

The Impact Of Social Media On Political Discourse: A Multidisciplinary Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Because of the emergence of social media, the political discourse has been totally transformed, since it has altered the manner in which information is disseminated, analyzed, and argued. Through the application of knowledge from the fields of information technology, political science, sociology, communication studies, and psychology, this multidisciplinary approach intends to investigate the intricate effects that social media platforms have on political discourse. The purpose of this study is to investigate the ways in which social media platforms enable the rapid broadcast of information and the manipulation of public opinion, so making them powerful tools for political mobilization. Additionally, it investigates the ways in which algorithms and echo chambers influence online debate and may contribute to the worsening of political polarization. The purpose of this article is to investigate the issues that are caused by disinformation and fake news on social media platforms, as well as to evaluate the impact that these issues have on democratic procedures and the quality of political discourse in general. This study investigates the psychological mechanisms that are responsible for political engagement on the internet. It takes into account a variety of factors, such as emotional contagion, cognitive biases, and the impact that anonymity has on user behavior. In addition, the research investigates the ways in which social media might facilitate political participation and civic engagement. Specifically, it examines the ways in which it can amplify voices that are marginalized and encourage political discourse that is inclusive. A comprehensive understanding of the intricate connections that exist between political discourse and social media can be obtained through the utilization of this multidisciplinary approach. It provides the general public, scholars, and policymakers with essential information by elucidating the benefits and drawbacks associated with this shifting link.

Keywords: Social media, Political discourse, Information dissemination, Algorithmic influence, Misinformation, Online activism, Political polarization.

INTRODUCTION

A reflection of the real world, social media is all about conversations and is a reflection of the world. The interactive web is made possible by social media platforms, which encourage users to participate in those platforms, leave comments on those platforms, and develop content as a means of communicating with other users, the general public, and

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other users on social media. Citizens are now able to discuss issues that are both of everyday and national relevance through the use of social media, which has become an essential tool. It is not enough to say that Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are internet breakthroughs in the twenty-first century; they are also rapidly becoming platforms that are influential and that generate opinions.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." In other words, social media is composed of applications that allow users to create and share information. The platform that allows users to construct social networks is referred to as a social networking service. These social networking systems that are based on the web provide users with an online platform for interacting with one another online. Through the sharing of postings, thoughts, photographs, activities, events, and hobbies, users of social networking sites are able to communicate with other people who are part of their network. Because of this, social media is a two-way street that enables users to engage with one another and also offers them the opportunity to acquire information. Additionally, it interacts with you while simultaneously delivering the information to you. In the context of communication, this type of communication could take the form of seeking comments, allowing you to vote on a piece of work, or providing movie suggestions based on the reviews of other users who have your interests. As opposed to only being a passive consumer of information, social media not only amplifies ideas but also makes it possible for anybody to participate as an opinion leader through the production and transmission of media. It is also possible for information and attitudes to flow across networks the way ripples spread across a pond.

Categorization of Social Media Portals

Websites that are associated with social media can be classified into the following categories: Wikis, social networking sites, social news websites, social bookmarking websites, and websites that allow users to upload personal images and videos. Users of social networking sites like Facebook, Hi5, and Last.FM are able to interact with one another by having conversations, adding friends, joining groups, and leaving comments on each other's profiles. Social bookmarking websites, such as Del.icio.us, Blink list, and Simply, are examples of such websites. Have a conversation with other people by marking webpages and looking through the bookmarks that other people have saved. Digg, Propeller, and Reddit are examples of social news websites where users interact with one another by commenting on articles and voting on those stories. Users are able to interact with one another through the practice of swapping and commenting on each other's entries on social image and video sharing websites such as Flickr and YouTube, amongst others. As a means of communication, wikis allow users to contribute new entries and update those that already exist.

Social Media and Its Impact

Numerous aspects of our life, such as politics, business, administration, marketing, culture, and education, have been influenced by social media due to its widespread influence. In the realms of education, marketing, communication, and news, social media has the potential to exert a substantial amount of impact. The news can now be mostly attributed to social media platforms. There are a plethora of news outlets that tweet or post updates on significant events that are taking place all around the world, and the news spreads rapidly through networks in ways that have never been seen before. Through it, people are able to communicate with one another more frequently. It is possible for people to effortlessly maintain communication with one another even when they are located in different towns, countries, or continents. The opportunity to learn about and talk about different cultures are opened up as a result of this.

In addition, the use of social media has significantly facilitated learning. Children and adolescents that engage in the use of social media platforms begin to develop early communication skills and typically improve their literacy levels. There has been a paradigm shift in the dynamics of marketing as a whole. Businesses are becoming more customer-focused as a result of interactions that take place on social media. Through firsthand observation of the market, they are able to deduce the wants of the market.

Social Media and C-Governance

As a result of the proliferation of social media, citizen-led governance, also known as C-governance, has grown increasingly prominent in India. In order to disseminate information regarding Anna Hazare's anti-corruption campaign and the demonstrations that took place in response to the rape committed by the Nirbhaya gang, social media was utilized. The participation of the typical citizen in these activities resulted in a significant amount of support from both the national and international communities.

Movement Against Corruption

Anna Hazare initiated the Satyagraha (Fasting for a Noble Cause) movement with the intention of advocating for the Indian Parliament to approve a Lokpal bill that is more muscular in its anti-corruption provisions. The Indian government's refusal to comply with his demand prompted him to go on a hunger strike. The movement was supported by millions of people both inside and outside of India, and it was covered by the media and earned national attention. A number of social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, were used to express support. Through the use of online signature campaigns such as *avaaz*, more than ten lakh signatures were collected in just 37 hours. As an immediate consequence of this, the government started giving the Lokpal bill a significant amount of scrutiny in parliament.

Delhi Gang-rape

An eruption of public fury and demonstrations on the streets were prompted by the gang rape case that occurred in Delhi in December. The people's movement that led to the nationwide rallies at India Gate in New Delhi was propelled by their consciences, which pushed them to seek justice for Nirbhaya. Additionally, the demonstrations were held in New Delhi. Social media was a significant contributor to the success of India Gate in attracting visitors. People who were sitting on the streets were receiving updates on their cell phones, despite the fact that television was undoubtedly covering every stage of the investigation. On their mobile device, they were receiving every piece of news that was posted on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and others. After seeing the comments on Twitter from well-known people who are admired and hold a unique place in society, people connected with one another more than they ever had before. As a result of widespread demonstrations, the government made the decision to establish the Justice Verma committee in order to modify the statute regarding rape. The Criminal Law [Amendment] Bill, 2013 was passed into law by the Lok Sabha on March 19, 2013, and the Rajya Sabha on March 21, among other legislative bodies. The sentences handed down to rapists were made more severe as a result of the amendments.

Telangana Movement

A clear picture of how social media is influencing administrative challenges is painted by the recent developments in the Telangana issue. On July 30, 2013, the Congress Working Committee gave its approval to the suggestion that the federal government should grant the desires of the people living in the region, which had been expressed for 57 years, and establish a separate state that would be known as Telangana. During the year 1969, the

Telangana movement was strengthened by the active participation of both students and teachers. Since that time, the student movement has been the primary motor of the movement, which has allowed it to expand throughout all ten districts of Telangana and become a movement of the people. A significant portion of the student movement can be attributed to social media. The establishment of a great number of communities on Facebook has been of assistance in bringing people together. The issue of statehood was the topic of discussion that was spurred by status postings on Twitter and Facebook. In addition, receiving feedback on what is working and what is not working was helpful. The usefulness of this instrument is demonstrated by the fact that thousands of people have viewed videos of demonstrations and movements that have been uploaded on YouTube.

In certain instances, the political landscapes have been fundamentally transformed as a result of the increased political awareness and organisation that has been made available by social media. As well as being visible in the political scene of India, the effect can also be seen in other countries. In order to get a better understanding of the impact that social media has on Indian politics, it is essential that we first investigate its effects within the context of industrialized nations, which have higher rates of internet usage and literacy.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study social media on political discourse
2. To study Political Debate

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not the level of user engagement and involvement in political online posts has an impact on people's actual political participation and political effectiveness in the real world. As independent variables, these criteria are included into the analysis in order to determine the extent to which social media has an impact on Indian politics. Social media activity (SMA) refers to the practice of following political websites, politicians, campaigns, and debates around politics. It is called social media activism (SMA) to like, comment on, and share political material. SMA refers to the act of contributing one's own political thoughts to an internet platform. Talking, discussing, and fighting about politics on social media platforms is considered to be social media activism (SMA). Different social media outlets, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp, are taken into account for this political activity. A nation's people's view that they understand and have the ability to change political events, as well as their degree of trust in their potential to overturn the government, is what social scientists in the field of political science refer to as Political Efficacy (PE). The term "Real-Life Political Participation" (RLPP) refers to activities such as reaching out to elected officials, working for political parties either directly or indirectly, following or attending political events, signing petitions for political causes, displaying party emblems, and boycotting items for political reasons.

For the purpose of the study, a random sample size of 300 individuals was generated via the use of Google Forms, which was an online poll. This survey was sent to people of varying ages and from a variety of different backgrounds. Through Facebook, WhatsApp, and email, we received responses from three hundred individuals. Due to the author's network, younger respondents submitted more responses than older respondents. This is a substantial disadvantage. The age factor is another important disadvantage. The bulk of respondents are from the following states: West Bengal, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Gujarat. This is another disadvantage of the survey. a questionnaire (please refer to the appendix) for the survey is primarily composed of closed-ended questions that use the 5-point Likert Scale (Summated Rating Scale) with

options such as 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree; alternative models include 5 = Always, 4 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 2 = Seldom, and 1 = Never. The Likert scale is used due to the fact that, although being an ordinal measure (categorical variable), it can also be evaluated as an interval scale (continuous variable). Political Efficacy (PE) and Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP) are considered to be dependent factors in this research. On the other hand, Social Media Activity (SMA) is considered to be the independent variable. The Zaheer scale (2016) was used in order to assess political participation, political effectiveness, and online political engagement from a political perspective. The hypothesis, also known as the alternative hypothesis, asserts that the utilisation of social media platforms has a beneficial and substantial impact on political participation and efficiency.

DATA

There were a variety of descriptive statistics that were performed on the randomly chosen sample (N=300) in order to have a better understanding of the respondents.

Gender

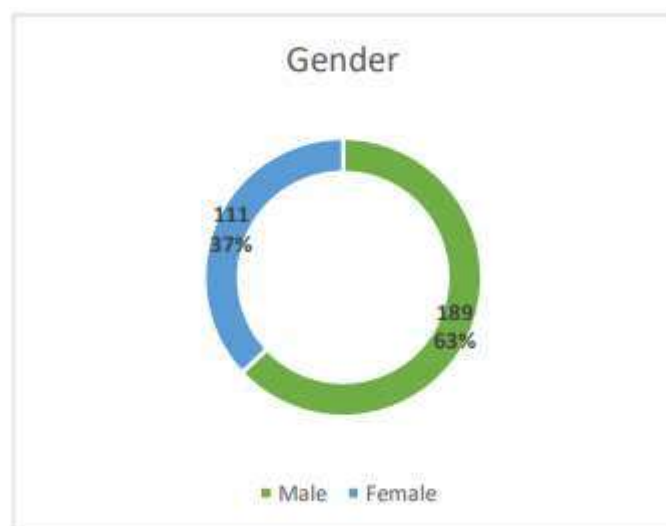


Figure 1: demography of gender in the sample

A total of 189 of the 300 replies, or about 63% of the total, are female, while 111 of the responses, or approximately 37%, are male. Before the survey was conducted, it was previously predicted that a far smaller number of women, around 10%, would take part in the study, and that Indian women would refrain from engaging in political debate and activities. However, 37% is a much higher percentage, which contradicts the first theory.

Age

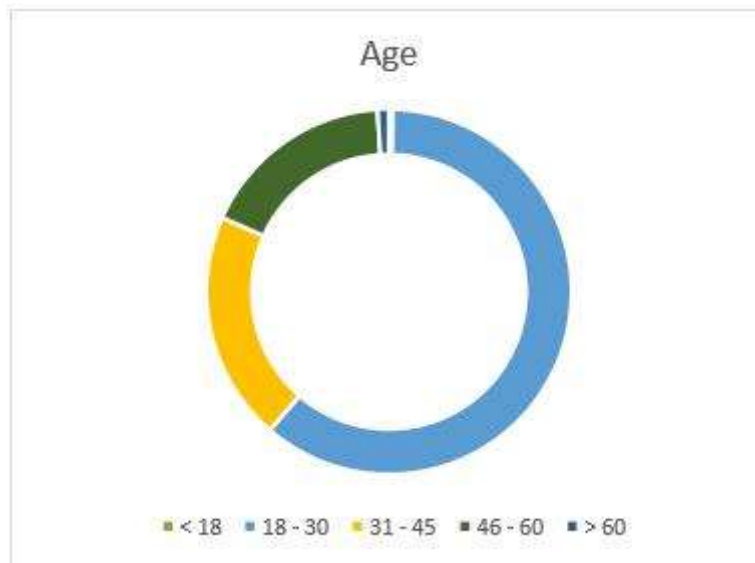


Figure 2: demographics of age in the sample

The age problem is one of the limitations, as stated in the methodology section under restrictions. This is due to the fact that a bigger number of respondents are younger in age. Only one of the responses is given by someone who is less than sixty years old, and only three of them are older than sixty. Of the total number of responses, 52 (17%) fall within the age range of 46–60 years old, 183 (61%) fall within the age range of 18–30 years old, and 61 (20%) fall within the age range of 31–45 years old. An average age of thirty-two years old was found among the respondents.

Education Level

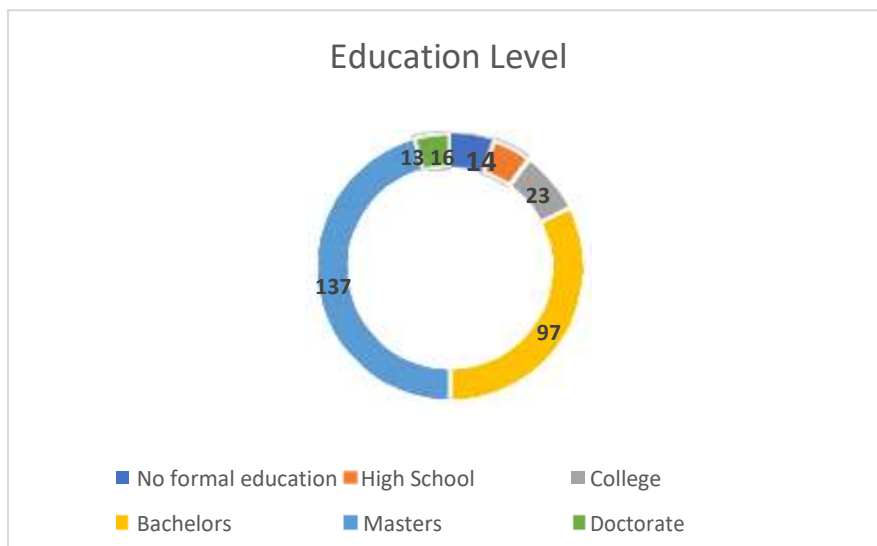


Figure 3: Demographics related to education level in the sample

The degree of education of an individual is questioned in order to ascertain whether or not there is a significant association between that individual's level of education and their usage of social media, political effectiveness, and in-person political activity. The respondents with master's degrees made up the largest percentage (46%) of the total, followed by those with bachelor's degrees (32%). Thirteen of the three hundred respondents, or around four percent of them, had a doctoral degree. It was reported that around 8% of the respondents

had completed their high school education, while 4% had completed their college education. It was reported by the respondents that around four percent of the three hundred people who were included in the sample did not work in the field of formal education.

Occupation



Figure 4: Demographics of occupation in the sample

A considerable connection between an individual's occupation and their use of social media, their success in politics, and their participation in real life is evaluated by including the jobs of the respondents in the documentation. This is done in order to determine whether or not there is a substantial link between these three factors. There were 106 students that participated in the survey, which is equivalent to 35 percent of the sample. According to the results of the survey, 42 of the respondents, which is equivalent to 14% of the total, are employed by the government, while 79 of the respondents, which is equivalent to 26%, are employed by private firms. Among the participants, eleven percent are self-employed or run their own enterprises, seven percent are now without jobs, and six percent are mothers who remain at home to raise their respective children.

RESULTS

Factor Analysis – KMO and Bartlett’s Test

There were three components that comprised the questionnaire for the research project: Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP), Political Efficacy (PE), and Social Media Activity (SMA) (for further information, please refer to the appendix). In order to calculate the mean and determine the variable that will be used to evaluate further hypotheses, it is crucial to determine whether or not these questions belong to the same dimension.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett’s Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.881
	Approx. ON-Square	3971.496

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	325
	Sig.	.000

Following the loading of all of the responses to the various questions into SPSS, the data was then coded in the right manner. For the purpose of determining the relevance of factor analysis in relation to the responses, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sampling adequacy and factor analysis were used in conjunction with the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. As shown by the KMO value of 0.881, the table that came before this one demonstrates that the sample size is enough, and the quality of the data that was acquired seems to be satisfactory. The fact that the significance value of the Bartlett's Test is 0.000 indicates that factor analysis demonstrates its usefulness when applied to the data that is being investigated. In addition to making things even more complicated, the queries that apply to the three variables that are being investigated correspond to dimensions that are comparable in the Rotated Component Matrix. Further testing of the hypotheses and the computing of a mean are both made possible as a result of this.

Using social media for political objectives

Table 2: Statistics on Political Content

Statistics		
How much of what you see on social media is related to politics?		
N	Valid	300
	Missing	0
Mean		6.50
Median		7.00
Mode		5

Table 3: Frequencies of Political Content

How much of what you see on social media is related to politics?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0%	3	1.0	1.0	1.0
10%	5	1.7	1.7	2.7
20%	12	4.0	4.0	6.7
30%	12	4.0	4.0	10.7
40%	19	6.3	6.3	17.0
50%	56	18.7	18.7	35.7
60%	40	13.3	13.3	49.0
70%	49	16.3	16.3	65.3
80%	29	9.7	9.7	75.0
90% 1	37	12.3	12.3	87.3

100% Total	38	12.7	12.7	100.0
	300	100.0	100.0	

According to the numbers shown above, around 65 percent of the information that is shared on social media platforms is connected to political issues. According to the respondents, the median value of political material on social media is 70%, and the majority of respondents report that at least fifty percent of the information they see on social media on a daily basis is political content.

Political Parties and Their Employment of Social Media

Table 4: Political Parties and Data on Social Media Usage

Statistics		
Do you think political parties have realized the importance of social media and are making use of it alongside on-ground political activities?		
N	Valid	300
	Missing	0
Mean		4.17
Median		5.00
Mode		5

Table 5: Political Parties and Frequencies of Social Media Usage

Do you think political parties have a realized the importance of social media and are making use of it alongside on-ground political?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly	6	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Disagree	18	6.0	6.0	8.0
	Neutral	49	16.3	16.3	24.3
	Agree	73	24.3	24.3	48.7
	Strongly Agree	154	51.3	51.3	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

An inquiry was made to determine whether or not individuals believe that political parties have recognised the significance of social media and are using it in addition to the activities that are typically carried out on the ground. According to the figures shown above, the majority of respondents prefer to agree with the statement, with the mean being 4.17.

Elections and Social Media Activity

Table 6 : Election Time Activity Statistics

Statistics		
Do you agree that there is increased political activity in social media during elections?		
N	Valid	300
	Missing	0
Mean		4.37
Median		5.00
Mode		5

Table 7: Online activity frequencies at election period

Do you agree that there is increased political activity in social media during elections?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly	5	1.7	1.7	1.7
	Disagree	11	3.7	3.7	5.3
	Neutral	25	8.3	8.3	13.7
	Agree	86	28.7	28.7	42.3
	Strongly Agree	173	57.7	57.7	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

The afore mentioned facts provide light on the political participation that takes place on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter during local, state, and national elections. In general, the majority of participants are in agreement that there is an increase in political activity on the internet during election season, as shown by the computed mean of 4.37. As a matter of fact, notable media sources have carried out a number of polls on their official websites that are comparable to surveys performed between arrival and leave. All of the many parties participating in the political process, including the government and its opposition, political parties, politicians, the Election Commission, policy makers, and voters, are responsible for the creation of the political information that is available on the internet. This is particularly true during the times leading up to elections.

CONCLUSION

The "aam aadmi" have never been able to express their political opinions with such a sense of empowerment and involvement as they are now, thanks to the advent of social media. There has been a positive impact brought about by the proliferation of social media, which has been encouraging young people to talk about political issues. In the past, the only people who were able to participate in political conversation were those who read newspapers, watched news channels, or attended discussion groups held in clubs or the nukkad of a hamlet. However, the youth of India have been compelled to participate in political discourse as a result of social networking. They spend some time thinking about

and discussing politics. They now have thoughts regarding the most recent political events and have a voice in the decisions that are made by administrative officials. On the other hand, mobilising young people to vote and using social media as a platform to support political parties are still unattainable goals. It is possible that India may require several decades to catch up to the United States in terms of the use of social media for campaigning and shaping the opinions of voters. The use of social media in Indian politics is generating a revolution that is real, immediately noticeable, and occurring very quickly. Although it is possible that there would not be big changes immediately, it will still have a significant impact on increasing political awareness, which is a huge accomplishment for a growing nation like India.

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