



GLOBAL REGULATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS: ADDRESSING PRIVACY, MISINFORMATION, AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract:

Social media platforms are gaining more influence on public opinion, privacy and democracy, and regulation of social media platforms has become increasingly urgent. This research examines the existing frameworks of social media platform regulation and aims to find a model of regulation that can better protect citizens while strengthening technological development. The study considers the need for regulation to overcome problematic content, punish indelicate user conduct, and safeguard freedom of expression while proposing a regulatory framework that spans regulatory mechanisms and identifies gaps in current regulatory methods.

Keywords: *Social Media Regulation, Privacy Protection, Misinformation, Digital Governance and Global Policy Framework*

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Introduction:

Social media platforms have changed how communication is done, how we share information and even how politics are done globally. These platforms have billions of active users worldwide and have become essential social bonding mediums, business tools, and political platforms. However, as there is an explosion of harmful content, data privacy issues, and misinformation have been spread, there have been demands for stricter oversight of such platforms. Examine how social media platforms are regulated, the challenges in regulating a rapidly growing and changing industry, and the benefits and risks of more robust rules.

Literature Review:

Roy Morgan (2013) Social media can help foster social support and connectivity while developing digital-age skills. But using social media more

frequently comes with risks, particularly for kids and teenagers. The purposeful design of social media platforms, such as the use of algorithms to show users content they will find interesting based on their past online activity, can make them very addictive. Similar to gambling and gaming, individuals may get engrossed and fixated on the platforms, spending more time than they had planned.

Gillespie (2018) states that regulating a decentralized digital environment is complex. The models range from government intervention to self-regulation by tech companies, and the article evaluates how they might work.

Binns (2019) reviews legal frameworks for data protection around the GDPR in Europe and CCPA in California. This paper focuses on the challenges in applying these frameworks to global platforms and is



used as a basis for a call for international cooperation in data privacy.

Fuchs (2020) considers the economic and political forces behind the regulation of social media and deals with the question of the role of big tech corporations and their influence on regulatory policy formulation. Finally, the paper critiques neoliberal regulatory 'approaches', which privilege corporate interests over public welfare.

Zengler (2021) Addresses the tension between privacy protection and freedom of speech in the discussion of the regulation of social media. It argues that existing regulatory models fail to protect users' privacy, enabling dangerous or harmful speech to flourish.

Cox's (2022) focus is on how efforts to combat misinformation on social media platforms have been global. This paper shows that current country regulatory frameworks are vastly different, and a more harmonized global approach is needed to combat the spread of false information.

Binns (2019) reviews legal frameworks for data protection around the GDPR in Europe and CCPA in California. This paper focuses on the challenges in applying these frameworks to global platforms and is used as a basis for a call for international cooperation in data privacy.

Objectives:

- To understand the existing global legal landscape looks for the regulation of social media
- To assess international and national policies on social media,
- To find out the research gap while evaluating the literature regarding the study
- To make comparative analysis of various countries regarding social media regulations

Methodology:

This study uses a descriptive approach to perform an in-depth analysis of the current regulatory frameworks

that govern social media platforms and propose a new, more effective regulatory model at the global level. Quantitative research method to evaluate the literature are included in order to gain a holistic understanding of the regulatory landscape and the public's views of governance for social media. The research is based on existing literature and empirical data to build a more robust, equitable and adaptive regulatory framework that stands the test of emerging challenges in the digital age.

Discussion and Findings:

Need for regulatory responses:

In recent years, governments all over the world have started to think about what kind of regulation is necessary to lessen the harmful consequences of social media. Recognizing social media's advantages, such as its ability to promote cross-border relationships and communications and provide a voice to individuals who might have historically been marginalized in public discourse, is just as vital as acknowledging the difficulties it presents. The preservation of these advantages must be guaranteed by any rule.

Australia:

Cyberbullying, terrorist and extremist content, and the media marketplace have been the main areas of concern for Australia's social media regulations. Less attention has been paid to the platforms' addictive qualities and effects on mental health, particularly as they pertain to children, adolescents, and vulnerable populations. Furthermore, only a little amount of legislative reaction has been made thus far, despite increased awareness of social media's role in disseminating false information, especially in the context of COVID-19, and the resulting detrimental impacts on social cohesion. Australia's defamation laws, according to Communications Minister Paul Fletcher, should guarantee that social media businesses are subject to the same regulations as conventional media.



USA:

Following the November 2020 US elections, there was a spike in inflammatory, deceptive, and fraudulent content, which ultimately resulted in the violent attack on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. The CEOs of Facebook, Google, and Twitter were questioned by the U.S. Congress during a congressional hearing on March 25, 2021, in response to the Capitol storming. The hearing focused on how these platforms contributed to the attack and how they disseminated misinformation and extremism. On April 27, 2021, 39 Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter executives gave testimony before a Senate Judiciary panel regarding the manner in which users are influenced by the algorithms of these platforms. The detrimental impacts of the economic models backed by advertising were criticized by senators from all parties, who also questioned the platforms' dissemination of false information.

European Union:

Making technology work for people and investing in digital skills to promote a cohesive democratic society are the main goals of the European Commission's strategy. Europe invests in digital skills for all Europeans and defends against cyber threats through its overarching digital plan, Shaping Europe's Digital Future,⁸⁷ published on February 19, 2020. Making sure that technology, especially artificial intelligence, is developed in a way that upholds people's rights and fosters their trust is the major goal of the strategy. A fair and competitive digital economy as well as an open, democratic, and sustainable society are the goals of the digital strategy.

New Zealand:

Hon. Jan Tinetti, Minister of Internal Affairs, said on June 10, 2021, that a thorough assessment of content regulation would be conducted in order to provide a modern, adaptable, and cohesive regulatory framework that would lessen the negative effects of

content. Any communication that is made publicly available, whether it be through text, audio, video, or photos, is considered content. Material that involves child sexual exploitation is one kind of dangerous content.

India:

The biggest market for Facebook and WhatsApp users is India. Because of the growth of domestic platforms like Reliance Jio, the quick dissemination of false information on platforms, and the government's ambition to exert more control over social media, India has grown less tolerant of large digital businesses. Because of a WhatsApp rumor that the men had abducted children, five foreigners were beaten to death by the villagers in a small Indian town in July 2018. Due to worries that the applications were participating in activities that endangered the "national security and defence of India, which ultimately impinges upon the sovereignty and integrity of India," India banned 59 apps created by Chinese companies, including TikTok, on June 29, 2020.

The results pinpoint several crucial hurdles for controlling social media systems, including enforcing international conformity, safeguarding users' confidentiality and restricting damaging content without flouting communication independence. The literature review showed that many countries tried to introduce regulations, most of which did not adhere to a single standard approach and did not solve the scope of the problem. A more robust global regulatory framework is necessary for which ethical guidelines for platform owners, stricter data protection policies are included, and provisions against falsehood are made.

From the literature review and initial findings, the following themes emerge as key concerns in regulating social media platforms:

- **Privacy:** Current privacy legislation frequently falls short of adapting to rapid technological



changes, and gaps in user protection are left.

- **Misinformation:** Current regulatory frameworks are reactive, not proactive, and cannot stop distributing destructive content before an audience is too widespread.
- **Platform Responsibility:** Yet much debate has been surrounding how much blame—or freedom or blame and freedom—social media companies should share for user content.
- **Freedom of Speech:** One of the most challenging elements of social media regulation is the balance between free expression and regulating harmful content.

Conclusion:

Overall, regulating social media platforms is a pressing and challenging problem. The right balance between protecting individuals' privacy rights and allowing free speech and international governance must be cautiously strived. This research adds to the ongoing debate by suggesting a new regulatory framework that balances these competing interests and

offers the public good from social media platforms. Future research should explore the possible effect of such frameworks on global cooperation and enforcing regulatory standards in multiple jurisdictions.

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