Relationships between government and citizen via Twitter

Abstract

Twitter has become one of the ways for people to connect, unite, share common interest and receive updated news around the world. Recently, it has become a place to spread awareness and gain attention for issues that are obscure. Therefore, this paper will elucidate the relationships between government and citizen that has developed on Twitter under the circumstances of protesting, collaborating and raising awareness in order to achieve the intended objectives.

Did you know that internet was invented in 1983 by the Advance Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) in USA (Andrews, 2019)? Even so, why was it invented? It was first to catered the militaries and scientists to communicate easier but then, it got popular and formed into the internet that we know today (Gharbawi, n.d.). We are living in an era where the internet is still expanding and where the technologies are invented to do what we used to think impossible such as how we are able to connect across the globe. The rapid development has made the interactions between people around the world becoming simpler and easier. SixDegrees.com was the first social networking sites where users can set up a profile page, make friends and send messages within its network (Samur, 2018). It was developed in 1997. Then, the social media platforms started to emerge in the early 2000's where they can obtain and access a wider range of options for social medias. In particular, MySpace was created in 2003, Facebook which is the most popular and has the highest users until today was created in 2004, Twitter in 2006 then came Instagram in 2010, a photo sharing platform which has more than a billion active users today and still counting (Samur, 2018) (Most used social media 2021, 2021). It has been the cornerstone of the world ever since. This paper will elucidate the relationships between government and citizen that has developed on Twitter under the circumstances of protesting, collaborating and raising awareness in order to achieve the intended objectives.

According to The purpose and power of protest (2021) an article written by ADL (2021), "A protest is an event or action where people gather with others to publicly express their opinions about something that is happening in society". Protest happens when incidents that are lack of fairness took place. Contemporarily, social media platform has a great influence on its users as well as it takes lesser time to reach and influence the intended audiences. Numerous of incidents that are reported in the news involves communities utilising social media platform to response to

major incidents such as racial injustice, human rights and political issues. To demonstrate, police brutality incident took place in 2020 involving the mistreatment of George Floyd which led him to his death has caused a stir both virtually and physically in the US (Hill, Tiefenthäler, Trierbert, & etc., 2021). Every individual that felt connected to George Floyd's death whether they are a part of the people of colour community or being a part of a community that demands for human right stood up for his death. This unnecessary death has opened up a pandora's box which led to many more injustice death of innocent people of colour to be exposed. A hashtag has been brought back for this movement and is still being used until now which is #BlackLivesMatter. The hashtag was founded in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi in a Facebook post with the same reason which is racial injustice (Anderson, Barthel, Perrin, & Vogels, 2020). However, people were not aware as social medias were not widely used. This time, George Floyd death has caused an outrage to the communities in the US and made the hashtag trending worldwide which research has found that "8.8 million uses of #BlackLivesMatter as national and global protests spread" on May 28, 2020 (Anderson, Barthel, Perrin, & Vogels, 2020). It was the highest usage of #BlackLivesMatter since the 2016 incident which had more than a million (Anderson, Barthel, Perrin, & Vogels, 2020). During the movement period, thousands of people participated in the protest of police brutality both physically and virtually demanding the fair death of George Floyd. Particularly, latest update, information, petitions and funding links on the movement were being spread like a wildfire on a global scale on Twitter demanding people to educate themselves and be a part of the movement. Physical protest concerning thousands of people were able to be pulled off through the sharing of information from one social media to the other however, a number of casualties were also reported. This incident certainly has shown the worst of the United States and that people are still being treated for the colour of their skin. Thus, allowing different community of people to support and demand to put a stop on the immoral act of a government body proposed that Twitter and other social platforms play a big role in making the movement happened. The emotions of users can be captured and influenced by a post that affects their emotional and mental state, enabling them to relate to the situations others are facing.

Collaboration between users of distinct parties, specially involving citizens and governments on social media is a topic that has evolved vastly. Government bodies particularly, the police has joined other public and private organisations in creating their own social media accounts which allow them to provide first-hand latest news and updates to their followers. Taking this as a way to widen and develop their service, connecting and collaborating with the citizens has improve their system to protect and serve the country. Specifically, there was a riot in England back in 2011 due to an injustice death of Mark Duncan that was shot dead by police officers. Mobile technologies including Twitter and other social media application has developed the process to bring together a riot. Taking a shorter time, it is known for its mobilization of a "mediated crowd" (Panagiotopoulos, Bigdeli & Sams, 2014). This crowd is influenced by the regularly shared information which affect their decision to whether participate in an unlawful act or not. Further, the riot has made people took advantage of the event by looting off of the businesses. This has caused businesses in London to face billions of losses. The following has led to the collaboration between citizen and government through Twitter in order to provide a safer place for the communities. Citizen and government were showed to have interacted mostly through Twitter as well as providing citizen news update about the situations during the riots incident. Citizen would "helps the government be more responsive and effective" such as citizen reporting websites (Panagiotopoulos, Bigdeli & Sams, 2014). According to experts, Panagiotopoulos, Bigdeli & Sams (2014), "Twitter provides an immediate and flexible tool to disseminate information and communicate through brief public messages". Again, citizen were joining forces with police to find looters that has taken the advantage of the event (Panagiotopoulos, Bigdeli & Sams, 2014). Citizen has directly helped governments to resolve the issue faster through twitter and this illustrate how the existence of Twitter has helped people to connect facilely.

Raising awareness is not a foreign act to do in this day and age. As claimed by SDG Accountability Handbook (2021), "it is a process that seeks to inform and educate people about a topic or issue with the intention of influencing their attitudes, behaviours and beliefs towards the achievement of a defined purpose or goal". Twitter is one of the best social platforms to raise awareness on as Twitter has the feature where people are able to share others' opinion and experience simply by 'retweeting' another person's tweet. This suggests that the tweet will be seen by the followers of the person who shares the tweet enabling it to spread and gain attention from Twitter users and so the concatenation continues until it becomes trending or popular. In particular, latterly an incident happened in Malaysia where a high school student, Ain Husniza

Saiful Nizam, voiced out through an application called TikTok about her teacher rape jokes which he said do not rape people that are under 18 where you could get punished instead, rape people that are over 18. This had her and her friends appalled however, the boys in her class just laugh it off. The video was brought to her Twitter account and received an overwhelmed response where it reached 33k retweets and 30.8k likes and made #MakeSchoolASaferPlace trending (Nizam, 2021). Yet, she received rape threat from one of her classmates and backlashed or even lewd remarks from some of the social media users and teachers as well after the video sparked an outraged on Twitter (South China Morning Post, 2021). She then lodged a police report and received a response from the Deputy Inspector-General of Police (IGP) himself saying that the rape threat as maybe a joke (MalaysiaKini, 2021). After the incident, many users on Twitter started to voice out their experience and raise awareness about rape culture which expresses that victim is always to be question and at fault and never the predator. As a result, many Malaysian artists supported her through Twitter and gave their full support on her movement and raising awareness. This movement has gave people either boys or girls, men or women the courage to stood up and speak up for themselves instead of forsake the occurrence.

Next, every matter that occurs in social media especially regarding sensitive issues such as politics, discrimination of races, entertainments and environmental crisis can easily reach to people due to the evolving of internet and technology at the present time. Social media always bring news that even faster than the normal newspaper or through the main stream media such as television news and radio channel. Furthermore, society is more easily connected to the social media platform where everything is on their fingertips. This is due to social medias are easier to access, and gain attention around the world.

In the final analysis, Twitter has changed over time in the best possible way to provide a service that suits the current needs of its users. Twitter has become a one stop place where it not only acts as a platform which allow users to keep in touch and share pictures, but also a platform where it can gather and unite a public who have mutual beliefs and opinions. Moreover, great outcome can be produced and achieved through collaborations between two distinct parties that take place on Twitter by collecting feedbacks and sharing updates. It also indirectly facilitate each other's' work. Lastly, awareness regarding current issues and sensitive topics can also be raised through this platform. This enables the society to learn about current issues and educate themselves as well as find out ways to help in creating a better world for everyone. In conclusion, Twitter users should know how to fully utilise this never-ending evolving platform in order to

obtain the benefits of using them. In my point of view, governments need to take citizen's word earnestly as they are actually serving for them and not the other way around. Rather than fighting against it, governments should listen and take action on the person who is accountable in the future.

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