

**If I will not be here, I will be virtually
there: Reflections of the insufficient media
governance on public deliberations:
National Dialogue in Egypt as a case study**

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Abstract:

Undoubtedly people accessibility to the public space and the possibilities of sharing in running their affairs has been a global boomed call for long decades. Technology in media comes to accelerate this process of participation and power sharing and gives the digital media additional role in re-shaping the public space and its on-line platforms. Beyond the question of does mass media promote/ restrict the good governance or vice versa, tighten the public sphere through On or Offline platforms raises various debatable questions on: **To what extent the online media can be complemented with offline one in supporting the deliberative democracy in a society.** This core question will deliver extra sub questions on the role of state in governing the traditional and digital media platforms. Has online media and the virtual space been efficient transparent and responsive compared to the real space? To what extent the non-democratic states create rational and functional public space? And what are the consequences of creating an alternative (on-line platform) in odd with the real one? Later in Egypt, the head of state calls for a “national dialogue” to discuss priorities for the upcoming stage in policies and practices. President El-Sisi called for dialogue on April 26, 2022. The formation of the Board of Trustees was announced on June 26, 2022. The first dialogue session took place on July 5, 2022. Splatted over this above mentioned initiative between a “group” that suspected in the goals of this dialogue and considered it as “unproductive” and manipulated initiative and another group assured that it has positive outcomes, this study argues that **formal and official media agencies governs the virtual public space ineffectively and filter the communicative act of the Egyptian political opposition to reduce its influence on the dialogue and guide it to meaningless reform one which pushed the voiceless to have on line space.**

The paper comprises three parts. A theoretical framework that presents the main features of the deliberative democracy and approaching insufficient media governance reflections on public deliberation. In addition, this part focuses on approaching role of social media in enhancing principle of deliberative democracy. In the second, outlines the research methodology and design. While in the third and final section, the

researchers analyse the online discourse on two Facebook pages to measure the extent of adopting and practicing of principles of deliberative democracy in the Egyptian context.

Part I:

Theoretical framework

In low trust context, public deliberation can be useful for issues over which the public and the government are at odds. (Gimmler, 2001). Public deliberation can be an effective tool to increase transparency and accountability between policy-makers and the public and it can contribute significantly in enhancing the public trust.

In this context, (Cohen & Arato 1992) and (Etzioni, 1993) highlights the role of open discussion, and the importance of citizen participation to create rational and functional public sphere that plays undeniable role in the plural society.

With the significant change in the world perception for the socio-political transformation that occurred over the world in the last decades due to the unprecedented shift in the communication means that not only has left far impacts on the types of layman political participation but also overcome the real public space restrictions, virtual public space has been the “popular” parallel sphere for welcomed and unwelcomed strands of social actions in both democratic and non-democratic states.

Functionalized Media and Deliberative Democracy:

In its significant themes, the classic literature on media and communication has established and developed the concept of a real “functionalized media”. It has been conditioned to the necessities of removing all restrictions and even the hostile context that misgoverned state- society communication. Governing media either by the state or private means professional has to be liable, impartial and neutral. (Bezabih, 2017)

Through overwhelming literature, the scholars have contributed in defining what the real functionalized media through two strands: societal and individual. The societal strand highlights how real media is investigating the socio-cultural context, creating coherent society and transmitting the cultural heritage as underlined by (Lasswell, 1948). In the same track, (Wright, 1975) highlighted the role of Media in providing people the medical information and how Media has to work to avoid the societal breakdown. While (Dyer, 2005) contributed in the individual strand by analysing how Media reduces loneliness and feeds individuals with means of entertainment, relaxation and draining the daily life tension, mobilizing individual to political and commercial propaganda were suggested as key concepts for defining what is the functionalized media by (McQuail, 2000)

Recently, Digitalism comes to have a part of media functions and to contribute politically in changing the citizens’ ability account the public officials through identifying cases of corruption, different types of deviances like bribe and nepotism or even human rights violations in either democratic or non-democratic states. **If steps are not taken to close this gap between digital mass expectations and the policy making officials, digitalization may worsen the crisis of political trust in societies and cause a significant democratic backsliding.**

In this regard, (Norris, 2009 ,) argues how channels of the news media can function to

promote government transparency, accountability by highlighting public policy failures, corruption in the judiciary, and scandals in the corporate sector The tendency of democracy and the quality of governance is underlined by (Gerring, 2005) as even if the state has a code of democratic procedures and a level of political diversity, maintaining democratic media has to be for transferring the procedural democracy to be true and plural one.

Therefore, **digital media may play a significant role in informing the publics about the plans and practices of the government in order to develop a culture of transparency and accountability.** In the weak society, **social media practiced distorted the truth and misgoverned. Objectivity, fairness and accuracy will not be supported** (Haythornthwaite, 2002).

Regardless of the broad debate over democracy that describe its liberal model as “adversary democracy” (Mansbridge, 1980), a vast literature on “deliberative democracy” has emerged to develop the majoritarian liberal democratic implication. While Liberal thinkers such as (Rawls, 1993) had emphasized the role of “public reason” and deliberation in democratic decision making, Anti- liberal thinkers, including (Sandel, 1984) and (Barber, 1984) have promoted a conception of democracy in which public discussion and cooperative, participatory discourse are central. **The deliberative democracy as a developing democratic model comes to satisfy individuals’ interests, understand their preferences and look at democratic political process as a fair public policy.** From this side, democratic process is not only procedural one but it is an instrument by which the competing preferences may be aggregated fairly (Talisie, 2005).

(Habermas, 1996), and (Mansbridge, 2009) underlined how the output of democratic process is only the product of interchange between people and government, and how the decisions come as a balanced aggregation of individual interests, not more. In this regard, the politicians behave like agents and the political process is restricted by the natural individual rights versus the oppression of dictator and the dynamics of authoritarian state. Accordingly, all types of political systems that based on unpopular rule are illegitimate form of governance.

Deliberative democracy is beyond what liberalism allows. It came as a reaction of restricting the agenda of public discussion and neglecting as such the viewpoints of specific groups at the margins of the dominant culture in a society. Therefore, deliberative democracy came for further inclusion and a broadening the democratic discourse. The idea of deliberative democracy is based on a statement: **the political life would be better with a “wider discussion to reach a fair terms based on moral values between people and their representatives** (Wertheimer, 1999).

Shortly, the deliberative democracy allows politics to be operated through bargaining over different policy preferences and interests. According to (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996), **the ideal sketch of deliberative democracy has four main purposes:**

- Legitimizing the collective actions as the democratic deficits undermine the government capacity.
- Encouraging public-spirited perspectives in arranging people affairs.
- Supporting mutual decisions by respectful bargaining.

- Correcting the mistakes of the past by keeping healthy context to increase people willingness to correct them.

Seemingly that **deliberative democracy comes to prove that the democratic deficit concept is not without challenge and the citizens' political disengagement should be attributed to the poor performance of political institutions** (Pharr, Putnam, & Dalton, 2000).

Insufficient Media Governance and Public Deliberations:

Drawing the ideal sketch of deliberative democracy that supports mutual decision by respectful bargaining would not be viable without functionalized media. Insufficient media governance can have a significant impact on public deliberations, particularly in terms of the quality of information and the diversity of perspectives presented to the public. When media outlets are not held accountable for accuracy, fairness, and impartiality in their reporting, it can lead to the spread of misinformation and the amplification of certain viewpoints at the expense of others.

One way that insufficient media governance can affect public deliberations is by **limiting the range of voices and perspectives that are heard**. If media outlets are controlled by a small group of individuals or organizations with a specific agenda, they may prioritize certain viewpoints and exclude others, leading to a lack of diversity in the public discourse. This can be particularly damaging in democratic societies where informed public debate is essential for making good policy decisions.

Another way that insufficient media governance can impact public deliberations is by **allowing the spread of false or misleading information**. When media outlets are not held accountable for the accuracy of their reporting, it can lead to the dissemination of misinformation that can undermine public trust and erode the quality of public debate. This is especially concerning in an era where social media and other online platforms have made it easier than ever for false information to spread rapidly and widely.

Overall, **insufficient media governance can have a range of negative impacts on public deliberations**, from limiting the range of voices and perspectives that are heard to allowing the spread of false or misleading information. To promote informed public debate and democratic decision-making, it is essential to ensure that media outlets are held accountable for accuracy, fairness, and impartiality in their reporting.

Insufficient media governance can have negative impacts on deliberative democracy, that emphasizes the importance of informed and inclusive public deliberation in decision-making processes. In general, insufficient media governance can have significant negative impacts on deliberative democracy by:

- **Limiting access to information**: Insufficient media governance can limit access to accurate and reliable information, which is essential for informed

public deliberation. This can undermine the quality of public discourse and reduce the ability of individuals to make informed decisions.

- **Amplifying certain voices over others**: Insufficient media governance can lead to certain voices and perspectives being amplified over others, either due to commercial or political interests. This can distort public discourse and prevent a diverse range of voices from being heard.
- **Reinforcing polarization**: Insufficient media governance can reinforce polarization and lead to the creation of echo chambers where individuals are only exposed to viewpoints and perspectives that confirm their existing beliefs. This can make it difficult to engage in constructive and inclusive

public deliberation.

- **Undermining trust in democratic institutions:** Insufficient media governance can erode public trust in democratic institutions by perpetuating false information, biased reporting, or a lack of transparency in decision-making processes. Allowing for the spread of disinformation: Insufficient media governance can allow for the spread of disinformation, which can manipulate public opinion and undermine the quality of public deliberation.

To mitigate these risks, it is important to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills, as well as to advocate for policies and regulations that promote media diversity, transparency, and accountability.

Social Media as an Alternative Space for Enhancing Public Deliberations: Social media can provide an alternative space for public deliberations that can enhance democratic engagement and promote a more diverse and inclusive public discourse.

Here are some ways in which social media can facilitate this:

- **Amplifying diverse voices:** Social media provides a platform for individuals and groups who may not have had a voice in traditional media outlets to share their perspectives and opinions. This can lead to a more diverse and inclusive public discourse that reflects the perspectives of a wider range of people.
- **Facilitating engagement and participation:** Social media can help to increase engagement and participation in public deliberations by making it easier for people to access information and share their views. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook can be used to create online communities where people can discuss and debate issues and share information and resources.
- **Enabling real-time feedback:** Social media can provide real-time feedback on public deliberations, allowing policymakers and decision-makers to gauge public sentiment and respond to emerging issues in real-time.
- **Increasing transparency:** Social media can help to increase the transparency of public deliberations by providing a platform for

stakeholders to share information and communicate with each other. This can help to promote greater accountability and trust in democratic decision-making processes.

- **Enhancing access to information:** Social media can provide a platform for the dissemination of information and news in real-time, making it easier for people to access information and stay informed about issues of public importance.

Overall, social media can provide an alternative space for public deliberations that can enhance democratic engagement and promote a more diverse and inclusive public discourse. However, it is important to recognize that social media can also have negative effects on public deliberations, such as the spread of false information and the amplification of certain voices over others. As such, it is important to approach social media as a tool that can be used to enhance public deliberations, but also to be aware of its limitations and potential risks (Guy & Hoskins, 2013).

Though the digital era has created new opportunities and challenges for deliberative democracy. Here are some conditions that are necessary for safeguarding well-informed and inclusive public deliberation in decision-making processes:

- **Access to reliable and diverse information:** Deliberative democracy requires access to accurate and reliable information from a diverse range of sources. In the digital era, this means promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills to help individuals distinguish between accurate and false information, as well as promoting media diversity, transparency, and accountability.
- **Inclusive and respectful digital platforms:** Deliberative democracy requires inclusive and respectful digital platforms that encourage constructive and informed dialogue among individuals and groups with diverse perspectives. This means promoting the use of online platforms that foster respectful and constructive dialogue, and providing resources and support for individuals and groups who are marginalized or underrepresented in public discourse.
- **Transparency and accountability in decision-making processes:** Deliberative democracy requires transparency and accountability in decision-making processes, including clear and accessible information about how decisions are made, who is involved, and how the public can provide input. In the digital era, this means promoting open and transparent decision-making processes that allow for public participation and feedback.

Strong democratic institutions: Deliberative democracy requires strong democratic institutions that are accountable to the public and that promote and accountability of government and other institutions, as well as supporting civil society organizations that promote democratic values and principles.

- **Protection of privacy and civil liberties:** Deliberative democracy requires the protection of privacy and civil liberties, including the protection of personal data and freedom of expression. In the digital era, this means promoting the protection of personal data and the rights of individuals to express their views without fear of harassment or retaliation.

Part II:

Methodology Research statement

The article addresses the issue of severe restrictions on traditional public sphere platforms in Arab countries, which has led to questions regarding the role of citizens in governing virtual spaces and whether this will facilitate or hinder the democracy process. The article aims to answer the main question of whether virtual spaces will promote good governance and deliberative democracy in the Arab region, specifically in Egypt, or if they will instead hinder the democratic process due to their dysfunctionality.

Research questions:

1. To what extent has the "National Dialogue" in Egypt been discussed and deliberated on virtual platforms?
2. How is the "National Dialogue" framed in virtual spaces?
3. How do social media followers interact with posts related to the "National Dialogue" on Facebook?
4. To what extent does social media discourse reflect the values and principles of deliberative democracy?
5. Does the culture of virtual national dialogue (attitudes, values, behaviors) establish a new type of deliberative democracy that may increase

transparency and public trust?

6. How do traditional and virtual spheres interact while deliberating public issues?

Data Collection Methods:

The researchers created a content analysis coding book that combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. The first part of the book is dedicated to collecting data on the number of posts related to the "National Dialogues" on a monthly basis, as well as analyzing the various reactions users have to the posts, such as Like, Love, Care, Haha, Wow, Sad, and Angry, as well as the interactive actions of Share and Comment. The gender of the deliberators has also been coded.

The second part of the book focuses on items related to deliberative democracy, the public sphere values, conditions, and practices, and the endorsement of good governance principles such as transparency, accountability, and the role of laws.

The third part of the book is dedicated to qualitative content analysis, which involves interpreting the various ways in which the "National Dialogue" is framed in virtual discourse and the level of trust among participants, as well as their views on political institutions and the outcomes of the National Dialogue. Additionally, this part examines the interaction between traditional and virtual spaces when discussing public issues.

Sample:

Data has been collected from the official Facebook page of the "National Dialogue"³ established on June 15, 2022, with 31K followers and Al-Shorouk newspaper⁴, with 5.9 M followers.



Figure (): <https://www.facebook.com/National.Dialogue.NTA/>

³ Created and managed by the National Training Academy, which is affiliated with the Egyptian Presidency

⁴ A semi-independent private Egyptian newspaper



Figure (2) : https://www.facebook.com/shorouknews/?locale=ar_AR

Two Facebook posts have been analysed out of 100 posts identified relevant to “National Dialogue” on two pages, as Facebook is the most common social media platform in Egypt has more than 50 M users which almost half of the population (Internet World Stats, 2022). Based on the information provided, it appears that the two selected posts for analysis are:

1. "The National Dialogue Department announces the full formation of its Board of Trustees" on the National Dialogue Facebook page, posted on June 26, 2022.
2. A video of Ahmed Moussa (Journalist) on the Al-Shorouk newspaper page, posted on July 20, 2022, where he states that "The National Dialogue outcomes are not binding on President Sisi".

The researchers have collected and analyzed the 100 most recent comments on each of these posts, resulting in a total sample of 200 comments.

Pat III: Findings

According to the analysis, there were a total of 100 posts made on the Facebook pages of Al-Shorouk newspaper and the "National Dialogue" from the time of the President's call for dialogue on April 26, 2022 until the beginning of March 2023. The posts were evenly distributed between the two Facebook pages. Most of the posts were made in 2022, with all of the posts on the Al-Shorouk newspaper page being from that year. On the other hand, the posts on the official "National Dialogue" page were mainly from 2022 (92%), with only a small percentage from 2023 (8%). The majority of the posts (38%) were made in July 2022, during the first dialogue session, followed by September 2022 with a rate of 19%.

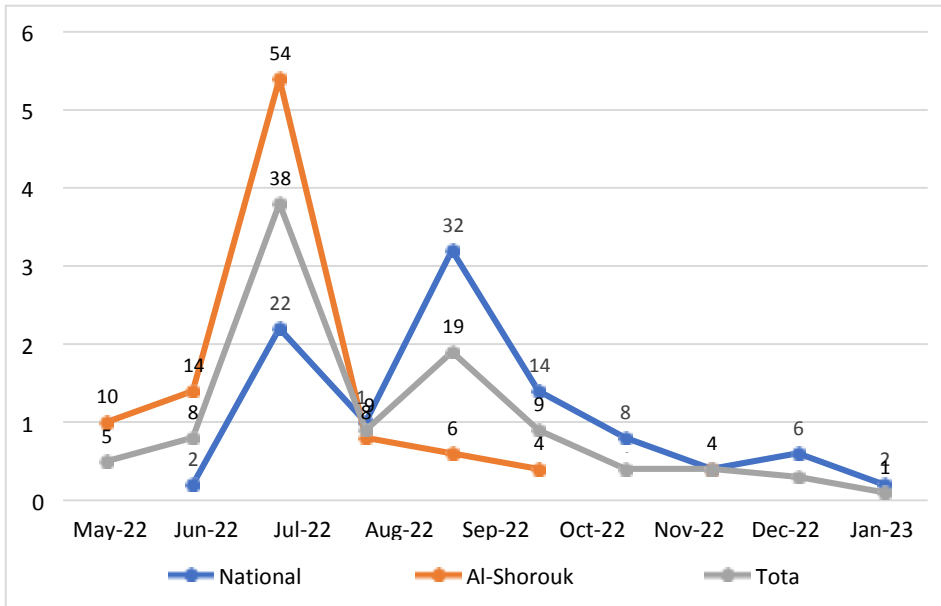


Figure (3): Posts distribution of over the time period

Based on the analysis, it was found that the majority of the posts published on the official Facebook page of the “National Dialogue” were descriptive, focusing on the sessions, meetings, and organizational procedures such as committee formation and selection of rapporteurs and regulations. On the other hand, the majority of posts on Al-Shorouk's Facebook page focused on statements from media figures and politicians, discussing included and excluded members, the importance of the “National Dialogue”, expected outcomes, and raised public issues.

In terms of the gender of the virtual deliberators, the analysis revealed that men dominated the virtual discourse, while women were significantly underrepresented.

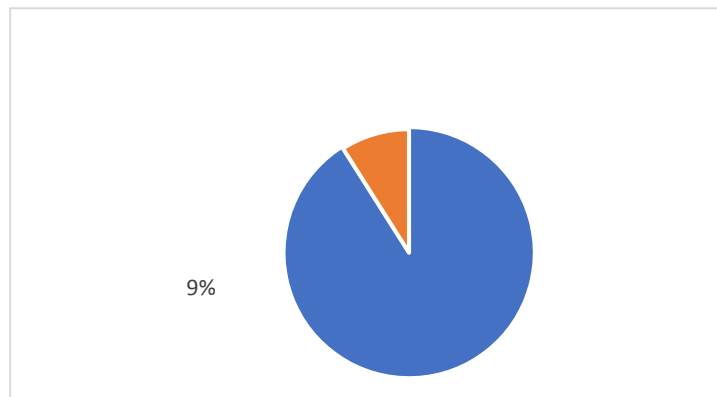


Figure (4): Gender representation on virtual discourses of the “National Dialogue”

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This finding highlights the significant gender disparity in online discussions, as women's participation in the National Dialogue was only 9% of the total comments, while men's comments accounted for 91% of the total.

Based on a qualitative analysis of framing the National Dialogue in virtual discourses, it was found that most comments regarding the "National Dialogue" lacked a thorough understanding of the issue at hand. Commentators were not engaging in productive or meaningful discussions with one another to enhance their understanding or reach a conclusion.

The comments were polarized into four distinct categories, with some were providing constructive feedback based on research and knowledge of the National Dialogue. For instance:

- *“A wonderful and very brilliant step, with the names of great writers, intellectuals and journalists, yet I searched for all these names, and I did not find patriotic poles in Egypt from the representatives of Al-Azhar and the Church, or at least the moderate religious approach”, “How long will we bury our heads in the sand like ostriches...How long will we applaud falsehood? How long will we waste the resources of the country and let the corrupt senior officials tamper with the capabilities of the beloved country and the honorable toiling patriotic citizen. Corruption crimes are within from His Excellency the President of the Republic, Field Marshal Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. This is because their positions, chairs, and ranks are more important than the homeland and the honorable, patriotic, toiling citizen. if it breaks, all its life will come out without standing, and if the staircase or ladder is not cleaned from top to bottom, it will not be cleaned at all”, “The problems that the Egyptian society suffers from are multiple and intertwined. They need people who possess academic competence in addition to a sense of patriotism and a sense of people’s suffering and pain, and they possess a realistic gradual and implementable reform vision. There must be national personalities who specialize in economics, politics, education and society”, “Please include all groups; especially workers who are supposed to be represented by the Federation of Egyptian workers and it is far from their problems. Evidence for my words is that we are a group of trade unionists and labor leaders. we established a group called the National Labor Dialogue and many problems were presented and solved thanks to the President’s invitation to the National Dialogue and we hope that it reaches all sects of the Egyptian people and that it is not limited to specific people.” We hope to add someone who talks about farmers and professional workers*

so that the national dialogue system is complete”, “We want someone to feel the pulse of the people and what they are suffering from with sincerity, not slogans. Greetings to all the honorable people of Egypt. Long live Egypt, the mother of the world. Greetings to our loyal president”, “Respected personalities, good luck. Yet, is it possible to work at the level of governorates like what was done at the level of the Republic? and Can we go down to the level of departments, centers and villages with official councils to spread the benefits?”, “There should be agreed upon headlines and a societal dialogue should be launched under the management and supervision of this respected national committee”, “The Board of Trustees of the National Dialogue, agreed upon by the national group, reflects all colors of the political and social spectrum. A board of 19 members with expertise, representatives of political currents, the media, the House of Representatives and the Senate, and the civil society organizations, gives an indication of the seriousness and credibility of the dialogue before it begins”.

Among the posts analysed, there were commenters who blindly supported or opposed the idea without demonstrating any understanding of the matter. These commenters may have made statements that were not well- informed or lacked evidence to support their views. For example, they may have expressed their support or opposition without providing any reasons or justifications, for instance, supporters commented:

- “National Dialogue is an honor and integrity for political dialogue for the goal of progress and prosperity and serving citizens for the sake of development and preserving the rights of citizens”, “Good luck for the interest of the citizens and the preservation of the institutions of the Egyptian state. May God protect Egypt, its great people, its armed forces and its leader, Sisi, and the new capital”, “A step that deserves praise and appreciation, with hopes for the desired results of the national dialogue in favour of Egypt”, “A strong beginning. God knows how much we hope for the dialogue to serve the interest of all the national forces in Egypt and that that our goal will be an Egypt that includes all of us”, “May God protect Egypt and its great people and may God protect the President of the Republic. We are with you for the sake of Egypt. Long live Egypt. Long live Egypt. Long live Egypt. Long live Sisi, my president and I am proud”.

While comments expressed by opposing groups said:

- “A national dialogue without the condition of accepting the results is called a dialogue of the deaf”, “If not binding, what is the benefit of it? They are just being entertained;

especially that you foresaw its failure, or is it just to absorb people's anger in hope that there would be hope? I wish you would shut up", And the dialogue, if not binding on all parties; especially the executive authorities, then it is only for media distortion and is not necessary", "So it is the dialogue of the snapshot...only to take the snapshot and that is it", "Meaningless plays...", "What was the need for the conference then? You could have saved money as long as its results are not binding on the President".

There were some other commenters who opposed the idea in order to insult the government and its officials, rather than based on any valid concerns about the proposal. These commenters may have used inflammatory language or made personal attacks in their comments.

- *"The National Dialogue's film will end by the end of Sisi's tour abroad", "So, this is an acting movie and meaningless expenses. Well, it would have been more humane if you saved money and improved the load of bread. God suffices me, and He is the best disposer of affairs", "Dialogue after what? After the destruction of the country for eight years during which you shut mouths and spread terrorism against the defeated people? or you are sure that these people would eventually forget? Gentlemen, Egypt has become a jungle; thanks to the one who governs us. May we be compensated", "It is meaningless. It is an image to polish the system and reduce external pressure on citizen rights. It is well known that members of the House of Representatives do not even represent themselves because they are appointed. The dialogue begins with a popular base of free patriotic opponents without positions or personal interest".*

Overall, holding government and Dialogue officials accountable for decisions and outcomes is crucial for ensuring that public policy decisions reflect the best interests of the citizens. However, to do so effectively, it's essential that all stakeholders have access to accurate and relevant information about the Dialogue and its purpose. Constructive feedback is vital for any democratic process, and it's only possible when people have a clear understanding of the issues at hand. Rather than opposing or insulting government officials, people should focus on promoting a deliberative approach that encourages open dialogue and informed opinions.

To achieve this, the media and social media can play a vital role in providing accurate information and facilitating discussions. Experts in relevant fields can also contribute to the dialogue by sharing their knowledge and expertise.

Overall, promoting a deliberative approach to the Dialogue's purpose and operation is essential for ensuring that all stakeholders have the information they need to make informed decisions. By working together, we can hold government

and Dialogue officials accountable and ensure that public policy decisions reflect the best interests of the citizens.

Table (1): Interacting with posts on the Facebook pages of Al-Shorouk newspaper and the “National Dialogue”

Reacts	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
like	9	3300	13652	136.52	329.940
love	0	355	1905	19.05	38.342
care	0	65	283	2.83	6.917
angry	0	122	290	2.90	12.369
Haha	0	905	5856	58.56	121.202
Wow	0	12	86	.86	1.902
Sad Sad	0	6	40	.40	1.015
Total Reacts	21	3800	22268	222.68	396.165
Share	0	548	2312	23.12	60.165
Comment	7	1300	12074	120.74	168.647
Video Views	1100	3600	16200	2025.00	747.854

Engaging with other users through reactions, shares, and comments can be very important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it allows users to express their opinions and perspectives on a given topic, which can lead to a more diverse and dynamic discussion. Additionally, this can help users learn from each other, challenge their own assumptions, and gain new insights and knowledge. Secondly, social media algorithms often prioritize content that receives a lot of engagement, which means that interacting with content can help it reach a wider audience. This can be particularly important to promote specific ideas. Finally, social media interactions can help users build connections and relationships with others who share their interests or values. This can lead to the formation of online communities that can provide support, encouragement, and inspiration.

Results show that there was no significant difference in total reacts, $t(98) = .876, p = .383$, despite reacts on “National Dialogue” ($M = 257.4, SD = 519.8$) being higher than Al-Shorouk ($M = 187.9, SD = 210.7$). Nevertheless, there was a significant difference in average of Like, Love and Care reacts (consequently: $M = 212.08, 34.28, 5.02, SD = 452.40, 49.83, 9.26$) on “National Dialogue” compared to Al-Shorouk (consequently: $M = 60.96, 3.82, .64, SD = 60.19, 3.64, 1.045$) demonstrated significantly more reacts, $t(98) = 2.34, 4.31, 3.32, p = .021, .000, .001$.

Similarly, there was a significant difference in average of Haha and Waw reacts (consequently: $M = 115.10, 1.48, SD = 151.92, 2.435$) on Al-Shorouk page compared to “National Dialogue” (consequently: $M = 2.02, .24, , SD = 8.71, .77$) demonstrated significantly more Haha and Waw reacts, $t(98) = -5.25-, -3.43-, p = .000, .001$.

Also, results point out that there was a significant difference in average of Share ($M = 39.86$, $SD = 81.50$) on “National Dialogue” compared to Al-Shorouk ($M = 6.38$, $SD = 9.895$) verified significantly more sharing and interacting with the “National Dialogue” content, $t(98) = 2.88$, $p = .005$. But, there was no significant difference in Comment, $t(98) = 1.17$, $p = .244$, despite comments on “National Dialogue” ($M = 140.46$, $SD = 206.12$) being higher than Al-Shorouk ($M = 101.02$, $SD = 119.09$).

Generally, these results suggest that participants are more interested in expressing their emotional response to a post rather than engaging in a deeper discussion. This trend may indicate a lack of interest or motivation for a more rational and evidence-based deliberation in virtual spaces. The low score for sharing also suggests that participants are less interested in spreading information or engaging in conversations with others outside their immediate network.

However, it is important to note that this finding is based on the two selected posts and may not be representative of the overall trend in virtual deliberations. Further analysis of a larger sample of posts and comments is needed to confirm these findings.

Table (2): T.TEST Significant differences between the “National Dialogue” and Al-Shorouk pages in the mean scores of interactions about the published posts

Interactive Feature	National Dialogue			Al-Shorouk Newspaper			t-value	df	Sig.
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation			
like	50	212.08	452.401	50	60.96	60.197	2.341	98	.021
love	50	34.28	49.835	50	3.82	3.646	4.310	98	.000
care	50	5.02	9.261	50	.64	1.045	3.323	98	.001
angry	50	.66	1.686	50	5.14	17.206	-1.832-	98	.070
Haha	50	2.02	8.712	50	115.10	151.920	-5.255-	98	.000
Wow	50	.24	.771	50	1.48	2.435	-3.433-	98	.001
Sad	50	.32	.935	50	.48	1.092	-.787-	98	.433
Total Reacts	50	257.42	519.831	50	187.94	210.737	.876	98	.383
Share	50	39.86	81.509	50	6.38	9.895	2.883	98	.005
Comment	50	140.46	206.122	50	101.02	119.099	1.172	98	.244
Video Views	8	2025.00	747.854	-	-	-	-	-	-

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.64, $SD = 60.19$, 3.64, 1.045) demonstrated significantly more reacts, $t(98) = 2.34$, 4.31, 3.32, $p = .021$, .000, .001.

Similarly, there was a significant difference in average of Haha and Waw reacts (consequently: $M = 115.10$, 1.48, $SD = 151.92$, 2.435) on Al-Shorouk page compared to "National Dialogue" (consequently: $M = 2.02$, .24, , $SD = 8.71$, .77) demonstrated significantly more Haha and Waw reacts, $t(98) = -5.25$ -, -3.43-, $p = .000$, .001.

Also, results point out that there was a significant difference in average of Share ($M = 39.86$, $SD = 81.50$) on "National Dialogue" compared to Al-Shorouk ($M = 6.38$, $SD = 9.895$) verified significantly more sharing and interacting with the "National Dialogue" content, $t(98) = 2.88$, $p = .005$ but, there was no significant difference in Comment, $t(98) = 1.17$, $p = .244$, despite comments on "National Dialogue" ($M = 140.46$, $SD = 206.12$) being higher than Al-Shorouk ($M = 101.02$, $SD = 119.09$).

In sum, these results suggest that citizens are more engaged with the content posted on the "National Dialogue" page compared to the Al-Shorouk page, as evidenced by the higher number of likes, loves, and care reacts, as well as shares. On the other hand, citizens seem to engage more via ridiculous or sarcastic emjis on the Al-Shorouk page, as demonstrated by the higher number of Haha and Waw reacts. However, there was no significant difference in the number of comments posted on either page. It is important to note that these findings only apply to the two selected posts, and further research is needed to generalize these results to the larger discussion on the "National Dialogue" in Egypt.

Table (3): Deliberative democracy indicators in the National Dialogue virtual discussions

Deliberative democracy indicators	National Dialogue	Al- Shorouk Newspaper	Total		X2	Sig.	Contingency Coefficient (C)
	N	N	N	%			
Discussions provide in-depth and rich insights into the core deliberated issues	39	1	40	20	54.21	.000	0.514
Discussions relies on evidence-based thoughts	35	10	45	22.5	21.41	.000	0.181
Participants accept other people's views and opinions	12	3	15	7.5	4.84	.020	0.208
Participants recognize other people's political and civil rights	37	1	38	19	51.20	.000	0.521
The balance of opinion	38	1	39	19.5	54.00	.000	0.514

Recognition of political equality and fair representation	50	1	51	25.5	04.24	.000	0.540
Total	100	100	200				

These results indicate that virtual discussions do not heavily incorporate elements of deliberative democracy. Specifically, an examination of comments on the two most interactive posts regarding the "National Dialogue" reveals that only 20% of the comments offer thorough and substantial insights into the central topics being discussed. Additionally, just 22.5% of the deliberations are based on evidence-based ideas. This results in a lack of knowledge and an increase in false information among users. Using non-evidence-based content in virtual spaces will not promote the development of well-informed citizens, which in turn will have negative consequences on the creation of a democratic environment.

Furthermore, the results indicate that there is a noticeable absence of objectivity in the discussions related to the "National Dialogue" on the two Facebook pages that were analyzed. Specifically, only 19.5% of the comments included a balanced assessment of the initiative and its potential outcomes, highlighting both positive and negative aspects. The majority of comments either expressed complete support for the initiative or conveyed disappointment and criticism towards it.

The findings also reveal a low level of acceptance towards different viewpoints and opinions when discussing public issues. Particularly, only 7.5% of the content related to the "National Dialogue" indicates a respectful consideration of other deliberators' views and opinions.

The results also highlight that a mere 19% of the contents demonstrate respect for other people's political and civil rights. Furthermore, only 25.5% of the posts demonstrate recognition of political equality and fair representation. These findings suggest that there is a lack of adherence to the discursive democracy values of inclusiveness and equality by avoiding bias and political discrimination.

The findings suggest that there is a statistically significant difference between the "National Dialogue" Facebook page and the "Al-Shorouk Newspaper" Facebook page, with a p-value of less than .005. The percentages of all addressed discursive democracy principles on the "National Dialogue" page are higher compared to the "Al-Shorouk Newspaper" page.

The results show that virtual discussions do not fully incorporate deliberative democracy elements, with only a small portion of comments offering insightful and evidence-based ideas. This lack of evidence-based content can lead to false

information and uninformed citizens. Moreover, the discussions related to the "National Dialogue" were found to be mostly subjective, with little objective analysis of the initiative's positive and negative aspects. The study also suggests that there is a lack of acceptance towards different viewpoints, as only a small percentage of the content indicates a respectful consideration of other people's opinions. Furthermore, there is a lack of adherence to discursive democracy values of inclusiveness and equality. The findings also indicate a significant difference in the percentages of all addressed discursive democracy principles between the "National Dialogue" Facebook page and the "Al-Shorouk Newspaper" Facebook page.

Discussion

In summary, these results demonstrate that all stakeholders are not effectively participating in upholding the values and practices of discursive democracy.

The fact that the government, which initiated the "National Dialogue" and created a Facebook page as a virtual platform for enhancing citizen engagement and deliberation to address social issues, has failed to ensure discursive democracy is ironic. This situation confirms that the government can misuse social media in numerous ways, resulting in negative impacts on public deliberations and democratic engagement. The government can use social media to spread false or misleading information, either intentionally or unintentionally, which can erode the quality of public discourse and undermine public trust. Additionally, it can manipulate public opinion by amplifying certain voices and perspectives over others or by employing bots and other tactics to artificially inflate or suppress certain views. It can also use social media to suppress dissent by censoring or blocking critical content or by intimidating and harassing individuals with dissenting views. Lastly, the government can use social media as a tool of propaganda or as a means of attacking political opponents, which can further erode public trust and democratic engagement.

In conclusion, the misuse of social media by governments can have severe negative consequences on public deliberations and democratic engagement. To address these risks, it is crucial to hold governments accountable for their use of social media and to ensure that democratic values such as freedom of expression and privacy are upheld in all online interactions. This will require a collective effort from all stakeholders to foster a culture of responsible online engagement that promotes inclusiveness, objectivity, and respect for differing viewpoints. By doing so, we can help safeguard the integrity of public discourse and strengthen the foundations of democratic governance.

Furthermore, the deliberative perspective places a significant burden on citizens, but it does so because a diverse democracy cannot function effectively without

such expectations. However, the misuse of social media as an alternative communicative and discursive platform by laypeople or professional media can erode the potential for realizing a democratic environment. The overall results confirm that the public can misuse social media by sharing false or misleading information, which can spread rapidly and undermine public trust in accurate and reliable sources of information. The anonymity and accessibility of social media can also create a breeding ground for cyberbullying and insults, which can create a hostile environment for public discourse and discourage participation from certain groups. In general, it can be concluded that non-democratic virtual discourse can create echo chambers where individuals are only exposed to viewpoints and perspectives that confirm their existing beliefs. This can lead to polarization and an unwillingness to engage in open and constructive dialogue. The misuse of social media by the public and media can also have negative impacts on public deliberations and democratic engagement. To address these issues, it is important to promote responsible social media use and encourage constructive dialogue that is inclusive, objective, and respectful of diverse perspectives.

The Egyptian case presents an odd face of deliberative democracy, as the results of the study show a lack of adherence to the principles and values of discursive democracy in online spaces. The virtual discourses analyzed in the study revealed a low percentage of in-depth and rich insights into the core deliberated issues, a lack of objectivity, and a low level of respect for other people's views and opinions. Additionally, few posts showed recognition of political equality and fair representation, revealing the absence of democratic deliberation values of inclusiveness and the avoidance of bias and political discrimination.

The study also highlighted the potential for the misuse of social media by governments, which can have significant negative impacts on public deliberations and democratic engagement. The government's use of social media to spread false or misleading information and manipulate public opinion undermines public trust and erodes the quality of public discourse. The anonymity and accessibility of social media also create a breeding ground for cyberbullying and insults, creating a hostile environment for public discourse and discouraging participation from certain groups.

Conclusion

Overall, the Egyptian case presents a challenging context for realizing the principles and values of deliberative democracy. To address these issues, it is essential to promote responsible social media use and encourage inclusive, objective, and respectful dialogue that values diverse perspectives and respects democratic values such as freedom of expression and privacy. Holding governments accountable for their use of social media is also crucial to ensuring

that democratic engagement is protected and that the potential for misuse is minimized.

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