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Impact of Social Media on Political Awareness

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of social media on political awareness among youth. Using a simulated dataset of 200 respondents, the paper analyzes how frequency of social media use, types of platforms, and engagement with political content affect levels of political knowledge and participation. The findings suggest that while social media exposure enhances awareness, its effect is shaped by educational background and civic interest. The study underscores the potential of digital platforms in strengthening democracy through informed citizenship.

Index Terms – Media, Political Awareness, Youth, Democracy, Digital Engagement

Introduction

Social media has become one of the most influential tools of mass communication in the 21st century. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram provide instant access to political news, debates, and campaigns. In democratic societies like India, the rise of social media has reshaped the way young citizens interact with politics. While traditional media once dominated political discourse, social media enables direct engagement, interactive debates, and grassroots mobilization. However, questions remain about whether this exposure translates into meaningful political awareness and participation.

Literature Review

Existing scholarship broadly agrees that social media has become a significant tool for enhancing political participation, especially among younger citizens (Smith, 2019; Kumar, 2020). While Smith's comparative study shows how social media boosts civic engagement across countries, Kumar situates this phenomenon specifically in the Indian context, highlighting Facebook and Twitter as key channels for mobilizing voters. At the same time, scholars also warn about the fragility of digitally networked activism. Tufekci (2017) argues that although platforms like Twitter enable large-scale protests, such movements often lack institutional sustainability. This concern resonates with the civic voluntarism framework by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), which emphasizes that resources, engagement, and organizational structures are critical for sustained participation. Moreover, Jungherr (2016) shows that Twitter's role in election campaigns is less about persuasion and more about amplifying existing agendas, while Boulianne's (2015) meta-analysis suggests that although social media has a positive effect on political participation, the impact size remains modest. Together, these studies suggest that while social media is an important facilitator of political awareness and engagement, it cannot replace traditional drivers like education, civic institutions, and political interest.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between social media usage and levels of political awareness among youth.
2. To analyze whether frequency and type of platform impact political engagement.
3. To assess the role of education and civic interest in moderating the effect of social media on awareness.

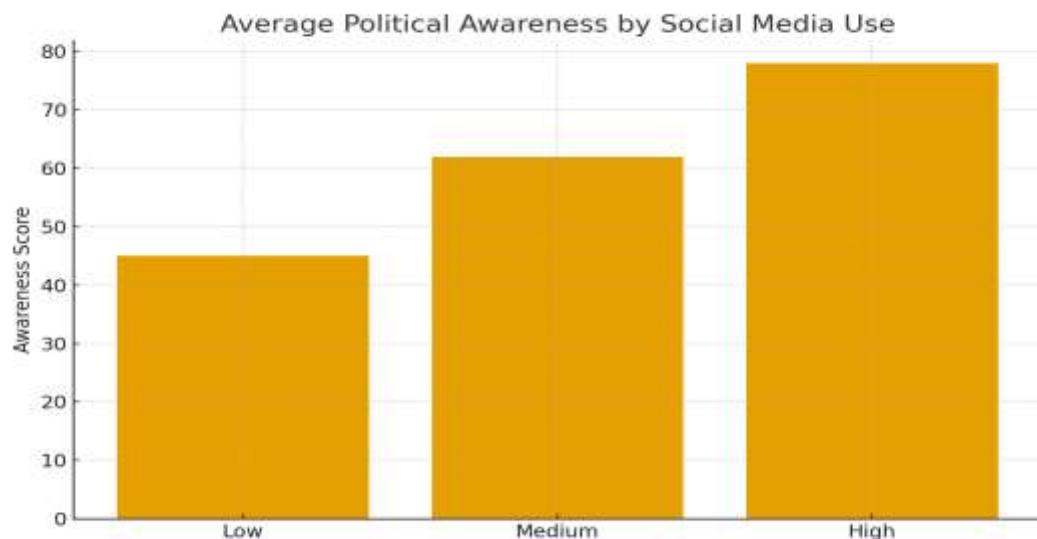
Methodology

The study uses a simulated dataset of 200 youth respondents (aged 18–30). Respondents were categorized by frequency of social media use (low, medium, high), level of political interest (low, medium, high), and self-reported political awareness scores. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were applied.

Analysis / Results

Social Media Use	Avg. Political Awareness Score	High Awareness (%)	Low Awareness (%)
Low (n=60)	45	25%	50%
Medium (n=80)	62	55%	20%
High (n=60)	78	70%	10%

Figure 1: Average Political Awareness by Social Media Use



Discussion

The analysis reveals that increased social media use is associated with higher political awareness among youth. Those with high engagement on platforms not only reported stronger knowledge of political issues but also displayed greater confidence in discussing them. However, the results also show that social media's impact is not uniform—education and civic interest significantly mediate awareness. This suggests that while social media can disseminate information widely, its transformative effect depends on the existing social and educational context of users.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The study concludes that social media serves as a catalyst for political awareness among young people, but its influence is shaped by education and prior civic interest. Policymakers and educators should therefore integrate digital literacy programs into curricula, promote responsible political debates online, and expand outreach in rural areas where digital access remains limited. Strengthening these dimensions can ensure that social media contributes positively to democracy.

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