

# **Developing an Ethical and Public Policy Approach to Social Media Monitoring during Crises Situation**

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## Introduction

In the world today social media has become an integral part of everyday life. It is an important means through which individuals share information and generate content. Today popular social networking sites (SNS) like *Facebook* have over 1 billion registered accounts. The microblogging network site *Twitter* generated over 288 million monthly active accounts (Kemp 1). Social media represents a revolutionary trend that has now become an interest for people of all age-groups (Kemp 1). The growing use of smart phones and other powerful smart devices have even made it possible to provide location based services to the users. It was seen that the users have expanded exponentially across the developing world as many countries in Africa, Asia, and Pacific have mobile phone saturation of over 100 percent (Martin-Shields 157). For the field of governance, conflict management, and disaster response this trend has opened unprecedented opportunity for international development organizations to get real life information. It provides an opportunity for the crisis managers to get a better overview of the situation and interpret the severity of the problem. Recently, the US Department of Homeland Security adopted a program called *SMART C* for decision support throughout the life cycle of the disaster via MMS messages, web portals, blogs, tweets, and others (Adam, Shafiq and Staffin 92). An important consideration that all these initiatives raises is to determine the actual potential of using information originating from social networking sites.

Social networking sites like *Facebook* and *Twitter* allow users to amass friends or followers who can see and comment on the users' activity (Mullaney 3). Users activity include posting on thoughts on the day, links to photos, articles from websites, uploading a video, and others. Another form of social media category is the information exchange focussed web world typified by sites such as *Digg*, *Reddit* and *Stumble upon* (Mullaney 3). In these sites users have the

opportunity to identify relevant items and vote on them depending on how prominently it should be displaced. Most of these open source platforms can be accessed freely by the users through self-contained programs known as apps<sup>1</sup>. They are also considered as open source governance as they stimulate rational dialogue on democratic activities, justice, and performance of the government (Onguny 3). Presence of this kind of dialogue allows the government to reflect on its ability to deliver programs and services to the citizens. However, it is a relatively new phenomenon and just starting to appear in the field of governance (Lindsay 1). The field calls for more elaborative engagement that could explore both the policy implications of new technology as well as the ethical concerns that arises from it.

There is a gap in the manner in which information and early warning indicators are being projected during crises. Those undertaking the prevention initiatives do not let the context inform what kind of approaches will work best (Mancini 5). They try to base their decisions on what methods and approaches have been successful in the past. Sometimes they also do not have the capacity to properly absorb and act on that information on a timely basis (Mancini 50). The use of social media can actually help to overcome these barriers through improving the efficiency level on the response. Social media capabilities for example can help crisis managers analyse the interdependencies of discrete data and their associated relationship so as to provide better understanding of the issue (Chan 6). Most importantly it can help in developing a strategy that is not solely based on the understanding of the response organizations.

The use of social media as a primary source of information also leads to problems that cannot be downplayed. They can be used as platforms to propagate hate agendas and misinformation, among other anti-social and anti-democratic users. In order to use social media during crises it is

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<sup>1</sup> A self-contained program or piece of software designed to fulfill a particular purpose, an application especially as downloaded by a user to a mobile device.

important to properly determine the validity of the information. There is also the consideration of privacy and the question of who should monitor the data from social media. It raises important questions for reasonableness and unreasonableness of such limits upon individual freedom. Despite all such considerations it would be very difficult to develop an effective response strategy without using social media. As technology continues to grow social media will become an even greater integral part of people's life.

The main argument of this paper is to promote *social media monitoring* as an acceptable initiative for better crisis management and response. This research only looks at the role of agencies and organizations using it for the purpose of co-ordination their response initiatives. The paper reflects the issue of *social media monitoring* by interpreting the positive outcome of reducing the harm in the society through better information gathering and enhancement of community participation. The central research question is “How can *social media monitoring* during crises situation be justified as an ethical form of practice?”. An ethical justification to the action would provide room to balance efficiency with satisfaction of public value. A value based understanding establishes expectations on the performance of crisis managers that public want to see. This form of understanding will also open up the avenue to institute social media monitoring more adequately in the global humanitarian crisis agenda as legitimacy on the action can be improved.

In this paper *social media monitoring* would connote information gathering, sharing, and information analysis. Various crisis mapping databases that relies on user generated information from the social media will be taken into consideration as well. For this paper, I would only look at information monitored by the crisis managers and policy makers representing government organizations and humanitarian agencies. In the recent past there has been rise in the kinds of

conflicts that lead to rampant surge of refugees and displaced populations. It is stated that “crisis managers are increasingly confronted with more complex, hardly predictable crisis involving large number of people” (Rainer, Grubmüller and Pejic 112). During such time social media can be used as an instrument to support understanding of the crises.

Chapter I provides an overview of the use of social media during crises situation by drawing references from the literature. Firstly, it looks at the functions and opportunities of social media during the crisis response. By doing so it reflects the perception of media influence in the community. Secondly, it illustrates how *social media monitoring* can identify emerging trends and potential hotspots that could become the flashpoint for crisis. A better situational analysis is key for responding effectively after crisis and social media due to its capacity to disseminate need based information facilitates the process.

Chapter II defends the idea of *social media monitoring* during crises by using the utilitarian ethical framework. Primary ideas of utilitarian ethics such as the principle of non-maleficence, the determining of actions based on outcomes, and notion of public good will be used to support the action. These show how social media monitoring by providing benefit to the society can fulfill moral commitments. In the later part this chapter also interprets some of the ethical problems pertaining to privacy and informed consent that cannot be completely addressed by utilitarian principle. An identification of such issues actually shows what kind of values are at stake while undertaking such action.

Lastly chapter III looks at ways through which *social media monitoring* can be established as a value based public-policy response. This section draws reference from public value framework developed by Mark. H. Moore a professor at the Harvard University’s, Kennedy School of Government. At its essence it is a framework where different criteria’s are applied to

strategically incorporate public values in the policies of institutions. Public value perspective helps to take into consideration notion of accountability, transparency, and citizen's needs. Developing a public value based system for *social media monitoring* helps to address the ethical concerns surrounding the issue. Finally, in this section I will propose some policy recommendations that could be taken into consideration for the future.

## Chapter I- An overview of the issue

### **The contribution of social media in crisis management**

During the time of crises, social media serves as primary platform of communication. Message contents are exchanged between individuals, audiences, organisations, and sectors of the general public via interactive communication (Alexander 718). People that have access to it are able to express their views and concerns. It can be used passively as channels to disseminate information. It has been reflected that social media has been used to disseminate a wide range of public safety information before, during and after various incidents (Lindsay 3). In the information dissemination process there is an active participation from both the affected communities as well as the organization carrying out the response initiative. During the initial stage, it is more likely that the information flows from the citizens, which is then used by organizations to solicit feedback. Sometimes, it is also experienced that prior to an incident many of the emergency management organizations will be involved in providing preparedness and readiness information. In this way both consumers and contributors of information have a scope for participation in the process.

Leveraging social media in crisis situations allow direct sharing of information that can remove uncertainties. It is argued in a Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management article that, “Messaging, computing, phoning, and photography offer a rich experience of

connectedness” (Veil, Buehner and Palenchar 114). These forms of communication help to build strong relationship that actually relieves stress and fear. Meanwhile, social media allows people to get connected in the most expedient and personal manner (Veil, Buehner and Palenchar 116). When information is shared in the social media it can be easily expanded within the social networks of the people who created the content. In this way social media can perform the duty of reaching out to masses that would otherwise be difficult to establish through traditional forms of media such as radio and television.

Dissemination of information through social media provides scope to reflect adequately the concerns of the victims. It is seen in many cases that information generated from mainstream media may seem less personal and useful to the local residents (Veil, Buehner and Palenchar 115). It has been illustrated that, stakeholders are able to receive more authentic and transparent conversation in a human voice as opposed to company messages from faceless managers’ filtered through traditional broadcast media (Veil, Buehner and Palenchar 115). It allows them to maintain a personal language that resonates well with the public. Therefore, it is possible to present the message in a manner where there is higher level of compassion and empathy. On the other hand, people can use this to express properly their actual suffering and pain. Crises that unfold due to large scale natural disasters, epidemics or conflict often require assistance from other countries. In this situation, social media’s capacity to comprehend the actual concerns of the people can contribute to a more efficient response.

Social media presents a scope where information feedback can be obtained via interactive message, wall posts, and polls. This makes it possible for citizens to self-correct and keep updating the information. Consumers of information are simultaneously contributors of the information, thereby providing the basis for user generated media (Veil, Buehner and Palenchar

110). Social media can also be used in conducting training exercises that can mobilize the community. If the victims are confused about the situation then the question and answer reciprocity available through social media could be used to correct their misunderstanding. It is seen that new media tool have much potential for enhancing the preparedness, knowledge, and involvement during the crisis response (Veil, Buehner and Palenchar 112). Thus the use of social media in the crises response presents an opportunity to the organization to clearly communicate their message and more efficiently manage the response.

In times of crises, social media can be used as an emergency management tool. This could include monitoring users' activities to establish situational awareness and using uploaded images to create damage estimates among others (Lindsay 1). Obtaining real time information as the incident unfolds gives officials the capacity to determine changing conditions and identify new threats. Through social media it might be possible to even obtain information before first responders reach the affected area (Lindsay 4). In this way it is possible to direct resources appropriately so that damages and loss of life can be reduced. Through this process, crisis managers can identify relevant themes that are being expressed online and conduct analysis that are based on facts. Information from social media can also serve as early warning tool before outbreak of epidemics.

Information gathered in the early stages of an emergency situation can be mapped and used in the various phases of crisis management. For instance, *Ushahidi*, a downloadable software, enables people to support eyewitness reports during the disaster which can then be displayed onto the map (Chan 11). This form of crisis mapping gives organizations the capacity to assess locations that require more assistance. Crisis mapping seeks to leverage mobile platforms, geospatial technologies, and crowd sourced data in order to conduct assessments (Chan 24).

During the Haiti Earthquake in 2010, for example crisis mapping was used as central mechanism of coordination by the disaster relief organizations, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies. *SensePlace 2* is another map based web applications that allows responders to filter through information by place and time in order to analyze trends. These kinds of opportunities that can be achieved through social media platforms therefore make it advantageous for reporting the progression of problems and issues during crises.

The use of social media during the crisis plays the role of generating social capital for the communities. It has been argued that the extensive reach of the medium allows people to rapidly connect with the needed resources (Merchant, Elmer and Lurie 290). This is crucial in situations where the infrastructures must be rebuilt and conditions of people are severe. It can improve the affected people's condition by increasing awareness and health related information. During the H1N1 influenza pandemic of 2009, the US Department of Health and Human Services used '*Mommycast*' that could be viewed on *YouTube* or downloaded through *iTunes* to tell 1 million viewers how to prevent spread of influenza (Merchant, Elmer and Lurie 290). Due to the interactive nature of the media the victims can familiarize themselves with various coping strategies and rehabilitation initiatives. For instance, if responders find that certain services or facilities are overloaded then adequate action could be taken to address that. The overall well-being, which is an important indicator of social capital can be enhanced by this feature.

Social media acts as a medium through which popular opinion and public preferences can be gauged. According to Crawford this function involves keeping track of policy action, giving advice, and collection information (Alexander 720). It can generate input from the public since the medium encourages them to provide answer to the questions through a process of open transmission. It leads to collaborative decision making that contribute in eliciting a positive

response based on involvement. Higher level of social networks increases productivity and lend added values to the outcome which empowers social capital. Social capital is involved in mobilisation of skills, leadership, networks, and support system (Alexander 722). Thus social media in humanitarian disasters considers public as a resource for formulating their action plan thereby increasing the efficiency in the relief program

The information technology (IT) infrastructure of *mashup* is the basis under which most of the social media sites are developed. The term is borrowed from the pop music scene where a new song is mixed from vocal and instrumental tracks of two different source songs (Constantinides 608). In the field of information and Communication technology (ICT), *mashup* platforms comprise an amalgamation of content, presentation, and application functionality. They have the potential to collect data from different sources and aggregate them into a single web page. For instance, popular news sources such as *New York Times*, *BBC*, and *Reuters* have been effective in using syndication mash up feeds (Constantinides 609). When humanitarian crises unfold it is imperative for the crisis managers to aggregate whatever data is available. The *mashup* feature available in the social media indeed makes it possible to use client side logic to assemble and compose the content (Constantinides 610). This also helps in ensuring that a specific content come up first when searching. These features of social media can come into great use in the outreach of information during the crises.

Social media also provides opportunities for volunteer participation that can enhance ground operations during emergency situation. Even ordinary citizens can participate in the relief effort by monitoring *Twitter* and *Facebook* comment on missing persons, or similar situations and then recording it in the database (Mullaney 11). During the earthquake in Haiti this kind of efforts made a substantial difference in reducing the suffering of the people as ordinary citizens were the

ones who build the crisis mapping databases. Moreover simple fundraising effort where one make a small contribution to support the victims can also be carried out more rapidly through SNS. Information of applications that solicit donations, emails to corporations that typically supply aid in emergencies can easily be tagged through social media. Internet fundraising also creates opening for netizens or habitual users of the internet, to tap into their existing networks such as their friends and followers of the post. The capacity of the social media to tap larger netizens to contribute to the cause either through volunteering in relief effort or soliciting donations can be helpful during the crises.

### **Possible risks that come with the use of social media**

Social media networks are a great source of knowledge but the manner in which the information is generated could also lead to deception. Social networks make every user a self-publisher with no editing, checking for factual accuracy and clarity with no accountability (KP and G 1). This diverts netizens from getting access to verified information and contributes to affecting their understanding of the issues. In the cyber space, manipulation of information creates semantic attacks for the users. Semantic attacks in social networks could be the result of propagation in various forms (KP and G 2). Propaganda in the social media can misled recipients into believing things that are not true. It has been seen that political astroturfing<sup>2</sup> in the form of propagation of memes have become a common phenomenon that are being applied by groups. Popular micro blogging sites such as *Twitter* enable one to subscribe to another's tweets by following them (KP and G 3). The manner in which the message can be retweeted in *Twitter* makes it a medium for spreading propaganda.

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<sup>2</sup> They are campaigns disguised as popular large scale grassroots behaviour but actually carried out by single person or organization.

Social media is a domain where misinformation can spread at a faster rate as people from various cultures and background are able to participate. Misinformation actually arises from people's prior beliefs and opinion, as well as cognitive biases and heuristics. Pre-existing social, political, and cultural views incline people to such information without questioning them. It has been illustrated that "False beliefs based on misinformation are held strongly and often result in greater support for a cause" (KP and G 5). With SNS, misinformation held by individuals can be strengthened as it is easier to find common ground with others in the platform. They are contagious as persons continuously make efforts to spread them to others. Today cyber space has become echo chambers because blogs and social media tend to link people to like-minded sites promoting similar views than contracting ones (KP and G 5). Misinformation that occurs can be in the discussion for a long period of time.

The lack of a filtering option in the social media platform accounts for why the medium can be such an important source for disinformation. Disinformation is the product of a carefully planned and technically sophisticated deceit process (KP and G 3). It can be targeted at specific people or organizations. The manner in which online social media sites are used by terrorist groups as forum for the discussion of anti-western propaganda is an example of how disinformation can be propagated. It has been stated that groups such as Tehrik-I-Taliban Pakistan, Al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State (ISIS) use social media to post detailed reports of their activities, photographs, videos, policy statements, future plans and responses to criticisms of their organizations (Muhammad Ahsan 11). These forms of activity creates an opening for disinformation as false information can spread very quickly. Maintaining accuracy in the communication is an important measure for ensuring quality in the information (KP and G 3). In

social media establishing complete accuracy is difficult due to extensive speed of communication and information overload.

Social networking sites like *Facebook* suffer from problems in terms of its privacy setting features. It is seen that their policies have shifted from the default assumption of privacy to a default assumption of openness. Profile information that are submitted to *Facebook* are available to users who at least belong to one of the common network that are allowed to access information through the privacy settings such as schools, geography, friends of friends, and others (Junichi P 303). This feature makes it difficult for netizens to control or even track their own information flow. The unwieldy process that one has to go through in order to opt-out of sharing is something that adds further confusion for the users. If anyone has made their profile public in the networking sites then they have no reasonable expectation of privacy since any evidence obtained from the site is clearly in plain view (Junichi P 319). This means that information can easily go into the hands of groups that might use it for mal intended purposes. Hence based on this it could be interpreted that an open access policy could have negative implications in the globally digitalized environment.

Protest and revolution are not a recent phenomenon as they have been around since human beings started disagreeing. However social media, due to its power of connecting with people, helps to increase the intensity of such movements. It helps to further their cause, oust government leaders, and manipulate election results that could also have negative consequences. In this way social media applications can create behaviours that break down social norms as they can manipulate user's perception (Robin L 177). These kinds of behaviours create a divide in the community and lead to breakdown of law and order. It was stated that social media lures its users with a promise of friendship, acceptance or a sense of purpose (Robin L 168). This makes it

difficult for one who is part of a group to come out of it. Therefore, based on this it could be interpreted that appealing nature of the applications can make social media a nefarious means.

Threats on SNS can originate from excessive social contact or digital crowding.<sup>3</sup> The evolution of SNS has led to a situation akin to offline crowding where inability to control interaction, in particular the boundaries between self, small intimate groups, and public audience has deleterious consequences (Sabine and Leonard 33). It is similar to how excessive physical contact generates crowding. There is a psychological implication to it as overburdening someone with information increases the propensity of disliking others. Overlapping of social spheres and excessive information about oneself can create problem of stress. Sharing with multiple audiences each with their own understanding of what is and is not appropriate, create a conflict of social sphere (Sabine and Leonard 40). In online media the bonding of friendship that one shares with others is not the same across the list. Digital crowding present in SNS provides an opportunity to post contents that can hurt the sentiments of others. Hence new technology makes it difficult to maintain interpersonal boundaries as it is often not possible to control the amount of information they are willing to disclose to others.

One of the main motivations behind engaging in SNS is to start, cultivate and maintain strong social relationships. SNSs are an ideal place for strategically creating highly socially desirable identities depending on how individuals like to be judged by others (Sabine and Leonard 54). For instance, if someone wants to manage their self-presentation for business purposes, then it is more likely that they would put emphasis on qualifications and awards as it might attract future partners and employers. The agenda for SNS is determined based on the service and the need

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<sup>3</sup>Digital crowding occurs when multiple audiences are provided with limited or overly complicated methods to control sharing within the set boundaries.

that users want to achieve. The increasing interdependence between online and offline corroborates the approach on conceptualizing SNSs as designed environment that is sometimes misused (Sabine and Leonard 186). This notion of self-acclimation could lead to a situation where wrong impression can originate. Excessive importance that is given to social media on judging someone's personality can create serious individual and social problems.

Information generated in social media tends to have an effect on journalism. Journalism as a genuine media phenomenon is strongly affected by this change as the internet is threatening the traditional basis of the profession. It is stated that, "One of the most frequently postulated observations with respect to the new forms of public communication in an online media environment is the changing nature of sender/receiver relationship and the loss of journalism gatekeeper monopoly (Sabine and Leonard 210). A space that was once controlled is now shared with others. The asymmetry between professional journalism and audience cannot be maintained. Information is no longer filtered before they reach to the mass audience. This makes it difficult to include more background and context in their report thereby reducing its authenticity.

Various SNS platforms can be used for gathering situational information that serves as an antecedent for opportunistic decision making. Unregulated real time *Twitter* postings can increase the level of situational awareness which can facilitate terrorist operation (Onook, Manish and Raghav 34). In the Mumbai attacks in 2008, for example, situational information was monitored to mount attacks on targeted civilians. In the case of conflict or an unfolding crime a party that is better aware of the situation can use it against its opponents. It was illustrated that, "In the situation assessment process the perception, comprehension, and projection are contingent upon the goals which the actors intend to achieve" (Onook, Manish and

Raghav 36). However, to address such problems security agencies need to come up with a strategy to identify deleterious situational information. In this case suggestion has been made to analyze political goals of adversaries and use them as interpretative filters (Onook, Manish and Raghav 41). Other challenges of using social media such as information overload, and noise are starting to be addressed by the use of automated tools. For instance *Tweet Tracker* a tool is being used to monitor postings or *tweets* that are appropriate to the events through mature search functionality (Kumar, Morstatter and Liu 2). These are some ways through which *social media monitoring* tries to address problems of its nature. However, it must be kept in mind that both strength and weakness of information management in the social media derives from its participatory openness (Bott and Young 56). This problem needs to be acknowledge when developing a solution.

## Chapter II-Looking at Social Media Monitoring from an Utilitarian perspective

### **Utilitarian Ethical framework as a basis for decision making**

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that was developed in the nineteenth century. It is stated that, “In its most useful modern reformulation it is a moral theory that judges the goodness of outcomes- and therefore the rightness of actions insofar as they affect outcomes- by the degree to which they secure the greatest benefit to all concerned” (Goodwin, Utilitarianism as a Public Philosophy 3). According to ethical theory, the rightness or wrongness of a law, policy, or act is judged by whether it has the tendency to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. The utilitarian approach ensures that choice is ratified by pragmatic considerations having to do with peculiar circumstances of a policy (Goodwin, Utilitarianism as a Public Philosophy 14). It is important that policy choices are made in a manner where the basic welfare interests of the people are protected. This form of understanding means that there is room for adopting institutions and

practices suited to recurring situations (Goodwin, *Utilitarianism as a Public Philosophy* 23). In this way the theory can serve as a guide for the conduct of public affairs.

Utilitarian ethical theories are based on two notable features or criteria. Firstly, they place importance on prudential reasoning to think about the means to employ in order to reach a desirable end. It is based on the assumption that whatever they may be, the most efficacious means of producing happiness are legitimate. They think that by doing so they would be able to prevent the community from experiencing greater pain or suffering. Any claimant to the status of a moral principle must withstand scrutiny against the principle of utility where consequences are outweighed (Michelle Louise 15). They insist on utility to determine whether an action should be followed or not. The claimant that cannot be justified in terms of its tendency to maximize happiness is rejected no matter how deeply it is entrenched in the common understanding of morality. They believe that the definition of ultimate good in the society would have an impact on the individual right. A key tenet is that good society is based on a carefully crafted balance between liberty and social order and a combination of particularistic and society wide values and bonds (Michelle Louise 92). Any action that makes public interest a central premise of their discussion is given higher priority as far as defending their case is concerned.

In particular utilitarian's consider a policy decision or institutional practices to be morally right and permissible if the results are no worse than their alternatives (Hausman and McPherson 99). In other words, if the results of a specific policy are better than their alternatives then it becomes obligatory for decision makers to implement it. The appraisal is always based upon comparing the alternative course of action. All the foreseeable benefits and harm that results from each course of action are taken into account (Hausman and McPherson 99). It is the results of an action that determines what policy decision to implement. All contemporary utilitarian's

take utility as an index of preference satisfaction rather than as an object of preference (Hausman and McPherson 110). This means that rationality and well-informed decisions are given more importance than the actual preferences. In this way they are able to prevent identifying welfare with the actual preferences. It is stated that, “focussing on rational or informed preference leads away from person’s actual wants and towards what is in some substantive sense good for the individual” (Hausman and McPherson 110). This kind of approach presents opportunity for the utilitarian’s to operationalize moral basis of the actions in a better manner.

According to the nineteenth century philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) utilitarian ethics holds that there are some pleasures that are more valuable and higher than the other. It is referred in Mill’s work that, “Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure” (Mill 9). This form of thinking does not rely on the majority principle but on the judgement of the quality of pleasures. These form of judgement leads to acceptability of those pleasures that are derived from higher faculties and which are less susceptible in nature (Mill 11). There is a perceived rationale that higher form of pleasures if achieved would take into consideration the best of what is desirable for all.

When Mill is discussing higher pleasures he is referring to activities that exercise higher intellectual capacities. First, he claims that the intellectual pursuits have value out of proportion to the amount of contentment or pleasure (mental state) that they produce (Brink 74). Second, he claims that higher pleasure doctrine are intrinsically more valuable, that is they are good in itself, good whatever its consequences or necessarily good (Brink 71). In other words the value is greater than the quantity of pleasures it produces. Using social media to enhance humanitarian initiative is something through which multiple intrinsic goods can be provided for the society.

According to Mill, the principle aim of government is the improvement of its citizen which is achieved through the development of intellectual, moral, and deliberative capabilities (Brink 79). Exercise of these deliberative capabilities is carried out through reflection and implementation of structured plans. It is crucial that one has the opportunity to assess, choose, and implement their set of plans even if they do not contain the contents (Brink 79). They constitute people's objective desire about specific course of action. It is interpreted that the value of an agent's activity is more or less independent not only of the pleasures he derives from those but also of his desire to perform those activities (Brink 80). The participatory nature of social media platforms actually gives people the ability to exercise their deliberative roles in a more efficient manner. The deliberative rationale interpreted in the utilitarian ethics is used to justify operation of social media during crises.

In accordance with the paternalistic views shared by the utilitarian, not everyone's interest is met in the implemented decision. It is illustrated that, "if substantial benefit can be produced for the majority, which nevertheless, imposes cost on minority, that is an acceptable outcome as long as the aggregate benefits outweigh the aggregate costs" (Lake 407). Accordingly, the net social benefit derived from a specific course of action is sufficient to ethically justify Geographic Information Systems (GIS) applications. A decision that is favourable to everyone is very hard to achieve because it is the citizens who are the best judge of their own good. To overcome this problem utilitarian's favour applying maximizing principle where the welfare of the majority is counted. Similarly, collecting information from social media during a crisis may not be satisfying to some specific agents but the legitimacy of the majority makes it possible to override some interests. The maximum principle is used to overcome the dilemmas that policy makers face in terms of balancing between ethical issues.

The utilitarian ethics would perceive social media monitoring as a specific course of action that prevents harm in the society. The passive stream of real time information that can be obtained through social media prevent transformation of conflicts. In utilitarian terms monitoring of content posted in the social media can produce happiness in the form of security. Security needs can also be considered as a form of pleasure that are more desirable and valuable than other kinds of pleasure. Law and order constitute a basic protection that states should provide to its citizens. Despite the pervasiveness of invasion of privacy and other freedom incurred by social media surveillance it is assumed that this pain is offset by the comparatively higher moral weight that security provides (Casey 32). Therefore it is seen that the evaluative criteria used by the utilitarian's help to justify that social media use can be applicable during crises situation.

Harm principle is used as a common explanation to defend the conduct of information monitoring. As an ethical principle, harm avoidance is not just built upon a selfish interpretation of a golden rule which simply advises us not to harm others rather it is based on shared capacity for suffering, human connectedness, and compassion (Sabine and Leonard 52). By doing so it does not avoid causation of any kind of harm. It refers to harm that both violates a person's right and at the same time can be avoided without creating greater harm elsewhere. This necessitates applying a cost benefit analysis that takes into consideration the pros and cons of specific actions. In media ethics this cost benefit analysis is based on two criteria (i) privacy invasion is only acceptable if no other means are available, (ii) any invasion of privacy requires existence of an overriding public interest (Sabine and Leonard 52). Such criteria provide an opportunity for decision makers to determine a fair distribution of costs and benefits. It weighs the context relative norms of the individual's flow of information against the new flow intended by the

special interest actor (Sabine and Leonard 53). For humanitarian crisis all such criteria prevails thus providing strong justification for conducting *social media monitoring*.

Utilitarian framework provides an opportunity to achieve some kind of proportionality that facilitates in achieving a more balanced outcome. For any monitoring policy it is rudimentary to balance liberty against security. This proportionality would be determined based on reasonableness of specific and articulable facts (Michelle Louise 5). However, it must be considered here that there is no ready test available for determining reasonableness other than the balancing of rights. Rights under this is now subject to weighing of harms rather than having the emphasis on whether or not right has actually been infringed in any absolute sense (Michelle Louise 6). The kind of information that can be obtained from viewing the content in the social media reduces the risks associated with the specific conflict or crises situation.

The manner in which people monitor their digital actions in the social media in many cases resemble features of traditional surveillance. It was stated that, “The constellation of practices framed variously as stalking, watching, creeping, gazing or looking are characteristic of social media use, but this social surveillance creates panoptic type effects” (Alice. E 378). Netizens are characterized by both watching and a high awareness of being watched. This kind of social surveillance demonstrates the effect of domesticating surveillance practices on the day-to day life and interpersonal relationship. Netizens self-monitor their online action to maintain a balance between publicity and seclusion. As a matter of fact, most of the social media users are less concerned with governments or corporations watching their online activities than key members of their extended social networks (Alice. E 379). Web 2.0 or websites that promote user-generated content have made it necessary for the users to internalize surveillance as part of their activity. To a large extent it blunts the negative view that people previously held about

monitoring as it has now become a necessary action that social media users should avail in order to enhance their presence.

Utilitarian ethics is based on the rationale that actions that people's choices will, to an extent, take into consideration the interest sensitive to their own. By doing so it encourages certain forms of roles and expectations to the individuals. The moral obligation to discharge role responsibilities is underwritten either by voluntary agreement or by the duties to protect the vulnerable both of which has utilitarian objective (Goodwin, Public Service Utilitarianism as a Role Responsibility .322). By engaging in these forms of activities they can achieve greater level of public trust which is an important criterion for welfare. It is stated that "In serving the interest of the public, the public servant will be serving its wishes in some more or less attenuated sense" (Goodwin, Public Service Utilitarianism as a Role Responsibility .329). This same analogy can be applied in justifying the use of social media by the crisis responders. Monitoring of information from SNS sites on one hand ensures in fulfilling the needs of the victims and on the other hand by doing so organizational efficiency and performance can be improved.

Using ICT for crisis response and development serves a utilitarian objective. Such a framework provides an opportunity to perceive growth both on the basis of distribution as well as social justice. It is interpreted that, "Development occurs if and only if there is overall expansion in human flourishing or in the quality of human lives that are consistent with demands of social justice and freedom" (Qizilbash .1210). The use of social media in humanitarian crises is a medium that presents a scope to determine whether valuable functioning ability is available in the community or not. By doing so it provides a wider lens to policy makers to assess a situation.

Social media surveillance is conducted with the objective of disciplining behaviour that is thought to violate rules or generate violence. The basic idea is to use social media data to identify

potential offenders so that future threat can be projected. Surveillance gathers data about humans in order to exert potential direct, structural, or cultural violence against individuals or groups (Christian and Daniel 123). In doing so it not only tracks the bad guys but also sets a precedent in the society that certain actions are unlawful. By monitoring converging social activities of humans in their converging social roles it prevents actual as well as future violence. The positive outcome achieved from this action makes it a desirable approach. It increases the efficiency of the counter terrorism operations and protection of national security.

The utilitarian ethical approach is considered a rationally instrumental action. This means social media monitoring is conceived as a means to find out what is going on in the virtual world in order to intervene in this environment with communication that can be expected to be successful in accomplishing certain policy goals (Victor and Arthur 336). It is a useful tool to identify relevant trends in the society such as opinions of citizens and target groups. It presents an opportunity for the one's conducting the surveillance to project the future and know where the public opinion is treading. A lot of political parties today use social media to see how the masses feel about a specific policy action. If used strategically it can be used to correct false, incomplete or misperceived statements (Victor and Arthur 336). Policy makers can use this to respond better to the public. The manner in which they play a role in transforming the society definitely makes *social media monitoring* a justified form of practice.

### What ethical concerns are avoided in utilitarian interpretation of social media monitoring

On the other hand a utilitarian approach misrepresents certain notion of surveillance ethics. Surveillance in its most commonly used form implies a significant power imbalance between the group gathering information and the group being watched (Alice. E 386). This notion of asymmetry between actors violates the norms of common good which is an important

consideration for utilitarian ethics. In the case of social media, power is constantly in flux between individuals. For instance at any in time between two individuals someone may be wealthier, better looking or jealous, all of which all can affect the balance of power (Alice. E 386). Social surveillance thus recognizes models of hierarchy that incorporates power differentials that extent beyond state/subject to social roles.

The secrecy in surveillance process represents a danger for the society. It is stated in many cases that programs that are implemented in secret and without public oversight lacks legitimacy (George R Lucas 29). It creates a situation where decision making occurs without generating public input. These kinds of policies are evasive and morally wrong as they do not have any informed consent from the public. Ordinary citizens who are minding their own business and have not done wrong do not deserve to be unduly subject to grave but avoidable risks of harm (George R Lucas 35). Some level of transparency about who is conducting it or admitting that it is taking place would be desirable to prevent abuse of privilege. The manner in which the surveillance operations are designed aim at attribution and denial of anonymity rather than invasion of individual privacy (George R Lucas 36). Violation of individual privacy may be permissible under certain circumstances but anonymity is something that should always remain with individuals. This autonomous right gives individuals absolute authority over their self.

Social media content is considered the kind of information that possess a degree of self-ownership. It is based on the idea that whatever we do with our bodies is our own business as long as we do not use them to transgress the rights of others. These rights and duties are reciprocal because if one has the right to their own body then all others have the duty to refrain from aggression against the bodies of others (Robert W 87). The right of free speech also derives from this doctrine of property. Individuals under this perspective have the freedom to speak

when they are on their property and social media is considered a space that individuals own. The tendency to intervene in other people's property is considered unjust and immoral in liberal states. Rights approach begins with the premise that it is the process that is important and not the destination (Robert W 106). Such a notion is based on the general idea that if personal rights are violated to achieve a goal then it is no longer a desirable mechanism. Thus based on such interpretation it could be considered that social media surveillance intervenes with the process. However, these kinds of arguments are less valid in terms of a crisis situation, where netizens are actually giving the information so that the response group can rescue them.

From a societal implication it is seen that surveillance has to do with the phenomena of categorical suspicion. Categorical suspicion means that due to surveillance technologies everyone becomes a reasonable target (Christian and Daniel 128). Police surveillance of social media is based on the assumption that all users are actual or potential criminals until proven innocent. There is also the danger that sorting is not proper and certain groups or communities are targeted. It leads to cumulative disadvantages where historical disadvantages cumulate over time and across categories of experience. (Christian and Daniel 128). The way it assesses who or who not to follow violates principle of fairness. One of the main principle of utilitarian ethics is to ensure that benefits are evenly distributed in the society. The arbitrary disadvantage that an individual suffers then accumulates and results in further disadvantages that are enforced by predictive algorithms. Hence these are some things that basing a decision on utilitarianism fail to take into consideration.

The ethical, legal and political considerations with regard to collection of information are many. It is true that government has a duty to protect the national security of its citizens but in liberal states that must be balanced against a competing duty to uphold the constitution (Michelle

Louise 93). In the American context the fourth amendment's rights have been vigorously debated in the post 9/11 era. Many thinkers have debated surveillance based on the constitutional obligation but the moral bases have often been overlooked. In order to make such moral assessments they need to get hold of certain information which is not easy to obtain. Due to such gaps it is not possible for utilitarian ethical framework to determine the consequences of *social media monitoring* properly.

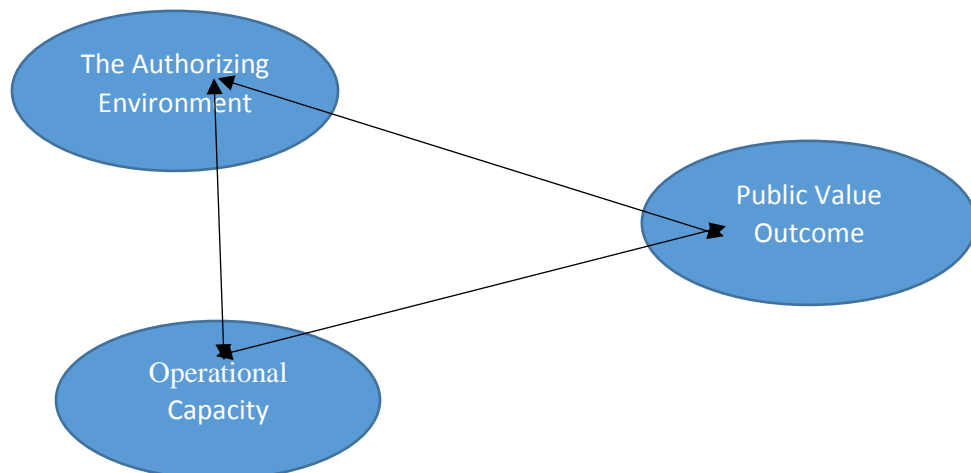
The socio-psychological need for privacy and legal rights that imply privacy possesses a specific moral value should have special importance. It was illustrated that, "Privacy is regarded both as an inherent value and as interrelated with a number of essential human values, among them moral autonomy and freedom, equality and justice, dignity and self-fulfillment, and trust and variety in relationship" (Sabine and Leonard). When surveillance is conducted it imposes a direct threat to these values. In today's world informational self-determination has become a positive moral concept for policy debate regarding privacy invasion. The benefits that people achieve through such privilege are not considered while implementing surveillance policies. Informed consent criteria should govern the ethical comparison for surveillance and not the external moral force (Sabine and Leonard). Utilitarian approach has the tendency to shift the burden from individuals to the public or organization which is bad from an ethical position. Therefore using utilitarian ethics to comprehend *social media monitoring* does not always give us the correct picture.

### Chapter III- Public policy intake on Social Media Monitoring from a Public Value Framework

Public policies developed to conduct *social media monitoring* should take into consideration ethical, political and technological factors. A more practical solution is necessary so that the real

world problems are replicated in the actual decisions. As a policy approach I would be using the public value framework primarily developed by Mark Moore a professor at Harvard University's, Kennedy School of Government. Mostly it has been applied in relation to public management and the delivery of public services (Bromell 17). In this case this approach would be applied to guide the behaviour of the crisis managers and response organizations that are providing support to the affected victims by using social media. The core idea associated with Moore's framework is based on the strategic triangle of (i)Public Value Outcome,(ii)The Authorizing Environment, (iii)Operational Capacity. In the first stage the policy makers must clearly specify the public value outcome which is aimed for in a given situation (Benington and Moore 4). Basically the public values are those that are important for the public. After the value has been determined it is necessary to create an environment that makes it possible to achieve the desired outcome. This could involve mandate from key political and other stakeholders. In the authorization phase public policy makers may have to bring several parts of the authorizing environment together to strengthen the legitimacy for what they are proposing (Benington and Moore 6). In the third stage they determine their operational feasibility by looking at financial, staff, and technological skills required to achieve the set targets.

**Figure to represent Moore's Strategic triangle** (Benington and Moore, 2011:5)



In order to apply *social media monitoring* as a form of practice, the crisis managers must look to determine the public value associated with that. To do so they need to come up with some form of assessment technique. According to Moore, managers should look to develop first a narrowly specified objective and narrowly specified means to achieve that objective (M. H. Moore 34). These specific means and objectives are what precisely define policies and actions. Such a form of value seeking imagination would present an opportunity to discover what could be done with the resources more effectively and efficiently (Benington and Moore 3). Knowing the overall value produced by the organization in adopting a strategy is important for proper evaluation. One element Moore stresses is the ability of the policy actors to undergo proper evaluation so that they can have good foresight of the scenario. This is an area where the profit oriented enterprises are far more competent than the public or third sector (M. H. Moore 35). They pay close attention to looking at its bottom line values such as profits generated and revenue earned which are far more realistic. Public sector and humanitarian organizations should try to adopt ways through which performance can at least be somewhat operationalized through which values that are good for the public can be reflected.

Public value outcome should also look to find what sorts of preferences can be satisfied. As argued by Moore they should ensure that good choices are made in the public interest which legitimate and guide the subsequent implementation in order to improve outcome for the public (Benington and Moore 4). Such an approach tries to achieve this by placing substantial responsibility at the hand of the individuals rather than the organization. Under this approach, activities should be valued by the individuals sizing up the consequences for them as individuals (M. H. Moore 36). In short organizations should try to get a grasp of the opinion that public hold. It is different from techniques used in the field of New Public Management (NPM) which tend to

measure how specific policy effort scored in terms of its organizational goals. In order to better reflect how well specific policies are working it is important to understand the value of its clients. For instance they should try to embrace the value of their efforts in the satisfaction of the customers (M. H. Moore 36). Similarly, the policy action of social media monitoring during crises acts to arbitrate the value of the affected community just as consumption of a commodity determines private value.

John Benington, a UK professor of governance, takes this public value approach further and tries to understand how it can be applied within the notion of public sphere. The public sphere in this case can be thought of as a web of values, places, organizations, rules, knowledge, and other cultural resources held in common by people through their everyday commitments and behaviours and held in trust by governments and public institutions (Benington and Moore 43). In this form strong focus is given on building relationship with local communities and civil society groups. The role of the organization that is shaping the policies must strive to create a public value in a manner that shapes both thinking and action across boundaries (Benington and Moore 37). They have to both be part of and participant in this network as public value should be created through dialogue between actors. For developing a policy on how to effectively use social media during a crisis situation it is important to develop a process of co-creation between users and producers of services within which the value gets created (Benington and Moore 46). Presence of 'public sphere' where different actors can engage ensures that long term public needs are addressed in the discussion. By doing so the public value framework could focus process and outcomes and not just input and output which many other policy frameworks look to measure (Benington and Moore 47). For instance, public value perspectives in the crises

situation will focus on faster delivery of aid, establishing relationship, as well as future preventive strategies.

Moore emphasises the need for the managers to take into consideration the ideas of what is publicly valuable for the citizens whom they represent. According to him, “managers goals, objectives, perhaps even their deepest values are open to change as a result of dialogue” (M. H. Moore 149). The organization that is adopting the *social media monitoring* policy must ensure that its managers are willing to make themselves agents of others purpose. The whole idea here is to develop an attitude of learning and integrate the value of others in their own initiatives (M. H. Moore 150). As a policy implementation criterion, it is important to be able to put different ideas on the same map and then seek to look for answers on how it might be best performed. This kind of approach will guide the behaviour of the response organization or governments.

The authorization criteria used by Moore in his strategic triangle can confer better legitimacy to the agents who are carrying out the task. The public value framework approach is a kind of process where the views of those who receive the services are taken into account (Benington and Moore 120). For a policy issue such as the *social media monitoring*, it is important that the public give the authority to the organization that is carrying out the task so that important concerns regarding privacy and security are not left unaddressed. When this is done a public consensus is achieved for performing the action. It has been argued that a range of justification for this kind of initiative could be promotion of democratic accountability, to ensuring appropriate tailored services, and fully informed consent (Benington and Moore 164). When the public authorizes an organization it attests its validity and position (Benington and Moore 159). Such criterion ensures in achieving a kind of policy practices where a distinct role is assigned to the lead organization.

In an authorizing environment it is possible to eliminate privacy sensitive attributes that organizations may perform while obtaining information from social media sites. Organizations would not be able to perform tasks where privacy breaches and risks are avoided because civilians that feel uncomfortable with the organizations operations will not give them approval. People expect that organizations follow rules and regulations carefully in order to protect them and their privacy (Meijer, Choenni and Alibaks 333). In order to operate in a digital environment, organizations will need to reconcile these values. This can be conceptualized as a policy instrument whereby an organization imposes some restraint on its policy in order to restrict the extent to which values may conflict (Meijer, Choenni and Alibaks 333). When this happens organizations are in a position to better adopt a policy where many of the negative consequences associated are mitigated. The kind of risk that social media monitoring constitute in terms of trust and transparency can also be better addressed by adopting this kind of procedure in their strategy.

Maintaining the authorizing culture is also needed in an environment where there is a more active participation from the public. Here a participation comprises of host of actors and relationships (Blaug, Horner and Lekhi 33). It is also important to determine properly how much participation will actually be fruitful as too much would lead to various tensions. Authorization would ensure these active participatory methods are properly linked with accountable processes. Accountability can come in various forms such as providing explanation to all stakeholders, operating mechanism to redress, and also public scrutiny (Blaug, Horner and Lekhi 33). It is a form of assurance to the public that their interests are being met. In developing a policy for social media monitoring, installation of accountability standards must be ensured. It has been stated that“ accountability standards will help the policy explain how the organization will use the

input in decision making and how it will feed these decisions back to the public and other service users” (Blaug, Horner and Lekhi 38). In a complicated scenario where all the stakeholders involved cannot be engaged, accountability standards serve as medium to get an overall idea of what is happening. This process will not leave the public clueless about the policy actions. The notion of accountability helps in avoiding various concerns raised by the society in terms of the legitimacy of the process. Therefore, based on these explanations it can be concluded that ensuring an authorizing environment would lead to better outcome both in the design and implementation of the policy related to *social media monitoring* during the crises situation.

Looking at the policy problem through the lens of public value framework would give greater scope to allocate resources. When this is done it can serve broader perspectives for the organization. This strategic requirement in organizational effectiveness is explored by Moore through the notion of ‘public value chain’. The purpose of this value chain is to identify the particular process and activities an organization relies upon to produce its output (Blaug, Horner and Lekhi 45). Under this, managers continuously seek for ways through which distinctive competency can be achieved in its operation. Distinctive competency determines how effectively an organization is able to negotiate the process of resource allocation in their decision-making. It helps non-economic value compete with the economic ones as it looks at ways through which social results can be produced (Blaug, Horner and Lekhi 45). The resource allocation for social media monitoring should not be based on how effectively an organization can deliver aid but on broader objectives like providing human contact to the communities who have been affected.

In order to better enhance their operational efficiency managers need to develop adaptive capacity and learn from others. This implies more than the improvement through interaction between the formal, rule bound operation of each institution, and its surrounding networks of

families, cultures, communities, and socio-economic forces (Blaug, Horner and Lekhi 48). Such an approach allows managers to adopt new organizational structure, undergo infrastructural developments, and integrate smarter technologies into its practice. Overlooking the issue of *social media monitoring* from a public value framework would allow crisis managers to apply these new opportunities. Integration of *social media monitoring* in the practices requires effective diffusion of successful innovation (Blaug, Horner and Lekhi 48). Determining the performance based on the value based notion ensures that organization accept the challenges and willing to develop an innovative system that is more responsive. In a field like *social media monitoring* this sort of understanding is needed as it is constantly evolving with technology.

The emphasis on capacity building in the public value framework compels organizations to create an optimum situation for delivery of services. Capacity building is a process that allows the organization to attain its vision, mission, and sustainable future (Mitchell 300). It also takes into consideration the fact that if valued by the citizen, alternative approaches to delivery of services need to be explored. These initiatives could include activities such as value based budgeting and civic innovation. Civic innovation is more relevant to the policy problem that is being discussed here. Civic innovations gives an understanding how technology based platform can be used by the organization. Furthermore, it reflects advances in internal and external communication, evaluative mechanism, and technology created in order to facilitate delivery of services (Mitchell 301). Civic innovation demands that organization use technology based platform for the release of information and measurement. Through technology based innovation and internet based analytical tools better opportunities for capacity building and strategic planning can be created (Mitchell 303). Thus, the use of social media can be viewed as a civic innovation tool that is used to enhance performance of the organization and its services.

Applying the public value framework to the issue of social media monitoring during crisis situations will allow response organizations to bring more fairness and transparency in its practices. The public value accounting system uses authority as a form of measuring variable similar to how cost is used (M. H. Moore 471). It tries to determine based on different indicators how well the authority is getting used in a specific policy program. This allows institutions to develop a system where unjustified use of public authority can be punished. Moore observes that, “citizens might be willing to invest more of their hard earned money and accept new burdens if they think a specific action is creating prosperous and just society” (M. H. Moore 471). Such a condition would ensure that the organization collecting information from social media uses the authority instrumentally with a good motive.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Social media monitoring faces various risks due to information overload thus leading to problem of paradox of choices. Paradox of choices refers to a situation where one cannot see the wood of the tree (Victor and Arthur 336). Such complications in the online sphere demand a more strategic policy approach. In a strategic action, the actor acknowledges the presence of another actor in the environment who has their own goals and actions plan (Victor and Arthur 336). Information collected should only be used to serve their policy goals. A lack of strategic focus would prevent such outcome and start raising doubt on the mind of the people. The actors undergoing the monitoring must establish trust with the netizens. There are basically two kinds of transparency namely (i) micro-level transparency and (ii) macro-level transparency. Due to the nature of its practice only macro-transparency is possible. Under this, transparency is achieved through a public discussion of pros and cons of social media monitoring for public goals (Victor and Arthur 338). Through this, polices can therefore achieve some notion of accountability which has been a problem raised by many people.

Social media monitoring practices should consider protection of privacy as a central public value. According to the European Union's Data Protective Directive, the EU requires that if personal data is processed, this should be done fairly, lawfully, and for specified explicit and legitimate purposes (Meijer, Choenni and Alibaks 331). These important concerns to privacy should be considered while designing future social media monitoring strategies during crisis. Proportionality demands where the means used are proportional to the intended purpose is an important requirement that the institutions must look to abide with (Meijer, Choenni and Alibaks 331). Subsidiary demands where alternative is used to minimize the use of privacy sensitive data should be considered if required. In conflict related crisis where there is a potential for misuse of disclosed information, adequate security related measures must be placed. Modifications, destruction of records, and provision for anonymous participation are things that should be considered.

Much of the social media monitoring relies on the input that has been provided by the netizens which in technical term is known as crowdsourcing. It is then used to project trends and reflect the actual scenario. In order for crowdsourcing to find a place in the field of governance it is important that it should commit action on specific problems and not be a consultative mechanism on vague policy issues. Crowdsourcing tend to work well when problems are very clearly defined and where solutions are indicated (Dutil 378). The one's using the information should clearly state the crowd that they are looking to respond. In a crisis situation such an approach can be used to establish their priorities. For instance the crisis managers or humanitarian organizations should set the agenda and parameters of a policy and the output should be dependent on the crowd in this mechanism (Dutil 376). In this kind of policy approach crowds are not only considered as an agent but partner in direction that government take. It does not

replace the role of the policy makers by decentralizing their functions but actually contributes in making their role and functions more explicit.

The use of social media in crisis response replaces the top down decision making apparatus with the bottom up approach. Top-down approach means that decisions made by the higher authorities in the organization are delegated to others whereas bottom-up approach does not follow hierarchical decision structure and instead make decisions by community engagement. It enhances stakeholder's participation which is an important consideration identified in many public policy framework. One way communication track that flows from experts to the public do not give enough place for dialog and feedback (Wendling, Radisch and Jacobzone 10). People no longer favour to receive official recommendations and advice in a passive way. Evidence based information has become very important for the public. According to a recent study conducted by the World Bank, the rise of the volunteer technology communities like *Ushahidi* brought newer set of considerations for organizational designs and approaches to such problems (Wendling, Radisch and Jacobzone 13). Many organizations that work in crisis response encourage citizens to report using *Twitter* and *blogs*. The urge for informed decision, makes availability of facts an important consideration. Social media monitoring as a policy cannot be successful if it is based on centrally defined objective it requires more open oriented approach.

The use of social media has a potential to integrate all types of communication and information. Real-time data can be aggregated, categorized, layered, and visualized in ways that can be understood even by non-experts with relative ease (Bott and Young 52). By doing so it fulfills an important criteria of governance. Success of the policy also depends on how well it is able to communicate its message to a large audience or stakeholders. This helps the policy

implementation process as set of proposed guidelines can be smoothly transferred into actual practices.

The policies adopted should have a protocol that set precedence for more stringent ethical guidelines. It is stated that, “the current state of the field in ethics and crowdsourcing can be looked at two ways: the first is well designed, safe collection processes, and the second is transparency about what will be done with the user-submitted data after the event” (Martin-Shields 161). There should be an expectation that people submitting information in the social media know the risks of participating. If this can be established, then it could set some sort of standards about data use and protection which is an important consideration for use of social media.

To better incorporate social media monitoring as a mode of practice during the crisis situation the response organizations need to undergo some structural changes in their operation. It is stated that, “Information system designers need to provide structures for collecting, validating, and transmitting citizen generated information during disasters” (Hiltz, Kushma and Plotnick 608). At the moment more emphasis is placed on disseminating information through social media rather than collecting from it. Lack of resources and availability of trained personnel in data analytics are some of reasons why they are unable to widen its scope. According to the US Government Emergency Managers of Federal Emergency Management Agency, major barriers to the use of social media are organizational more than the technical (Hiltz, Kushma and Plotnick 607). In order to overcome these issues they need to create a condition of culture change where the use of social media as a tool is acknowledged.

Social media use during humanitarian crises also depends on how well the crisis responders are able to use the information in their decision making. This would require computational

models that can process what the citizens have produced and serve it to responders in the form that could be inputs to their data streams (Tapia, Moore and Johnson 777). They need to apply some analytical techniques through which proper sorting and categorization are possible. The ability to categorize microblogged data by needs, sub events, and customized folders appeared to be prominent suggestions made by the crisis managers (Hiltz, Kushma and Plotnick 606). Such an approach would give scope to manage information overload in a better way.

The extent to which the affected communities are digitally engaged should be an important policy consideration. Otherwise it would create a situation where the citizens will get disproportionately affected by their inability to connect with such networks (Watson and Finn 418). It is important that social media use during the crises situation takes into consideration issues related to digital divide or else it would hinder its outcome.

## Conclusion

Overall, this paper promoted *social media monitoring* as an acceptable tool that should be used during the crises situation. The increasing use of social media by people across the globe and the scale at which information can be disseminated indeed make it a useful medium during times of crisis. Social media is a platform through which response organizations can make factual based policies. When real time information can be obtained, then response mechanisms can be geared more specifically towards the need of the victims. The user generated feature in the social media allows the citizens to provide their answer to the problem that gives the monitoring organization the opportunity to reflect upon its own performance. The kind of impact that technology is creating in the lives of the people will only make social media use prominent in days to come.

This paper used the utilitarian ethical framework to analyze *social media monitoring*. It applied the outcome based analysis used by the utilitarian to portray the kind of benefit that society achieves by gathering information from it. Secondly, it used the proportionality test to illustrate reasonableness vs unreasonableness for a specific course of action. It provided scope to perceive harm as a separate entity rather than using it against individual liberty or freedom. *Social media monitoring* brings higher form of pleasures for the affected community which actually helps them to override negative concerns that it raises. This kind of action is based on the moral commitment of protecting which ensures welfare of the community. Thus it gives policy makers the opportunity to ethically justify the practice.

Chapter III of the paper applied the public value framework and showed how organizations can address both ethical and operational challenges of using social media in this way. It used the public value framework developed by Moore as a guidance as to how social media polices should be developed by the crisis organizations. Disaster relief organizations would benefit if they view their function as an opportunity to generate public value and not look at it purely as an operational means. Meanwhile, it took into consideration the public policy perspective of the problem and highlighted issues such as public engagement, innovation, and capacity building as a way forward for implementing this action.

*Social media monitoring* as a policy action has the potential to be incorporated more adequately in the global humanitarian crises agenda. The Digital Government initiatives adopted in number of countries have addressed the role of social media and how it can be used more adequately to support policy development. They are considering to see gathering information from social media important for ensuring good governance. These set of initiatives need to reflect the ethical consideration of using social media along with the strategic enhancement

opportunities that it brings for the society. This paper has been an attempt to deal with this phenomenon.

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