

"A man is
great by
deeds, not by
birth"
-Chanakya

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**When Voice Feels Futile: A Helplessness Perspective on
Digital Civic Engagement**

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When Voice Feels Futile: A Helplessness Perspective on Digital Civic Engagement

Abstract:

This study examines the phenomenon of helplessness in the context of civic & political participation on social media platforms. Drawing on learned helplessness theory, we explore whether repeated exposure to unresponsive civic participation on social media directly or through observing others' experiences can lead to feelings of helplessness among citizens. Using a comparative case study methodology, the study proposes to analyse scenarios where government responses are absent versus present, assessing their impact on learned helplessness experienced by both active participants and passive observers. The findings are expected to contribute to theoretical advancements by expanding the understanding of learned helplessness in digital contexts as a possible factor behind citizens' disengagement. The study will provide practical insights to policymakers & platforms to design interventions that foster public trust, long-term engagement, and curb misinformation.

Keywords Learned helplessness; Civic Participation, Social Media, e-governance, Active vs Passive users



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