SLACKTIVISM'S POLITICAL PROSPECTS: DICHOTOMY, DIVERSITY AND IMPLICATIONS

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The article offers a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of slacktivism within the context of digital political engagement, exploring its multifaceted impact on modern political discourse and activism.

The paper examines the evolution of slacktivism, initially seen as a positive concept but increasingly associated with superficial engagement. The study delves into the role of slacktivism in political movements and its implications for political participation, particularly in terms of its efficacy and legitimacy. It evaluates the potential benefits and limitations of slacktivism, analyzing its role in the evolving dynamics of political participation and activism in the digital age. It also discusses how slacktivism intersects with political theory, raising critical questions about its influence on political mobilization, advocacy, and participation in contemporary democracies.

The exploration of the dichotomy surrounding slacktivism, highlights its potential to transform within political contexts. The study examines two main transformation paths: the evolution of slacktivism into offline political activism and its decline into political absenteeism, underscoring both slacktivism's potential to serve as a gateway to conventional modes of political participation, exemplified by case studies, and concerns about slacktivism leading to political absenteeism, emphasizing the risk of digital engagement reducing participation in impactful offline political actions.

The article underscores the need for rigorous research to understand the complexities of slacktivism's impact on political participation and democratic governance. It calls for an examination of the interplay between online and offline activism, contextual factors, and evolving digital technologies to evaluate slacktivism's diverse dimensions. The relevance of slacktivism to political science research is highlighted, considering its potential to inform our understanding of contemporary political participation, public discourse, and the evolving dynamics of digital activism. The paper suggests that investigating the impact of slacktivism and its interplay with traditional forms of political participation is crucial for advancing a comprehensive understanding of political activism in the 21st century.

Key words: slacktivism, digital political engagement, political mobilization, online activism, political participation.

Slacktivism, a term coined by combining "slacker" and "activism", refers to low-effort, often online political activities that are criticized for their lack of meaningful impact on real-life political outcomes [1; 2]. In today's context, it encompasses a range of activities, such as sharing content on social media, signing online petitions, and participating in short-term boycotts. While the term originally had a positive connotation, it has since evolved into a more negative concept, often associated with superficial engagement and a lack of genuine political commitment.

Within the realm of political science, slacktivism has garnered significant attention due to its association with modern political movements and digital political engagement. The emergence of digital platforms, particularly social media, has facilitated the ease with which individuals can

participate in low-cost, low-effort political actions. Online petitions, social media campaigns, and digital advocacy have become prevalent forms of slacktivism, enabling citizens to engage in political activities with minimal effort [3].

The diffusion of slacktivism in modern political discourse has prompted debates regarding its efficacy and legitimacy. Detractors argue that it leads to a decline in meaningful political action, characterizing it as "clicktivism". Critics believe that these activities, while enabling individuals to feel good about their participation, often fail to generate substantial change or impact real-life political decisions [4].

In analyzing the role of slacktivism in modern political movements, it becomes essential to consider both its potential benefits and limitations. While some view it as a gateway to digital political engagement, others highlight concerns regarding its ability to effect tangible political change.

The intersection between the potential transformation of slacktivism and political theory and practice raises critical questions about the evolving dynamics of political participation and activism in the digital age.

The core of this investigation involves an examination of the contrast associated with slacktivism. On one hand, it offers a seemingly accessible avenue for individuals to express their political views and contribute to causes with minimal exertion. Yet, on the other hand, critiques of slacktivism raise concerns about its impact on the depth and substantive nature of civic engagement. Hence, evaluating the potential transformation of slacktivism necessitates an examination of its dichotomous nature.

Moreover, understanding the potential transformation of slacktivism calls for an appreciation of its diversity. From online petitions to social media activism, slacktivism encompasses a wide array of digital activities. Consequently, scrutinizing the intersection between slacktivism and political theory requires an exploration of the diverse manifestations and implications of these digital engagements within the broader political framework.

In this context, the implications of slacktivism on political theory and practice demand careful consideration. How does slacktivism influence political mobilization, advocacy, and participation in contemporary democracies? Does it engender a shift in the dynamics of citizen-government interactions, and if so, what are the implications for political theory and practice? These questions underscore the significance of evaluating the potential transformation of slacktivism within the realm of political theory and its practical implications for democratic governance.

Political theorists have offered valuable insights into the phenomenon of slacktivism, providing a framework for understanding its implications within the broader context of political participation and activism.

The slacktivism hypothesis, as presented by scholars, encompasses the notion that political participation on social media often culminates in a form of self-staging that fails to translate into tangible offline participation or effect political change. This hypothesis draws attention to the user agency in online political participation, emphasizing the need to scrutinize the depth and impact of digital engagement on actual political outcomes [5].

Critics have underscored the superficial nature of certain forms of engagement on social media platforms, characterizing them as "somewhat superficial." This prompts an examination of the dichotomy between the ease of participation facilitated by digital platforms and the genuine impact of such activities on political processes [6].

Political theorists, such as Kahn, Kellner [7], Karpf [8], and others, have highlighted the potential of social media as a tool for mobilizing groups and exerting pressure on governments.

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This perspective presents an alternative view, attributing significance to social media activism as a means to bring about collective action and influence political decision-making.

Consequently, the debate surrounding slacktivism leads to an exploration of the multifaceted impact of digital activism on individuals' political participation. This exploration furthers the understanding of the evolving nature of political engagement and activism in the digital era, shedding light on the opportunities and challenges inherent in leveraging digital platforms for political mobilization.

Scholarly discourse also encompasses inquiries into the efficacy of internet campaigns and the potential substitution of traditional offline participation by digital engagement. Debates surrounding the impact of internet activism on real-life political decisions prompt an evaluation of the tangible outcomes of online political activities and their influence on broader democratic processes [3].

In essence, political theories on slacktivism not only serve to critique the phenomenon but also offer nuanced perspectives that emphasize the dichotomous nature of digital engagement, the potential for collective action through social media, and the efficacy of internet campaigns in effecting political change. These theories provide a comprehensive lens through which to analyze and understand the complexities of slacktivism within contemporary political landscapes.

Slacktivism occupies a unique position within the broader narrative of political participation and digital democracy. Its emergence has prompted considerable discourse on its implications for civic engagement and democratic governance, sparking debates on its efficacy, legitimacy, and impact. In navigating this landscape, it is imperative to examine how slacktivism intersects with the evolving dynamics of digital political participation and its relationship with established political theories.

The dichotomy surrounding slacktivism underscores the need to reevaluate traditional notions of political participation. While critics highlight its potential for shallow engagement, proponents argue that it serves as a vital gateway for individuals to express their political views and contribute to causes with minimal effort. This calls for a reexamination of the dichotomous nature of slacktivism and its role in shaping contemporary political discourses.

Furthermore, the transformation of slacktivism necessitates an exploration of its intersection with political theory and practice. By probing the complexities of slacktivism, we can discern its potential to redefine the dynamics of civic engagement, advocacy, and political mobilization within the digital sphere.

The evolution of slacktivism prompts us to consider how it influences political mobilization and advocacy, challenging established paradigms of citizen-government interactions. Political theories emphasizing the opportunities presented by digital activism offer valuable insights into the paradigm shifts in political participation, emphasizing the potential of social media as a platform for collective action and pressuring governmental entities [9; 10].

By scrutinizing the tangible outcomes of online political activities, scholars can assess its influence on democratic processes and its potential to complement or substitute traditional forms of offline participation [11]. We can consider two main transformation paths of slacktivism in political context:

Path 1: Evolution into offline political activism

The concept of slacktivism presents an intriguing trajectory that intertwines with traditional forms of political activism. Political mobilization theories offer valuable insights into the potential transformation of slacktivism as a gateway to more conventional modes of political participation. This transformation path can be characterized by its propensity to bridge the gap between digital and offline activism, thus redefining the landscape of civic engagement

and democratic governance. Political mobilization theories underscore the gradual evolution of slacktivism into offline political activism, challenging prevalent skepticism surrounding online participation's impact on real-life politics.

The discourse serves as a catalyst for reevaluating the dichotomy between digital and traditional activism, emphasizing their interconnectedness rather than displacement. Moreover, it debunks skepticism pertaining to efficacy in effecting meaningful change by highlighting evolving trends from online activities toward tangible outcomes in offline engagement [12].

Several political case studies provide compelling evidence of the transition from slacktivism to offline activism. One notable example is the Arab Spring, where social media were utilized as a tool for organizing and mobilizing protests against authoritarian regimes. What began as online activism, characterized by hashtags and viral campaigns, translated into mass demonstrations and offline political engagement, leading to significant political upheaval in the region [13].

Another illustrative case is the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the United States. Initially propelled by social media activism, the movement evolved into widespread protests, community organizing, and policy advocacy, effectively transcending the realm of slacktivism to effect systemic change and social justice reforms [14].

These case studies shed light on the transformative potential of slacktivism, showcasing how digital activism can serve as a catalyst for substantive offline political participation and tangible social impact. They underscore the dynamic interplay between digital and traditional forms of activism, debunking perceptions of online engagement as purely symbolic or inconsequential.

By examining these case studies, we gain insights into the nuanced pathways through which slacktivism can evolve into robust offline activism, challenging prevailing notions of its limitations and amplifying its role in driving societal and political change.

Path 2: Decline into Political Absenteeism

Despite the potential for the evolution of slacktivism into offline political activism, there exists a contrasting trajectory that raises concerns about its propensity to lead to political absenteeism. This pathway calls into question the sustainability of digital engagement in effecting tangible political change, highlighting the risk of disillusionment and disengagement from traditional forms of political participation.

The disillusionment with the political process and the lack of tangible policy impact associated with slacktivism may contribute to a decline in political engagement, as individuals become increasingly skeptical of the efficacy of online activism. In this context, the allure of minimal effort and the illusion of impact perpetuated by digital engagement may lead to a sense of complacency, ultimately deterring individuals from meaningful offline political actions [15].

Moreover, the critique that slacktivism may reduce participation in offline forms of engagement amplifies concerns about its potential to erode the robustness of traditional political activism. As individuals gravitate towards convenient online gestures, there is a risk of diminishing the collective influence of organized, sustained offline mobilization, thereby weakening the capacity for impactful political change [16].

This decline into political absenteeism underscores the need for a critical examination of the sustainability of slacktivism and its long-term implications for civic engagement and democratic governance. It prompts scholars and practitioners to consider the imperative of cultivating holistic approaches that harmonize digital and traditional forms of activism, mitigating the risks of disengagement and disillusionment while harnessing the transformative potential of online engagement as a catalyst for meaningful political change.

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In navigating the intricate pathways of slacktivism within the political context, it is crucial to adopt a balanced lens that illuminates its dual potential for evolution into substantive offline activism while acknowledging the risks of fostering political absenteeism. Embracing this comprehensive perspective enables a nuanced understanding of the complexities and dynamics of digital engagement within contemporary political landscapes.

The debate surrounding slacktivism raises pertinent questions about its efficacy in effecting tangible political change and its nuanced impact on democratic processes. At the heart of this discourse lies the political dichotomy that frames slacktivism as either a transformative force or a contributor to political apathy. However, adopting a multiplicity of outcomes approach can offer a more comprehensive understanding of slacktivism's influence on civic engagement and democratic governance.

Proponents of the dichotomous view argue that slacktivism represents a superficial form of political engagement, primarily characterized by low-barrier actions that offer limited substantive impact. From this perspective, online activism is portrayed as an expression of symbolic involvement that fails to translate into tangible policy outcomes [16]. Consequently, the dichotomous lens casts slacktivism as antithetical to robust political participation, positioning it as a hindrance to meaningful social and political change.

In contrast, proponents of the multiplicity of outcomes approach advocate for a more nuanced understanding of slacktivism's impact. By acknowledging its potential to serve as a gateway to deeper civic involvement, this perspective reframes slacktivism as a catalyst for raising awareness, building solidarity, and seeding the groundwork for sustained offline activism. Moreover, it emphasizes the diverse pathways through which online engagement can yield tangible benefits, such as fostering community resilience, amplifying marginalized voices, and shaping public discourse.

The dichotomous view of slacktivism tends to oversimplify the diverse ways in which digital activism intersects with traditional forms of political participation. By dichotomizing slacktivism as a binary choice between efficacy and apathy, the nuances inherent in its transformative potential may be overlooked. In contrast, acknowledging the multiplicity of outcomes enables a holistic examination of the varied dimensions of slacktivism, embracing its capacity to trigger nuanced social and political changes in different contexts [17].

Furthermore, the multiplicity of outcomes framework prompts scholars and practitioners to explore the dynamic interplay between online and offline activism, recognizing that slacktivism's impact is contingent upon contextual factors, socio-political dynamics, and the evolution of digital technologies [18]. By navigating the complexity of slacktivism, a richer understanding of its role in reshaping contemporary political landscapes emerges, transcending the confines of a singular political dichotomy.

In light of these considerations, an inclusive approach that embraces the multiplicity of outcomes can enrich the discourse on slacktivism, offering a more nuanced portrayal of its influence on civic engagement, democratic governance, and the broader political landscape. This holistic perspective invites critical inquiry into the varied dimensions of slacktivism, underscoring its potential to engender diverse and impactful outcomes, thereby advancing an informed analysis of its role in the digital age.

The phenomenon of slacktivism, characterized by low-effort online engagement in political causes, prompts a critical examination of the psychological motivations that underpin this form of digital activism [19]. Understanding these motivations is essential for assessing the impact of slacktivism on political engagement and policy perspectives.

Psychological research suggests that individuals' engagement in slacktivism may be influenced by intrinsic motivational factors. The concept of "moral licensing" provides insight

into this behavior, as individuals who perform a small, morally positive action, such as sharing a social or political post online, may subsequently feel licensed to forgo further, more impactful actions [20; 21; 22]. This phenomenon is rooted in the psychological need for self-affirmation, where individuals seek to maintain a positive self-image by engaging in token gestures that align with their moral values.

The allure of social validation also plays a significant role in motivating slacktivism. Online platforms provide a space for individuals to garner affirmation and recognition from their social networks through likes, shares, and comments on their proclamations of support for political causes. This validation acts as a psychological reward, reinforcing the behavior of engaging in low-effort online activism.

Moreover, the psychological concept of "diffusion of responsibility" may contribute to the prevalence of slacktivism [23]. In the digital realm, individuals may perceive their online actions as part of a collective effort, alleviating their sense of personal responsibility for effecting tangible change. This diffusion of responsibility reduces the individual's sense of accountability for meaningful offline engagement, thus perpetuating the cycle.

The intrinsic psychological drivers of slacktivism have notable implications for political engagement and policy perspectives. As individuals derive psychological fulfillment from minimal online actions, the likelihood of transitioning to impactful offline engagement may diminish. This can lead to a reduction in sustained, collective mobilization for political causes, potentially impacting the depth of civic involvement in effecting policy change [24].

Furthermore, the psychological reinforcement obtained through social validation and moral licensing may shape individuals' policy perspectives. By engaging in slacktivism, individuals may develop a sense of involvement in political issues without necessarily delving into the complexities of policy analysis and critical discourse. As a result, their policy perspectives may be influenced by superficial understandings of political matters, potentially impacting the depth of informed citizenry within democratic processes [25].

Understanding the psychological motivations behind slacktivism illuminates the complexities of digital activism and its influence on political engagement and policy perspectives. By delving into these psychological drivers, scholars and practitioners can garner insights into the nuanced dynamics of online engagement, thereby informing strategies for promoting meaningful political involvement in the digital age.

The potential political directions of slacktivism embody a nuanced landscape shaped by divergent perspectives on its impact. While some point to its limitations as a superficial form of engagement with negligible real-world effects, others emphasize its capacity to catalyze meaningful social and political change. These differing viewpoints underscore the complexity of slacktivism's role in contemporary political discourse, highlighting the need for a comprehensive understanding of its implications for political science research.

Summarizing the potential political directions of slacktivism, it is apparent that scholars and practitioners grapple with contrasting assessments of its efficacy. On one hand, the notion of slacktivism as mere symbolic involvement divorced from tangible policy outcomes has prompted skepticism regarding its value as a meaningful catalyst for political change. On the other hand, proponents of a more multifaceted approach contend that online activism, including slacktivism, can serve as a gateway to deeper civic engagement and have tangible benefits such as raising awareness and shaping public discourse.

This duality underscores the need for rigorous research to disentangle the complexities of slacktivism's impact on political participation and democratic governance. Examining the interplay between online and offline activism, contextual factors, and evolving digital technologies

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is imperative for evaluating the diverse dimensions of slacktivism. Moreover, the ethical and psychological dimensions inherent in online engagement warrant critical inquiry, shedding light on the motivations and implications of slacktivism within the broader political landscape.

The relevance of slacktivism to political science research lies in its potential to inform our understanding of contemporary political participation, public discourse, and the evolving dynamics of digital activism. By delving into the multifaceted nature of slacktivism, scholars can enrich their analyses of civic engagement, democratic governance, and the broader political landscape in the digital age. As such, investigating the impact of slacktivism and its interplay with traditional forms of political participation holds immense significance for advancing an informed and comprehensive understanding of political activism in the 21st century.

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ПОЛІТИЧНІ ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ СЛАКТИВІЗМУ: ДИХОТОМІЯ, РОЗМАЇТТЯ ТА МОЖЛИВІ НАСЛІДКИ

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У статті пропонується комплексний аналіз феномену слактивізму в контексті цифрової політичної участі, досліджується його багатогранний вплив на сучасний політичний дискурс та активізм.

У роботі розглядається еволюція слактивізму, який спочатку розглядався як позитивна концепція, але все частіше асоціюється з поверхневою залученістю. Дослідження заглиблюється в роль слективізму в політичних рухах та його наслідки для політичної участі, зокрема, з точки зору її ефективності та легітимності. Воно оцінює потенційні переваги та обмеження слактивізму, аналізуючи його роль у динаміці політичної участі та активізму в цифрову епоху. Також обговорюється, як слактивізм співвідноситься з політичною теорією, порушуються критичні питання щодо його впливу на політичну мобілізацію, пропаганду та участь у сучасних демократіях.

Дослідження дихотомії, що оточує слактивізм, підкреслює його потенціал до трансформації в політичних контекстах. У дослідженні розглядаються два основні шляхи трансформації: еволюція слактивізму в офлайновий політичний активізм і його занепад у політичний абсентеїзм, підкреслюючи як потенціал слактивізму слугувати брамою до традиційних форм політичної участі, проілюстрований конкретними прикладами, так і занепокоєння щодо того, що слактивізм призводить до політичного абсентеїзму, наголошуючи на ризику цифрової взаємодії, що зменшує участь у впливових офлайнових політичних акціях.

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У статті підкреслюється необхідність ретельного дослідження для розуміння складних аспектів впливу слактивізму на політичну участь і демократичне врядування. Вона закликає дослідити взаємодію між онлайн та офлайн активізмом, контекстуальними факторами та розвитком цифрових технологій, щоб оцінити різноманітні виміри слактивізму. Підкреслюється актуальність слактивізму для політологічних досліджень з огляду на його потенціал для поглиблення нашого розуміння сучасної політичної участі, публічного дискурсу та динаміки цифрового активізму, що еволюціонує. У статті висловлюється припущення, що дослідження впливу слактивізму та його взаємодії з традиційними формами політичної участі має вирішальне значення для просування всебічного розуміння політичного активізму в 21 столітті.

Ключові слова: слактивізм, цифрова політична активність, політична мобілізація, онлайн-активізм, політична участь.