



## **Social Media as a Catalyst for Political Engagement among Youth in India**

**Rashika Rama Raikar<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract:**

In India, the number of social media users has been growing at a rapid pace. Social media has contributed significantly to shaping contemporary political discourse and has emerged as an important tool for political participation among Indian youth. It has been a source of diverse political activities, enabling youth to engage in political news, campaigns, discussions, and events on social media. Through this youth frame their political opinions and develop perspectives on public issues. It acts as medium for political communication through various platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, X, etc. Thus, this study aims to study the impact of social media on the political engagement of youth in India. It explores the role of social media in fostering political efficacy, participation and youth opinion on politics. The rapid use of social media has also resulted a shift from online participation to offline participation. The study aims to find out positive and negative impact of social media on the political engagement of youths in India. It examines the dual role of social media as a fast information source and platform for propagation of misinformation. The study uses secondary sources such as newspaper articles, books, scholarly research articles, etc.

**Keywords:** Social media, Political engagement, Youth, India, Public opinion

### **Introduction**

In this digital world, social media has emerged as an imperative medium for political communication and public engagement in political discourses. Social media has acted as a revolutionary tool for political engagement among Indian youth in various ways such as accessing political information, political activism, campaigning, influencing voting behaviour, spreading misinformation, etc. by using various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube. India is a country where one can find world's largest youth population, which approximately stands at around 420 million

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<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science St. Xavier's College, Mapusa, Goa



which makes up approximately 29% of the total populace (Shukla, 2024). And 65% of India's citizens falls under the age of 35 (Charan, 2025). This demographic has capacity to influence political discourse, governance processes, and electoral outcomes. The rapid growth of digital technologies and widespread internet access have positioned social media and online platforms as central spaces for political engagement among Indian youth.

Social media has enabled individuals with large audiences to gain political awareness, build networks, and actively engage in political awareness. It provides a forum to youth for political debate through different online groups, pages, and accounts (Bhatt & Kumar, 2020). The present study shows the influence of social media platforms on political engagement among youths of India; how social media contributes to a shift from online to offline participation. The research also explores how social media has transformed youth-politics interactions by giving them access to various new forms of political participation, mobilization, and political expression.

### **Research Objectives**

- To examine the role of social media as a tool for political engagement among Indian youths.
- To study the impact of social media on political efficacy and participation of youths in India.

### **Methodology**

The study employs a qualitative approach by using a descriptive and analytical method to understand how social media platforms acts as a catalyst for political engagement among youth in India. The study focuses only one political participation of youths by taking a case study of India by primarily focusing on age group from 15-25 years old. The data have been collected from secondary sources such as books, research articles, journal, newspaper articles or reports, etc.

### **Literature Review**

The existing literature on social media and political participation brings out the transformative impact of digital platforms on political awareness and participation. Baglari (2025) argues that social media connects previously disengaged populations to political discourse. Bhatt and Kumar (2020) specifically examine Instagram as a platform that enables political expression among university students through interactive and visual content, thereby shaping political opinions. Kaur, Verma, & Otoo (2023) establish a positive relationship between social media usage and political participation, suggesting that online engagement can



translate into offline political involvement. The existing literature presents a comprehensive study on how various social media platform act as medium for young generation for political discourses.

## **Results**

### **Social media as a tool for Political Engagement among Indian Youth**

Over the years India has witnessed a digital revolution which has been driven by affordable smartphones, widespread internet access, and the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube. This has enabled millions of young youths to access digital content, engage in discussions, and participate in political activities both online and offline.

One of the most significant impacts of social media is political awareness among the electorate (especially, the first-time voters). On social media the youth are exposed to various political content, news, campaign updates, debates, policy discussions. For example, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Bihar launched 'Mission 60' campaign with an aim to increase voter turnout and in that special attention was given to encourage participation among youth, women, migrant voters, and persons with disabilities.

The 2014 Indian General Elections marked a significant shift in the use of social media in political campaigning in India. Shri. Narendra Modi Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate, effectively used platforms such as Facebook, X, and YouTube to engage with voters in unprecedented ways. His campaigns demonstrated how social media platforms could be used to build a direct connection with citizens, particularly young voters. Similarly, his campaign slogans and hashtags like "Aab Ki Baar, Modi Sarkar" went so viral that it helped the party to engage with young first-time voters and tech-savvy voters (Rajesh & Mane, 2024; Baglari, 2025).

According to the survey conducted by People Research on India's Consumer Economy (PRICE), the Indian youths identified six key national priorities for the upcoming years such as access to high-quality education to develop skilled workforce, controlling inflation to maintain affordability of essential goods and services, improvement in healthcare services in the post-pandemic context, improving infrastructure to facilitate economic activity and connectivity, creating job opportunities, and promoting inclusive economic growth to reduce disparities (Shukla, 2024).

Social media also serves as a platform for political candidates and political parties to engage directly with the young voters. This phenomenon is called virtual campaigning. By using live streams, post, tweets, and





targeted advertisements politicians communicate their messages. Social media has resulted in an interactive political campaign especially among young and tech-savvy voters (Narayan & Priya, 2025). At the same time, the circulation of viral memes promoting the “Modi guarantee” narrative, along with backlash-driven content related to electoral bonds, influenced voters’ perceptions. Its frequent use increases voters’ exposure to political content, often even unintentionally, which can influence their opinions.

Through the use of social media, political participation among the youths have increased as social media platforms have blurred the boundaries like geographical, linguistic, regional, national in the interconnected world. Social media provides the Indian youth a platform to view recent issues in political spheres and share their viewpoints. It has helped in mobilizing voters as various political parties’ social media-based groups and pages, and articulate party favor short videos, posts/photos, stories, and songs.

Instagram is most popular and widely used social media platform in India. It has also become a new forum for politician and political parties to engage with youths digitally. ‘Youth, metropolitan, and first-time millennial voters are the target audiences on Instagram’ (Bhatt & Kumar, 2020). Besides, X has become the primary medium for current events and public dialogue, enabling users to express their views and engage in relevant discussions about politics, entertainment, and social issues (Tiwari & Khan, 2025).

The rise of social media has contributed to the growth of social movements by enabling mass mobilization, especially among youth and fostering greater political engagement which was evident in the Anna Hazare ‘India Against Corruption’ or Anti-corruption movement. (Sharma, 2011 & Kattakayam, 2021).

“On August 17, two post appeared on India's Against Corruption Facebook page [www.facebook.com/IndiaACor](http://www.facebook.com/IndiaACor), and a tweet on its Twitter handle, [www.twitter.com/janlokalpal](http://www.twitter.com/janlokalpal)” (Kattakayam, 2021) for public gathering at India Gate, followed by march to Jantar Mantar.” And within an hour these online appeals generated over 500 comments, 2000 likes, and multiple retweets by netizens, which resulted in transformation of Anna Hazare led struggle into mass movement. The movement has resulted in implementation of two important laws, that is Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act. Social media also contributed in Telangana movement (socio-political movement) and creation of separate Telangana state. It supplemented the movement by facilitating protesters activism The people of Telangana, especially educated youth were brought together through Facebook. The supporters of Telangana movement created Facebook pages & groups to showcase the miserable plight of Telangana people, participate in discussion forum & threads. This has resulted in launching online virtual movement to offline real protest (Gadari, 2017).

## **Discussion**

The availability of political content on social media platforms encourages the youth to participate in political activities. It also helps in creating awareness in low-turnout constituencies. First time voters are mostly the targeted section on social media, as they are more exposed to social media and rely the platforms for political information. It was clearly witnessed during 2014 India's general election, wherein BJP's candidate popularly used slogans and hashtags to gain support of tech savvy voters. Along with that the youths have certain expectations from the government and through various online campaigns the candidates try to influence the voting pattern in India. Consequently, the active involvement of youth on various social media platforms plays a significant role in shaping their political opinions and ultimately influencing their voting behaviour.

It also has become a popular and effective tool for political campaigning in India. In recent years, virtual campaigning has become an important part of contemporary Indian politics as political parties use platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram to share their opinions on various issues and to criticize political opponents, to share their propaganda, etc. (Kalita, 2022). For instance, "in 2024 during Bihar Lok Sabha election, digital campaigns boosted first-time voter turnout by 15-20% in urban Bihar constituencies" (Narayan & Priya, 2025). Not only this, the core ingredient in the success of movement was the use of social networking as tool for mass mobilization and rapid dissemination through the Internet during demand for creation of Telangana as a separate state. It was the active involvement of the youths where a simple post and a tweet on X helped in mobilizing the people to fight for cause.

While social media has contributed positively, it also presents significant challenges to democratic functioning. The proliferation of misinformation and false content has the potential to misinform voters and shape distorted opinions about political leader and policy issues. Some individuals and groups misuse social media to spread propaganda, influence public opinion, and creates social divide (Singh & Amarjeet, 2024). For example, fake news related to caste violence on "Muslim reservations" was widely shared through Facebook groups in Sitamarhi in Bihar and this misleading content polarized 20-25% of voters along religious lines (Narayan & Priya, 2025).

During the 2019, Indian general elections, the spread of misinformation on WhatsApp influences voter perceptions and fuelled communal tensions (Rajesh & Mane, 2024 & Rajesh & Mane, 2024). Jha (2020) in his research also indicated that misinformation campaigns were deliberate strategies to sway public opinion and disrupt electoral process.



Social media often creates echo chambers or filter bubbles where users are exposed to the information that matches their existing beliefs. This results in biases, limit diverse perspectives, reduces meaningful dialogues, and making it difficult for different groups to foster understanding.

## **Conclusion**

Political engagement of youth plays a very significant role in the functioning of the democracy. And in this digital age, where social media has taken a significant place in the daily routines of youth, it provides a platform for youth to frame public opinion, participate in political discourses and be an important factor in shaping India's democratic future. However, the increasing spread of misinformation, including AI-generated and manipulated content has raised concerns about the reliability and credibility of political information shared online. To conclude, social media has served as a catalyst for political engagement among youth of India.

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