

# EFFECTS OF FACE BOOK ON THE POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF THE YOUTH

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## Abstract:-

Social media plays a vital role in fostering democratic deliberations. Several studies have revealed that there are significant positive relationships between the use of digital media and political participation. Facebook is, nowadays, one of the widely used social media platforms to discuss news about government and politics. It allows users to share their political beliefs, support specific candidates, and interact with others on political issues. The present study is an attempt to understand the relationship between Facebook and political ideologies among the youth. The study based on an online survey reveals that Facebook can be a platform for political discussions but it does not have much impact on the political ideology of the youth.

**Key Words:-** Participatory communication, Sustainable development, Information and communication technology (ICT)

## INTRODUCTION

Social media plays a vital role in fostering democratic deliberations. Online tools such as blogging, podcasting, political websites with mechanisms for online feedback and participation, social networking, and online video sharing play a critical role in the political communication process (Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 2008). Research has indicated that levels of political knowledge affect the acceptance of democratic principles, attitude toward specific issues and political participation (Galston, 2001). According to Pew Research Centre, the advent of social media has opened up new ways for people with similar interests to find, share and talk about news including news about politics with friends and colleagues. Several studies have revealed that an increased exposure and attention to online news is positively related to political knowledge, and there are significant positive relationships between the use of digital media and political participation (Dimitrova et al.,

2011).

Social media is playing a pivotal role in a democratic country like India. It is interesting to note that one third of India's population is comprised of youth in the age group of 15-34 years, and is expected to be the world's youngest country by 2020 (Shivakumar, G., 2013). India has been recording a fast growth in Internet penetration too. In 2010, only 7.5% of Indian population had access to Internet, and in 2016, it has leaped to 34.8% (internetlivestats.com). According to a report by Internet and Mobile Association of India, 66% of Internet users in urban India regularly access social media (livemint.com), and at present there are about 21.5 crore social media users in the country (statista.com). Politicians and political parties in India are making the best use of social media to reach its voters during elections in the recent years.

### Literature review:

Tolbert & McNeal (2003) found out that

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Internet may enhance voter information about candidates and elections, and in turn stimulate increased participation. Informational use of social networking sites exerted a significant and positive impact on individuals' activities aimed at engaging in civic and political action. (Gil de Zúñiga *et.al.*, 2012) Another study (McClurg, 2003) has revealed that interaction in social networks has a strong influence on the propensity to participate in politics. Blog readers are involved in a range of participatory activities, both online and offline, and that these two spheres are highly complementary and mutually supportive. (Gil de Zúñiga *et.al.*, 2010)

Impact of internet and social media on political participation and civic engagement in the 2008 Obama campaign and found that the campaign created a nationwide virtual organization that motivated 3.1 million individual contributors. (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011)

Social media news use has direct effects on offline political participation and indirect effects on offline and online political participation mediated via political expression. (Gil de Zúñiga *et al.*, 2014) Online political expression enhanced the effects of political mobile apps, traditional offline and online media, and social media on political participation. (Yamamoto *et.al.*, 2015)

The Presence on Facebook and Twitter of Members of the Danish National Parliament and revealed that Danish MPs have a relatively high degree of engagement in political conversations with citizens on Facebook. (Sorensen, 2016) Focusing on usage of Facebook in Hong Kong, Tang & Lee (2013) examined how time spent on FB, exposure to shared political information, network size, network structural heterogeneity, and direct connection with public political actors relate to young people's online and offline political participation.

The potential link of Facebook group participation with viral advertising responses (Chu 2011). The study suggested that college-aged Facebook group members engage in higher levels of self-disclosure and maintain more favorable attitudes toward social media and advertising in general than do non-group members.

A few studies have been conducted in India too with regard to the use of social media by politicians and political parties during elections. However, there have been no specific efforts to understand whether social media like Facebook have any impact on the political ideology of the voters, especially the youth. The present study attempts to explore how young Facebook users' react to the political posts and what kind of influence Facebook has on the political ideology of its users.

#### **Method:**

The primary data for the present study was collected through an online survey for two weeks. A total of 130 Facebook users, basically natives of Karnataka, in an age group of 18-35 years, were selected via a convenience sampling, who were distributed with a structured questionnaire. The respondents were invited to fill in the questionnaire through e-mails and Facebook messages. A total of 92 people responded to the request with a response rate of 71%.

The questionnaire gauged the demographic characteristics such as sex, age, education, employment and income of the respondents in the first part. In the second part, it collected information about their Facebook usage, like since when they had a Facebook account, hours spent on Facebook, number of 'friends' and groups, and reasons why they use Facebook. A question was also asked which political ideology they wanted to be identified with.

The third part of the questionnaire dealt with Facebook and politics. Respondents were

asked to rate on a 5-point Likert-scale (1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree) how they treated Facebook as a forum for political discussions. Another set of questions were asked to measure the connection between the respondents' interest in political issues and their Facebook behavior. They were also asked to respond to a set of eight items on 5-point scale (1= never, 5= very often) in order to assess their political activities on Facebook.

The respondents were also asked some direct questions with an intention to measure the impact of Facebook on their political ideologies such as, 'Has your Facebook experience made you think that the political ideology you have is the correct one or not?', 'Have you started admiring a specific political ideology in course of your Facebook experience?', 'Have you changed your views on a politician or political party after going through Facebook posts?', etc. The respondents were also asked which social media other than Facebook and which mass media influenced their political ideology.

**Results:**

Among 92 respondents, 59 were males and 33 were females. Majority of them (66.3%) were post-graduates, while 12.8% had an under graduate degree, and 18.6% had an M. Phil. or PhD. Most of the respondents (71.8%) were

employed in private sector, while 15.3% were in government sector, 8.2% were self-employed.

Majority of the respondents (77.9%) said that they had Facebook accounts for more than five years, while 16.3% said they created their account 3-4 years ago. As many as 37.2% respondents said that they spend 1-5 hours on FB in a week, while 30.2% spent less than one hour and 24.4% spent 6-10 hours. Majority of the respondents (29.1%) had FB friends in between 1001-2000 and FB groups in between 1-10 (66.7%). Most of respondents (71.4%) use FB for keeping in touch with friends, 57.1% for getting news updates, 47.6% for expressing their views on current issues, 29.8% for getting feedback on the contents they post, 22.6% for making news contacts, 21.4% for having fun in leisure time and 9.5% for promoting business. 16.3% identified themselves as 'rightist', 2.3% as leftist, 18.6% as centrist, while 46.5% said they don't want to be identified with any political ideology, while 16.3% said they don't have any political ideology. As shown in Table-1, most of the respondents considered FB an appropriate forum to discuss about politics. Majority of them felt that political leaders having accounts/pages on FB is something good.

However, when asked about their

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
FB is an appropriate place for people to express political views	25.8%	36%	13.5%	16.9%	7.9%
FB can be used to inform and educate people regarding politics	27.3%	40.9%	13.6%	14.8%	3.4%
It is good that political leaders have accounts/pages on FB	47.7%	40.9%	3.4%	6.8%	1.1%
FB can be used to convince people on certain political issues	20.5%	48.9%	17%	11.4%	2.3%

**Table-1: Facebook as a forum to discuss politics**

individual behavior in Facebook with regard to political issues, the majority of the respondents

were negative in their answers. This is clear in Table-2.

<b>How many times did you do the following things on Facebook in the past one year</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometime</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Very Often</b>
Posting a status update about a political issue	36.5%	31.8%	21.2%	7.1%	3.5%
Commenting on a friend's post on politics	29.1%	30.2%	25.5%	11.6%	3.5%
Posting or sharing a photo or video or link about politics	41.7%	26.2%	23.8%	6%	2.4%
Writing or sharing a note about politics on my network	45.9%	27.1%	20%	3.5%	3.5%
Joining or leaving a group about politics	57.6%	24.7%	10.6%	4.7%	2.4%
Clicking 'going' for a political event	69.5%	24.4%	3.7%	1.2%	1.2%
Discussing a political issue on a message	48.2%	28.2%	20%	2.4%	1.2%
Clicking 'like' on a political party or politician's fan page	52.9%	24.7%	14.1%	4.7%	3.5%

**Table-2: FB users' individual behavior in Facebook with regard to political issues**

In case of individual reactions to Facebook posts (Table 3), respondents showed varied attitudes.

<b>What do you do with a post/link/photo/video related to political issues on Facebook?</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometime</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Very Often</b>
Read	8.2%	20%	36.3%	24.7%	10.6%
Like	20.7%	35.4%	39%	1.2%	3.7%
Comment	30.1%	43.4%	20.5%	3.6%	2.4%
Share on my wall	56.1%	22%	17.1%	3.7%	1.2%
Share on a message privately	61.4%	22.9%	15.7%	0%	0%
Tag friends	81.9%	12%	4.8%	0%	1.2%

**Table-3: FB users' reaction to political posts**

The responses for the questions what do they do with the political posts which they don't like, or what they do with a friend whose political posts irritate them often, also did not make much difference (Table-4 and Table-5).

<b>What do you do with a post/link/photo/video related to political issue or party, which you don't like?</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometime</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Very Often</b>
Ignore	14%	15.1%	33.7%	17.4%	19.8%
Comment	57.1%	27.4%	10.7%	3.6%	1.2%
Share on my wall	79.8%	7.1%	11.9%	0%	1.2%
Share on a message privately	79.8%	14.3%	4.8%	0%	1.2%
Tag friends	88.1%	9.5%	0%	0%	2.4%

**Table-4: FB users' reaction to political posts which they don't like**

What do you do with a friend whose political posts irritate you often?	Never	Rarely	Sometime	Often	Very Often
Ignore	16.5%	7.1%	22.4%	18.8%	35.3%
Block	53.1%	14.8%	18.5%	6.2%	7.4%
Unfriend	50%	21.3%	16.3%	6.3%	6.3%
Unfollow	42.5%	15%	16.3%	10%	16.3%
Hide	46.9%	17.3%	16%	9.9%	9.9%

**Table-5: Reaction to political posts that irritate users often**

Table-6 summarizes the responses for some direct questions which were intended to

understand whether FB had any impact on the political ideology of the respondents.

Questions	Yes	No	Don't know
Has your Facebook experience made you think that the political ideology you have is the correct one?	4.8%	59.5%	35.7%
Have you started admiring a specific political ideology in course of your Facebook experience?	9.5%	75%	15.5%
Have you changed your views on a politician or political party after going through Facebook posts?	17.6%	77.6%	4.7%
Have you changed your option of candidate in any election after going through Facebook posts?	10.6%	78.8%	10.6%

**Table-6: Impact of FB on political ideology of respondents**

Responding to two other questions, the respondents said Twitter (41%) and YouTube (20.5%) were the other social media that influenced their political ideology, while 45.8% marked the option 'none of the above'. According to them, newspaper (79.1%) and television (61.6%) were the mass media that influenced their political thoughts.

#### **Discussion:**

The main objective of the present study was to explore how Facebook users' react to the political posts and what kind of impact Facebook has on the political ideology its users. A large majority of the respondents make it clear that Facebook do not have any impact on their political ideology. As shown in Table-6, 59.5% of respondents said their FB experience did not even reassure them that what ideology they had was the correct one (35.7% replied 'don't know').

75% of the respondents said they do not admire any specific political ideology in course of their FB experience. 77.6% of the

respondents said the political posts on the FB did not made them change their views on a politician or a political party. Finally, a high majority of respondents (78.8%) said they did not change their option of a candidate in any election after going through FB posts (Table-6). As per the results, many people agree that FB can be an appropriate place to discuss about politics, but when it comes to their personal reaction to political issues, they become passive. They were more positive on 'reading' and 'liking' certain posts/links/photos/videos related to politics, but negative on commenting, sharing and tagging friends (Tables 2, 3 & 4).

For instance, 36.3% respondents said they 'sometime' read, and 24.7% said they 'often' read; but 56.1% said they 'never' share such posts on their wall, 61.4% said they 'never' share them on messages privately, and 81.9% of respondents said they 'never' tag friends to such posts. Even most of them were never for blocking (53.1%), unfriending (59%), unfollowing (42.5%) or hiding (46.9%) a friend



whose political posts irritated them. However, majority of the respondents said they ignored

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