Sum of Squares		df	F	Sig.
Freedom of expression	Free	15	2.3307 ^c	.19052	BG	6.861	2	15.819**	.000
	Partly Free	6	2.5731 ^c	.23606	WG	4.771	22		
	Not Free	4	.9975 ^{a,b}	1.15240					
Censorship	Free	15	2.1254 ^c	.11779	BG	3.710	2	6.863**	.005
	Partly Free	6	2.3717 ^c	.16277	WG	5.946	22		
	Not Free	4	1.1825 ^{a,b}	1.36866					
Accountability in government	Free	15	2.1360 ^c	.12088	BG	4.677	2	10.490**	.001
	Partly Free	6	2.3736 ^c	.22030	WG	4.904	22		
	Not Free	4	1.0550 ^{a,b}	1.21889					

Transparency in government	Free	15	2.3291 ^c	.93879	BG	6.243	2	4.200*	.029
	Partly Free	6	2.3669 ^c	.19220	WG	16.349	22		
	Not Free	4	.9775 ^{a,b}	1.12932					
Civility in culture	Free	15	1.9587 ^b	.15085	BG	.835	2	7.398**	.003
	Partly Free	6	2.3119 ^{a,c}	.24223	WG	1.242	22		
	Not Free	4	1.7605 ^b	.45822					
Polarization in politics	Free	15	2.3040 ^c	.19274	BG	4.633	2	7.874**	.003
	Partly Free	6	2.4915 ^c	.13029	WG	6.473	22		
	Not Free	4	1.2025 ^{a,b}	1.39858					
Civility online	Free	15	1.8953 ^b	.15626	BG	.822	2	7.244**	.004
	Partly Free	6	2.3333 ^a	.32321	WG	1.249	22		
	Not Free	4	2.0075	.35818					
Ease of communication	Free	15	2.4387 ^b	.14211	BG	.242	2	5.281*	.013
	Partly Free	6	2.6732 ^a	.18041	WG	.503	22		
	Not Free	4	2.5475	.13889					
Overall quality of life	Free	15	2.0849 ^b	.10476	BG	.536	2	10.258**	.001
	Partly Free	6	2.4308 ^{a,c}	.23696	WG	.575	22		
	Not Free	4	2.1000 ^b	.21649					
Access to information	Free	15	2.4087	.23692	BG	.293	2	3.132	.064
	Partly Free	6	2.6687	.16804	WG	1.030	22		
	Not Free	4	2.4500	.18547					
Distractions during the day	Free	15	2.3500	.20535	BG	.074	2	1.184	.325
	Partly Free	6	2.4817	.11891	WG	.690	22		
	Not Free	4	2.3900	.09832					
Foreign meddling in politics	Free	15	2.3060	.19998	BG	1.207	2	2.734	.087
	Partly Free	6	2.4615	.11518	WG	4.854	22		
	Not Free	4	1.7775	1.18711					
Worsened personal privacy	Free	15	2.3267	.24309	BG	.051	2	.623	.546
	Partly Free	6	2.4351	.09694	WG	.899	22		
	Not Free	4	2.3700	.09018					

N= Number of studied countries, BG= Between Groups, WG= Within Groups, df= Degree of freedom
* P < 0.05, ** P < 0.01

The results in table 4 show that:

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free, partly free, not free countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 15.819$, $p < 0.01$). A Tukey post hoc test showed that the "Not free" group was the least affected by social media in regarding of freedom of expression. The "Not free" group was statistically significantly less than the Free

and Partly free two groups ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the "Free" and "Partly free" groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free, partly free, not free countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 6.863$, $p < 0.01$). A Tukey post hoc test showed that the "Not free" group was the least affected by social media in regarding of Censorship. The "Not free" group was statistically significantly less than the Free and Partly free two groups ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the "Free" and "Partly free" groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free, partly free, not free countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 10.490$, $p < 0.01$). A Tukey post hoc test showed that the "Not free" group was the least affected by social media in regarding of Accountability in government. The "Not free" group was statistically significantly less than the Free and Partly free two groups ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the "Free" and "Partly free" groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free, partly free, not free countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 4.2$, $p < 0.05$). A Tukey post hoc test showed that the "Not free" group was the least affected by social media in regarding of Transparency in government. The "Not free" group was statistically significantly less than the Free and Partly free two groups ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the "Free" and "Partly free" groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free, partly free, not free countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 7.398$, $p < 0.01$). A Tukey post hoc test showed that the "Partly free" group was the highest affected by social media in regarding of Civility in culture. The "Partly free" group was statistically significantly higher than ($M = 2.3229$) the Free ($M = 1.9587$) and Not free ($M = 1.7605$) two groups ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the "Free" and "Not free" groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free, partly free, not free countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 7.874$, $p < 0.01$). A Tukey post hoc test showed that the "Not free" group was the least ($M = 1.2025$) affected by social media in regarding of Polarization in politics. The "Not free" group was statistically significantly less than the Free ($M = 2.3040$) and Partly free ($M = 2.4915$) two groups ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the "Free" and "Partly free" groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free, partly free, not free countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 7.244$, $p < 0.01$). A Tukey post hoc test showed that the "Free" group was the least affected by social media in regarding of Civility online. The "Free" group mean was statistically significantly less than the Partly Free group ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the "Not free ($M = 2.0075$)" and "Free ($M = 1.8953$) & Partly Free ($M = 2.3333$)" groups ($p > 0.05$).

There is a statistically significant difference between groups (Free, partly free, not free countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 5.281$, $p < 0.01$). A Tukey post hoc test showed that the "Free" group was the least affected by social media in regarding of Ease of communication. The "Free" group mean was statistically significantly less than the Partly Free group ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the "Not free ($M = 2.5475$)" and "Free ($M = 2.4387$) & Partly Free ($M = 2.6732$)" groups ($p > 0.05$).

There is a statistically significant difference between groups (Free, partly free, not free countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 10.258$, $p < 0.01$). A Tukey post hoc test showed that the "Partly free" group was the highest affected by social media in regarding of Overall quality of life. The "Partly free" group was statistically significantly higher than ($M = 2.4308$) the Free ($M = 2.0849$) and Not free ($M = 2.10$) two groups ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the "Free" and "Not free" groups ($p > 0.05$).

Also, the table 2 shows that results ensure that in regarding of Access to information, Distractions during the day, Foreign meddling in politics and Worsened personal privacy there were not statistically significant differences between groups ($p > 0.05$).

H₂: The effects of social media increase when the development level of a society is high. In other words, there are significant differences between nations based on the development level in the effects of social media.

Table 5:

Differences between means of social media effects in Developed and Developing Countries (Economic Development Index)

Social Media Effects	Groups	Mean	Std. D	df	T	Sig.
Access to information	Developed Countries	2.3230	.24258	23	3.150**	.004
	Developing Countries	2.5809	.16798			
Ease of communication	Developed Countries	2.3750	.10927	23	4.099**	.000
	Developing Countries	2.6040	.15191			
Overall quality of life	Developed Countries	2.0270	.03860	23	3.201**	.004
	Developing Countries	2.2659	.23227			
Distractions during the day	Developed Countries	2.2910	.22566	23	2.437*	.023
	Developing Countries	2.4527	.10321			
Civility online	Developed Countries	1.8480	.09908	23	2.647*	.014
	Developing Countries	2.1320	.32726			
Freedom of expression	Developed Countries	2.2271	.11277	23	.296	.770
	Developing Countries	2.1412	.90526			
Censorship	Developed Countries	2.0890	.12387	23	.350	.730
	Developing Countries	1.9967	.82232			
Accountability in	Developed Countries	2.0710	.08252	23	.323	.750

government	Developing Countries	1.9861	.82274			
Transparency in government	Developed Countries	2.4230	1.15409	23	1.284	.212
	Developing Countries	1.9212	.80595			
Civility in culture	Developed Countries	1.8930	.07818	23	-1.713	.100
	Developing Countries	2.0909	.35728			
Polarization in politics	Developed Countries	2.2410	.20648	23	.402	.691
	Developing Countries	2.1272	.87199			
Foreign meddling in politics	Developed Countries	2.2590	.20867	23	.002	.999
	Developing Countries	2.2586	.63632			
Worsened personal privacy	Developed Countries	2.2670	.27917	23	-2.020	.055
	Developing Countries	2.4214	.08664			

df= Degree of freedom

* P < 0.05 ** P < 0.01

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the developed and developing countries in different social impacts. The results in the previous table show that there are significant differences between the two groups in five effects of the social media as below:

There are significant differences in access to information for developing countries (M=2.5809, SD=.16798) and developed countries (M=2.3230, SD=.24258); t (df 23)= 3.150, p<0.05.

This result ensures that people in developing countries are more likely to think that social media has influenced their access to information than people in developed countries. Also, there are significant differences in the “Ease of communication” for developing countries (M=2.6040, SD=.15191) and developed countries (M=2.3750, SD=.10927); T (df 23)= 4.099, p<0.05.

Also, there are significant differences in the impact of social media on overall quality of life for developing countries (M=2.2659, SD=.23227) and developed countries (M=2.0270, SD=.03860); T (df 23)= 3.201, p < 0.05.

There are significant differences in the impact of social media on Distractions during the day for developing countries (M=2.4527, SD=.10321) and developed countries (M=2.2910, SD=.22566); T (df 23)= 2.437, p < 0.05.

There are significant differences in the impact of social media on Civility online for developing countries (M=2.1320, SD=.32726) and developed countries (M=1.8480, SD=.09908); T (df 23)= 2.647, p < 0.05.

The differences are not significant in the other impacts as it shown in the table 2. So, we can accept the first Hypothesis partially.

H₃: There are significant differences between nations based on the freedom/development level in the effects of social media.

Table 6:

Differences between means of social media effects in Free developed, Free developing, Partly free developing and Not free developing Countries (Economic Development with Freedom Indices)

Social Media Effects	Groups	Mean	Std. D	Sum of Squares		df	F	Sig.
Access to information	Free Developed	2.3230 ^c	.24258	BG	.514	3	4.440*	.014
	Free Developing	2.5801	.09471	WG	.810	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.6687 ^a	.16804					
	Not Free Developing	2.4500	.18547					
Freedom of expression	Free Developed	2.2271 ^d	.11277	BG	7.183	3	11.302**	.000
	Free Developing	2.5380 ^d	.13378	WG	4.449	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.5731 ^d	.23606					
	Not Free Developing	.9975 ^{a,b,c}	1.15240					

Censorship	Free Developed	2.0890 ^d	.12387	BG	3.750	3	4.444*	.014
	Free Developing	2.1981 ^d	.06419	WG	5.907	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.3717 ^d	.16277					
	Not Free Developing	1.1825 ^{a,b,c}	1.36866					
Accountability in government	Free Developed	2.0710 ^d	.08252	BG	4.804	3	7.038**	.002
	Free Developing	2.2660 ^d	.06427	WG	4.778	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.3736 ^d	.22030					
	Not Free Developing	1.0550 ^{a,b,c}	1.21889					
Civility in culture	Free Developed	1.8930 ^c	.07818	BG	.965	3	6.069**	.004
	Free Developing	2.0900	.18317	WG	1.112	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.3119 ^{a,d}	.24223					
	Not Free Developing	1.7605 ^c	.45822					
Polarization in politics	Free Developed	2.2410 ^d	.20648	BG	4.752	3	5.235**	.007
	Free Developing	2.4299 ^d	.06613	WG	6.354	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.4915 ^d	.13029					
	Not Free Developing	1.2025 ^{a,b,c}	1.39858					
Civility online	Free Developed	1.8480 ^c	.09908	BG	.890	3	5.270**	.007
	Free Developing	1.9900	.21581	WG	1.182	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.3333 ^a	.32321					
	Not Free Developing	2.0075	.35818					
Ease of communication	Free Developed	2.3750 ^c	.10927	BG	.363	3	6.661**	.002
	Free Developing	2.5660	.11588	WG	.382	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.6732 ^a	.18041					
	Not Free Developing	2.5475	.13889					
Overall quality of life	Free Developed	2.0270 ^c	.03860	BG	.637	3	9.400**	.000
	Free Developing	2.2008	.09941	WG	.474	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.4308 ^{a,d}	.23696					
	Not Free Developing	2.1000 ^c	.21649					
	Free Developed	2.2910	.22566	BG	.179	3	2.138	.126

Distractions during the day	Free Developing	2.4681	.08291	WG	.585	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.4817	.11891					
	Not Free Developing	2.3900	.09832					
Transparency in government	Free Developed	2.4230	1.15409	BG	6.507	3	2.832	.063
	Free Developing	2.1412	.14723	WG	16.085	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.3669	.19220					
	Not Free Developing	.9775	1.12932					
Foreign meddling in politics	Free Developed	2.2590	.20867	BG	1.273	3	1.861	.167
	Free Developing	2.4000	.15944	WG	4.788	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.4615	.11518					
	Not Free Developing	1.7775	1.18711					
Worsened personal privacy	Free Developed	2.2670	.27917	BG	.158	3	1.395	.272
	Free Developing	2.4461	.06885	WG	.792	21		
	Partly Free Developing	2.4351	.09694					
	Not Free Developing	2.3700	.09018					

N= Number of studied countries, BG= Between Groups, WG= Within Groups, df= Degree of freedom
* P < 0.05, ** P < 0.01

The results in table 6 show that:

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free Developed, Free Developing, Partly Free Developing and Not Free Developing countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 4.440$, $p < 0.05$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the "Free Developed" group was statistically significantly less than the Partly Free Developing group ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the other different couples of groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free Developed, Free Developing, Partly Free Developing and Not Free Developing) countries as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 11.302$, $p < 0.05$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the "Free

Developed, Free Developing and Partly Free developing" groups were statistically significantly related to Not Free Developing group of countries ($p < 0.05$) which got the least mean (.9975). This means that the not free developing countries have affected a little by social media in regarding of freedom of expression. There was no statistically significant difference between the other different couples of groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free Developed, Free Developing, Partly Free Developing and Not Free Developing) countries as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 4.444$, $p < 0.05$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the "Free Developed, Free Developing and Partly Free developing" groups were statistically significantly related to Not Free Developing group ($p < 0.05$) which got the least mean (1.1825). This means that the not free developing countries have affected a little by social media in regarding of Censorship. There was no statistically significant difference between the other different couples of groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free Developed, Free Developing, Partly Free Developing and Not Free Developing) countries as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 7.038$, $p < 0.05$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the "Free Developed, Free Developing and Partly Free developing" groups were statistically significantly related to Not Free Developing group ($p < 0.05$) which got the least mean (1.055). This means that the not free developing countries have affected a little by social media in regarding of accountability in government. There was no statistically significant difference between the other different couples of groups ($p > 0.05$).

Regarding the civility in culture there was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free Developed, Free Developing, Partly Free Developing and Not Free Developing countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 6.069$, $p < 0.05$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the "Free Developed and Not free developing" groups were statistically

significantly less than the Partly Free Developing group ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the other different couples of groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free Developed, Free Developing, Partly Free Developing and Not Free Developing) countries as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 5.235$, $p < 0.05$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the "Free Developed, Free Developing and Partly Free developing" groups were statistically significantly related to Not Free Developing group ($p < 0.05$) which got the least mean (1.2025). This means that the not free developing countries have affected a little by social media in regarding of polarization in politics. There was no statistically significant difference between the other different couples of groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free Developed, Free Developing, Partly Free Developing and Not Free Developing countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 5.270$, $p < 0.05$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that in regarding of civility online the "Free Developed ($M=1.848$)" group was statistically significantly less than the "Partly Free Developing ($M=2.3333$)" group ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the other different couples of groups ($p > 0.05$).

There was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free Developed, Free Developing, Partly Free Developing and Not Free Developing countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 6.661$, $p < 0.05$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that in regarding of the role of social media in ease of communication the "Free Developed ($M=2.375$)" group was statistically significantly less than the "Partly Free Developing ($M=2.6732$)" group ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the other different couples of groups ($p > 0.05$).

Regarding the Overall quality of life there was a statistically significant difference between groups (Free Developed, Free Developing, Partly Free Developing and Not Free Developing countries) as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA ($F = 9.40$, $p < 0.05$). A Tukey post hoc test

revealed that the "Free Developed and Not free developing" groups were statistically significantly less than the Partly Free Developing group ($p < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference between the other different couples of groups ($p > 0.05$). This results mean that social media has affected the overall quality of life in the partly free developing countries more than the other groups of studied countries.

Finally, the table four shows that results ensure that in regarding of distractions during the day, transparency in government, Foreign meddling in politics and Worsened personal privacy there were not statistically significant differences between groups ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion:

The results of this study align with previous studies all over the world. In Denmark, Jørgensen & Zuleta, (2020) discovered that almost half of the respondents (48%) consider Facebook as an important platform for expressing their ideas and engaging in public discourse.

Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, (2010) discussed that Nations across the Americas, Asia, and Europe have all claimed successes in reducing corruption through e-government. They highlight four key strengths of social media: collaboration, participation, empowerment, and real-time interaction. Social media inherently fosters collaboration and participation through social interactions, enabling users to connect, form communities, share information, and work towards common goals. It also empowers individuals by providing them with a platform to voice their opinions and democratizing media access. Additionally, social media allows for immediate publishing of information, contributing to transparency and openness (Mäkinen & Kuira, 2008), despite attempts at censorship. Governments have faced challenges in adapting censorship strategies to social media, as traditional methods are less effective in limiting content on these platforms (Faris, Wang, & Palfrey, 2008; MacKinnon, 2009). However, it is important to acknowledge that social media is not entirely immune to government censorship (MacKinnon, 2008; MacKinnon, 2009).

The use of social media in conjunction with open government data offers new opportunities and challenges for transparency initiatives. By making government data available through platforms like www.data.gov (White House, 2010), the Obama administration exemplified an approach that primarily appealed to researchers, technologists, and civic-minded individuals. However, true democratization of data requires a conscious effort to make these initiatives more inclusive and participatory for all citizens.

Social media also presents opportunities for citizen journalism, particularly in cases where traditional media fails to provide adequate coverage or is influenced by those in power.

Citizen journalism facilitated by social media contributes to transparency efforts.

Governments are increasingly adopting social media to complement information dissemination, communication, and participation channels, allowing citizens to access government officials and make informed decisions. Song & Lee (2016) observed a positive association between the use of government social media and perceptions of government transparency in the USA. They also found that perceptions of government transparency positively influence trust in government. Thus, social media serves as an effective tool for governments to enhance citizens' trust by improving their perception of government transparency.

According to the research findings, Russia demonstrates a lower mean rating for freedom of expression. Wijermars & Lehtisaari (2020) reveal that the Russian government has significantly increased restrictions on the internet, adopting strategies utilized by independent media to disguise their lack of free expression. Additionally, the Freedom House report, "Freedom on the net 2022" (2022), highlights the deteriorating online environment in Russia, particularly after the invasion of Ukraine. The government has implemented measures such as blocking popular social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and imposing substantial fines on platforms that refuse to remove content or store user data within the country.

In contrast, our findings assert that social media has had a positive impact on freedom of expression, ease of communication, distractions during the day, censorship, and overall quality of life in Nigeria. Ogisi's study (2017) applauds Nigeria's impressive record in the relationship between social media and freedom of expression. Uwalaka & Nwala (2023) emphasize the importance of social media in supporting protests by facilitating communication and serving as platforms for freedom of expression in Nigeria.

The findings from Kenya indicate that social media has had significant impacts on polarization in politics, foreign meddling in politics, accountability in government, transparency in government, civility in culture, and civility online. Other studies have also explored the effects of social media on politics. For example, Zinnbauer (2021) examined the influence of social media on political polarization across nations. The study revealed a contextual and methodological gap in understanding the impact of social media on political polarization. Evidence suggests that many politicians worldwide fail to uphold their crucial role in preserving the integrity of political communication and, instead, contribute to its erosion. In 61 countries, politicians and parties were found to employ questionable methods of computational propaganda, including paying online influencers for personal endorsements and mobilizing volunteer cyber troops to spread misinformation about opponents (Disinformation, 2020). Reuters Public opinion survey across 40 countries consistently in 2020 identified "domestic politicians" as the most frequently named source of misinformation. In France, the UK, and the US, for instance, approximately 40% of respondents considered their own government, politicians, and parties as the primary source of misinformation, surpassing other sources. Experts agree that political parties and candidates in various countries, such as Austria, Italy, Slovenia, Indonesia, Kenya, and Thailand, utilize social media to disseminate misleading viewpoints and disinformation, with this practice occurring "about half of the time" and "often" in countries like Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, Egypt, and the Philippines. This trend is also observed to be on the rise in many

other countries globally (Newman, Fletcher, Schulz, Andi, & Nielsen, 2020). Moreover, expert interviews suggest that politicians today make more misleading claims compared to the recent past. An analysis of political advertisements during the 2019 UK elections revealed a significant number of ads containing misleading information (Skjeseth, 2017).

As for the model proposed by the study hypotheses, it was shown through the results that the factors of freedom and economic growth affect the level of influence of social media in different countries, as shown in the following figure:

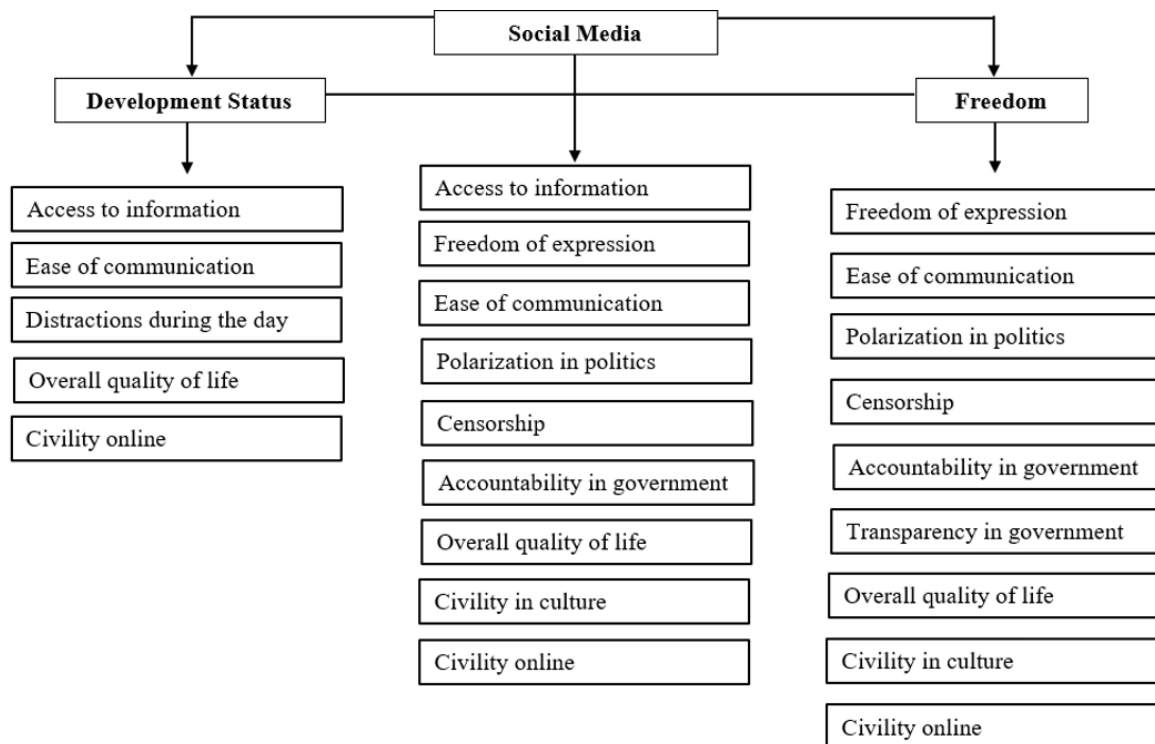


Figure 2: The Impact of Freedom and Economic Development on the work of social media
Across Nations Model

From the figure, it is notable that the aspects in which the variable of freedom or the variable of economic status is a mediator influencing the work of social media. The results indicated that social media are usually more influential in these aspects when societies do not have a great deal of freedom or democracy, and also when economic conditions are more difficult.

Conclusion:

This study attempts to reveal whether social media platforms have been able to change the theoretical statements of normative theories, especially authoritarian theory, press freedom theory, and development media theory. Are they able to create a new model for a media system that can work in the same way in all societies? Or does its ability to influence differ from one society to another? This is done through a secondary analysis of the data provided by the report of International Governance Innovation (IGI) about “**Social media, Fake news & Algorithms**” throughout a survey conducted in 25 economies. The study sought to answer two questions about the extent of social media platforms impact on different aspects and the difference between its impact across nations. As well as, the study supposed three hypotheses about the significant difference between groups of nations according to the level of democracy and development.

The results of the study showed that social media has influenced all of the following aspects: freedom of expression, censorship, accountability in government, transparency in government, civility in culture, polarization in politics, civility online, ease of communication, overall quality of life, access to information, distractions during the day, foreign meddling in politics and worsened personal privacy. The results showed that the most prominent aspects of the social media impact across nations are: ease of communication, access to information, Distractions during the day, Freedom of expression and Polarization in politics.

The study concluded that the influence of social media is greater in countries governed by non-democratic regimes as well as developing countries. The study proposed a model for the aspects in which social media is most influential through intermediate variables, which are the level of freedom and the state of economic growth in the country. Thus, the impact of social media in different countries can be considered a new normative theory in addition to previous normative theories.

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