Monitoring Government Actions and Decisions Through Emerging Media, Cyberspace, and Public Opinion

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Abstract

In the contemporary era, due to increasing social complexity, the expanding role of modern mass media and cyberspace in shaping public opinion across cultural, economic, and political domains has become more significant than ever. At no point in human history has society been as politically engaged as it is today. It is likely that one of the principal causes of this politicization is the widespread development of mass communication tools. The present study was conducted using a qualitative research method and employed a library-based approach. This research seeks to examine and delve into existing sources and findings to understand the extent to which public opinion, emerging media, and cyberspace can be effective in monitoring and controlling governmental actions. A careful and critical review of the thoughts of experts in political science, law, and social sciences suggests a consensus among scholars that the Internet, media, particularly new forms of media and cyberspace, have had a profound influence on public opinion—guiding its direction, instigating both structural and partial reforms in societies, overseeing the actions of governing authorities, and influencing or altering the behavior of governmental institutions. Moreover, an analysis of relevant case studies from different societies supports this view. Given the influential power of social media in shaping public opinion, the need to establish effective mechanisms for the optimal use of these tools to strengthen democracy and promote human rights is increasingly felt.

Keywords: Government actions, Public opinion, Emerging media, Cyberspace, Oversight.

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1. Introduction

Every government requires an accountability system in order to function in a manner approved by society. Accountability is the foundation of any society that claims to be democratic. Perhaps this statement can be reversed even more emphatically:

democracy necessitates a proper accountability system. Governmental organizations are established by the people and for the people, and therefore must be accountable to them. The relationship between citizens and the government can be likened to that between a client and an attorney: citizens have essentially consented to someone else governing on their behalf, but they must ensure that their interests are properly safeguarded.

Accountability in the public sector is fundamentally different from that in the private sector. It is often believed that public institutions, in comparison to private ones, are neither responsible nor accountable, which itself is used as an argument for reducing their size and influence (Alvani & Danaeefard, 2001). Oversight of the actions of the ruling powers and governmental agents is a fundamental component in achieving good governance and ensuring the accountability of public officials (Amidzanjani & Mousazadeh, 2010). Politics and interpersonal relations in societies around the world are being transformed by new technologies aimed at targeting individuals and by complex methods used to shape personalized messages. New technologies are challenging many boundaries—between news, information, entertainment, and advertising; with the advent of the World Wide Web, even national borders. Communication, society, and politics now reflect the political and social implications of these new communication systems on both national and global scales (Kleis Nielsen & Fletcher, 2020).

At present, with the rapid advancement of technology and the widespread dissemination of emerging media and cyberspace, the role of these communication tools in monitoring government actions and decisions and influencing public opinion is increasingly apparent. This study aims to examine the role of emerging media, cyberspace, and public opinion in enhancing transparency and accountability in governments.

The key questions this research seeks to answer are: Can emerging media and cyberspace be used as powerful tools to monitor government actions and decisions? And does increased access to information and diverse perspectives in cyberspace lead to enhanced public awareness and oversight of governmental behavior? To address these questions, this study begins by outlining the research background and methodology. It then provides brief definitions of key concepts and proceeds to explore how monitoring occurs through emerging media, cyberspace, and public opinion. Finally, it offers a synthesis and conclusion based on an analysis of the mechanisms of public and media oversight of government actions.

2.   Literature Review and Research Background

A review of existing articles, books, and research reveals that the specific subject of the present study has not been previously addressed in depth. While there has been research on public opinion, cyberspace, and related topics, and on public oversight of government actions, these studies have not focused on the integrated impact of all three dimensions.

In 1922, Walter Lippmann published a work titled *Public Opinion* in which he offered a distinctive perspective on media freedom in Western societies. He argued that the media, by conveying accurate information, could serve as representatives of society. Contrary to common assumptions, however, he viewed public opinion not as the sum of scattered individual views, but as the result of the mental reflection of real-world events in individuals' minds. Lippmann saw people not as active participants in events but as passive observers (Lazar, 2001).

Previous research in this field has largely focused on how emerging media, cyberspace, and public opinion intersect with governmental actions and decisions. Some studies have concentrated on the use of social media platforms for political communication and public participation. Additionally, several investigations have analyzed the impact of digital media on governmental transparency and accountability, as well as the potential for online activism and mobilization to influence political processes and policymaking (Gerbaudo, 2012; McCoy & et al., 2019).

Researchers have also examined the challenges and opportunities posed by the digital age for traditional forms of governance, along with implications for democracy, civic engagement, and public discourse (Chadwick, 2013; Hofmann, 2019). However, there is a strong need for comprehensive research on the mutual impact of media—especially emerging media—cyberspace, and public opinion, culminating in mechanisms for monitoring and controlling government behavior. This research aims to address that need.

3.   Methodology

This study was conducted using a qualitative research methodology, and a library-based approach was employed throughout the research process. In this method, the researcher searches through library resources and databases for articles, books, reports, and other materials relevant to the research topic. Through careful reading and analysis of these sources, the researcher collects and interprets the necessary data and information.

Qualitative methods allow the researcher to delve deeply into the subject matter, understand individual perspectives and thoughts, and uncover hidden patterns. This approach enables the collection and interpretation of descriptive and qualitative data without relying on quantitative statistics. For example, in analyzing the role of emerging media in monitoring government actions and decisions, the researcher sought to gather data and examine it to reach the intended conclusions.

Given the complexity and numerous challenges associated with this research domain, the use of qualitative methods for data collection and analysis proves particularly effective. This research is categorized as applied research, a common type that utilizes theoretical and foundational findings to improve methods, tools, structures, and models relevant to human life. The focus of applied research is on expanding practical knowledge within a defined domain. While the level of analysis in such studies may be abstract and conceptual, it is pursued within a clearly defined framework (Parvin, 2023). In applied research, the goal is to employ theories, laws, principles, and methods derived from basic research to solve real-world and operational problems (Khaki, 2013).

4. Conceptual Clarification

4.1. Oversight

Linguistically, *oversight* refers to attentive observation, monitoring, and supervision (Dehkhoda, 2006). Oversight has existed as long as human social life itself. From the earliest formations of social and political systems, oversight mechanisms emerged alongside them. Conceptually, oversight implies a form of control aimed at understanding the ongoing process of actions, typically involving a comparison between what *is* and what *ought to be* (Bennett & Hess, 2004). It also implies that the agent (executor) is aware that an individual or institution is monitoring their behavior.

In legal terms, oversight refers to inspection, evaluation, and appraisal of the actions of executors, and the overseer is the entity designated to carry out such inspection and evaluation (Amidzanjani & Mousazadeh, 2010). Some legal scholars define oversight as a process whereby actions—both ongoing and completed—are reviewed to assess their alignment with laws and prior decisions and to prevent potential deviations (Ghazi, 2004).

In public law, oversight encompasses a wide domain—not only does it include oversight of governmental and state institutions, but also addresses the legitimacy of the political system itself. Hence, oversight plays a vital role in governance and state affairs. This process seeks to assess the extent to which actions align with the law, enabling the comparison of performance outcomes with institutional objectives and ensuring conformity.

In its precise sense, oversight refers to the examination and control of the conduct of a governmental body or official by another authority, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that actions remain within legal boundaries. Political oversight intersects both legal and political domains—it is the meeting point of law and politics. On one hand, oversight is a legal act; on the other, when institutionalized within a political system, it aligns with political thought. The philosophy of political oversight is centered on preventing tyranny, rebellion, and injustice. This makes political oversight the most critical form of supervision (Parvin et al., 2020).

4.1.1. Public Oversight

Public interest in active participation in political and social spheres is influenced by multiple factors, among which political awareness plays a prominent role. This awareness is shaped by the values and structures of governance in society. Political concepts are transmitted through various channels, including traditional civil institutions, active political parties and groups, mass media, and social networks. Political participation encompasses actions taken by non-governmental citizens aimed at influencing elections or the performance of public officials.

However, such a definition may fall short, as it does not cover the full scope of participation. The definition provided by Huntington and Joan Nelson suffers from similar limitations, as they define participation as citizens' attempts to influence public policies. Relationships between the public and the state take various forms—some individuals support the status quo and align their behavior with governmental needs; others seek reform or change; and some adopt neutral or passive stances. Analysts have categorized these behaviors as "active participation" and "passive participation" (Mousavi Khalkhali, 2001).

Types of public oversight include:

1. Direct public oversight of government actions: Article 8 of the Iranian Constitution addresses public oversight over the government. This form of oversight is both a right and a duty of every individual in society, as citizens play a critical role in holding government accountable and preventing deviation from the correct path. According to this article, public oversight is implemented in the form of enjoining good and forbidding evil and is classified as informational (istilāʿī) oversight. Article 90 further grants individuals the right to submit complaints in writing to the Islamic Consultative Assembly if they are dissatisfied with the conduct of the legislature, executive, or judiciary. The Parliament is obligated to investigate and respond adequately. If the complaint concerns other branches, the Parliament must ensure proper inquiry and demand an appropriate response. The outcome must be disclosed on time and, if of public concern, made publicly available. The responsibility for this oversight lies with the Parliament, while Articles 84 and 86 specifically pertain to the duties of individual representatives.

2. Indirect public oversight of government actions: Indirect oversight occurs through the election of members of city and village councils and representatives to the Islamic Consultative Assembly. This oversight is governed by specific constitutional mechanisms. While council members, under the authority granted by Article 100 of the Constitution and ordinary laws, have consultative, recall-based, and disciplinary oversight powers, members of Parliament enjoy all four types of oversight. However, in indirect public oversight, informational oversight is most critical, as citizens trust their representatives based on their level of awareness, and other forms of oversight depend on the performance and perspectives of the representatives themselves (Mousavi Khalkhali, 2001).

4.2. Emerging Media

Advancements in information technologies have ushered humanity into the era of free media, where individuals have rapid access to news and information. In such an environment, people are no longer mere consumers but also producers or contributors to news flows. As a result, information is disseminated through unconventional means, often with unpredictable consequences.

Unlike traditional hierarchical media systems where editorial decisions dominate, emerging media operates through dynamic, often chaotic interactions—dialogues that can quickly disappear in social networks. Individuals and groups engage in collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news in ways that starkly differ from traditional journalism.

Alongside conventional journalism, emerging media plays a significant role, involving both individuals and organizations in the information ecosystem. One of the primary functions of these media—especially social networks—is to inform the public about social developments. The rapid advancement of mass communication in the modern era has turned the world into a "global village," where people can quickly and widely access events around the globe.

In the age of communication, no event, no matter how remote, remains unnoticed. Thus, three key characteristics—timelessness, placelessness, and high speed—define mass communication tools. Today, every aspect of individual and social life is penetrated by media, from private behaviors to major changes in social institutions and cultural-political structures (Rahmanzadeh, 2010).

4.3. Cyberspace

Cyberspace is a product of Web 2.0 technologies—tools that enable users to participate in content production and share data such as text, images, videos, links, files, and more. These technologies form the digital hive of user interactions in cyberspace, with virtual social networks being one of their main manifestations.

In these networks, users can interact, form friendship circles, engage in polling groups, establish horizontal communications, and customize their web pages as they please (Taherian et al., 2000). Cyberspace is an online environment enabled through

the Internet, where users can connect, share information, and engage in various activities. This includes websites, social networks, email, online games, and other digital tools.

Because of characteristics such as lack of spatial limitations, interactive discourse, absence of central agents, decentralization, non-linearity, and boundless fluidity, cyberspace facilitates fast, low-cost transmission of data, information, sound, and images. It includes a constellation of media enabling interpersonal and social connections. Awareness—or lack thereof—of the capabilities of cyberspace plays a vital role in optimal utilization.

The digital and networked features, along with the ability to link text, images, and symbols, combined with the use of virtual reality technologies, render cyberspace a realm where fictional realities are presented in convincingly real forms (Ameli, 2009).

4.4. Public Opinion

Public opinion refers to the judgment of the people regarding a widely relevant and contested issue at a particular time. It is not merely the aggregate of individual views but emerges from the interaction between individuals and groups within a particular cultural, social, economic, and political context.

Public opinion constitutes a form of social production that often plays a decisive role and can influence leaders and decision-makers through various channels. It represents informal social awareness formed among the general population and groups with shared interests. It embodies cognitive and emotional elements and is not free of bias. When public opinion becomes widespread and stable, it evolves into consensus (Dadgaran, 2003).

Today, public opinion has reached such coherence and objectivity that it is considered a new political actor. It is distinct from common opinions, which are broad but neutral and lack dynamism. Public opinion, on the other hand, represents a collective force capable of exerting pressure. This makes the relationship between public opinion and public policy a particularly compelling topic in sociology. It lies at the heart of normative democratic theory, where government responsiveness to public preferences is viewed as a cornerstone of democracy (Binzethbolt & Robert, 2005).

5. The Role of Emerging Media and Cyberspace in Government Oversight

The public sphere, as the space where opinion and will are formed, is a fundamental condition for liberal democracies. Communication media, the public sphere, and democratic life are intricately interconnected in many ways. This becomes particularly clear when one considers the profound political changes enabled by new communication infrastructures since the advent of radio and television (Chadwick, 2013). Content and media are shaped by the right to choose and individual freedom, as explicitly referenced in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This right is regarded as an inherent human right and emphasized in the preamble of the same declaration. According to one legal scholar, "All state powers emanate from the nation, and governments are obliged to guarantee individual freedoms to the greatest extent possible. Freedom of speech, press, and activity are intrinsic and inalienable human rights, and no law may infringe upon these superior rights" (Rastegaran et al., 2023).

In contemporary times, the role of media has become increasingly significant for both politicians and citizens tracking their actions. Politicians and those seeking to influence public opinion have come to realize that there is no alternative to media in achieving their goals. They have discovered that their access to public opinion, their methods of framing issues, satisfying public preferences, occasional support for specific policies, and even sharp criticisms of political decisions and behaviors can be highly impactful—if timed correctly. The power cards in today's political arena, and the authority of leaders, stem from their ability to shape public opinion through the news media.

5.1. Facilitating Public Communication and Creating Online Communities

In the age of communication, mass media plays a key role in raising political awareness in society, with radio and television standing out as the most widespread and influential media. Visual media, especially television, have a profound influence on people. Anthony Giddens notes that many people shape their behavior based on television programs (Taghavi & Khoshnavis, 2009). In the realm of the Internet and emerging media, ensuring public access to open and available data regarding decision-

making processes, governance practices, key issues, and responses is crucial for enabling inclusive participation within a distributed framework.

Such a framework must update the development of data in open and reusable formats, while also ensuring the injection of new data into decision-making processes. This supports a model of "two-way transparency." Increasing data accessibility enables internet governance stakeholders to track and contribute to issue development and response over time, allowing actors to learn from one another's successes and failures and hold each other accountable for actions taken (Matt, 2011).

Since the 2000s, websites and social media platforms have transformed the world of communications. Users not only receive messages, but also actively generate content and feed websites and blogs. Some blogs are run by individuals, others by groups. Some function like portals, directing readers to other blogs or sites, while others publish political, social, and cultural information, encouraging readers to freely express their opinions and comments on the content (Rahmanzadeh, 2010).

McQuail identifies new media as a distinct set of communication technologies characterized by digital features, broad access for personal communication, and applications including online news, advertising, downloadable media, discussions, web search, and other emerging forms of interaction (McQuail, 2008). One of the effects of interaction via new digital platforms is the public's participation in producing, circulating, and ranking information flows. As people become content creators, traditional boundaries between production, distribution, and consumption of news dissolve. Legacy media lose control over communication channels, while social media platforms redistribute public voices and clarify new regulatory boundaries (Kleis Nielsen & Fletcher, 2020).

Cyberspace and social networks, by providing users with the ability to share concerns, thoughts, and opinions daily with a wide audience, create opportunities for political, social, and cultural participation. These networks no longer function solely as spaces for socializing or photo-sharing. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have become powerful tools for exchanging ideas, promoting products and services, and expressing opinions on various societal issues. Individuals comment on posts, chat through platforms like Facebook, Skype, or Viber, share images on Instagram and Flickr, and watch videos on YouTube. These platforms offer users the chance to actively participate in creating and sharing content and to interact with the world around them, sharing emotions and information in the process.

This interaction generates numerous opportunities and challenges. It facilitates interpersonal communication across the globe, making it easier than ever before. In essence, new media are inherently social—linking people through broader and more complex social relationships than in the past. These platforms encompass vast geographic communities where users, despite being dispersed and anonymous, feel a deep social connection and closeness to one another. New media allow people to communicate with many others simultaneously through message customization and personalization.

Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram serve as spaces for public expression and collective emotion. Today, people must rely on social media and cyberspace to navigate a vast, uncertain, and constantly changing world. Media helps shape belief in political events, fosters media dependency, and brings a constructed public world into private spaces. People depend on media and cyberspace for understanding narratives, imagery, and heroes; acquiring information; expressing emotion; identifying public values; interpreting signs and symbols; and even shaping language itself (Gitlin, 1980).

Cyberspace and social networks integrate all Internet capabilities into a single interactive platform. With ongoing technological advancements and the structural evolution of virtual social networks, users enter a new world that is rooted in and influenced by reality (Aghili & Ziaei Pour, 2009). These networks are part of a broader virtual society in which individuals with diverse or shared views engage in open discussions and share opinions. Many organized social groups, including NGOs and nonprofits, use cyberspace to promote their goals. These platforms allow users to interact freely with others, exchange ideas, and engage in meaningful dialogue after joining communities and groups.

Cyberspace and social networks not only raise political awareness but also involve individuals in political processes. The Internet and social networks facilitate swift dissemination of information about major social issues, spread symbols of protest, and stir public emotions. They foster widespread protest movements through networking and organizing, leading to greater support, internal coherence, and unity among social actors (Bashiri, 2016).

With the spread of the Internet and its communication services in the early 1990s, new perspectives on virtual communities emerged, highlighting their unique features. The symbolic image of these communities is no longer the traditional town hall, but the "global village." Nearly thirty years after McLuhan coined the term, the global village now incorporates California's

"small is beautiful" ethos, tying it to a utopian ideal of a post-national democracy manifested within the virtual domain—beyond the reach of state control.

5.2. *Shaping and Mobilizing Public Opinion*

Cyberspace can contribute to shaping public opinion. By disseminating appealing and influential content, activists can direct public attention toward specific issues. Moreover, activists in this realm can counter misinformation and fake news by providing accurate and transparent information.

When the media presents a news item to the public, it lends it public legitimacy. The information enters a shared public sphere, enabling open debate and discussion. The media does not merely report an event or announcement to a broad audience; it amplifies and highlights it. A speech, event, or document can reach millions within hours—or even instantly—across a region, country, or the world, producing significant consequences (Lazar, 2001).

Although the power of public opinion is not explicitly codified in law, its impact is undeniable. It has brought down governments and sparked historic revolutions. The influence of public opinion varies by system of governance—under presidential systems, its impact is more pronounced during the formation of new governments via party mechanisms, though its visibility may decline during a government's term (Alam, 2013).

In democratic political systems, media shapes the domain of information and public discourse and reflects critical and democratic perspectives widely. These systems regard mass media as the most immediate and accessible sources for public judgment. Without access to factual information, such judgments are not possible. In this context, a direct relationship exists between the delivery of factual information by media and the intellectual development of society. Especially in the age of the communication and information revolution, mass media has become a principal institution in the public sphere (Dahlgren, 2001).

Today, social media plays an undeniable role in the political arena—from public mobilization and steering collective opinion, to enhancing governance practices, overseeing performance, promoting civil institutions, encouraging broad-based participation, stirring national sentiment, exposing political corruption, communicating demands to the government, and reflecting government performance in society (Bashiri, 2016).

5.3. *Influence on Social Change and Political Decision-Making*

In recent years, cyberspace and the dramatic evolution of the digital world have significantly transformed socio-economic, cultural, and political structures. With the growing influence of mass media and social networks, these tools have become critical elements in political discourse and social change due to their soft power.

Free information dissemination, public opinion shaping, political reform promotion, electoral influence, the development of e-democracy through citizen–state interaction, and even threats to national sovereignty are now central concepts in political development. Virtual social networks—through their unique capabilities like real-time information, public awareness, interpersonal communication, and mass mobilization—play a major role in social, cultural, and political domains (Bashiri, 2016).

In the academic world, social networks are effective platforms for knowledge production, opinion exchange, and personal and social development. They help link individual intellectual capital to collective capital, advancing the overall level of knowledge. The primary goal of any social network is to generate social capital and facilitate interaction among experts, artists, and professionals. Transforming individual capital into social capital is a critical issue across disciplines. This process converts personal knowledge into collective knowledge, which can then be used to solve academic and societal problems (Rahmanzadeh, 2010).

As a space for social mobilization, cyberspace and new media have had deep and wide-reaching effects on socio-political movements. These platforms allow individuals and groups to connect easily, form networks, and organize events, rallies, and protests. Online tools like Facebook groups, Twitter, and Telegram allow rapid and effective coordination. Cyberspace acts as a fast-moving channel for news dissemination, enabling activists to reach their audiences quickly. Through posts, videos, and articles, activists can raise awareness about key social and political issues and mobilize the public.

Cyberspace and emerging media can also foster a sense of belonging and solidarity. Like-minded individuals can gather in virtual spaces and support one another, participate in campaigns by signing petitions or sharing content, and build movements around shared goals. These platforms enable the coordination and mobilization of people for collective action (Gerbaudo, 2012).

Public opinion shaped in cyberspace can influence political decisions. Opinions and criticisms voiced online may lead to shifts in government policies and strategies. Cyberspace thus serves as a tool for organizing and coordinating social and political activities. Through this space, activists can organize protests, campaigns, and movements, contributing to social transformation.

In recent years, cyberspace has proven to be a powerful instrument for organizing and promoting social movements. For example, in the "Black Lives Matter" movement, which peaked after the killing of George Floyd in 2020, cyberspace played a crucial role in organizing, spreading information, and rallying public support—leading to tangible outcomes.

5.4. Oversight of Governmental Institutions and Promoting Transparency and Accountability

In recent centuries, with the growing legitimacy of democratic governments, public opinion's oversight power has significantly expanded, alongside legal protections for freedom. "The precondition for forming public opinion is public debate; once a matter becomes a subject of public discussion, it transforms into public opinion" (Araqi, 2004).

Public opinion functions within the broader framework of public oversight—a process primarily driven by the people, with key tools including political parties, the press, mass media, and in some cases, governmental institutions like the parliament (Rasekh, 2017). The emergence of digital media has revolutionized this oversight process. Tweets and hashtags—now symbols of public sentiment—task citizen activists and alternative media with monitoring a wide swath of society.

Political oversight by public opinion requires democratic tools and the free flow of information. These conditions make public oversight the most peaceful and effective form of accountability, offering hope for a better world. Sometimes, such pressure forces governments to act against their own preferences. The expansion of public opinion hinges on citizen engagement, which is shaped by how sensitively and swiftly a society reacts to events and news (Lazar, 2001).

According to O'Donnell, a democratic state is one in which a democratic regime grants universal rights to citizens residing within its territory. The state encompasses the legal framework and institutions that protect these rights and impose civic duties (O'Donnell, 2010). Democratic governance is based on broad participation in decision-making, and its core ethical goal is to foster individual empowerment, which can only be achieved through inclusive public and private decision-making processes (Pourahmadi Meybodi & Saeedi, 2011).

The UNDP report also outlines a conception of the state that aligns with O'Donnell's:

(a) a center for collective identity among citizens,

(b) a legal system for regulating social relations, and

(c) a set of bureaucratic institutions tasked with policy execution (Undp, 2004).

In participatory societies, media and public opinion occupy a central place. For ideas to become public opinion, the process must be independent of interest groups and emotional manipulation. Parviz Sanaei argued that emotional freedom is a prerequisite for genuine public thought—individuals must not be swayed by unconscious desires, personal issues, or biases (Sanei, 2002).

Although formal political participation has declined over the past 30 years, informal, nongovernmental, and decentralized engagement has grown. Individual and environmental factors influence participation. Five empirically measurable factors at the individual level are: socio-economic status, breadth of interpersonal networks, sense of efficacy, civic beliefs, and media usage patterns (Pattie et al., 2003).

In a republican system, legitimacy is the cornerstone of governmental stability. Public opinion is the metric by which legitimacy is assessed. A negative public perception reduces legitimacy, whereas public support enhances it—leading to significant social consequences. The government must reflect majority will while safeguarding minority rights; otherwise, it risks appearing democratic on the surface while operating autocratically in practice (Rastegaran et al., 2023).

Public opinion only takes shape and gains influence when it reflects collective sentiment. "Once this cohesion is achieved, public opinion can function far beyond a flexible parliament—it becomes a powerful organizing force." Here, flexibility means

the ruling authorities' ability to adjust to public demands, an element now referred to as *soft power*. Public oversight does not conflict with freedom—it complements it. Strengthening public oversight means empowering the people and relevant institutions to uphold justice and liberty, ultimately enhancing accountability under constitutional law (Kamerani, 2000).

As part of civil society and a bridge between the people and the state, the media is responsible for articulating social demands and monitoring power. One of its most vital roles is guiding and shaping public thought—using persuasion and information strategies to orient societal views toward rational goals. Without media, institutions could easily avoid accountability. When organizations know they are being monitored and critiqued by the public, they act more responsibly; otherwise, secrecy prevails. Through raising awareness and consolidating public demands, media fosters governmental accountability, strengthens civic participation, and promotes trust between society and the state (Metani & Hassanpour, 2014).

Emerging media enhance transparency by publishing data on government performance. This empowers citizens to monitor government decisions and actions and increases the accountability of public officials.

6. Challenges and Barriers

Despite its many benefits, cyberspace also faces numerous challenges and obstacles that can influence the formation and evolution of public opinion. Below are some of the key challenges:

6.1. Control and Censorship

In some countries, governments restrict and censor online content due to concerns over the negative influence of public opinion. Such restrictions can limit freedom of expression and hinder the formation of authentic perspectives. Globalization in various dimensions presents both opportunities and threats for nations. Policy-making concerning social networks and cyberspace is complex, multifaceted, and context-dependent, influenced by each country's development level.

To address these challenges, it is essential to incorporate digital governance and adopt smart media diplomacy for managing cyberspace. Media policies should utilize integrated and effective strategies. One of the fundamental weaknesses in this domain stems from the lack of integration between cyberspace policy and strategic planning, which ultimately weakens national soft power. The emergence of new threats demands that governments play a more structural role in cyberspace governance, granting greater autonomy to digital regulatory bodies—even to the extent of forming a dedicated ministry. Through dynamic policies—avoiding rigid approaches such as blanket filtering—governments can shift from a threat-centric to an opportunity-driven approach (Parvin, 2023).

Furthermore, platforms like Facebook and Twitter employ algorithms that tailor content based on user preferences, often exposing users only to similar viewpoints. This phenomenon, known as the *filter bubble*, reinforces existing beliefs and biases (Fraser, 1990).

6.2. Misinformation and Division in Public Opinion

The Internet-based media landscape facilitates the rapid spread of false information and rumors. *Fake news*, often intentionally crafted to deceive public opinion, is one of cyberspace's most critical challenges. Alongside factual data, rumors and disinformation proliferate in the digital sphere, potentially misguiding public perceptions and causing confusion. Such misinformation may mislead the public and foster false beliefs.

Additionally, the influence of certain groups within cyberspace can polarize opinions and erode trust. The digital environment readily enables the spread of rumors and disinformation, fueling division and polarization. People are often affected by inaccurate news instead of receiving accurate information (Pariser, 2011). Social media can also escalate social tensions, as it enables individuals to express extreme or inflammatory views easily.

Constant use of social media and frequent self-comparison with others may result in anxiety and social pressure, negatively impacting public opinion and behavior. The abundance of conflicting information and the rise of misinformation can reduce public trust in media, potentially leading to civic apathy and decreased participation.

Cyberspace may even spark internal divisions within activist movements, weakening their overall impact (McCoy & et al., 2019). Social platforms often encourage echo chambers—small, ideologically homogeneous groups in which opposing views are strongly rejected. Such divisions may breed feelings of alienation and mistrust, as people feel their views and experiences are ignored—heightening social tensions.

Moreover, in many regions, access to the Internet and digital tools remains unequal. This *digital divide* contributes to inequality in accessing information. A lack of digital literacy and media education can impair individuals' ability to critically assess information, increasing susceptibility to manipulation.

7. Conclusion

Political rights—regardless of ideology, religion, ethnicity, language, or other differences—are fundamental to every individual in a society. These rights include freedom of expression and the right to critique, both of which underpin citizens' ability to monitor the government. Emerging technologies and new media have transformed perceptions, expectations, and communication practices. However, understanding how digital technologies are embedded in political institutions and used to engage citizens requires considering deeper social, cultural, and economic transformations.

An informed citizen is the cornerstone of democratic continuity and civic participation. Without awareness of political rights and civic responsibilities, democracy cannot endure, and intentional, institutionalized participation will not take root. Free access to political information via civil society channels and mass media is essential for holding authorities accountable and enabling citizens to participate actively in governance (Sardarabadi, 2004).

Technological tools have accelerated information transfer and increased data complexity. They have also become more accessible to more people. Information quality now matters more to citizens, and the effectiveness of governance is increasingly tied to efficient communication. This highlights the importance of *media democracy*.

An informed citizen is someone who consents knowingly, can interpret political processes, and accesses government services more efficiently. Numerous studies confirm that public opinion significantly influences policy. The degree of influence depends on how attitudes and policies are measured and related. Although the findings vary due to different methodologies and datasets, they consistently indicate that public opinion constrains policymakers.

The strategic use of new media, cyberspace, and public opinion is essential for monitoring government decisions and promoting transparency, accountability, and civic participation. These platforms enable citizens to hold governments accountable, engage in policy-making, and influence outcomes. Governments must adapt to the evolving media landscape and engage with citizens via these channels to foster a transparent and responsive system.

The government–citizen relationship is reciprocal: the more effective a government is, the more attention it receives from its citizens, and vice versa. Assessing governmental effectiveness requires wide-ranging information and complex knowledge now more available to the public than ever. New media and cyberspace are among the most influential sources of this knowledge.

This study comprehensively investigated effective oversight of government performance through emerging media, cyberspace, and public opinion. The findings reveal significant implications for enhancing transparency, civic engagement, and the quality of democratic governance. Modern media technologies facilitate real-time monitoring and critical review of governmental policies and decisions.

Platforms such as social media, citizen journalism, and other digital tools support active public oversight of elected officials and demand accountability. These channels also facilitate the rapid dissemination of information, coordination of civic initiatives, and the strengthening of public discourse. Cyberspace plays a vital role in enabling access to governmental data, public dialogue, and participation in policymaking.

E-governance initiatives, online advisory forums, and collaborative digital tools foster more inclusive and transparent management, thereby increasing trust and public engagement. The emergence of new media and cyberspace has profoundly reshaped how information is produced, shared, and consumed—and how individuals, communities, and governments interact. Understanding the nature and implications of these technologies is crucial for research and analysis in the fields of government oversight, policymaking, and public opinion.

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