
Social Media And Its Influence On Political Engagement Among Youth Of Delhi NCR Region

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 26-03-2025

Published: 15-04-2025

Keywords:

*Social media, political
engagement, youth, Delhi
NCR*

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of social media on political engagement among youth in the Delhi NCR region, focusing on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp. It explores how social media fosters political awareness, activism, and perceptions, while also addressing challenges such as misinformation, polarisation, and echo chambers. Through a comprehensive review of literature and research. The findings underscore the transformative potential of social media while emphasizing the need for regulation and digital literacy.

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15223198>

INTRODUCTION

Social media has dramatically transformed since its early days, evolving from basic networking platforms to a dynamic digital ecosystem that profoundly influences global societies. Initially, platforms like Friendster and MySpace were created to connect individuals. Over time, the launch of Facebook in 2004 marked a revolutionary shift, offering users not only a means of communication but also a platform to share ideas, opinions, and multimedia content. Today, the spectrum of social media



platforms has expanded to include Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn, each serving distinct purposes and catering to diverse audiences.

This evolution aligns with the exponential rise in global internet penetration and the ubiquity of smartphones. The integration of advanced algorithms and multimedia capabilities has allowed social media to transcend its original purpose. It is now a formidable medium for disseminating information, fostering social movements, and shaping political discourse. Twitter, for instance, has revolutionized real-time communication and often serves as a primary source for breaking news. Simultaneously, platforms like Instagram and TikTok have redefined visual storytelling, engaging users through creative and immersive content.

Social Media in India: A Rising Force

India's social media landscape illustrates these global trends, reflecting a profound transformation in how people interact and engage online. With over 692 million internet users in 2023, India is one of the world's largest digital markets. Among the youth, social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube dominate digital routines, especially in urban centers like Delhi NCR. Here, the proliferation of high speed internet and affordable smartphones has created an always-connected generation. Social media has become more than just a source of entertainment for Indian youth. It serves as a space for self-expression, education, and civic participation. In Delhi NCR, a region renowned for its vibrant and youthful population, over 45% of residents are under 30. This demographic embraces social media as an integral part of daily life, blending its use for academic pursuits, professional networking, and activism. Platforms like TikTok have encouraged creative expression, while Twitter and Facebook offer forums for intellectual debates and social discourse.

Youth as Catalysts for Digital and Social Change

The youth demographic is widely recognized as the driving force behind digital innovation and social media proliferation. Their adaptability, curiosity, and tech savviness make them ideal adopters of new technologies. In Delhi NCR, this phenomenon is especially evident. Youth in this region not only consume social media content but actively create it, transforming platforms into tools for academic, professional, and civic endeavors.



During significant social movements like the 2020 anti-CAA protests, youth in Delhi NCR leveraged social media to mobilize support, spread awareness, and document developments. Such instances highlight the dual role of social media as both a tool for activism and a reflection of youth identity. However, challenges such as cyberbullying, digital addiction, and the pressure to maintain curated online personas also emerge, revealing the complexity of the digital sphere.

Political Engagement in the Digital Era

Political engagement has traditionally been associated with activities such as voting, rallies, and grassroots campaigns. In the digital age, it now encompasses a spectrum of online activities, from consuming news and participating in discussions to virtual protests and e-petitions. Social media bridges geographical and cultural divides, enabling youth in regions like Delhi NCR to connect with global communities and share ideas.

Objectives of The Study:

1. To explore the influence of social media on young people in Delhi NCR in terms of their political awareness, engagement, and activism.
2. To analyse how social media shapes political opinions and affects voting decisions.
3. To investigate the role of social media in encouraging youth participation in political campaigns.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Books on Social Media and Its Impact

1. Keen, A. (2007). The cult of the amateur: How today's internet is killing our culture. Doubleday/Currency.

Andrew Keen's *The Cult of the Amateur* argues that the rise of user-generated content and Web2.0 technologies has degraded professional standards in media, culture, and knowledge dissemination. Keen critiques how platforms like blogs, YouTube, and social media prioritise amateurism, often at the expense of expertise and quality. He discusses the implications of this trend, including the erosion of traditional journalism, the proliferation of misinformation, and the decline of cultural gatekeepers. Keen warns that while democratising content creation has benefits, it also poses risks to intellectual integrity



and cultural value. He advocates for a renewed appreciation of professional expertise and accountability in the digital era.

2. Carr, N. (2010). *The shallows: How the internet is changing the way we think, read and remember.* W. W. Norton & Company

In *The Shallows*, Nicholas Carr examines how the internet is reshaping the way humans think, read, and process information. Carr explains how digital technologies, with their emphasis on speed and multitasking, are rewiring our brains, diminishing our capacity for deep focus and contemplation. He explores the neurological effects of constant online engagement, linking them to a decline in critical thinking, memory retention, and sustained attention. Drawing on historical and scientific insights, Carr contrasts the immersive experience of reading with the fragmented, surface-level nature of online interactions. The book is both a warning about the cognitive costs of the internet and a call to preserve the mental habits that underpin creativity and knowledge.

3. Bauerlein, M. (Ed.). (2011). *The digital divide: Arguments for and against Facebook, Google, texting, and the age of social networking.* Penguin.

This anthology, edited by Mark Bauerlein, presents a balanced exploration of the benefits and drawbacks of digital technologies and social networking. The book features essays from scholars, journalists, and technologists, covering topics such as the role of social media in fostering connections, its impact on privacy, and its effects on attention spans and critical thinking. Contributors debate whether platforms like Facebook and Google empower individuals or exploit them, providing a nuanced discussion of the opportunities and challenges of the digital age. The collection serves as a comprehensive guide for readers seeking diverse perspectives on how technology is reshaping society.

4. Highfield, T. (2016). *Social media and everyday politics.* Polity.

In *Social Media and Everyday Politics*, Tim Highfield examines how ordinary citizens use social media to engage in political activities like news sharing, protest organization, and civic participation. The book explores the democratizing potential of digital platforms, highlighting both their role in amplifying marginalized voices and the challenges they pose, such as misinformation and reduced face-to-face engagement. Highfield emphasizes how everyday political participation has shifted due to social media, leading to new forms of political engagement that both empower and fragment communities.



5. Lynch, M. P. (2016). The internet of us: Knowing more and understanding less in the age of big data. Liveright.

The Internet of Us explores the paradox of how the internet provides unprecedented access to information while simultaneously eroding our ability to think critically and deeply. Lynch argues that reliance on digital platforms for knowledge acquisition often prioritises convenience over understanding, leading to superficial engagement with complex issues. He discusses the implications of living in a "knowledge economy" driven by algorithms, where misinformation and cognitive biases are easily reinforced. Lynch advocates for reclaiming critical thinking skills and emphasising epistemic responsibility in an age where big data and algorithms dominate how we learn and interact.

Research on Social Media and Its Impact

1. Marengo, D., Montag, C., Perchtold-Stefan, C., & Elhai, J. D. (2021). Examining the links between active Facebook use, received likes, self-esteem, and happiness.

Marengo and colleagues explored the relationship between Facebook use and users' subjective well-being. Their study demonstrated that the frequency and intensity of positive feedback, such as Likes, significantly influenced users' self-esteem and happiness. Increased profile updates and personal content sharing were directly correlated with receiving more Likes, which in turn elevated self-esteem and happiness levels.

2. Bastick, Z. (2021). Would you notice if fake news changed your behavior?

Bastick conducted a randomized experiment to assess the unconscious effects of disinformation. Even minimal exposure to fake news—less than five minutes—was found to significantly influence participants' unconscious behaviors. The study underscored the subtle yet profound effects of disinformation, emphasizing the inadequacy of current methods to combat fake news.

3. Rani, S., Fatima, M., & Kumar, P. (2024). Influence of social media on educational and mental well-being of young minds.

This study critically analyzed how social media impacts young individuals aged 18–30 in terms of mental health and academics. Data collected from 100 participants revealed that social media affects cognitive processes, attitudes, and behaviors, often to the detriment of psychological well-being and academic performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a comprehensive literature review design to explore the impact of social media on political engagement among youth in the Delhi NCR region. This design is particularly suitable for addressing broad research questions regarding social media's influence on political behavior, attitudes, and participation without the need for original empirical data collection. The literature review approach enables systematic exploration and synthesis of existing scholarly works, offering critical insights into recurring themes, theoretical frameworks, and empirical findings. This method is especially valuable for understanding complex phenomena like the intersection of social media and political engagement. By relying on established research, the study mitigates resource constraints related to time, budget, and logistics, while providing a solid theoretical foundation for the analysis.

Several reasons justify the use of a literature review in this study. First, its exploratory nature allows for the identification of gaps, contradictions, and patterns in existing research, enriching the understanding of social media's role in political engagement. Second, the study is grounded in established theories such as network theory, media effects theory, and political engagement theory, ensuring a comprehensive and well rounded analysis. The broad scope of the review also permits the examination of diverse perspectives, yielding nuanced insights. Additionally, by synthesizing findings from disciplines like political science, sociology, media studies, and communication, the study offers a holistic view of social media's influence.

The research methodology follows systematic and thematic analysis, ensuring high quality, relevant literature is included. Studies are evaluated based on research design, sample size, and focus. Comparative analysis is used to contextualize findings from regional and global studies, while critical appraisal of sources ensures credibility and reliability. Bias is mitigated through triangulation, contextualization of global trends in the Delhi NCR region, and a critical evaluation of research methods and frameworks.

To ensure quality assurance and validation, only peer-reviewed articles, credible books, and reputable reports are included, with cross-verification from multiple sources to identify inconsistencies. This methodological rigor strengthens the reliability of the study's conclusions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



Network Theory examines the interconnectedness within digital communities, with social media allowing individuals to connect based on shared ideologies. Key figures like political leaders, influencers, and activists shape public opinion, particularly during elections. However, network theory also highlights concerns like echo chambers and filter bubbles that intensify political polarization by reinforcing existing beliefs.

Media Effects Theory: Agenda-Setting and Framing investigates how social media serves as a powerful tool for shaping public perceptions. Hashtags like #FarmersProtest highlights how political issues gain traction online. Yet, the amplification of sensational content through algorithms distorts political discourse and fuels misinformation.

Impact on Human Relationships and Psychology addresses how social media affects emotional well-being and human interactions. While it promotes connectivity, it also leads to superficial relationships, body image concerns, and information fatigue, especially among youth. Despite these challenges, social media can foster solidarity, particularly for marginalized groups, by providing a platform for self-expression and advocacy.

These frameworks collectively shed light on the complex ways social media shapes political behavior in India, particularly in urban areas like Delhi NCR.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this present study were to explore the influence of social media on young people in Delhi NCR in terms of their political awareness, engagement and activism. The study also aimed to analyse how social media shapes political opinions and affects voting decisions. Lastly, it also investigated the role of social media in encouraging youth participation in political campaigns.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study stem from a thorough review of 15 scholarly books and 15 research studies, which collectively contribute to understanding the relationship between social media and political engagement among youth in the Delhi NCR region. Social media's influence on political awareness, perceptions, and activism has been explored, highlighting both its potential benefits and challenges. Social Media's Role in Political Awareness and Engagement Social media has transformed political engagement by serving as both an information hub and a platform for participation. As emphasized by



Glenn Harlan Reynolds in *The Social Media Upheaval*, social media platforms amplify political content, making news and opinions easily accessible. However, Reynolds also notes that this accessibility can sometimes lead to sensationalism, undermining thoughtful political discourse. Sinan Aral's *The Hype Machine* discusses how algorithms on platforms like Facebook and Instagram tailor political content to users' interests, enhancing political awareness. Research by Indira (2022) supports this, revealing that over 88% of Indian millennials rely on the internet for political information, with social media being the dominant source. These platforms provide real-time updates and interactive features that keep users engaged and informed, crucial for political discourse, especially in a fast-paced political environment like Delhi NCR.

Mobilization and Youth Empowerment

Social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram have proven crucial in the mobilization of political movements. *Breaking the Social Media Prism* by Chris Bail highlights how hashtags and live streaming can connect activists and amplify movements. Research by Panwar (2024) on the Farmers' Protest in India demonstrates how social media facilitated coordination, spread counter-narratives, and fostered solidarity. Social media has also empowered youth by enabling them to take leadership in political movements, bypassing traditional political structures. As noted in *The World Without Mind* by Franklin Foer, digital platforms empower grassroots leaders, evident in the anti-CAA protests, where youth leaders used social media to organize rallies and gain public support.

Challenges and the Integration of Online and Offline Activism

Despite its potential, it presents challenges, such as the spread of misinformation, which can hinder political mobilization and create confusion among participants, as discussed in *Antisocial Media* by Siva Vaidhyanathan. However, studies by Panda et al. (2024) show how online activism often transitions into offline actions, like physical protests, thereby increasing the visibility and impact of movements. In the context of Delhi NCR, social media has become an essential tool for organizing political events and spreading awareness, especially given the region's high internet penetration and politically active youth demographic. Platforms like WhatsApp and Twitter have played pivotal roles in rallying young people to political causes, further solidifying social media's central role in shaping the region's political landscape.

Democratization of Information



A significant impact of social media is the democratization of information. As highlighted by Sinan Aral in *The Hype Machine*, social media platforms allow individuals to bypass traditional media gatekeepers, making political content more accessible to a broader audience. This has particular importance in regions like Delhi NCR, where socio-economic factors often limit access to traditional news sources. Research by Indira (2022) shows that 88% of Indian millennials rely on the internet as their primary source of political information, with social media platforms at the forefront of news consumption.

CONCLUSION

This research investigates the role of social media in shaping political engagement among youth in the Delhi NCR region, focusing on its impact on political awareness, perceptions, and activism. With high digital penetration and a politically active environment, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp are critical in shaping political discourse. The study aims to understand how these platforms contribute to political participation, while addressing challenges like misinformation, echo chambers, and polarization.

The findings reveal social media's dual role as both a catalyst for political engagement and a challenge to constructive discourse. On the positive side, platforms increase political awareness by offering real-time updates and interactive content, allowing users to stay informed and engaged. As Sinan Aral highlights in *The Hype Machine*, algorithms personalize content to enhance users' political awareness and shape their identities. Social media also empowers marginalized voices, as seen in movements like the Farmers' Protest, and facilitates political activism. Studies like Panwar's (2024) emphasize how social media is central to organizing protests and supporting movements for change. However, the study also identifies negative aspects of social media in political engagement. Misinformation, discussed in *Antisocial Media* by Siva Vaidhyathan, distorts political perceptions and influences voting behavior, as shown in Bastick's (2021) research on fake news. This underscores the importance of digital literacy to mitigate misinformation's harmful effects. Additionally, echo chambers and political polarization, explored in *The Social Media Upheaval* by Glenn Harlan Reynolds, undermine meaningful political discourse, especially during election periods in the Delhi NCR region. The study suggests that while social media fosters political mobilization, particularly among youth, challenges like misinformation and polarization must be addressed. Policymakers should regulate platforms to promote transparency and digital literacy, while educational institutions can equip youth with the skills to engage critically with online content.



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