

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT ON YOUTH AND FIRST-TIME VOTERS IN INDIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS 2024

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how social media activity affects both youth voters and first-time voters during the Indian General Elections 2024. Political communication now occurs through interactive digital platforms which include Instagram Facebook and X because these platforms have rapidly expanded their user base. The research investigates how social media engagement affects young voters' political knowledge and their voting behavior and political views. The researchers employed a descriptive and analytical research design which included 200 participants as their study sample. The researchers used structured questionnaires with a Likert scale to gather data which they analyzed using statistical methods that included correlation and regression analysis. The study results show that social media use improves political awareness and increases voter turnout while simultaneously exposing young people to false information and partisan material. The research shows how social media functions as an educational resource that also serves to control voter behavior during elections. The study reveals that digital literacy needs to be developed together with ethical campaigning practices and regulatory systems so that people can make informed choices. The research shows how digital technology has changed political participation patterns while offering information that governments and political organizations need to handle future research activities.

Keywords: Social Media Engagement, Youth Voters, First-Time Voters, Voting Behaviour, Political Awareness, Digital Media, Electoral Participation, Indian General Elections 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The background of this study focuses on the growing influence of social media on political communication and electoral participation which affects youth and first-time voters in India. The rapid expansion of Facebook, Instagram and X has created a situation where political information now exists as widely accessible and interactive content. The platforms have changed standard election campaigning methods by providing candidates with tools to connect directly with voters and share instant information updates while voters develop their opinions. Social media content, which young voters consume, has emerged as the main element that affects their voting decisions according to research about Indian General Elections 2024.

1.2 Evolution, Concept, and Electoral Context

The evolution of social media in Indian politics has transformed communication from traditional methods to interactive digital platforms like Facebook and Instagram which enable

direct engagement between leaders and citizens. Social media engagement describes the active participation of users through their likes shares comments and political discussions. The online content which young people and first-time voters watch has become a major force that shapes their voting behavior in India. Digital media functions as a vital element which increases voter turnout by providing educational content that drives people to vote. The 2024 Indian General Elections will see these factors together determine how people vote and participate in the democratic process.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram experience rapid growth which causes major changes to political communication methods in India. The study lacks sufficient evidence to demonstrate how youth and first-time voters change their voting behavior through their online digital interactions. Social media platforms enable users to access political information which prompts them to participate in political activities yet these platforms also deliver false information together with slanted material. The research investigates whether social media engagement helps voters make informed choices or whether it leads to controlled decision-making during the Indian General Elections 2024 elections.

1.4 Research Gap

Research on political communication through digital media has been studied by multiple studies. However, researchers have not conducted studies that specifically investigate how social media usage affects Indian youth and first-time voters. The existing research studies voter behavior patterns but fails to acknowledge the distinct traits that young people with digital presence exhibit. The electoral decision-making process has been influenced by three factors: influencers, peer networks and misinformation. The Indian General Elections 2024 require new research that uses empirical methods to investigate digital political influence, which currently lacks essential research.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The research establishes its value because it presents complete evidence showing how social media engagement affects political knowledge and attitudes and voting patterns of young people who vote for the first time. The results of this research will assist policymakers and political parties and researchers who rely on X which serves as a key platform for political debates to create better methods of communication. The study advances academic research by providing actual data about how digital political participation operates in India. The study demonstrates the requirement for people to use media responsibly while they build their understanding during critical moments such as the upcoming Indian General Elections 2024.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study investigates how social media usage impacts voting behavior among young voters and first-time voters in India during the Indian General Elections 2024. The research examines Facebook, Instagram, and X as social media platforms to study their effect on political knowledge and voter behavior. The study focuses on three main elements which include online user engagement, content viewing patterns, and how voters see candidates. The research findings apply only to young voters who use digital platforms and reside in the specific study area because research does not include all demographic groups and offline factors.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Agarwal (2018) studied how social media directs youth political awareness development in India which showed that Facebook and other social media platforms provide users with better access to political information. The research showed that first-time voters who participated in online activities increased their rate of voting. Agarwal showed that digital platforms help people develop their opinions while he also warned that false information can distort how young voters view political candidates during elections.

Sharma (2020) analyzed the impact of digital media campaigns on voter behaviour during Indian elections. The study discovered that Instagram and X social media platforms function as essential tools for political parties to reach out to voters and create political support. Sharma discovered that youth voters respond strongly to online political content which shapes their voting behavior and political beliefs for the Indian General Elections and other modern elections.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations of Political Participation

Almond, G. and Verba, S. (1963) studied political participation through their civic culture theory which showed how citizens' political system attitudes and values affected their participation. They argued that an informed and engaged citizenry is essential for a stable democracy. Their research demonstrates that political awareness together with a civic duty leads to active participation in civic activities. The basic principles of their work still apply today because social media platforms such as Facebook help users learn about politics while they promote democratic participation among young people.

The civic voluntarism model developed by **Verba, Schlozman, and Brady in 1995** explains political participation through three key factors which include resources and psychological engagement and recruitment networks. The researchers showed that people will participate in activities when they possess the necessary time plus required skills and actual motivation and they receive chances to participate. The theory shows its strongest relevance in the digital era because X platform enables political parties to connect with their young audience and new electoral voters through its system which simplifies the process of joining political activities.

2.3 Social Media Engagement and Political Awareness

Boulianne (2015) studied how social media use affects political participation and discovered that Facebook users who engage actively with the platform will develop greater political knowledge. The study shows that people who share political content and make comments and take part in discussions will develop better understanding of political matters and processes. The research shows that social media functions as an essential platform for young people to participate in public activities because it provides them with simple access to information and supports their ability to interact through political dialogue.

Loader and Vromen and Xenos (2014) investigated how digital media affects political engagement and political knowledge among young people. The researchers discovered that social media platforms including X enable users to participate in new types of political activities because they provide instant communication and information sharing capabilities. The authors demonstrate that online activities increase political interest and political knowledge among first-time voters. The researchers demonstrate that users who encounter

high-quality information together with misleading content will develop different levels of political comprehension.

2.4 Role of Influencers and Peer Networks

Gupta (2021) examined the growing role of social media influencers in shaping political opinions among young voters in India. The study found that influencers on platforms like Instagram create political awareness and engagement among users because they present complex political issues through content that users find easy to understand. Gupta showed that peer networks increase this effect because young users prefer to believe what their friends share about political matters. The research found that communication through influencers serves as an essential factor which helps first-time voters develop their opinions and increase their voting activity.

Sharma (2020) studied how peer networks and digital platforms affected youth voting behavior. The study found that Facebook peer group discussions determine political opinion and election choice. Sharma explained that people tend to select their preferred candidates because they want to please their social circles rather than following news broadcasts. The research demonstrated that young voters and first-time voters show a strong tendency to vote when they encounter the combination of influencer content and peer discussions.

2.5 Social Media Campaigns and Voter Mobilization

Boulianne (2015) studied how social media platforms work to boost civic engagement and political participation, finding that Facebook functions as a voter mobilization tool which helps users learn about politics and take part in political activities. The study found that online campaigns which used targeted advertisements together with interactive content succeed in getting young voters to take part in elections. Boulianne showed that social media functions as a contemporary political outreach tool which helps first-time voters who depend on digital platforms for their political information needs.

Tufekci (2017) explored how digital platforms reshape political movements and voter mobilization strategies. The research found that social media enables rapid dissemination of political messages and facilitates collective action, especially during major electoral events. Through platforms like X, political actors can directly influence public opinion and mobilize supporters. The study concluded that while social media campaigns are powerful tools for engagement, they also raise concerns about misinformation and the manipulation of voter behaviour in contemporary democracies.

2.6 Misinformation and Its Impact on Young Voters

Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017) investigated how fake news spreads during elections and found that fake news affects voter beliefs and perceptions because young voters and inexperienced voters lack political knowledge. Their study showed that Facebook and other social media platforms allow fast spread of false political information which results in distorted democratic decision-making. They found that young voters face increased risk because they spend time online while they lack skills to check information sources.

Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018) studied how true and false information spreads on the internet. The researchers discovered that false news travels faster and reaches a wider audience than factual news. Their research showed that platforms such as X attract young users through emotionally charged and sensational false information. The study found that

misinformation has the power to shape political views while destroying institutional trust and creating strong voting effects among young voters.

2.7 Empirical Studies in Indian Electoral Context

Kumar (2021) conducted an empirical study on the role of social media in shaping electoral participation among Indian youth. The research discovered that Facebook and X platforms played a major role in increasing people's political knowledge and political activities. Kumar used survey results to demonstrate that young voters depended on digital platforms for their political information which they used to make their voting choices. The research showed that social media campaigns boosted voter turnout among first-time voters because they made political information accessible while inspiring people to take part in democratic activities.

Sharma (2022) studied how digital media election campaigns affected Indian youth voting behavior during elections. The research discovered that social media activities influenced political opinions and voter preferences. Digital analysis showed that Sharma discovered political advertisements and Instagram influencer content increased electoral participation among voters. The study discovered that misinformation spreading on social media platforms creates a new problem which affects how people make their electoral decisions. The study found that digital platforms boost democratic participation but need regulatory measures which help people vote based on complete knowledge without bias.

2.8 Research Gap Identification

Agarwal (2020) investigated how social media influences political awareness among Indian youth and discovered that Facebook and other platforms provide better access to political information and political discussions. The study demonstrated that people who participate more in activities eventually develop better awareness skills but the research stopped short of finding out how this awareness ability explains actual voting behavior among first-time voters. The study failed to investigate how misinformation and digital manipulation affected the Indian General Elections 2024 election outcomes which created a gap in understanding voter behavior.

Sharma (2022) studied how digital campaigns affect voter turnout in India which shows that Instagram has become an essential tool for reaching younger voters. The study found that social media campaigns successfully boosted political activity among citizens but it failed to examine how peer networks and digital platforms worked as intermediaries. The study failed to examine how first-time voters experienced social media while making their voting decisions. The research gap exists because researchers have not established how people use digital platforms to decide their voting behavior during recent elections.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

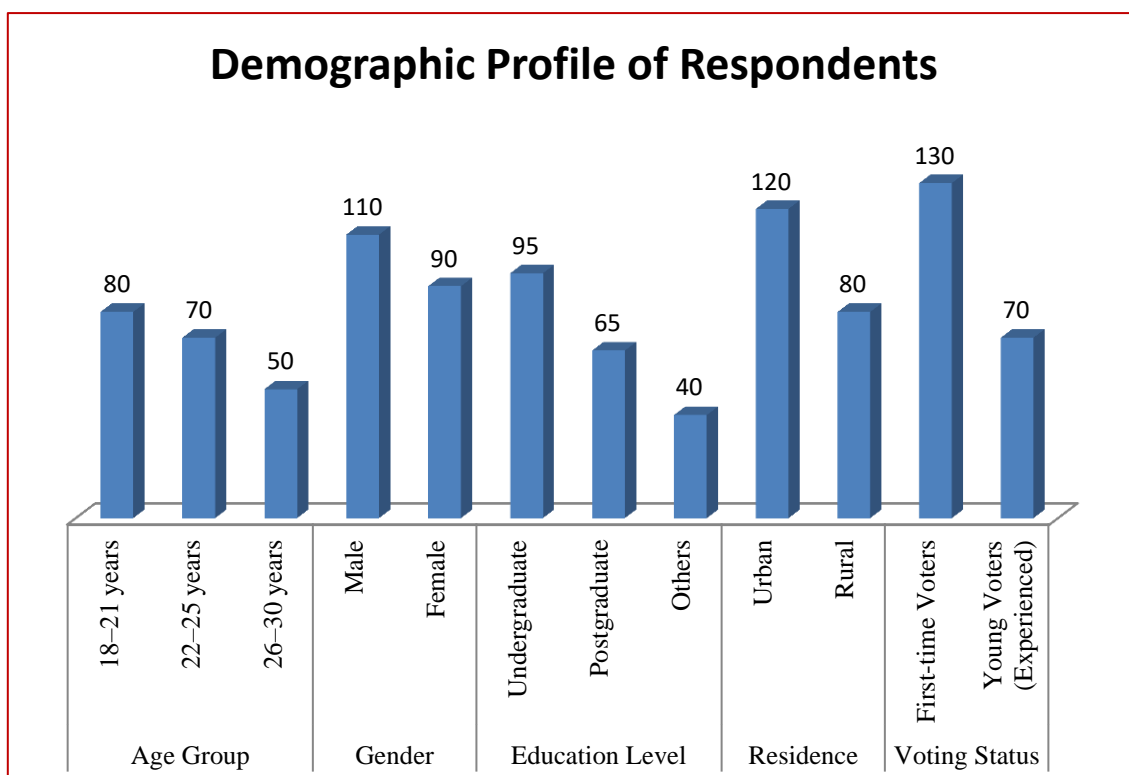
The researchers employ descriptive and analytical research design methods to study how social media engagement affects young people and first-time voters during the Indian General Elections 2024. The study aims to explore digital influence and voter awareness and election participation through dedicated research questions and their corresponding hypotheses. The study establishes a conceptual framework which connects independent variables (social media engagement on platforms like Instagram) to dependent variables (voting behaviour) through mediating factors (awareness and attitude) and moderating factors (age, education, and background). The study employs a sample base of 200 participants who were chosen through valid sampling methods. The researchers gathered data through primary sources

which included a questionnaire and secondary sources that used a Likert scale. The analysis process applies descriptive statistics and correlation and regression methods while maintaining reliability and validity and recognizing study limitations.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

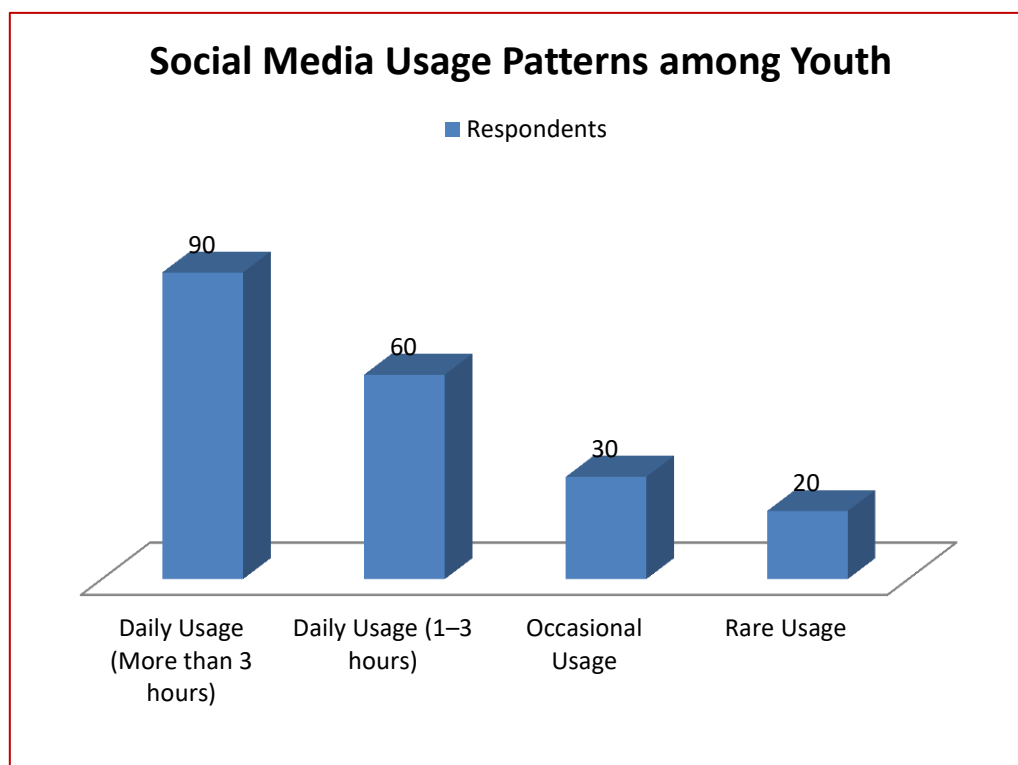
Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group	18–21 years	80	40%
	22–25 years	70	35%
	26–30 years	50	25%
Gender	Male	110	55%
	Female	90	45%
Education Level	Undergraduate	95	47.5%
	Postgraduate	65	32.5%
	Others	40	20%
Residence	Urban	120	60%
	Rural	80	40%
Voting Status	First-time Voters	130	65%
	Young Voters (Experienced)	70	35%



The above table presents the demographic distribution of 200 respondents selected for the study. The age group between 18 and 21 years old shows strong voter participation because it has the highest percentage of voters at 40 percent. The male participants in the study make up 55 percent of the total while female participants account for 45 percent of the total. The study sample shows an educated youth composition because 47.5 percent of participants hold undergraduate degrees. The study shows that 60 percent of urban participants use digital platforms more than 40 percent of rural participants. The study targets first-time voters because 65 percent of participants fall into this category. The research methodology requires the demographic profile to show digitally active youth who use Instagram during the Indian General Elections 2024.

4.2 Social Media Usage Patterns among Youth

Usage Pattern	Frequency (Respondents)	Percentage (%)
Daily Usage (More than 3 hours)	90	45%
Daily Usage (1–3 hours)	60	30%
Occasional Usage	30	15%
Rare Usage	20	10%
Total	200	100%



The table shows that most youth participants spend more than three hours each day on social media platforms which include Instagram and Facebook. The 30% of respondents who use social media for 1 to 3 hours each day demonstrate their continuous online content exposure. A smaller group of people uses the service 15% of the time while only 10% of participants use it on uncommon occasions. The pattern demonstrates that most young people stay active

on social media platforms which serves as an effective tool for political communication and voter education and voter impact during the Indian General Elections 2024.

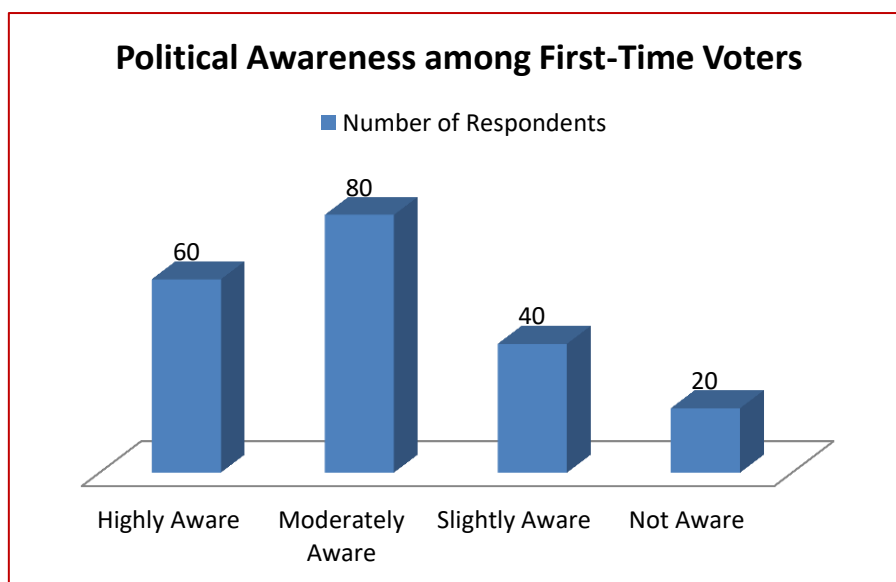
4.3 Level of Social Media Engagement

Level of Engagement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High	60	30%
High	50	25%
Moderate	45	22.5%
Low	25	12.5%
Very Low	20	10%
Total	200	100%

The above table presents the level of social media engagement among youth and first-time voters. The majority of respondents 55% engage with platforms at high and very high levels which shows that users watch political material and interact with it through Instagram and Facebook. About 22.5% of respondents show moderate engagement which suggests they participate in political discussions at times. The study found that 22.5% of respondents display low and very low engagement because they have minimal contact with the material. The results show that social media platforms significantly affect how young voters learn about politics and participate in political activities.

4.4 Political Awareness among First-Time Voters

Level of Awareness	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Highly Aware	60	30%
Moderately Aware	80	40%
Slightly Aware	40	20%
Not Aware	20	10%
Total	200	100%

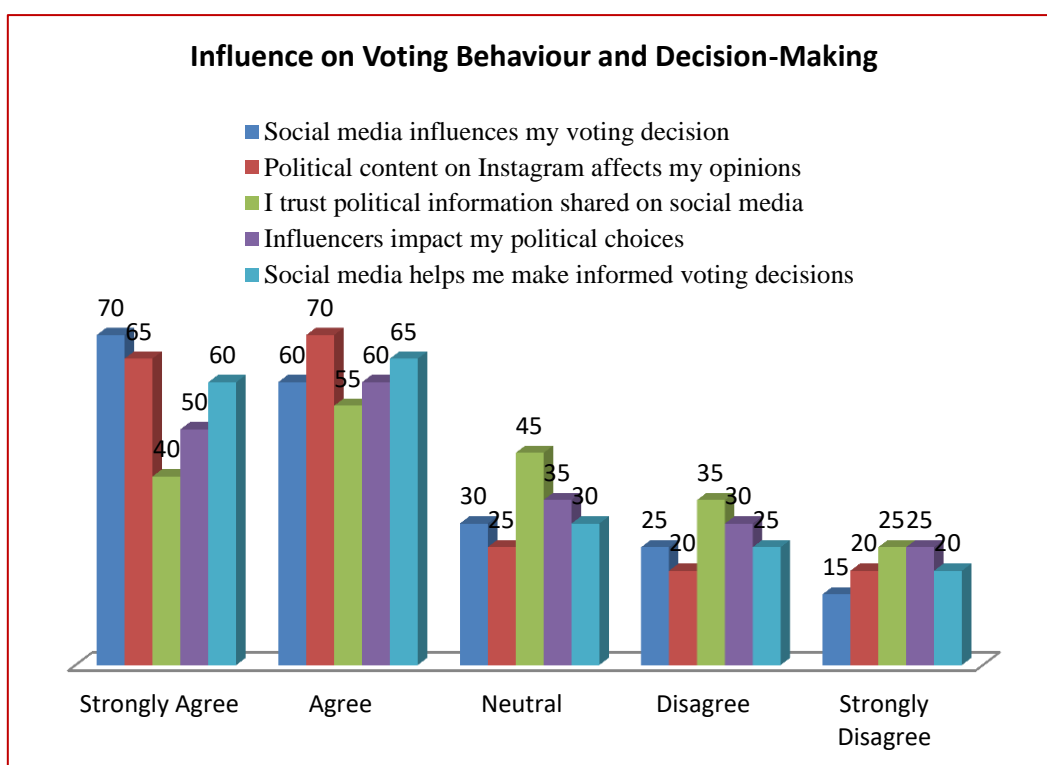


The table shows that most first-time voters show moderate to high political knowledge according to their voting behavior. Social media platforms Instagram and XTwitter serve as major channels for political information distribution according to 40% of respondents who

possess moderate political awareness and 30% who possess advanced political knowledge. The 20% of respondents who showed slight awareness and 10% who showed complete unawareness demonstrate how information distribution and digital literacy skills are deficient. The findings indicate that Indian General Elections 2024 require dedicated efforts to improve voter knowledge despite current improvements in electoral awareness.

4.5 Influence on Voting Behaviour and Decision-Making

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score
Social media influences my voting decision	70	60	30	25	15	3.73
Political content on Instagram affects my opinions	65	70	25	20	20	3.70
I trust political information shared on social media	40	55	45	35	25	3.25
Influencers impact my political choices	50	60	35	30	25	3.40
Social media helps me make informed voting decisions	60	65	30	25	20	3.60

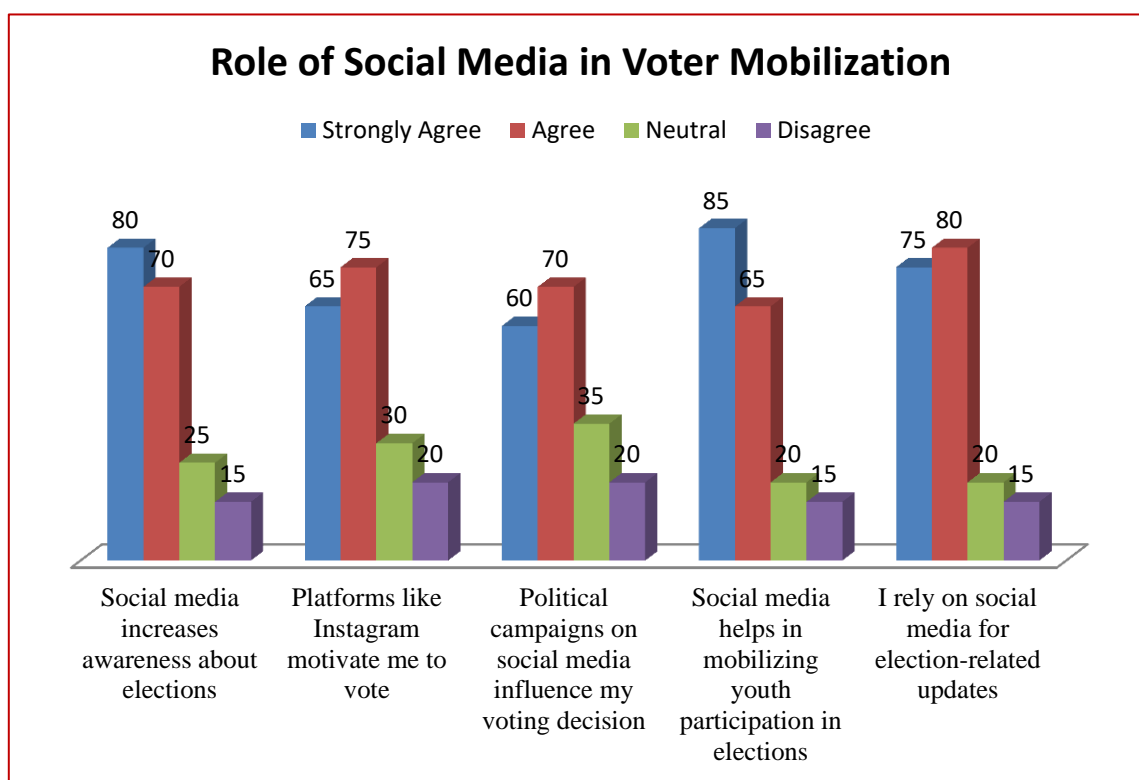


The research shows that social media platforms have a moderate to strong impact on how young people and first-time voters make their electoral choices. A significant number of respondents agree that social media platforms play a role in shaping their political opinions and choices. The relatively high mean scores (above 3.5 for most statements) suggest positive

engagement and influence. The study found that people trust political information sources about two-thirds of the time while evaluating political information sources. The Indian General Elections 2024 remain more accessible to voters through social media yet they doubt online political content because they lack trust in its accuracy.

4.6 Role of Social Media in Voter Mobilization

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Social media increases awareness about elections	80	70	25	15	10
Platforms like Instagram motivate me to vote	65	75	30	20	10
Political campaigns on social media influence my voting decision	60	70	35	20	15
Social media helps in mobilizing youth participation in elections	85	65	20	15	15
I rely on social media for election-related updates	75	80	20	15	10

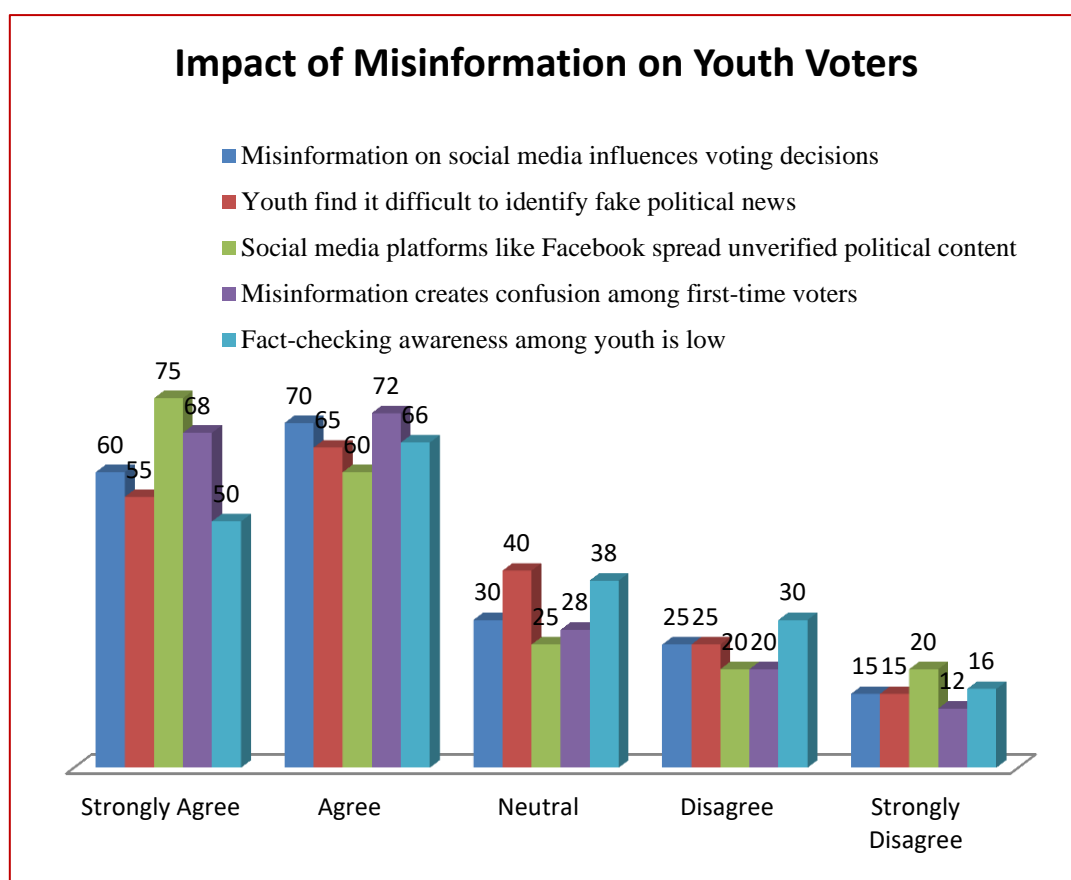


The table demonstrates that social media has a major impact on driving youth and first-time voters to participate in elections. A majority of respondents either strongly agree or agree that social media increases election awareness and encourages participation. Instagram serves as an efficient platform to help organizations attract voters while sharing vital information. The results show that different users experience different levels of impact because most

respondents chose neutral or disagreement as their response. The research findings demonstrate that social media functions as an effective platform to drive voter turnout during the Indian General Elections 2024.

4.7 Impact of Misinformation on Youth Voters

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Misinformation on social media influences voting decisions	60	70	30	25	15
Youth find it difficult to identify fake political news	55	65	40	25	15
Social media platforms like Facebook spread unverified political content	75	60	25	20	20
Misinformation creates confusion among first-time voters	68	72	28	20	12
Fact-checking awareness among youth is low	50	66	38	30	16



The table above shows that misinformation creates a major influence on youth voting behavior. The majority of survey participants believe that voting decisions become affected by misinformation while first-time voters experience confusion. Participants face challenges in identifying authentic political material from deceptive content which demonstrates their insufficient digital literacy skills. People consider Facebook to be one of their main sources for unverified information. The public remains unaware of fact-checking tools which leads to higher risks of falling for deceptive content. The research results show that misinformation acts as a fundamental force which creates biased impressions among people while it decreases their ability to make knowledgeable voting decisions during elections.

5. DISCUSSION

The study shows that social media platforms including Instagram and X have a major effect on political awareness and voting behavior among young people and first-time voters. The main results show that when users interact with content more their voting activity increases but they become more vulnerable to false information. The results of the study show that digital media helps with voter mobilization but they also demonstrate that first-time voters experience greater effects from this process. The study uses theoretical frameworks to explain how people join political activities and how media shapes their behavior. Political parties need to use responsible digital approaches according to the research while policymakers must work to enhance media understanding during the Indian General Elections 2024.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study demonstrates that social media platforms establish a crucial connection between political understanding and electoral participation among young voters and first-time voters in the Indian General Elections 2024. Users who engage with Instagram face increased exposure to false information through the platform's interactive features. The research findings indicate that organizations need to establish more stringent policies which require digital literacy training and fact-checking systems. Political campaigners should focus on transparent, issue-based communication and ethical digital strategies to build trust among young voters. Future research needs to investigate how digital political participation in India transforms through time together with different regional patterns and new platform developments.

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