

Original Article

A Study on the Impact of the Digital Age on the Development of Political Awareness in Modern-Day India

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Newspapers, television, and political rallies are no longer the most effective ways to affect democracy in the digital era. Instead, it is strongly promoted with the use of new media platforms, such as blogs, social media, online forums, digital information websites, and video-sharing platforms. In India, where tens of millions of people utilise smartphones and the internet, new media has shown to be a useful instrument for raising awareness and shaping political opinions. This research study focuses on the ways that new media has shaped political consciousness in modern-day India. The term "political focus" describes people's knowledge of social concerns, rights, obligations, authority regulations, and political issues. The observer examines the positive and negative functions of new media. In terms of quality, it has made information easily accessible, encouraged youngsters to participate, strengthened public opinion, and increased openness. Through hashtags, online campaigns, and digital activism, people may now express particular viewpoints, challenge leaders, and support social movements. On the negative side, false information, fake news, propaganda, online abuse, and political manipulation have all become commonplace in new media. This study examines how new media influences political thinking in India using secondary research methods, including journal articles, news stories, e-book references, and online data. According to the findings, new media has strengthened democracy in many ways, but it has also created extremely difficult circumstances that need to be managed through media literacy, strict regulations, and ethical journalism. The study comes to the conclusion that new media is neither wholly good nor wholly bad, and that how it affects democracy depends on how responsibly individuals, government officials, and media companies use it.

Keywords: Digital Activism, India, Teens' Involvement, Disinformation, Social Media, Transmitted Governance, Political Emphasis, And New Media

Overview:

Democracy is predicated on the idea that people are capable of freely choosing their government and expressing their opinions. Citizens have a significant role in forming the political apparatus in a democratic country like India. In the past, the primary sources of political data were newspapers, radio, and television. However, the rise of new media in the last 10 years has fundamentally altered how people get, distribute, and respond to political news.

Virtual forms of communication that rely heavily on internet-based generation are referred to as new media. These include blogs, podcasts, online news portals, discussion forums, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and other social networking websites. Not only can users obtain information through these frameworks, but they can also produce and share content. This is a significant difference from traditional media, where verbal communication is primarily one-sided.

One of the most significant net-user populations in the world is found in India. People from a variety of circumstances are now linked to virtual platforms because to inexpensive cellphones and inexpensive information. In particular, younger people use social media extensively. They utilise those platforms to discuss politics, voice their opposition to injustice, support movements, and raise awareness of issues facing the entire nation. Examples include debates on new laws and regulations, farmer demonstrations, scholarly actions, and election-related conversations.



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The idea of "mediated democracy" is the focus of this research article. The media will become the main medium through which political ideas, involvement and focus are shaped in a mediated democracy. The goal of the study is to understand how Indian political enquiry is being influenced by new media. It also looks at whether this effect is strengthening democracy or making it more vulnerable.

Literature evaluation:

The connection between democracy and the media has been the subject of several studies. According to Habermas, social and political concerns are discussed in the public domain. Social media platforms have given rise to a new type of public space in the digital age where people may openly share their opinions. However, unlike in the past, this section isn't always continuously monitored or verified.

"The medium is the message," as McLuhan famously stated. This implies that the type of medium utilised affects how people interpret the message as well. These days, political beliefs may be significantly influenced by the quick, emotive, and visible character of social media information. Digital media enables "connective movement," which allows people to engage in activities without joining conventional agencies, in accordance with Bennett and Segerberg (2012). Hashtags such as #metoo, #caaprotests, and #indiaagainstcorruption have demonstrated how people use online spaces to voice their political demands.

According to researchers like Sumanth (2017), social media was crucial to the outcome of the 2014 and 2019 regular elections in India since political parties employed virtual tactics to connect with voters. Facebook pages, Instagram reels, WhatsApp forwards, and X posts have all been used to promote ideas, disparage rivalry, and garner support.

However, Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral's (2018) research indicates that fake news spreads more quickly online than real news. Democracy is at peril because it misleads and manipulates people's perceptions.

Other studies have also highlighted issues including online hate speech, trolling, and cyberbullying, particularly against minorities, activists, and reporters. The virtual space is dangerous and far less democratic as a result of these problems.

We can recall from the examination of recent research that new media has a significant role in influencing political attention, but it also presents serious issues.

Objectives:

- To comprehend how contemporary media shapes political priorities in contemporary India.
- To examine the ways in which social media systems affect political recognition and public opinion.
- To examine the positive and negative effects of contemporary media on Indian democracy.
- To acknowledge how new media influences teens' political engagement.
- To give recommendations on how to improve the democratic and accountable nature of new media.

In addition to understanding how new media generally affects political consciousness, this study aims to investigate how particular age groups enjoy online political information. The study also aims to determine if individuals find political information more convenient or more perplexing as a result of new media. Examining how independent reporters, content producers, and influencers contribute to the formation of political assessments on social media platforms is another important objective.

Additionally, by disseminating false information, manipulating emotions, and promoting biased narratives, this study attempts to understand if new media enhances democratic principles like discussion, participation, and awareness or undermines them.

The study also aims to assess the differences between virtual and conventional political communication, specifically with regard to audience emotional effect, reach, and pace.

Research methodology:

The examination of qualitative secondary information is the sole foundation of this study. The documents were gathered from: Educative research papers and books in the rule of law and the media:

- Government reports and online journals
- Pieces from reliable news sources
- Current studies on political discourse in India

There hasn't been a main survey or interview. As an alternative, the study examines current data from unique sources to identify trends and patterns. This strategy is suitable since the topic is broad and concentrated on the impact of media on society. The research is analytical and descriptive in character. It seeks to explain the current situation of India's media and examine how it influences political thought.

Current media's role in Indian politics:

In Indian politics today, the new media is absolutely essential. Social media is used by political figures, political parties, and businesses to connect with voters. Elections are more than just speeches, banners, and rallies. These days, campaigns are adequately run on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Humans discuss candidates, ministries, legislation, and guarantees on online structures during national and national elections. Online movies, sponsored posts, and popular hashtags are all used to display political classified advertisements. Unusual folks may now question political leaders instantly thanks to new media. For example, people often tag ministers and request

remedies on X (Twitter). This fosters a sense of accountability and involvement, both of which are essential for democracy. Alternative voices, such as unbiased reporters, college students, activists, and local reporters, who might not have enough space in mainstream media, can also be heard in new media. They disseminate important news like the environment, corruption, girls' rights, farmer concerns, and student issues via blogs, YouTube channels, and Instagram profiles.

Impact on children and political attention:

One of the largest demographics of social media users in India is teenagers. Teenagers and college students spend a significant amount of time on virtual constructions. Their exposure to political information has significantly increased as a result. On the one hand, this has increased young people's awareness of domestic and global issues. They adhere to political talks, debates, and information. Nowadays, a large number of young people take part in targeted campaigns, petitions, internet movements, and virtual rallies. College students now have a better understanding of their basic rights and beliefs thanks to new media. They may no longer be passive observers; they are now active people. This indicates a rise in the political recognition of many young people.

However, too much unreliable information might be confusing to young people. Young people frequently think about what's popular without looking at their records. Fake testimony, altered videos, and emotional postings can manipulate curiosity. This emphasises the need for media and digital literacy.

Dissemination of false information and fake news:

The quick dissemination of false information is one of the biggest issues facing modern media. False political information, photoshopped images, phoney speeches, and misleading data are distributed on Facebook, WhatsApp, and other platforms. A lot of people forward communications without verifying their authenticity. False impressions, fear, and hatred will result from this. In certain instances, it has even led to real-life conflict and violence. Fake news has the potential to negatively influence political consciousness. People's voting decisions and criticisms are impacted when they believe inaccurate data about a political event, a leader, or a community.

Political propaganda is any other challenge. Social media is frequently used by parties to disseminate skewed data that best supports their position. Instead of a thoughtful and well-balanced democratic space, this produces a fragmented and emotionally heated environment.

Online movements and digital activism:

Regardless of the issues, new media has been crucial to Indian social and political movements. Moves such as:

- Anna Hazare's anti-corruption motion
- The protest of farmers
- CAA-NRC demonstrations
- #metoo motion
- Campaigns for the environment

Thanks to social media, everyone received significant assistance. Posts, hashtags, and stay videos have connected people from unique parts of the United States. These sites aided in fact-sharing, protest planning, and garnering international attention. People don't need large corporations to be heard, as demonstrated by virtual activism. Even a simple submission has the potential to become viral and impact thousands of people. Democracy is now more inclusive and participatory as a result.

Demanding Conditions for Mediated Democracy:

While new media enhances communication, it also causes a number of issues for democracy's operation, including:

Echo Chambers: individuals only perceive information that confirms their preconceptions.

Online Hate and Trolling: Political discussions often turn into violent altercations.

Lawlessness: There are strong but limited laws that can be abused.

Emotional Manipulation: Information is less likely to go viral than sensational material.

Loss of critical thinking: People uncritically consider popular content.

These issues have the potential to erode democracy because they sow disarray and conflict instead of promoting constructive dialogue.

Advice and Recommendations:

The following actions may be performed to increase the good impact of new media on democracy:

- Start teaching media literacy in educational institutions.
- Encourage users to act in a truth-checking manner.
- Strengthen cyber regulations and legislation.
- Promote responsible content sharing and ethical journalism.
- Promote rational, courteous, and open online political discourse.

From an early age, media literacy should be incorporated into the academic programme as a vital component. College students should learn how to validate assets, impeach online information, and distinguish between reviews and statistics. This might mitigate the negative effects of false information and political manipulation.

Additionally, social media platforms should be more responsible for monitoring political information, particularly during election seasons. To protect consumers from misleading information, clean labelling of fact-checked articles and political messages should become mandatory. Leaders and political parties must adhere to ethical communication standards while using virtual platforms. Promoting fear, hate, or false narratives for political ends ought to be outlawed and strongly discouraged. In order to provide citizens with clear and fair facts, impartial media should also be encouraged and supported. An informed and aware populace is essential to a strong democratic society, and new media should be utilised to further rather than undermine this objective. Even while people use new media responsibly, it can actually lead to more democratic pressure.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, new media has emerged as a powerful instrument for influencing political discourse in contemporary India. It has altered how individuals think about politics, make certain assessments, and participate in political processes. It has raised awareness, encouraged engagement, and given voice to the ordinary people. However, technology has also led to serious issues including manipulation, online hatred, propaganda, and false information. It is impossible to ignore these issues. They influence people's mentalities and have an impact on important choices like voting. As a result, new media might be seen as having two sides. Depending on how responsibly technology is utilised, it will have an impact on democracy. It may strengthen Indian democracy when combined with moral behaviour, education, and awareness. It can threaten democratic principles and social peace if it is utilised improperly. Ultimately, India's mediated democracy rests on the shoulders of its citizens, particularly its youth. With the right skills and responsibility, new media may be a potent instrument for massive political dialogue. It's also critical to keep in mind that new media is neither wholly beneficial nor wholly detrimental to democracy. How responsibly consumers and content producers use it will determine its influence. New media may be a useful instrument for bolstering democratic principles in India if it is steered by awareness, education, and media literacy. Therefore, the focus should be on encouraging moral discourse, truth-checking, and responsible political participation among citizens, rather than outright prohibiting or disregarding virtual systems.

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