



Social Media a Tool for Social and Political Inclusion among Youth: A Study of Indian University's Students

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Abstract

Social Media is an important tool for sharing information and communication among the people. Mobile Applications enable these social networking sites (SNS) to send and receive info-content to the target audience. Especially, University students in the country today use SNS extensively for information and entertainment needs. Social media is playing a crucial role in social and political awareness for inclusive development. The study focuses on how social networking apps help in fulfilling the social needs of youth? What are the effects of social media on studies of university students? How do political parties use SNS apps for youth? And how mobile apps are contributing to the Digital India movement? A survey method was used for quantitative research methodology with a stratified random sampling of 100 university students of two state university of Haryana. The study reveals that students consider mobile apps help in socially connected with well known, to whom they are meeting personally and they feel happy for sharing their thoughts. It also explains the use of social media can create a negative effect on studies. Political parties and political leaders are targeting youth for their propaganda and agenda-setting through mobile apps. In the Digital India movement mobile apps are empowering youth for inclusive development.



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Introduction

The use of social media applications and websites has created a new dimension for the word 'community participation' as this process is largely moving online. These applications have become a new

zone where people can express their ideas and find similar voices online. The World Wide Web has connected users to the Internet which enables them to communicate with each other for sharing, learning, and entertaining by creating and distributing content.

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Other than sharing important events of their lives, users can also find information on these apps which can shape their opinions. People can be informed, educated, and even persuaded through the means of social media. The young population is a large and vulnerable part of this user base that spends long hours surfing the Internet, accessing it through their mobile phones, laptops, tablets, or Mac. Some of the most commonly used social media applications include Instagram, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Twitter, Whatsapp, Snapchat, and Reddit. In a study, Ali (2011) stated that social media is a tool of national integration. People of any country become unite due to social media.¹

The basic notion of the term 'social inclusion' is that all groups or individuals get to take part in society. To foster the participation of all citizens in society, it is necessary to reduce inequalities. In the 21st century, this inclusion has become easy as users of social media apps can get digitally included through online means in society. Any person having access to the internet can use these apps for free without any discrimination, without worrying about the barrier of distance and time. For instance- a tweet can reach far wide in a fraction of seconds. Social media has created a digital dimension where interaction with other members of society can be facilitated easily. Young people are very active on social media sites/apps on which they can share their talents with the world through videos, pictures or text. In this manner, they develop a style of social belonging and create social relationships online. In a study Urquhart, Underhill-Sem and Wilding (2009) stated that social inclusion is possible because of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and social media.²

Political inclusion is the right of the members of society to participate in the political process or have access to institutions of democracy. Online activity and presence have become an important element of the politics of today. Political opinions can be shared along with citizens can be persuaded to a political side on social media through posts, message conversations and debates. Social media has also become a tool of obtaining information which also provides the knowledge of politics of the country and the world. In the age of social media, political discussions have found a new platform. These free platforms are used by politically active

citizens of a democracy for public participation in government affairs. The engagement of today's youth with politics is changing through social media. Many young leaders are turning to social media to publicize new policies or express their political opinions on different matters. Leaders can also find a support base and influence other people online. In a book, Alava, Frau-Meigs, and Hassan (2017) pointed out that the internet and web media have given significant possibilities in the support of the development agenda. There is a well-established link between social media and its role in the personal, political, religious radicalization of youth.³

Deference between Political Awareness and Political Propaganda

Political awareness means knowledge of political happening which held in society. According to Zaller (1992), Political awareness means "the extent to which an individual pays attention to politics and understands what he or she has encountered."¹⁰ While, political propaganda means misinformation and disinformation shared by the political activist to meet any political goal. Basically political propaganda is use manipulation techniques. Political awareness must be based on fact full political information while political propaganda can be fake or untrue information.

Review of Literature

Review of related literature is the most important attempt to understand the subject deeply. This chapter contains reviews of research papers and book chapters. In a study Sharma & Goyal (2018) evaluate the use of social media for information sharing. Researchers had tried to understand agenda and media priming via social media platform Twitter. Content analysis method was applied to meet the objectives of the study. Result indicates that tweets used to include micro or positive agenda among the users. Tweets which have popular faces, controversial statements and fake information are primed on mainstream media.⁴

In a study, Way and Malvini Redden (2017) examined how the internet influences communication. They conducted a qualitative content analysis to meet the objectives. The finding indicates that internet fulfils the uses and gratifications habits, engagement and identity of youth.⁵

In research work, Gaby (2017) examined the use of media as influencing and engagement power. The researcher has conducted a survey to meet the objectives. The result indicates that people use media and other communication tools to engage participants and achieve their goals. Media tools are used in a one-directional manner during organizational communication.⁶

In a study Valenzuela, Arriagada and Scherman (2014) examined the changes in the association between social media use and protest behaviour in the context of growing social unrest among the youth. A cross-sectional survey conducted after the 2011 student demonstrations in Chile. The result indicates that both social media platforms Facebook and Twitter have notable effects on the likelihood of protesting. It indicates that there is a time dynamics social media–protest relationship.⁷

In a study Urquhart, Underhill-Sem and Wilding (2009) analysed the social inclusion of youth by ICT and other means of communications. Results indicate that social inclusion is very successful at the local level if it is conducted with information and communication technologies.² In research work, Notley (2009) examined the social exclusion among the teenage. The result indicates that online networks provided participants with valuable opportunities for social inclusion.⁸

In the study Colley (2003) analysis the mentoring for social inclusion. The conclusion indicates that the internet has given a chance of high-level engagement. Social inclusion is the result of this high-level engagement. It indicates that social inclusion is not only associated with the socially but also psychological way.⁹

Method and Material

This part of the study contains research questions, research objectives, research design and sample design.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are the following:

Q1. What are the uses of social networking apps among youth for social needs?

Q2. How much does social media affect the studies

of university students?

Q3. What are the utilization of SNS apps by political parties for youth?

Q4. What is the role of mobile apps in the digital India movement?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are given below.

RO¹: To explore the social networking apps used among youth for social needs.

RO²: To know the effects of social media on studies of university students.

RO³: To analyse the utilisation of SNS apps by political parties for youth.

RO⁴: To explore the role of mobile apps in the digital India movement.

Research Design

This study is descriptive. A survey was conducted on 100 students. Students were selected from the two out of 22 state universities of Haryana. Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra and Maharshi Dayanand University Rohtak has been selected as a sample. Cross-sectional research design has been used to conduct the survey. A closed-ended questionnaire has been used to meet the objectives.

Sample Design

All University students constitute the universe for the present study. University students of India can be considered as the sampling element of the study. Students of two universities of Haryana are the sampling unit for this study. Stratified random sampling technique has been used to meet the objectives. Sampling is done through stratification of 50 students each from Post Graduate (PG) and Undergraduate (UG) level. And 50 from each university. Equal distribution was done with the gender of the respondent for primary data collection. A questionnaire was framed with questions related to the social media for social and political inclusion and its effects on such needs. Data analysis was done with cross-tabulation according to gender-wise distribution and respective percentages.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The emergence of social media has taken control of human life in almost all its aspects. Social media is one of the great revolutions after print and broadcast technology. With the growth of new technology, social

media became more powerful than other mainstream media. Now it is very useful to understand the positive or negative aspect of social media which can affect society. Youth are considered as the future of any country. So, the effect of social media on youth can give very valuable results. The present analysis is based on the simple percentage analysis of data collected from the youth respondents.

People Connected Via Social Media are Known to Students

Social Media provides an opportunity to connect with various people virtually. In the present time, most of the youth try to communicate with their friends, classmates, family members and relatives using such a platform. Table-1 depicts that with those people they are connected using social media are known to them or not. More than one-fourth of

students responded that they connect to all known people via social media, in this category female students are more dominant with 36 per cent. About 42 percent of students connect virtually with mostly known people in which males (56%) are double to female (28%) respondents. About 13 percent students say they interact with almost known people on social media whereas 14 percent students The percentage of students who are connected to most known people are more, nearly 42 percent students finds very few people known on this virtual media. Only 6 percent female respondents have no idea about knowing the people connected through social networking sites. Sometimes they come into connection with unknown people based on interest and preferences. In total, about 83 percent of the students are connected with all known, mostly known and almost known people.

Table 1: People Connected via Social Media are Known to Students (gender-wise)

Gender	All known	Mostly known	Almost known	Very few	No idea	Total (%)
Male	10 (20.0)	28 (56.0)	6 (12.0)	6 (12.0)	0	50 (100)
Female	18 (36.0)	14 (28.0)	7 (14.0)	8 (16.0)	3 (6.0)	50 (100)
Total (%)	28	42	13	14	3	100

Table 2: People Connected through Social Media are physically Connected with Students (gender-wise)

Gender	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total (%)
Male	6 (12.2)	16 (32.7)	21 (42.9)	6 (12.2)	0	49 (100)
Female	3 (6.0)	16 (32.0)	11 (22.0)	14 (28.0)	6 (12.0)	50 (100)
Total (%)	9 (9.1)	32 (32.3)	32 (32.3)	20 (20.2)	6 (6.1)	99 (100)

Note: One male respondent does not respond.

People Connected Through Social Media are Physically Connected with Students

Social media makes people connected virtually every bit but are they physically connected. As per Table-2, about 9 percent students are always connected actually whereas one-third of students are often socially and physically connected with the same people. About one-third find themselves sometimes connected with people on social media and meeting physically in which males are almost double to female respondents. Only 12 percent female students never meet them face to face

whereas about 20 percent students rarely meet them in person which is dominantly responded by female students. One male respondent has not responded out of 100 students.

Social Networking Provides a Feeling of Connection with Loved One for Students

Social media has provided a platform to all internet and smartphone users to always connect with all loved once. Table-3 indicates that the feeling of students regarding connection with loved one means regular communication with family, relatives

and friends with these social networking apps and sites. Two female students do not respond out of 100 university students. Half of the students feel that they are very much connected with their loved one. About 28.6 percent of students believe these apps are much useful for connecting with loved one

dominated by male respondents. About 17.3 percent students normally feel connected via these apps whereas only 4.1 percent students assume little connected and only 2 percent male respondents mark these apps as not at all helping in connecting with loved one.

Table 3: Apps provide the feeling of connecting with Loved Ones for Students (gender-wise)

Gender	Very Much	Much	Normal	Little	Not at all	Total (%)
Male	23 (46.0)	15 (30.0)	9 (18.0)	2 (4.0)	1 (2.0)	50 (100)
Female	25 (52.1)	13 (27.1)	8 (16.7)	2 (4.2)	0	48 (100)
Total (%)	48 (49.0)	28 (28.6)	17 (17.3)	4 (4.1)	1 (1.0)	98 (100)

Note: Two female respondents did not respond.

Social Networking to Express Ideas and Feelings by Students

The rapid changing technology has allowed people to share their ideas and feelings within their social circle with the use of social media and it also provides instant feedback. As per Table-4 describes how much students use social media to express their ideas and feelings via social networking apps. About 22 percent students always express ideas and their feelings via social networking in which males are dominant whereas 25 percent students often share

their feelings in which 30 percent are male and 20 percent female students. About 24 percent of students sometimes express their thoughts using this networking platform in which male students are dominant. About 22 percent of the students rarely find this tool suitable for expressing ideas with others in which more female students find this media of no use. Only 7 percent of students never use social media apps for sharing their ideas and feelings with others.

Table 4: Social networking to express ideas and feelings by Students (gender-wise)

Gender	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total (%)
Male	14 (28.0)	15 (30.0)	14 (28.0)	5 (10.0)	2 (4.0)	50 (100)
Female	8 (16.0)	10 (20.0)	10 (20.0)	17 (34.0)	5 (10.0)	50 (100)
Total (%)	22	25	24	22	7	100

Note: Two female respondents did not respond.

Table 5: Social Media effects on studies of University Students (gender-wise)

Gender	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total (%)
Male	17 (34.0)	10 (20.0)	13 (26.0)	4 (8.0)	6 (12.0)	50 (100)
Female	7 (14.0)	11 (22.0)	20 (40.0)	8 (16.0)	4 (8.0)	50 (100)
Total (%)	24	21	33	12	10	100

Effects of Social Media on Studies of University Students

Youth contribute a maximum in the growth of internet users in the country. They also spend more time on social media for sharing information and fulfilling the need for entertainment. Table-5 depicts that one-third of the university students feel that this social networking sometimes affects their studies dominantly responded by female (40%) students. About 24 percent students always experience that

social media affect in their studies is dominated by male (34%) respondents whereas about 21 percent students often admit that such networking creates problems in their studies as it diverts attention easily. About 12 percent of students rarely experience any effect of social media use on studies in which female respondents are double of male whereas only 10 percent never feel any negative effect of such media usage on studies.

Table 6: Apps used by Political Parties for propaganda among youth (gender-wise)

Gender	Very Much	Much	Normal	Little	Not at all	Total (%)
Male	19 (38.0)	8 (16.0)	17 (34.0)	3 (6.0)	3 (6.0)	50 (100)
Female	5 (10.0)	18 (36.0)	12 (24.0)	9 (18.0)	6 (12.0)	50 (100)
Total (%)	24	26	29	12	9	100

Apps used by Political Parties for Propaganda among Youth

With the rise in the popularity of this media among youth political parties are also wanting to cater to this targeted audience. Political parties attempt to use different communication tools, especially during elections. Mobile apps have shown the great two-way process of information sharing. In Present time various political parties do propaganda to gain popularity among their prospective voters. University students are by and large new voters for the electoral system in India, so these political parties engaged in using various tools to motivate them to do a favor for them. As per Table-6 shows that about 24 percent students feel that political parties are involved in

propaganda using social media apps in which 38 percent male respondents dominantly think so. About 26 percent of students experience that social media is used much for propaganda purposes in which female (36%) students and male (16%) sense the same. About 29 percent of students feel the action of the political party on social media as normal whereas 12 percent find it little. Only 9 percent of university students are not at all in connection with such content of political parties. Male respondents 6 percent each find it little and not at all respectively whereas 18 and 12 percent female students admit the same that political parties use different available apps for the propaganda of their benefits.

Table 7: Apps used by political leaders for agenda-setting for youth (gender-wise)

Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (%)
Male	18 (36.0)	14 (28.0)	16 (32.0)	1 (2.0)	1 (2.0)	50 (100)
Female	6 (12.2)	31 (63.3)	11 (22.4)	0	1 (2.0)	49 (100)
Total (%)	24 (24.2)	45 (45.5)	27 (27.3)	1 (1.0)	2 (2.0)	99 (100)

Note: One female respondent did not respond.

Apps Used By Political Leaders For Agenda-Setting For Youth

During the election period, various political leaders also use social media for agenda-setting for gaining

support from masses. Nowadays social media play an important role among youth to receive and send communication using mobile apps. Table-7 explains how effectively political leaders use mobile apps

for setting agenda for students. About 24 percent of students strongly agree that apps are used for political agenda-setting in which 36 percent male dominantly think so. Most of the students about 45.5 percent agree that the agenda is set using apps in which about two-thirds of female respondents admit

that. About one-third of the students find mobile apps neutrally used for such issues whereas only 1 percent disagree and 2 percent strongly disagree that these apps are involved in agenda-setting by political parties for university students. One female respondent has not responded on this aspect.

Table 8: Role of apps in digital India movement for students (gender-wise)

Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (%)
Male	21 (42.0)	15 (30.0)	10 (20.0)	3 (6.0)	1 (2.0)	50 (100)
Female	9 (18.0)	34 (68.0)	6 (12.0)	1 (2.0)	0	50 (100)
Total (%)	30	49	16	4	1	100

Role of Appsin Digital India Movement

In India 2015 Digital India movement was launched to ease the life of a common man using digital technology. Mobile apps are providing a platform to execute various activities from anywhere at any time. In this study university students also assess the role of apps in the Digital India movement. As per Table-8 about half of the students (49%) agree that apps have an important role in the Digital India movement in which females (68%) are more than double of male (30%) believe the same. About 30 percent of students strongly agree that these apps can be a game-changer for this movement where males (42%) are more dominant from female (18%) respondents. About 16 percent youth feel it has a neutral role whereas only 4 percent university students disagree with the use of such a platform and merely two percent male students disagree with the use of mobile apps in such a movement. Overall students find mobile apps can play for significant change in the standard of people's lives and lead to the help in varied areas for development in the country.

Findings

The major findings regarding social media as a tool of social and political Inclusion among youth are as follows:

- Most of the university students are connected with well-known people using social media.
- About One-third of students reveal that they are often connected physically and virtually with the same people whereas other one-third students are sometimes connected with social media

and face to face dominantly by male students. About 20 percent rarely meet people personally with whom they are connected via social media.

- Most of the university students feel connected using social media is very much too normal to connect with their loved one.
- The mixed response among university students for expressing ideas and feelings via social networking to others.
- Social media affects the study of the university students as it depends on the time spent on such media and they have mixed reactions for its effects on studies.
- Most university students find itnormal that political parties use mobile apps for creating propaganda for their target audience.
- Majority of students agree and strongly agree that political leaders are using mobile apps for agenda-setting.
- Most of the students strongly agree and agree that the use of mobile apps for digital India movement can provide a pace for development in India.

Conclusion

Social media apps are helping university students to get connected socially to well-known people which include family, relatives and friends. Students are mostly connected virtually on social media generally with people with whom they are meeting personally (face to face). University feels happy being connected with a loved one using social networking platforms whereas they have mixed reactions regarding the sharing of ideas on online mobile apps. More use of social media creates a

negative impact on studies of students admitted by most of the students. University students discover that political parties are involved in propaganda using mobile apps for targeting youth. They also evidently agree that political leaders set an agenda for youth and promote this with the help of social media apps. Students also got valuable experience regarding these apps that they are contributing to the digital India movement for the development process. Overall mobile apps as a communication tool are playing a critical role for youth in socially and politically for the inclusive growth of the country.

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