



# Influence of Social Media on Presidential Candidates 2022 in Somalia.



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## Abstract

Social media influence plays a major role on election campaigns in Somalia as candidates' information are published, shared, tweeted on social media to convey their message and to influence voters. This study aims to seek an answer for the following research questions.

RQ1: How many followers do selected candidates have in social media in 2022?

RQ2: How often do candidates post campaign messages, and how do the audiences interact with the posts during the campaign?

Methodology: more than thirty candidates ran for the presidency. However, the Somali Researchers Association (SRA) has selected to assess six most active social media users among presidential candidates in Somalia.

Data was collected from candidate's official pages on Facebook and Twitter with verified tick. We analyzed number of people who like (follow) their pages, posts made last ten days starting from when officially announced due date of the election 5th May 2022 until election day 15th May 2022.

**Result:** selected six candidates have nearly five million followers in total on their social media: Namely Farmajo, kheyre, Abdirahman Abdishakur Warsame (AAW), Hassan Sheikh, Sharif and Deni. The research found that during the last ten days of the campaign, each candidate's pages was posted an average of two post per day. No candidate has used paid advertisement (sponsor) and hashtags were regularly used. Candidates hired social media influencers to promote their campaign messages. The study found about 100 to 200 thousand USD were spent social media campaign per candidate. Number of likes, comments, shares and views received the candidate were in line with or depend on the page followers. Since ordinary citizen have no chance to vote, they have used their social media to show solidarity and support their candidates.

## Introduction

Somalia elects a president for every four years, lawmakers from upper and lower houses of the parliament which consists of 54 and 275 respectively, and there is also

ceremonial MP (1) which he former president will vote for the tenth president of Somalia on 15th May 2022. There are thirty-nine (39) registered candidates running for the presidency in 2022. Around 90% of internet users, social-media becomes a primary source of information as candidates publish, share and tweet their campaign messages. In this context, this study aims to understand social media campaigning and its correlations with indirect election in Somalia.

## Literature

As we get closer to the presidential election in 2022, candidates are heading challenging competition than the 2017 election. The use of social media by presidential candidates has become a way for many candidates to reach voters and to hear their messages. Much academic research has been written on modern political campaign, such as (Dos, *et al.*, 2021) Correlations of social media performance and electoral results in Brazilian presidential elections. Whether it is possible to predict election results based on SM analysis (Brito et al., 2021) Like me! Analyzing the 2012 presidential candidates' Facebook pages. Online Information Review (Bronstein, J. 2013).

## Methodology

To get pages with the most followers, the researcher first visited social media pages of presidential candidates and selected six the highest number of followers on Facebook and Twitter. The study analyzed number of people who like (follow) their pages, posts made last ten days starting from when officially announced due date of the election 5th May 2022 until election day 15th May 2022. The researcher analyzed audiences' reaction such as number of likes, comments, shares and views receive posts on a candidate's page.

## Findings

Findings show that the current number of followers of the six candidates have, as of Sunday, 15 May 2022 is about five million in total. Data received from personal verified pages and no secondary pages for the candidacy has been used. See Figure 1& 2 photo gallery of the 2022 presidential candidates & results indicate that: -



Figure 1. Candidates' Facebook



Figure 2. Candidates' Twitter followers

## Mohamed Abdulahi Farmajo

Farmajo is the current president of Somalia, and he is the most active user of social media among presidential candidates. Farmajo has more followers on Facebook and Twitter accounts than other candidates. On Facebook has more than 855,000 while on Twitter has 701,000 followers. See appendix A social media link.

Farmajo's first campaign post was published on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022, six days before the election "this is too late". Comparing other presidential candidates, who started very early their posting campaign messages.

An average of two (2) post published a day Farmajo's page, a total of 19 videos, photos and posters were published and generated hundred thousands of reactions See Table 1 likes, comments and shares generated posts.

Farmajo's Facebook Post (5-15 May 2022)					
Date	Post	View	Like	Com.	Share
15/5	1	119K	20K	3500	3k
14/5	4	470K	113K	25K	9k
13/5	1	169K	30K	5200	5k
12/5	3	373K	67k	12K	8k
11/5	3	110K	108K	19K	7k
10/5	3	554K	99K	18K	15k
9/5	2	200K	74K	7K	9K
8/5	2	315K	95K	31K	11K
7/5	0	0	0	0	0
6/5	0	0	0	0	0
5/5	0	0	0	0	0

The researcher observed campaign posts which were not posted Farmajo's page but could have seen other sponsored pages. "It looks underestimating page with nearly one million followers".

On the other hand, the researcher observed that the campaign team did not use paid advertisement (Sponsor) However, the candidate hired various types of social media pages belong to influencers, TV & Radios to promote his campaign messages. Farmajo has campaign slogan which is [#IsbeddelDoonkaSocda](#), campaign team regularly used hashtag for the posts.

According to time to post, most of the Farmajo's posts were posted middle of the day, in the evening or the midnight, it is rarely posted in the morning.

13:26pm	14:05pm	07:18	00:11Pm
12:05am	4:53pm	5:18pm	10:11am
1:35pm	8:38am	3:15pm	6:00pm

## Hassan Ali Kheyre

Kheyre is a former prime minister of Somalia, worked with Farmajo for three and half years. Kheyre is the second most active user of social media among presidential candidates. His Facebook account has more than 714,000 followers, while on Twitter it has 348,000. See appendix A social media link.

Kheyre's campaign page is consistently post video clips, photos & posters, 25 posts were published in 10 days, the page posts have generated thousands of likes, comments and shares. See table 2 for details.

Kheyre's Facebook Post (5-15 May 2022)					
Date	Post	View	Like	Com.	Share
15/5	2	74K	108K	3K	791
14/5	3	74K	118K	24K	952
13/5	2	53K	9k	1777	679
12/5	3	42K	11k	1606	713
11/5	9	345K	17K	6773	4k
10/5	3	42K	11k	1606	713
9/5	1	113K	8k	8700	3k
8/5	1	199K	17K	3700	2k
7/5	1	82K	10k	2400	K
6/5	0	0	0	0	0
5/5	0	0	0	0	0

The researcher found that campaign messages were not sponsored "paid advertisement" they are organic. However, the candidate sponsored various types of social media pages belong to influencers, TVs & Radio stations to promote his campaign messages. The researcher observed campaign posts which were not published Kheyre page could have seen other influential pages. "It looks underestimating Kheyre's page with nearly one million followers".

The researcher observed that Kheyre campaigners mostly use the hashtag for his motto of #HiigsiIyoHorumar. No other

candidate has used more hashtags than Kheyre. See appendix A social media link.

According to time to post, most of the Kheyre's posts were posted middle of the day, in the evening or the midnight, it is rarely posted in the morning.

6:07pm	4:35pm	8:20pm	3:16 am
11:14pm	12:29am	4:15am	10:28pm

### Abdirahman Abdishakur (AAW)

AAW is a former minister of national planning and international cooperation. Before the campaign, AAW was one of the strongest opposition to the current administration and actively used social media to spread his ideas, and to criticize Farmajo administration.

AAW is the third most active user of social media, he has 645,000 Facebook follower and 174,000 on Twitter. AAW's campaign page is consistently updated as well, 30 posts were published in ten days this makes an average of 3 posts are published in a day. Posts generated reactions; likes, comments and shares. See table 3 for the details.

AAW's Facebook Post (5-15 May 2022)					
Date	Post	View	Like	Com/	Share
15/5	3	85k	30K	9K	2733
14/5	3	50K	38K	13K	2091
13/5	3	30k	38K	14K	2315
12/5	2	31K	10K	12K	780
11/5	6	143K	48K	10K	3292
10/5	3	163K	23K	29K	2906
9/5	3	127K	24K	5K	2323
8/5	1	50K	12K	38K	870
7/5	5	59K	40K	7K	2060
6/5	2	700K	26K	8K	1715
5/5	1	107K	14K	3K	1500

AAW's hashtag motto for the campaign is; [#WadajirIyoWadatashi](#). The researchers observed that the campaign team did not use paid advertising on social media. However, similarly to other candidates, AAW campaign messages were sponsored pages belong to social media influencers, TVs and radio official pages and of course his supporter's pages. Worthy to note, hashtags were regularly used post messages.

According to time to post, most of the AAW's posts were posted in the morning, middle of the day, in the evening, it is rarely posted in the midnight. See table 3.1 for details

10:12pm	5:06pm	10:51am	5:56pm
4:07pm	10:15 pm	5:45pm	4:54am

## Hassan Sheikh

Social Media has reshaped how politicians run presidential campaigns. Hassan Sheikh is a former president of Somalia; he was ruling the country 2012-2016. His Facebook and Twitter have followers of 497,000, and 126,000 respectively. Although the study does not focus on Instagram followers, Hassan Sheikh has also verified page on Instagram with nearly 7K followers.

Since after the election due date was announced Hassan sheikh has posted 13 including videos, posters and photos, these have generated audience's reactions such likes, shares and comments, see table 4 for details.

Hassan's Facebook Post (5-15 May 2022)					
Date	Post	View	Like	Com.	Share
15/5	1	10K	3K	600	139
14/5	2	104K	31K	15K	3200
13/5	1	35K	38K	1500	100
12/5	3	26K	12K	5K	2180
11/5	0	0	0	0	0
10/5	1	16K	7K	1300	335
9/5	3	164K	32K	79K	31
8/5	1	132K	14K	29K	2300
7/5	1	443K	36K	1K	9700
6/5	1	178K	34K	1K	58
5/5	1	100K	13K	5K	941

Similar to other candidates Hassan Sheikh has motto election of "Dal Heshiis ah Duni Heshiis ah", however, this moto was not used hashtags of the published post.

The researcher observed that the candidate did not use paid advertisement, but sponsored other pages belong to social media influencers, TVs and Radios.

According to time to post, most of the Hassan's posts were posted in the morning, middle of the day, in the evening, it is rarely posted in the midnight as shown table 4.1

8:32pm	10:26pm	3:23pm	7:29 pm
11:00pm	9:57pm	12:00Am	2:36am

### Sharif Sheikh Ahmed

The impact of social media on politics and elections around the country is receiving attention. Sharif is a former president of Somalia; his term was 2009-2012 and he is current candidate. Sharif has Facebook and Twitter official pages with followers of 355,000 and 73,000 respectively. The researcher traced posts published during the campaign and found that 8 posts including video clips, posters and photos were posted and generated reaction of the likes, comments and shares as indicated table 4 for the findings.

Sharif's Facebook Post (5-15 May 2022)					
Date	Post	View	Like	Com.	Share
15/5	1	24K	5K	11K	612
14/5	1	29K	5K	10K	998
13/5	1	13K	5K	7K	197
12/5	3	17K	16K	5K	1339
11/5	1	10K	8K	4K	230
10/5	0	0	0	0	0
9/5	0	0	0	0	0
8/5	1	9K	15K	7K	1400
7/5	0	0	0	0	0
6/5	0	0	0	0	0
5/5	1	0	9K	2K	406

Sharif has campaigned motto which is [#DalNabadahiyoDowladWanaagsan](#) this slogan has been regularly used hashtag for the campaign posts for the candidate.

The researcher observed that the posts were not paid advertisement, they only receive organic views. Sharif alternatively hired other pages belong to influencers to promote his campaign messages.

Worthy to note The candidate also made post on Twitter however, the reaction of the Twitter is not that much therefore, the researcher analyzed only Facebook reactions. Sharif's posts were posted in the afternoon, middle of the day, or the evening, it is rarely posted in the morning as table 5.1 indicates.

3:04pm	12:08am	5:34pm	4:50pm
1:09pm	3:44am	11:00am	3:00pm

## Said Abdullahi Deni

During election cycles, the use of social media by presidential candidates has become a way for many candidates to find out about voters. Deni is the current president of Puntland state of Somalia, he is also a candidate in federal election in 2022.

Social media is a major factor Deni's campaign; the candidate uses the social media as competitive advantage and attempt to grow his support bases on the various social media platforms. Deni has Facebook and Twitter pages with 281,000 and 77,000 followers respectively.

On campaign days, Deni has posted 48 posts including video, posters and photos on Facebook, these have generated reaction from the audiences and the supports. Below table 6 indicated likes, comments, and shares received from Deni's verified page on Facebook.

Deni's Facebook Post (5-15 May 2022)					
Date	Post	View	Like	Com	Share
15/5	2	24K	105K	4k	1083
14/5	4	20	731	15K	896
13/5	5	601	104	33K	1246
12/5	11	303	216	13K	10961
11/5	5	17900	1301	5K	845
10/5	6	62	266	13K	2995
9/5	2	62	514	17K	556
8/5	4	23	163	8K	159
7/5	3	34	101	5K	5224
6/5	6	75	2150	11K	2520
5/5	0	0	0	0	0

Deni has campaigned motto which is [Amni](#), [Adeeg](#), [Amaano](#). However, this slogan has not been regularly used hashtag for the campaign posts for the candidate.

Deni's posts were posted in the late in the day or the midnight, it is rarely posted in the morning. Table 6.1 shows the details

11:12pm	7:48pm	6:53pm	4:2pm
6:14pm	11:26pm	3:48pm	3:32pm

## Social Media Influencers

Our society turns to Facebook, Twitter, and blogs as sources of information. In 2022, endorsement of social media influencers become a common tactic for presidential candidates with the goal of promoting their campaign election messages.

The researcher observed that those with hundreds of thousands of followers on their Facebook and Twitter accounts have become part of the game, encouraging folks to vote for a named candidate who sponsored their show or page.

Influencers are a powerful asset for political campaigns, it is common to see a campaign video in the influencers' page while you may sometimes not see candidates' page. This shows that candidates are more satisfied their message to go through influencers' page than

their pages. “It is very popular to post influencers page vote for candidate X”.

It is beyond the scope of the study to analyze influencers page reaction.

### **Budget Allocated Social Media Campaign**

Social media plays a powerful role in 2022 local elections in Somalia. Although candidates haven't officially declared the amount of money spent on their social media campaign, the researcher communicated different campaign team and social media influencers and found that between 100-300 thousand USD were spent per candidate.

Influencers are paid differently depends on the candidates' budget, and their influencers' platform capacity. The researcher found that, candidates paid to the social media influencers between \$ 2000-5,000 depends on the capacity and the influence.

On the other hand, candidates engaged TVs and Radios social media platforms, these institutions can charge upwards of ten to fifty thousand dollars again depends on the influence level.

### **Ordinary citizens & the Campaign**

This election is not one man one vote, therefore, ordinary citizens do not have a chance to vote for their candidate and there is no online voting either.

However, citizens use social media as a platform to show solidarity to the candidate they support and post messages calling upon their representative PM to vote for candidate X. furthermore citizens share and comment pages for the candidate, these increases chance of more people to reach the message.

### **Conclusion**

It's true that the social media plays an important role in election campaigns. Sampled, six presidential candidates have a nearly five million followers on their Social Media accounts, namely Facebook and Twitter.

Followers react to campaign messages very well. Thus, candidates' posts have generated reactions around 5 million for the last ten days of the election.

No candidate has used paid advertisement on their social media, rather they sponsor influencers pages to promote their campaign.

Ordinary citizens do not have the chance to vote for their supporters, however, citizens use social media as a platform to show solidarity to the candidate they support and post messages calling upon their representative PM to vote for the candidate.

An estimation of 100-200 thousand dollars were sent on social media campaigns, mainly



sponsoring influencers' platforms. If social media paid advertisements were used, candidates would be able to get the equivalent of massive advertising without having to spend much money.

Finally, the study does not aim to investigate if there's correlation between social media performance and votes received by candidates. Views, likes, & comments do not determine election winner.

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### **About SRA**

SRA is a Somali led research institution focus on social issue at district, regional and national levels. Our research creates awareness about the public problems in people's life and pages a way that build momentum for a better tomorrow for all. SRA was founded in 2017 for the national interest.

This article is for information purposes only. The author has no position in any institution

mentioned in this article. The author has not received compensation for writing this article.

### **Appendix**

<https://www.kgun9.com/news/national/a-look-at-the-social-media-followers-of-current-2020-presidential-candidates>

<https://www.facebook.com/MudaneFarmaajo>

<https://www.facebook.com/HassanAliKhaire>

<https://www.facebook.com/AAbdishakur>

<https://www.facebook.com/HassanSheikhMahmud>

<https://www.facebook.com/HESharifShAhmed>

<https://www.facebook.com/ExcellenceSaidDeni>

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