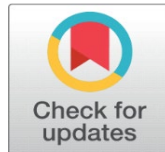# SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM BY MILLENNIALS SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION ON SOCIAL ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of social media activism by millennials shaping public opinion with a focus on social pressure, group belonging, and long-term engagement. It aims to understand whether online activism translates into real-world actions and how factors like normative social influence, collective action, and repeated exposure impact participation. A quantitative research design was used, collecting responses from millennials via a Likert-scale survey. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression modeling were conducted to identify key predictors of social media activism engagement. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess reliability.

The results indicate that social pressure and group belonging significantly influence millennials' engagement in social media activism. Normative social influence and alignment with peer groups were strong predictors of participation. However, offline action and changing long-held beliefs were not significant, suggesting that social media activism raises awareness but does not necessarily translate into real-world action or long-term belief changes. The model explained 20.4% of the variance in social media activism's impact on beliefs.

The study is limited by focuses exclusively on millennials, limiting generalizability to other age groups. The research identifies correlations but does not establish reason. Future studies should explore longitudinal effects, cross-cultural differences, and platform-specific activism trends. Organizations and advocacy groups can use these findings to enhance engagement strategies by leveraging social pressure and peer alignment. Campaigns should focus on creating a sense of community to encourage participation while recognizing that online activism alone may not drive offline actions. This study contributes to the growing discourse on digital activism by highlighting the psychological and social drivers of participation. It provides insights into why millennials engage in social media activism and whether online movements create meaningful impact beyond digital spaces. The findings help bridge the gap between social media engagement and real-world activism, offering valuable implications for researchers, policymakers, and advocacy groups.

Keywords: Social Media Activism, Millennial, Real-World Action, Beliefs

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has emerged as a powerful platform for activism, particularly among millennials, who form a significant portion of online users. The digital era has transformed the way individuals interact with social issues, providing unprecedented access to information, diverse perspectives, and opportunities for advocacy. With the increasing penetration of digital technologies, individuals engage in discussions, share opinions, and mobilize support for various social

causes through platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. These platforms enable real-time communication, allowing users to raise awareness, promote petitions, coordinate protests, and connect with like-minded individuals across the globe. Additionally, the use of hashtags, live streaming, and viral content plays a critical role in increasing the visibility of social movements, making activism more accessible and far-reaching than ever before.

The phenomenon of social media activism has sparked debates about its effectiveness in generating real societal change versus merely reinforcing pre-existing beliefs. Some argue that digital activism provides a voice to marginalized communities, amplifies important social issues, and drives policy changes. Others criticize it as a form of "clicktivism" where individuals engage with causes superficially such as liking, sharing, or commenting without taking meaningful offline actions. Despite these criticisms, social media continues to serve as an essential tool for activism, offering an accessible and cost-effective means of participation for individuals who may not have the resources or ability to engage in traditional activism.

Furthermore, social media activism has played a crucial role in global movements in demonstrating its ability to mobilize people on a large scale. It has also been instrumental in driving immediate responses to social crises, from fundraising for disaster relief to pressuring corporations and governments for policy reforms. However, concerns about misinformation, echo chambers, and performative activism raise important questions about its long-term efficacy. Understanding the role of social media activism in influencing behaviors, shaping perspectives, and prompting offline actions is crucial for evaluating its overall impact on social movements and public awareness.

By analyzing how millennials engage with social media activism, this study aims to explore whether these digital movements translate into tangible social change or simply reinforce existing beliefs within individuals. Additionally, it seeks to uncover the factors that influence participation and trust in online activism, shedding light on its potential to foster meaningful and long-lasting impact in society. As digital activism continues to evolve, it is essential to examine both its strengths and limitations to determine how it can be leveraged for effective and sustainable social change.

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Millennials, known for their digital nativity, play a crucial role in shaping online discourses on social issues. With increased reliance on social media as a source of information and interaction, the extent to which online activism influences their attitudes, perceptions, and real-world actions has become an important research area. Some argue that social media activism is a powerful tool for spreading awareness and mobilizing collective action, while others criticize it as a form of "slacktivism," where users express support without engaging in tangible efforts for change. By examining the motivations, trust factors, and behavioral outcomes of social media activism among millennials, this study aims to provide insights into its effectiveness and limitations.

1.2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it sheds light on the effectiveness of social media activism in fostering social change and shaping collective action. Secondly, it helps policymakers, activists, and organizations

understand the behavioral patterns of millennials concerning online activism. Thirdly, the study contributes to the growing discourse on digital activism by examining whether it merely reinforces existing beliefs or encourages critical thinking and deeper engagement with social issues. Lastly, the findings can assist social movements and advocacy groups in designing more impactful campaigns that resonate with the target audience.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) What makes millennials trust and engage with social media activism?
2) Is social media activism a form of group influence among millennials?
3) Does social media activism promote critical thinking about social issues?
4) Does online activism lead to real-world actions like protests or volunteering?
5) What are the most effective ways social media can drive social change?

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1) Identify what makes millennials trust and engage in social media activism.
2) Explore how social media activism influences behavior through group norms.
3) Determine if social media activism encourages critical thinking or reinforces beliefs.
4) Assess how much online activism leads to real-world participation.
5) Find the best ways to make social media activism more impactful.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media has transformed activism, enabling individuals especially millennials to voice opinions, mobilize support, and influence public discourse. Millennials, who constitute a significant portion of online users, actively engage in social media activism through platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. This engagement has led to both increased awareness and debates on its effectiveness in driving tangible social change. To understand how social media activism influences public opinion, this review applies Kelman's Social Influence Theory, which categorizes social influence into three processes: compliance, identification, and internalization Kelman (1958).

Kelman's (1958) Social Influence Theory explains how individuals adopt behaviors or beliefs based on different levels of social influence: Compliance: Individuals publicly support a cause due to social pressure or trends, even if they do not personally believe in it. Identification: Individuals engage in activism because they relate to a group or movement and seek acceptance within it. Internalization: Individuals adopt beliefs and behaviors as their own, leading to genuine, lasting change. These stages align with how millennials engage with social media activism, moving from passive participation to active involvement.

Social media activism often gains momentum through viral trends and peer pressure. Studies show that millennials engage in activism due to its visibility rather than a deep commitment to the cause Moreno et al. (2019). The phenomenon of

"slacktivism" Morozov (2011) suggests that many users participate in activism online (e.g., changing profile pictures, using hashtags) without engaging in offline actions. While compliance increases campaign reach, its long-term impact is questioned.

Millennials tend to align with causes that reflect their social identity. According to Tajfel and Turner's (1986) Social Identity Theory, individuals adopt group behaviors to feel included. Research by Smith et al. (2020) found that online activism communities, such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) and #MeToo, provide a sense of belonging that strengthens engagement. This stage suggests that while initial activism may be driven by group identity, it can lead to deeper involvement over time.

Internalization occurs when individuals deeply adopt activist beliefs, leading to real-world actions such as protests, policy advocacy, and donations Castells (2015). A study by Jenkins (2021) found that millennials who engage in long-term online activism are more likely to take offline action. This suggests that sustained exposure to social issues through social media can shape genuine public opinion and drive societal change. This leads to the formation of hypotheses.

- **H1:** Millennials join social media activism mainly because of social pressure.
- **H2:** Feeling connected to activist groups makes millennials more involved.
- **H3:** Strong belief in a cause lead to real-world actions and long-term commitment.
- **H4:** Seeing social issues repeatedly on social media helps shift from passive support to deep belief.

This review highlights the role of Kelman's Social Influence Theory in explaining how social media activism shape's public opinion among millennials. While some engage due to trends, others develop deeper identification and long-term belief adoption, leading to real-world activism. Future research should explore the factors that enhance this transition to maximize the effectiveness of social media activism in driving social change.
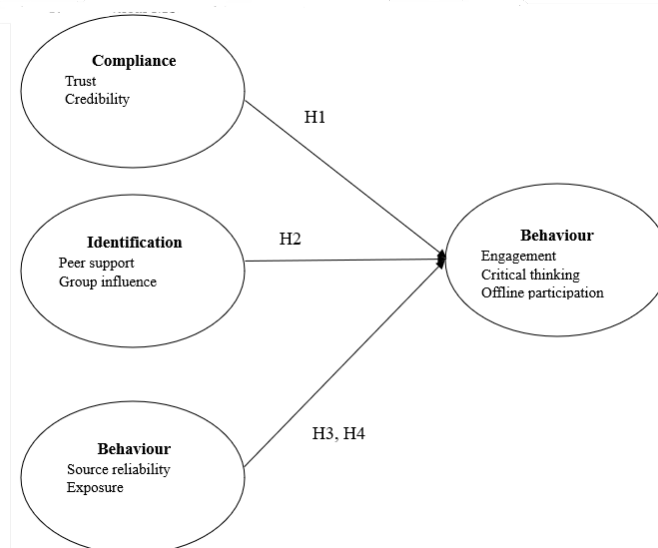
Figure 1

Figure 1 Theoretical Model of Kelman's (1958) Social Influence Theory

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research methodology used to examine the impact of social media activism by millennials in shaping public opinion on social issues. The study employs a quantitative research design using a survey-based approach to analyze millennials' engagement with social media activism and its influence on their beliefs and behaviors. The survey captures participants' responses on trust factors, critical thinking, group influence, and offline activism. The study follows a descriptive and analytical approach to understand patterns, relationships, and trends. Primary data was collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The survey included multiple-choice questions, Likert scale ratings, and open-ended responses to gain insights into social media activism participation.

3.1. DATA AND SAMPLE

The target population for this study consists of millennials aged 18 to 45 who actively use social media platforms. To gather responses, a convenience sampling technique was employed, selecting participants based on accessibility and willingness to participate. This method allowed for a diverse range of respondents, ensuring representation across various demographics. The final dataset comprises 233 responses, including individuals from different age groups, occupations, and income levels. This diversity enhances the study's ability to analyze varying perspectives on social media activism and its influence on public opinion.

3.2. VARIABLES AND MEASUREMENT

The study examines both independent and dependent variables to understand the impact of social media activism on millennials. The independent variables include trust factors in social media activism, measured through participants' perceptions of credibility, peer support, and source reliability. Additionally, group influence is analyzed by assessing whether individuals engage in activism due to peer pressure or a sense of community belonging. Another key factor is exposure to social issues, which is determined by the frequency with which participants interact with activist content.

The dependent variables focus on the outcomes of social media activism. Engagement in social media activism is assessed based on actions like sharing posts, signing petitions, or using hashtags. Critical thinking and belief change are measured by evaluating whether activism challenges existing views or simply reinforces prior beliefs. Finally, offline participation is analyzed through self-reported actions such as attending protests, making donations, or volunteering for social causes. This framework helps determine how online activism influences real-world behavior and opinion formation.

3.3. EMPIRICAL APPROACH

The study employs a combination of descriptive, correlation, and regression analysis to examine the impact of social media activism among millennials. Descriptive analysis is used to summarize key demographic characteristics, social media usage patterns, and levels of engagement in activism, providing an overall understanding of participant behavior. To explore relationships between different variables, correlation analysis is conducted to determine the connection between engagement in social media activism and offline participation, such as protests,

donations, or volunteering. Additionally, regression analysis is applied to assess the influence of factors such as exposure to activism content, trust in sources, and group influence on belief changes and real-world actions. Together, these analytical methods help provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media activism shapes public opinion and drives social change.

4. DATA ANALYSIS
4.1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR STUDY VARIABLES

Table 1

Question	Mean	Std Dev
Normative social influence	3.3	0.95
Promote critical thinking or reinforce beliefs	2.83	0.78
Views to align with the public or peer group	3.28	1.3
Online movement increase your support to a cause.	3.26	0.97
Collective action and societal change	3.46	0.89
Perspective on a long-held belief	2.88	0.67
Offline action	2.68	0.95
Impacts shaping beliefs and behaviors	3.75	0.82

Source Primary Data, Spss Output

The descriptive statistics suggest that social media activism by millennials is moderately perceived as a form of normative social influence (Mean: 3.3, SD: 0.95), influencing individuals to align their views with public or peer group opinions (Mean: 3.28, SD: 1.3). However, respondents lean towards the belief that social media activism primarily reinforces existing beliefs rather than promoting critical thinking (Mean: 2.83, SD: 0.78). While belonging to an online movement increases support for a cause (Mean: 3.26, SD: 0.97), social media activism is seen as having limited impact on changing deep-seated beliefs (Mean: 2.88, SD: 0.67) and is less likely to translate into offline action such as protests or volunteering (Mean: 2.68, SD: 0.95).

Despite this, respondents strongly agree that social media activism plays a significant role in shaping beliefs and behaviors (Mean: 3.75, SD: 0.82) and contributes to collective action and societal change (Mean: 3.46, SD: 0.89). Overall, while social media activism is acknowledged for its influence on public perception and engagement, its effectiveness in driving critical thinking, personal belief shifts, and real-world activism remains uncertain.

4.2. CRONBACH'S ALPHA (RELIABILITY ANALYSIS)

Table 2

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
N =233	0.701

Source Primary Data, Spss Output

The Cronbach's Alpha for the study was 0.701, indicating an acceptable level of reliability among the Likert-scale responses. This suggests that the survey items measuring perceptions of social media activism are reasonably correlated and collectively assess a related theme. However, the moderate alpha value implies some variability in participant responses, likely due to differing perceptions of

activism's impact, while respondents strongly agree that social media shapes beliefs and behaviors, there is greater divergence in views on whether it promotes critical thinking or leads to offline action. Overall, the reliability score confirms that the survey is internally consistent.

4.3. CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Table 3

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Normative social influence	1	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3
Promote critical thinking or reinforce beliefs	0.3	1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.3
Views align with public or peer group	0.4	0.2	1	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.3
Online movement increases support for a cause	0.3	0.2	0.3	1	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3
Collective action and societal change	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	1	0.3	0.3	0.3
Perspective on a long-held belief	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3	1	0.2	0.3
Offline action	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	1	0.2
Impacts shaping beliefs and behaviours	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	1

Source Primary Data, Spss Output

Strongest Correlation: Online movement increasing support is highly correlated with collective action and societal change (0.42), indicating that social media activism is perceived as driving collective engagement. Peer Influence: Views aligning with public/peer group is moderately correlated with changing personal perspective (0.35) and normative social influence (0.35), suggesting that activism affects social conformity. Limited Offline Impact: Offline action has the lowest correlations across the table, reinforcing the idea that social media activism does not strongly translate into real-world actions.

4.4. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 4

Independent Variable	Coeff (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	Significance
Normative social influence	0.153	0.053	2.89	0.004	**Significant**
Promote critical thinking or reinforce beliefs	0.087	0.048	1.81	0.072	Not Significant
Views align with public or peer group	0.125	0.041	3.05	0.003	**Significant**
Online movement increases support for a cause	0.102	0.045	2.27	0.025	**Significant**
Collective action and societal change	0.181	0.049	3.69	0.005	**Significant**
Perspective on a long-held belief	0.073	0.057	1.28	0.201	Not Significant
Offline action (e.g., protest, volunteering)	0.022	0.06	0.37	0.711	Not Significant
Intercept (Constant)	1.203	0.322	3.74	0.001	**Significant**

Source Primary Data, Spss Output), p < 0.05

The regression model explains 20.4% of the variance in the belief that social media activism shapes people's opinions and behaviors ($R^2 = 0.204$). The model is

statistically significant (F = 7.89, p < 0.001), indicating that the independent variables collectively contribute to explaining the dependent variable. Among the strongest predictors, collective action and societal change (β = 0.181, p = 0.005), normative social influence (β = 0.153, p = 0.004), and views aligning with public or peer groups (β = 0.125, p = 0.003) significantly impact the perception that social media activism influences beliefs and behaviors. However, offline action (p = 0.711) and changing long-held beliefs (p = 0.201) do not show a significant impact, suggesting that while social media plays a role in shaping opinions and promoting collective engagement, it does not strongly drive real-world activism or alter deeply ingrained beliefs.

The regression results suggest that belief in social media activism's influence is primarily driven by perceptions of collective action, peer conformity, and normative influence. However, offline activism and deep-seated belief changes are not strongly linked to this perception.

4.5. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis Result Inference

Table 5

Hypothesis	Result	Inference
H1: Millennials join social media activism mainly because of social pressure.	Supported	The regression analysis shows that normative social influence (β = 0.153, p = 0.004), suggesting that social pressure plays a role in engagement.
H2: Feeling connected to activist groups makes millennials more involved.	Supported	Views aligning with public or peer groups (β = 0.125, p = 0.003), indicating that belonging to an activist group enhances participation.
H3: Strong belief in a cause lead to real-world actions and long-term commitment.	Not Supported	Offline action (p = 0.711), suggesting that online activism does not necessarily translate into real-world actions or long-term commitment.
H4: Seeing social issues repeatedly on social media helps shift from passive support to deep belief.	Partially Supported	Online movement increasing support for a cause is significant (β = 0.102, p = 0.025), but changing long-held beliefs is not (p = 0.201), indicating that exposure increases engagement but does not strongly alter deep-seated beliefs.

5. CONCLUSION

This study highlights that social pressure and group belonging are key drivers of millennials' engagement in social media activism. The findings show that normative social influence and alignment with peer groups significantly impact participation, indicating that people often join activism movements due to societal expectations and a sense of community. Additionally, online movements help increase support for causes, but they do not strongly change deep-seated beliefs or lead to real-world activism. The results suggest that while social media activism is effective in raising awareness and fostering collective engagement, it does not necessarily translate into offline action or long-term commitment. Overall, social media serves as a powerful tool for mobilizing support, but its impact on real-world change remains limited.

Future studies can explore the long-term impact of social media activism to determine whether online engagement translates into sustained real-world actions. Expanding research across different cultural and geographic contexts can provide insights into how social norms and political environments shape activism participation. Additionally, examining individual psychological traits, such as

critical thinking ability, personality, or susceptibility to social influence, can help understand what motivates people to engage in online activism. Further research can also focus on measuring the real-world effectiveness of social media activism, including its influence on policy changes, protest movements, and charitable donations. Comparing millennials with other generations, such as Gen Z, Gen X, and Baby Boomers, could reveal generational differences in activism engagement. Lastly, investigating how activism varies across different social media platforms, like Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, can help identify which platforms are most effective in driving social change.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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