ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN INDIAN POLITICS: AN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of social media has profoundly altered the political landscape, influencing political discussions, shaping public opinion, and impacting electoral processes. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp have revolutionized political communication, making it more dynamic, instantaneous, and interactive. These digital spaces enable politicians, political parties, and citizens to engage in discourse in unprecedented ways. This research seeks to examine how social media influences political dialogue, shapes public sentiment, and affects election outcomes.

Akey advantage of social media in politics is its ability to reach a broad audience instantly. Politicians and parties leverage these platforms for election campaigns, policy promotion, and voter engagement, often bypassing traditional media. Its significance can be seen in a better alternative of main stream media particularly at the time when the main stream media is under control and it seems to be working for corporates and ruling Modi regime. Social media also empowers individuals by offering direct access to political figures and real-time political updates. It fosters discussions on critical issues, encouraging political participation and activism. Additionally, these platforms allow targeted political outreach through data-driven strategies, making campaigning more effective and precise.

Despite its benefits, social media presents significant challenges in political engagement. The rapid spread of misinformation and fake news has become a major concern, shaping public perception and sometimes even influencing election results. Manipulated narratives, biased reporting, and misleading content can misinform voters and contribute to political polarization. Moreover, the misuse of social media for propaganda, hate speech, and cyber bullying complicates online political interactions.

This study will explore both the benefits and drawbacks of social media in politics. By analysing real-world cases, it aims to provide insights into how social media is transforming political processes and suggest strategies to address its negative effects.

INTRODUCTION:

Social Media's Impact on Indian Politics Social media has drastically changed Indian politics by altering the interactions between political parties, leaders, and voters. With more than 500 million people using the internet, political communication has become crucial thanks to sites like Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp. Unlike traditional media, social media offers real-time interaction, allowing politicians to answer public issues instantaneously. It plays a key role both during and beyond election cycles by moulding public opinion, rallying support, and targeting specific voting groups, notably the tech-savvy youth.

In order to sway conversations, especially during elections, Indian political parties have progressively adopted digital campaigns, hashtags, and viral content. Politicians can interact with citizens on social media, resolve complaints, and create narratives that influence public opinion. Targeted adverts based on user demographics have made digital campaigning a crucial election strategy. During elections, prominent hashtags such as #AbKi Baar Modi Sarkar, #NYAY, and # Main Bhi Chowkidar have trended, affecting voter opinion. Additionally, social media gives citizens a forum to discuss governance and policy. It has also made politics more accessible to independent voices by allowing grassroots leaders to gain prominence without depending on conventional party structures.

Social media has notably impacted Indian voting behavior by influencing public perception and enhancing political engagement. Following the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, social media has been essential in predicting election results and rallying voters. Although social media boosts political involvement and the exchange of information, it also disseminates false news and misinformation; resulting in societal rifts. The improper use of social media in a democracy can lead to instability, thus making it crucial to oversee content wisely.

Not with standing its benefits, social media has sparked worries about propaganda, disinformation, and online manipulation. Misleading narratives, manipulated films, and fake news frequently spread online and affect public opinion. Another developing problem is the use of hired influencers and bots to spread political messages or disparage opponents.

Concerns

Over privacy and transparency were raised by the Cambridge Analytical affair, which revealed the dangers of data exploitation in digital politics. Ethical discussions over digital election tactics have arisen as a result of political parties being accused of utilizing personal information for micro targeted campaigns. These worries have raised questions about how political organisations gather and exploit user data.

Affordable smartphones and internet access have made political engagement more widespread, especially since Reliance Jio's 2016 launch. Previously excluded rural areas are now actively involved in online political discourse, and platforms like WhatsApp have become essential for direct communication, with political parties using them to organize meetings, rally support, and disseminate their agendas.

Numerous social and political movements in India have benefited greatly from social media. For example, the 2011 anti-corruption movement, spear headed by Anna Hazare, gained momentum through viral campaigns, and the2020–21 farmers' protests attracted national and international attention because of widespread digital activism. These movements show how social media gives citizens the ability to voice their concerns and hold leaders accountable. particularly at the moment when the mainstream media has become the handi maid of ruling Political Regime and Corporative. The social media is more democratic in its nature & essence as it gives adequate space to born ways communication. Social media's increasing power has led the government to enact content moderation laws in an effort to strike a balance between responsible governance and free speech. None the less, worries about data privacy, censorship, and digital spying continue. Social media is still an effective instrument in Indian democracy inspite of these obstacles. It has changed public opinion, empowered citizens, and transformed political communication. As technology evolves, digital literacy and responsible online behavior will be crucial in ensuring a well-informed and democratic society.

Objectives:

The followings are the main objectives of this study:

- Analyzing the Influence of Social Media on Political Communication.
- Comprehending the Function of Social Media in Political Engagement.
- Evaluating the Impact on Public Perception and Election Results.
- Examining Challenges Presented by Social Media in Politics.

Review of literature:

A literature review is an analytical and thorough overview of studies on a specific subject. It helps the researcher to identify & define research problem, as well as to layout its objectives & hypothesis. It is useful in generalisation of research findings & predictions of socio-Political phenomena. The followings are main aspects of Review of literature for the present study:

o Social Media as a Political Instrument: Research shows that social media has evolved into a significant asset for political campaigns. Manpreet Kaur and Rajesh Verma (2016) discovered that political parties widely utilize social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to directly interact with voters.

o The Impact of Social Media on Election Results: As noted by Usha M. Rodrigues & Michael Nieman (2017), India's general election in 2014 was called the "first social media election," emphasizing the increasing reliance of political parties on online platforms.

o Issues Arising from Social Media in Politics: A study conducted by Priya Sinha (2021) highlights the dangers of misinformation and digital manipulation, which can mislead voters.

Concept:

The main emphasis of this research is on the effect of Social Media Usage by university students regarding their understanding of Political Knowledge, Political Efficacy, Civic Involvement and Political Engagement in Campus Party Politics enabled campuses and Campus Party Politics prohibited campuses. Therefore, it is important to succinctly clarify on Social Media to enhance the understanding of the study's established goals. Social Media have revolutionized the realm of

communication. It has significantly shaped and transformed how individuals think, learn, play, connect, and create convey. Nowadays, it has integrated in to our daily life. It is more than just a technology; it is an engine of societal transformation, which has altered our work patterns, educational experiences, entertainment choices, social interactions, and methods of collecting and sharing information; in brief, our fundamental being. Various scholars have provided multiple definitions of Social Media. However there are numerous similarities in these definitions, some of these highlight specific aspects of Social with added emphasis on particular traits Media.

American Psychological Association (APA) defines social media as "forms of digital communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content." Whereas Wikipedia describes social media as "interactive technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing and aggregation of content amongst virtual communities and networks."

Forms of Social Media

Politics and Social Media are Online communities that facilitate information sharing, conversation, and worldwide connections, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, are referredtoassocialmedia.Socialmediaisessentialtopoliticalcommunication, campaigning, and public involvement because it enables leaders to communicate updates, engage with the public, and sway opinions. By influencing public opinion, rallying followers, and delivering real-time news, it has revolutionised political debate. Social media is a vital weapon in contemporary political operations since governments and political leaders use these channels to address issues, advance policies, and foster civic engagement.

Depending on how user-generated content is shared, Social Media can be divided into six categories:

a) Social Media Platforms (Facebook, Google+, MySpace, LinkedIn)

b) Community of Media Products (YouTube, Flickr, Slideshare)

c) Blogging Platforms (Wordpress, Blogger, Twitter, Posterous)

d) Community for Creating Information (Wikipedia, Wikispaces)

e) Services for Sharing Links (Digg, Diigo)

f) Online Communities (Habbo Hotel, Second Life)

Political Knowledge:

Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) characterize Political Knowledge as the collection of real political knowledge that is retained in long-term memory. Political Awareness is as ought-after trait among the people in any thriving democracy. Policy-related Knowledge empowers individuals to make educated decisions about who ought to govern. Them and which policies need to be adhered to during the administration process. Kate Kenski (2006) characterizes Political Knowledge as factual information that is retained in recollection regarding public policy, governmental matters, elected and appointed officials authorities, and individuals running for public positions. Multiple studies have suggested that individuals with more Political Knowledge tend to exhibit higher engagement in political events. Increased Political Knowledge

can contribute to individuals' dedication to different types of Political Participation not only makes them democratically effective but also informed in their opinions. Democracy functions more effectively. When the public is aware of political issues.

Trends in India's Population, Internet Usage, and Social Media:

Population: By 2025, India attained atotalof1.46 billion population of which approximately 62.9% is rural and 37.1% is urban. The gender distribution is 51.6% male and 48.4% female.

Internet Usage: In January 2025, India reported 806 million internet users (55.3% of the population), an increase of 49 million (6.5% rise) as compared to 2024. Nonetheless, 652 million individuals (44.7%) stayed disconnected.

Trends in Social Media: 491 million identities of social media users (33.7% of the population). Increase of 29 million users (6.3% raise) starting in 2024. However among this population 444 million adults use social media (43.1% of the adult population).

Gender disparity: There in this regard 65.5% are male, 34.5% are female. 60.9% of internet users in India engage actively with social media.

Social media is expanding quickly, but numbers might vary because of data modifications. Digital connectivity keeps growing throughout the nation.

Research Methodology:

The research approach utilized a descriptive research design to investigate the impact of social media on political communication. A convenience sampling approach was employed, focusing on active social media users aged 18 and older via platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. Data gathering was carried out through a structured questionnaire which covered information and political participation activities. The research mainly depended on the results of quantitative analysis. This method facilitated organized data gathering, allowing for a meaningful analysis of social media's impact on political engagement and opinion development. The research utilized both primary and secondary data collection methods for a comprehensive analysis. Primary data was gathered through an online survey on social media, while secondary data came from scholarly sources and reputable media. This integration provided deeper insights into social media's role in political communication.

Data Analysis:

In this study, information related to social media and politics and their respective effects have been collected from 48 people of Sirsa district. Through a questionnaire and analysis by using simple statistical tools which has been given below:

1. Which Social Media platform do you use most often for news and political information?

Determining the favored platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, aids researchers in grasping where individuals are most prone to come across political content and conversations. Every platform possesses distinct algorithms, audience demographics, and content formats, all of which affect how political information is disseminated and received. This data enables researchers to assess which platforms exert the greatest impact on political attitudes and participation.

Fig 1
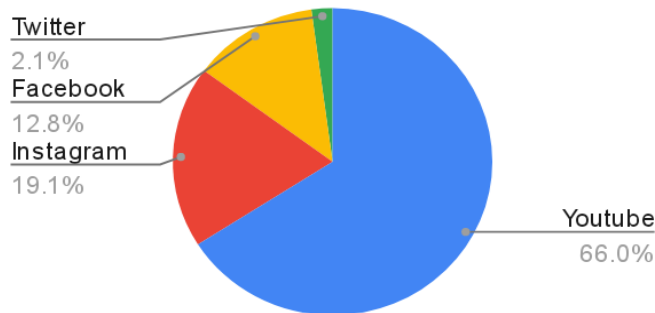
From fig.1 it is clear that two-thirds of the respondents (66.0%) use YouTube, (19.1%) followed by Instagram , (12.8%) Facebook and merely (2.1%) Twitter.

2. Do you believe Social Media has influenced your political views?

Social media platforms present users with a range of viewpoints, news outlets, and political views, which can influence or strengthen their beliefs. Algorithms that emphasize trending or like-minded content frequently generate echo chambers, where users mainly encounter perspectives that match their own, reinforcing their beliefs. Conversely, some believe they are not impacted, considering social media a source of information instead of influence. This combination of reactions underscores the considerable, yet diverse, influence of social media on political opinions.


Fig.2
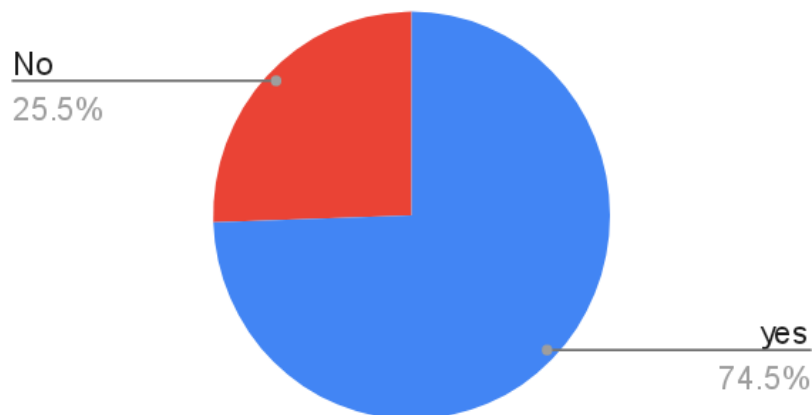
From fig.2, it is clear that about three-fourths of the respondents (74.5%) answered in Yes and One-fourth (25.5%) answered in No.

1.Do you believe Social Media played a significant role in the last (2024) election?

The public frequently shared varied opinions. Many recognized that social media served as a strong instrument for shaping voter views, spreading information, and rallying supporters. It was considered crucial for candidates' engagement, especially in reaching younger demographics and marginalized communities. Nonetheless, some individuals expressed worries regarding misinformation and echo chambers on social media, as these could polarize view points and impact the standard of democratic discussion.


Fig.3
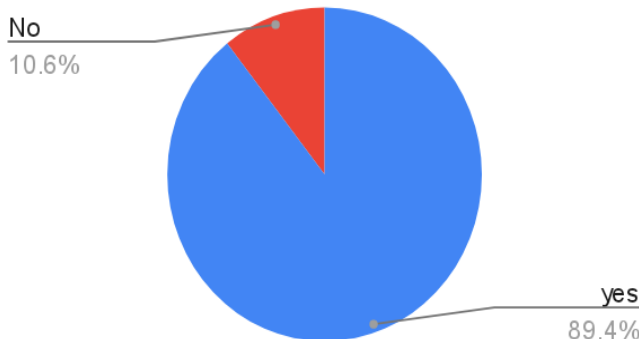
From fig.3, it is clear that almost all three-fourths (89.4%) respondents are of the view point that Social Media has played a significant role in the 2024 election and only a small segment (10.6%) have a contrary view point.

2.Do you think politicians should use Social Media more?

The community frequently emphasizes both possible advantages and issues. Numerous individuals think that a heightened social media presence enables politicians to connect directly with the public, encouraging transparency and facilitating immediate interaction on various issues. It also provides a means to connect with younger, more digitally engaged audiences, promoting increased political involvement. Nonetheless, some express concern over the dangers of misinformation, polarization, and the chance that rapid online reactions might lack the depth required for intricate political dialogues. Public feedback shows the two fold function of social media in improving political discussions, while also necessitating careful oversight to uphold credibility and trust.


Fig.4
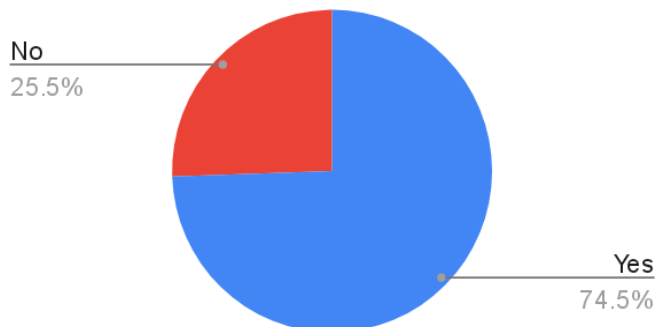
From fig.4, it is clear that about three-fourths of the respondents (74.5%) answered in Yes that politicians should use social media and One-fourth (25.5%) answered in No.

3. Social Media plays an important role in getting politicians to pay attention to certain issues?

Individuals frequently inquire if social media truly contributes to policy change or if it primarily raises public awareness. Some people doubt the extent of its influence on politicians' choices and whether online activism genuinely leads to tangible results. Furthermore, users might question whether social media elevates specific voices above others, or in what ways it can ensure politicians are held accountable. These inquiries are essential for grasping how social media serves as a potent, immediate channel of communication between the public and political leaders.

Fig.5
Disagree 6.4%
Neutral 23.4%
Agree 70.2%
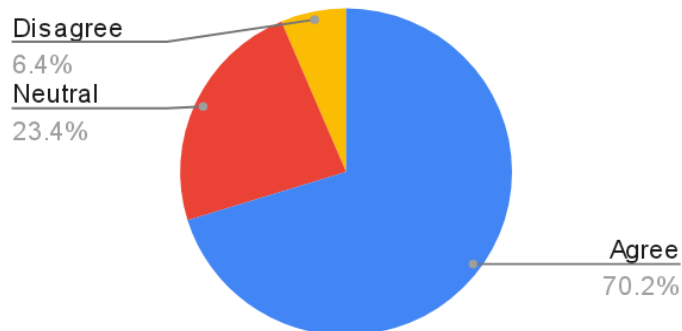
From fig.5 "Social Media plays an important role in getting politicians to pay attention to certain issues" then about three-fourths (70.2%) answered for agree, (23.4%) answered for neutral and (6.4%) answered for disagree.

Findings:

This take a look at is derived from a survey of forty eight members, investigating their engagement with social media and the way it impacts their political perspectives and moves. The survey consequences are broken down into precise classes for in-intensity analysis..

The maximum popular social media platforms for news and politics have been recognized within the survey: YouTube is used by 66.0%, Instagram by using 19.1%, Facebook through 12.8%, and Twitter through 2.1%. YouTube turned into found to be the maximum dominant platform, utilized by almost 2/3 of contributors, highlighting its importance in political discussions and video content material. Instagram also has a good sized range.

A observe at the Impact of Social Media on Political Views determined that 74.5% of respondents suggested that social media has encouraged their political affairs, even as 25.5% disagreed. The results recommend that maximum human beings trust social media plays a

Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research
ISSN: 2278-4853   Vol. 14, Issue 5, May 2025   SJIF 2022 = 8.179
A peer reviewed journal

massive position in shaping their political perspectives with the aid of promoting political discussions and doubtlessly changing their critiques.

The vast majority 89.4% of individuals assume that social media had a massive effect at the previous election, with simplest 10.6% expressing war of words. This discovery highlights the growing significance of on-line structures in political campaigning and elections.

Is it encouraged for politicians to increase their use of social media? According to a large majority 74.5% sure, they ought to, but 25.5% disagree. This illustrates the need for politicians to interact with the general public on these systems for you to talk their thoughts and plans. .

Social Media's Impact on Bringing Attention to Political Matters: 70.2% believe it is essential for purchasing politicians to take word, 23.4% are neutral, and 6.4% disagree. This shows social media has the strength to no longer best affect citizens but also deliver important problems to the eye of politicians, probably resulting in policy adjustments or political recognition.

Finally, the records suggests that social media has a massive effect on influencing political reviews and moves inside the members, specifically in the younger, well-educated organization. YouTube is the pinnacle preference for political content, with a considerable notion that social media has an effect on elections and political engagement. Although many human beings see political content, a extensive range do not participate via sharing or commenting, suggesting they consume information passively. These effects are treasured for greedy how social media use intersects with political behaviour, specially for directing political campaigns or educational efforts targeted on enhancing virtual literacy in political involvement.

Discussion:

The Pros and Cons of Social Media Usage in politics:

Advantages:

- Increased voter awareness and engagement being two way communications.
- A platform for marginalized voices to be heard.
- Cost-effective campaigning for political parties.

Disadvantages

- Spread of misinformation and propaganda.
- Political polarization and online hate speech.
- Issues with data privacy and cyber security.

Conclusion:

Social media has profoundly changed Indian politics by improving democratic engagement, but it has also brought challenges such as misinformation and social division. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram have allowed citizens, including marginalized communities, to participate in national conversations, connect with political figures, and promote their causes. The increase in internet accessibility, particularly following Reliance Jio's introduction in 2016, has broadened the influence of social media, especially in rural and semi-urban regions.

Political parties currently depend on social media for direct interaction, engaging voters, and providing real-time transparency. Nonetheless, this transition has also resulted in the proliferation of misinformation, propaganda, and hate speech, occasionally employing bots and trolls. The Cambridge Analytical controversy highlighted the dangers of data exploitation in political elections. Misinformation can heighten tensions and erode confidence in democratic institutions, emphasizing the necessity for more robust regulations.

In spite of these obstacles, social media continues to be an influential resource for political mobilization, accountability, and public involvement. As its impact expands, political campaigns and administration will more and more rely on digital tactics. Nonetheless, ethical and regulatory frameworks need to be established to weigh its advantages against its dangers. Future studies ought to investigate the dual role of social media in promoting democracy, while also potentially serving as a source of misinformation and division.

Suggestions:

Here are some suggestions to make it even better and more impressive:

a) **Social media literacy into academic curricula:** To assist students analyse political content and recognize on-line propaganda or incorrect information, as a result empowering them to suppose severely approximately digital information. It is vital that local academic establishments in Sirsa lead this initiative.

b) **Promote a subculture of reality-checking:** People must be endorsed to verify records before sharing political material. Efforts to inspire the usage of truth-checking resources like Alt News or Factly can aid in preventing in correct information throughout politically heated debates.

c) **Champion of transparency in political finances:** It is vital for residents to request transparency from political figures on social media. Verified money owed and transparent declarations of associations are vital to avoid the public being deceived by false accounts or unconfirmed sources.

d) **Prevent the propagation of hate speech:** People on social media must avoid spreading or interacting with content material that encourages hate speech or tensions within groups. Authorities and systems should take strong motion in opposition to the ones spreading such content to preserve social peace, particularly in sensitive regions.

e) **Keep song of politician's social media interest:** Residents can make sure responsibility by intently monitoring their interactions and public commitments on social media. Platforms should sell transparency by way of imparting customers with the potential to display these interactions and outcomes as they evolve.

f) **Encourage Political Awareness Campaigns thru Social Media:** Emphasize informing the general public approximately their rights, the importance of voting, and approaches to engage in governance. NGOs and neighbourhood civil society businesses in Sirsa have the choice to use social media platforms which includes Facebook or WhatsApp for disseminating these messages.

g) **Promote Equal Political Representation:** Political data on social media has a tendency to be skewed or one-sided. People and neighbourhood leaders should promote numerous

political representations via assisting and actively collaborating in numerous political view points to enhance choice-making thru better statistics.

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