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Impact Of Social Media On Politics In India

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Abstract : The internet is intertwined with all spheres of life; electronic mail, social networking, file transfer, online banking, e-commerce, tours and travel, ordering food online, business promotion, navigation, real-time news etc. are major uses of internet in our daily lives. The Covid pandemic has brought out a new dimension in the online Education and businesses like astrology, tarot card reading, horoscope and even prayer/puja services made use of the internet in the pandemic. Social media has emerged as an important tool because along with its primary functions of networking, broadcasting information, social photo and video sharing, its uses are multifold. For example, Facebook and Instagram are also used for business promotion, marketplace, YouTube is also used for education, WhatsApp groups are also used as a bridge between buyers and sellers. All these social media platforms are a hub for politics; Politics too has a direct or indirect influence over all spheres of life discussed above. The recent sensation Tik Tok, which is a video-sharing social networking service, is also used to share political opinions. Over the last decade, considerable literature has been published discussing the influence and effects of social media on politics. Though the pros and cons of social media is debatable, we can generalize that it amplifies human intent – both good and bad. In the Indian political landscape, the social media revolution is factual, concrete and accelerating. Political parties and elected representatives are making their presence felt in platforms like Twitter and Facebook to reach out to the citizens. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the impact of political activity in social media on political efficacy and real-life political participation. An online survey is conducted on people of different ages and different walks of life; the survey is distributed with the help of e-mail, Facebook and WhatsApp. The results reveal that political social media activity has a significant relationship and positively effects both political efficacy and real-life political participation. Also, political efficacy and real-life political participation have a significant correlation with each other.

Index Terms - social media, politics, political activity, political efficacy, political participation

I. INTRODUCTION

The internet is over five decades old which evolved from a military experiment to General Purpose Technology (John Naughton, 2016). The evolution from the concept of the “Galactic Network” to the wide-area packet switching network ARPANET to the open architecture networking with the protocol suite, addressed as the INTERNET is the biggest revolution in the world of technology (Kahn et al., 1997). Internet has transformed our lives in all possible ways and is intertwined with all spheres of life. Traditional communication platforms like the radio, telephone, newspaper, mail are either redefined, reshaped or bypassed by the internet which brought in online music and video streaming, VOIP and Wi-fi calling, digital news, blogs and emails and social media. Internet made possible for everyone across the globe to be digitally connected. In the current scenario people spend most of their time on smartphones, laptops and personal computers using internet to get information online, for their professional work, reading news, book a hotel or a restaurant, order food online, book a ticket for travel, cab booking for regular commute, shopping and e-commerce, listening to music, video streaming to watch movies and series, online gaming, reading e-books, running an online business, business promotion etc. A major chunk of the time also goes into interaction with friends, family and business via social media platforms. Thanks to Mr. Mukesh Ambani and JIO, for accelerating the penetration of internet into semi-urban and rural India.

Social media are interactive platforms where individuals, organizations, businesses and even governments engage with each other in this digital era. “The most significant change since the Industrial Revolution is the rise of social media” (Eric Qualman, 2012). Radio took 38 years to hit 50 million subscribers, TV took 14 years, the internet arrived in just four years, iPod in three, and Facebook in less than nine months. Social networking has risen to prominence as the most popular internet activity.

The social media platforms allow creation and sharing of ideas, information, entertainment and other forms of expression. People share their ideas, ideologies, pictures and videos, posts, activities, events, interests, and engage with each other by liking, commenting and sharing content. Social media, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), is “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.” Social media doesn’t just give you information but engages and interacts with you while providing that information; the interaction can be in the form of asking to like, share and comment, voting on a poll, taking part in a survey or as simple as asking your interests making social media a two-way street. The popularity and the rise of social media is because it gave freedom to the

users to express themselves freely to a larger audience. People love to express themselves and share their opinions. Social media evolved with time to serve multiple purposes like business promotion, connecting buyers and sellers via groups, marketplace, education, healthcare and even entertainment with the new Tik Tok or 'Reels' in Facebook and its associated platforms. Indians are rated as one of the most active social media users of the world.

After transforming many facets of our life, social media over the last decade became an important political tool. People discuss politics and express their political ideologies and even debate/ fight virtually over politics. Social media played a crucial part in the world politics via social activism and internet revolutions in the past. The change of political fabric in the Arab world, the ousting of the Philippines President Joseph Estrada in 2001, the US Presidential campaign of Barack Obama in 2008 are popular examples of impact of social media in world politics. Throwing light on the Indian political scenario, Indians are always open about political discussions and thus social media platforms have become a hub for politics. The 'Avaaz' campaign for the Anna Hazare's anti-corruption Lokpal Bill, the activism of student communities in the Telangana movement which led to the formation of the state, online political campaign of CM Naveen Patnaik in Orissa, BJP's social media usage in the central elections of 2014 are some popular examples in Indian politics. Irrespective of the platform and its primary feature of networking or sharing information, political discussion is everywhere. Facebook political discussion is in the form of posts, live webinars discussing politics, political groups, and invite to events. In twitter political tweets and hashtags are used. Instagram and YouTube facilitate more image and video sharing which facilitate political discussions and activism. Even the recent sensation Tik Tok has been used to share political beliefs and ideologies.

Initially, political parties used the internet as a one-way communication tool to inform the public through their websites. With the later emergence of social media and technology, communication patterns turned into a two-way path, making social media a more powerful political tool (Emruli & Bača, 2011). In the present scenario of the Indian political avenue, all the political parties and their candidates at various levels are active and involved in social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, personal websites and blogs. Political parties have realized the importance of social media and are making use of it alongside on-ground political activities. Political party pages, elected representatives, election commission, policy makers and the governments of different states keep showcasing their work on platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Party members and elected representatives often engage in a satirical jibe or a serious criticism on opposite parties and their cadre. Even the current Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann ki Baat', where he shares his thoughts on the All India Radio and DD Channel, are streamed live in YouTube and Facebook. There is increased political activity on social media before elections. There are online campaigns, showcasing manifestos and promises on social media, entry and exit polls by various media outlets and third-party organizations, the on-ground activities and telecasted live on social media and a lot of political discussion by the citizens.

Online activities related to politics are essential and act as a motivation for the younger generations to take part in political events (Quintelier & Vissers, 2008). The use of social media, the political information and knowledge, and political participation have an association with each other. This particular shift is playing a vital part in the elections of developing nations such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh etc. Internet and social media have proven to be critical tools for propagating political information (McAllister, 2015). On the contrary, this phenomenon also poses a threat to democracies as witnessed by European countries and also the US Presidential Elections 2016. As previously stated, social media is one of the largest sources of information for people; however, it also has a high potential for misinformation, propaganda and manipulating public views. Social media and the citizens' active participation can affect the political fabric of a nation. As it is often quoted that a tool is as good as its user, social media too is as good as its users; it amplifies the users' intent. Politics is associated with power and it is obvious that people tend to go to any length to get into power. A recent surge in the IT Cells, which are organizations in the mask of Pages/Groups/Individuals who help to amplify the effect of a political activity online, is observed. These IT Cells by different political parties trend disinformation and circulate fake news to politically influence the people and their opinions. The level of fake news in circulation and its impact on the citizens led to the coining of a new term called 'WhatsApp University', a satire on people who believe everything on social media without fact checking.

Though there is existing literature on the impact of social media on politics and various research talking on the effect of social media in Indian political scenario, this study aims to find the influence in the era of millennials and in a changing political environment since the BJP came to power in 2014. The objective of this study is to explore the relation between political social media activity (SMA), political efficacy (PE), and real-life political participation (RLPP). Additionally, it examines the awareness on IT Cells and also if people acknowledge the new voices in political discussion like Dhruv Rathee, Akash Banerjee, Wali Rahmani, Kumar Shyam, Swati Khanna etc. This study has both academic and practical importance; academically it is useful to understand the importance of social media as a political tool and practically might help with future political marketing.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The internet and social media facilitate political activities online with the help of posts, tweets, pages, groups, channels, events and engagement through like, comment and share. Bimber and Copeland (2011) pointed out the part played by social media and the political activity on these platforms and their influence on political efficacy and real-life political participation. Schulz's (2005) research showed that social media gave an opportunity for political discussions and that its users are active in political discourse. Social media has brought in more awareness on politics and also helped individuals develop interest on politics. Political social media activity has an effect on online and offline participation in politics and social media plays a role in influencing citizen's political beliefs and opinions. This strong relationship builds political efficacy as well as creates political interest in the users of social media increasing their involvement in politics, online and offline (Jiang, 2016). The internet and social media increased awareness on political campaigns and voting; social media has become a cause for political efficacy and real-life participation. Social media helps in political campaigning and also in voting; in fact, it has a positive effect on the voter's turnout during elections (Larson, 2004). The content on politics in social media gives new information and a better understanding of political affairs which

impacts the political efficacy of its users. Social media acted as a platform for information, communication and engagement with other users and as a tool to participate in political discussions and activities online (Kahne et al., 2014).

Social media, Facebook and twitter especially, have an impact on political efficacy of the users. Abdulrauf (2016) investigated cognitive engagement and political participation among youth in Nigeria and Malaysia and reported that political awareness increased political participation and involvement. Abdu, Mohamad and Muda (2017) studied the role of Facebook and its features providing an opportunity for political discussion and engagement and concluded that there exists a positive correlation between Facebook use and political participation. Though the relation between online political groups and knowledge on politics is limited, but there is a strong connection between online political groups and offline political participation (Conroye, Feezellb, & Guerreroc, 2012). Facebook posts by politicians calling for participation from individuals has an impact on the political efficacy and “has a positive impact on individuals with high external and collective efficacy traits and low cynicism traits” (Heiss and Matthes, 2016). Chan and Guo (2013) conducted research on the role of social media in political activities and found that social media increases political and civic engagement, especially in people who think they have limited understanding on political affairs and ability to participate.

Mahmud and Amin (2017) investigated the role of social media in political discussions and activities and reported that there is a relationship between online activity and offline political participation. On a similar note, Schmiemann (2015) studied the impact of social networking sites on political participation and found that political content on Facebook has a positive impact on political engagement and participation. Gibson and McAllister (2012) focused on online social ties and political discussions and engagement on social media platforms and concluded that social media platforms increase political interaction. Additionally, they found that online political interaction enhances real-life political participation. In the same research domain, Papagiannidis and Manika (2016) examined through different online and offline channels about the online engagement and political participation. The findings show that social media and different other online channels provide opportunity to individuals for involvement and expressing themselves freely. Like individual attitudes, digital media usage and offline political participation too varies.

The internet and social media add to the knowledge of people with respect to politics and thereby enhance political engagement and participation. The study on the internet, political engagement and participation, and the impact of information, discussions, and political campaigning online revealed that “online campaigning directly connects and engages internet users before and after elections” (Cantijoch, Cutts, & Gibson, 2012). Similar findings have been observed in case of political attitudes and engagement in individuals of Spain and the results reveal a significant difference between cognitive and effective components of attitude (De Marco et al., 2017). Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, and Verba (2012) examined the relation between social media and political engagement and reported that “39% of adults in the United States used social media and one out of every eight adults used social media for civic and political purposes.”

Social media brought in new trends of political communication that influenced real-life political participation. In addition to being used as a platform to build social relations, which is its primary purpose, social media is also used for political and other communication (Siluveru, 2015). There exists a strong relationship between politicians and users of social media and due to social networking sites interaction between politicians and voters has improved (Stieglitz et al., 2012). Biswas, Ingle, and Roy (2014) studied the impact of social media in the Indian political scenario and on voting behaviour of the citizens and concluded that social media unites individuals within political parties. “Activists used social media for a collective action” (Storck, 2011). Voters response to politicians’ personal content is higher than the response to their professional content, was revealed from the study of social media use to influence constituent perceptions (Hellweg, 2011). Kalsnes (2016) too spoke about Facebook being a facilitator for dialogue between political parties and voters which brought in enhanced political engagement. Social media is widely used for interaction between political candidates and voters, revealed from the study on social network systems as a tool for political change (Raouf et al., 2013). The political content and information on social media contribute to political education of its users and mobilize them in politics (Doris, 2014).

Political participation on social media is at its pinnacle point during elections. Rustad and Sæbø (2013) deduced that politicians also use social media to maintain a connect with citizens and update their manifestos, promises, agendas and activities. Borah (2014) examined the usage of Facebook during the Presidential campaign and reported that “the posts promoting the candidate increased political participation in individuals whose party affiliation is congruent with the post.” Mr Obama’s presidential campaign in 2012 made use of Facebook for promotion and to push Obama’s personality as a strategy (Gerodimos and Justinussen, 2014).

There is extensive amount of literature discussing impact of social media on politics, as discussed above, but these are mostly from developed countries. This study throws light on the political fabric in a developing country like India and how social media acts as a catalyst and influences political beliefs and opinions of the citizens. With highly increased political participation from all stakeholders like politicians, political parties, governments, policy makers, election commission and voters since 2014, the dynamics of political influence on people is changing rapidly and this study adds insights relevant to these times.

III. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to determine the relation between social media activity (SMA), political efficacy (PE), and real-life political participation (RLPP), thereby understanding the role and impact of social media on politics in India.

- To determine the relationship between Social Media Activity (SMA) and Political Efficacy (PE).
- To determine the relationship between Social Media Activity (SMA) and Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP).
- Political Efficacy (PE) and Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP) have an association with each other.

IV. HYPOTHESES

Based on the presented literature and the objectives of the study mentioned, the following are the hypothesis (to be tested at a significance level of 0.05) :

Hypothesis 1 (H1) – Social Media Activity (SMA) has a significant relationship and has a positive effect on Political Efficacy (PE).

Hypothesis 2 (H2) - Social Media Activity (SMA) has a significant relationship and has a positive effect on Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP).

Hypothesis 3 (H3) – There exists a significant correlation between Political Efficacy (PE) and Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP).

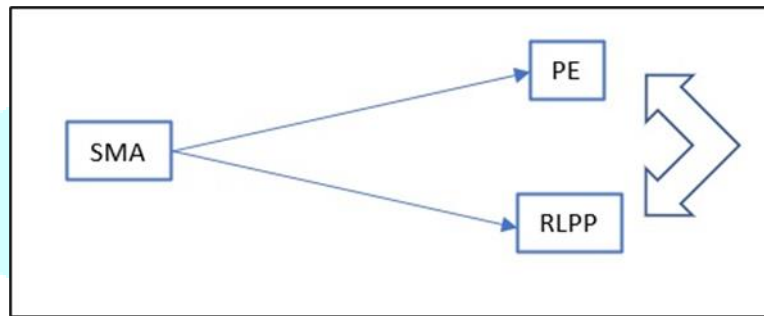


Figure 1 : Relationship Model developed from Hypotheses

V. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a causal research methodology, i.e., if the participation and engagement of users in online political posts has an effect on political efficacy and real-life political participation of the citizens. These parameters are taken as variables to determine the impact of social media on politics in India. Social Media Activity (SMA) includes (a) following political pages, politicians, campaigns and discussions, (b) liking, commenting, sharing political content, (c) posting personal political beliefs online (d) discussing or debating or arguing about politics on social media. This political activity is considered from different social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp. According to Political Science, Political Efficacy (PE) is the trust factor of the citizens of a country in their ability to change the government and the belief that they comprehend and can influence political affairs. Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP) equates to contacting a government official or a politician, directly or indirectly working for a political party, watching or attending political meetings, signing a petition for political causes, displaying symbols of parties and boycotting a product for politically motivated reasons. These factors taken for the purpose of this research are inspired from the work of Ahmad, T., Alvi, A., & Ittefaq, M. (2019).

In this study, a random sample size (N=300) has been obtained via an online survey with the help of Google Forms. This survey was distributed to people from different ages and different walks of life. With the help of e-mail, WhatsApp and Facebook, responses were received from 300 individuals. One major limitation is the age factor; more responses were obtained from younger people because of the author's network compared to older aged respondents. Another limitation is that the respondents are majorly from these states: Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal. In the survey, the questionnaire (refer to Appendix) is designed with close-ended questions, majorly with the 5-point Likert Scale (Summated Rating Scale) options like 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree or another model like 5 = Always, 4 = often, 3 = Sometimes, 2 = Rarely, and 1 = Never. The reason for using a Likert scale is because it can be considered as an interval scale (continuous variable) during analysis though it actually is an ordinal measure (categorical variable). In this paper, Social Media Activity (SMA) is considered as the independent variable and Political Efficacy (PE) and Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP) are considered as dependent variables. The Zaheer scale (2016) was used to measure the online political activity, political efficacy, and political participation. The assumptions or the alternative hypothesis is that social media activity has a significant relation and positive effect on political efficacy and political participation.

After the data collection via survey questionnaire, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software by IBM was used to perform relevant analysis. Initially, Factor Analysis was performed to check for sampling adequacy followed by Descriptive Statistics to draw insights and also find errors and inconsistencies, which aligned with our limitations. One-way ANOVA test was performed between some categorical and scale variables. Regression analysis and correlation were performed to test the hypotheses.

VI. DATA

From the random sample (N=300) obtained, several descriptive statistics were performed to understand the respondents.

6.1 Gender

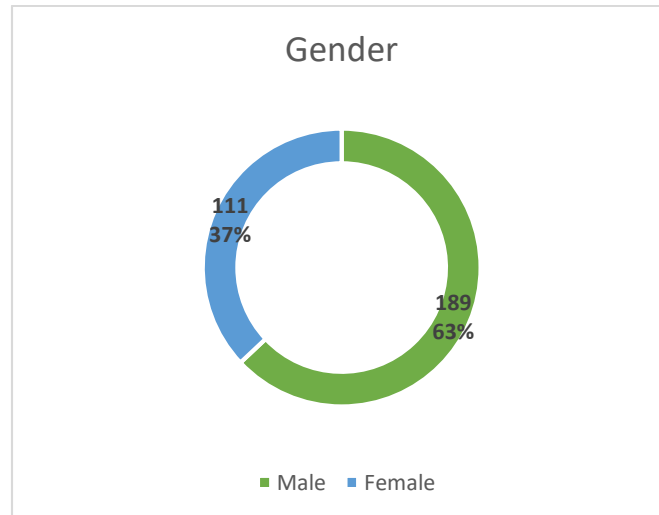


Figure 2 : Gender demographics from the sample

Of the 300 respondents, 189 are Male which is about 63% and 111 are Female which is about 37%. The initial assumption before the survey was that it would be taken by much lesser females (about 10%), that women in India are not active in politics and distance themselves from political discussions or feedback. But 37% is comparatively bigger and is against the initial assumption made.

6.2 Age

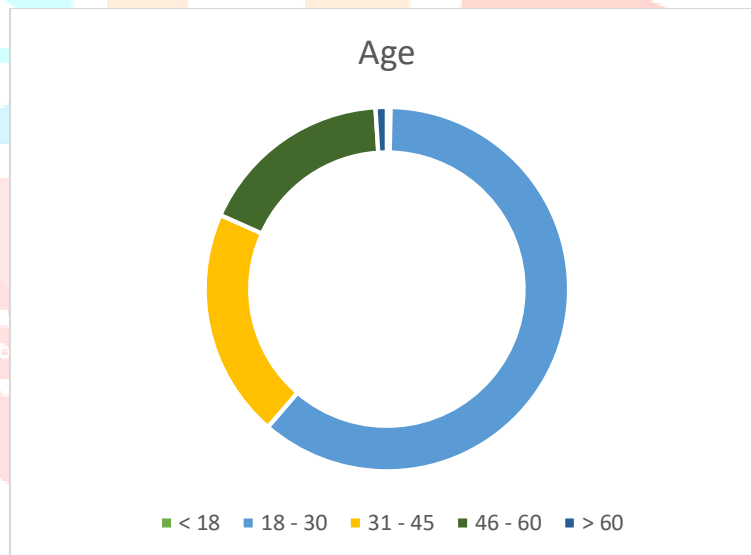


Figure 3 : Age demographics from the sample

As discussed under limitations in the methodology section, age factor is one of the limitations as more respondents are of younger age. Only 1 respondent is a minor and just 3 respondents above the age of 60 answered the survey. 183 respondents (61%) are of the age 18 to 30, 61 respondents (20%) are of the age 31 to 45 and 52 respondents (17%) are from the age bracket of 46 to 60. The mean age of all the respondents is 32 years.

6.3 Education Level

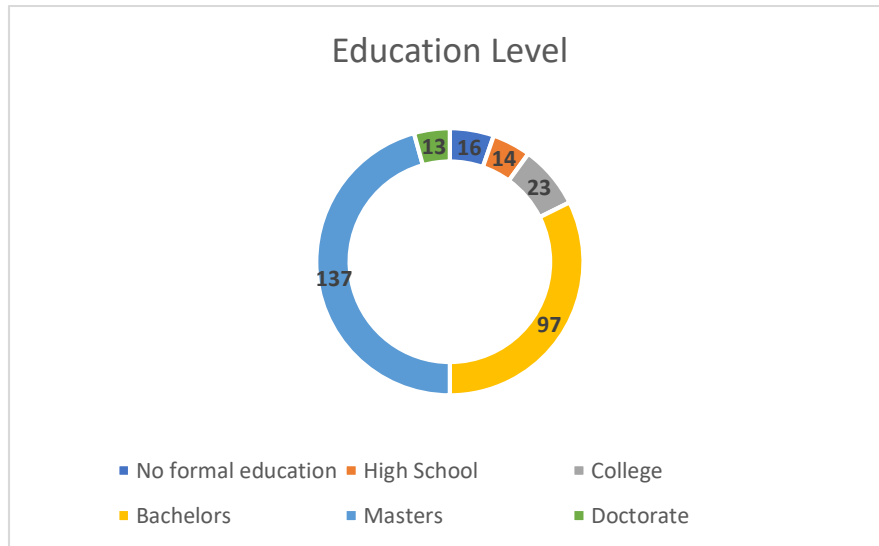


Figure 4 : Education level demographics from the sample

The education level is questioned to analyze if there exists any significant association between the level of education of an individual and the social media activity, political efficacy and real-life political participation. A majority of the respondents hold a master's degree (46%) followed by the people with a bachelor's degree (32%). 13 respondents (around 4%) out of the 300 hold a doctorate degree. Around 8% of the respondents have completed their college followed by 4% who have completed high school. The respondents also have people without a formal education that constitute about 4% of the 300-sample taken.

6.4 Occupation

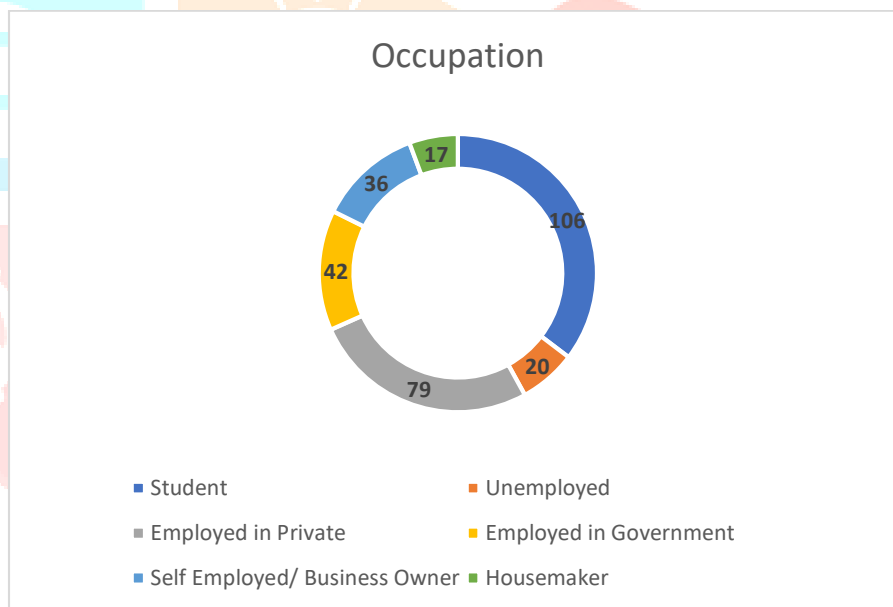


Figure 5 : Occupation demographics from the sample

Occupation of the respondents is noted to analyze if there is a significant association between the occupation of an individual and the social media activity, political efficacy and real-life participation. 106 respondents who constitute 35% of the sample are students. 26%, i.e., 79 respondents are employed in private companies, while 14%, i.e., 42 respondents are employed in government organizations. Around 12% of the respondents are self-employed or own a business followed by 7% unemployed respondents and 6% homemakers.

VII. RESULTS

7.1 Factor Analysis – KMO and Bartlett's Test

In the survey questionnaire (refer to Appendix), questions were asked on the three variables, Social Media Activity (SMA), Political Efficacy (PE) and Real-Life Political participation (RLPP). But the question is, do these questions fall into the same dimension, so that we can determine a mean and name the variable to test further hypothesis.

Table 1 : KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.881
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3971.496
	df	325
	Sig.	.000

All the responses collected for various questions were imported into SPSS and coded accordingly. The Factor Analysis was performed to check the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to indicate if factor analysis is significant with the responses. From the table, the KMO value 0.881 says that the sampling is adequate, and the data collected is meritorious. The significance value (0.000) obtained in the Bartlett's Test indicates that the factor analysis is useful with the data. Also, in the Rotated Component Matrix, questions asked under the three variables to be tested fall into related dimension thereby allowing to compute a mean to test the hypotheses further.

7.2 Political Content on Social Media

Table 2.1 : Political Content Statistics

Statistics		
How much of what you see on social media is related to politics?		
N	Valid	300
	Missing	0
Mean		6.50
Median		7.00
Mode		5

Table 2.2 : Political Content Frequencies

How much of what you see on social media is related to politics?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0%	3	1.0	1.0	1.0
	10%	5	1.7	1.7	2.7
	20%	12	4.0	4.0	6.7
	30%	12	4.0	4.0	10.7
	40%	19	6.3	6.3	17.0
	50%	56	18.7	18.7	35.7
	60%	40	13.3	13.3	49.0
	70%	49	16.3	16.3	65.3
	80%	29	9.7	9.7	75.0
	90%	37	12.3	12.3	87.3
	100%	38	12.7	12.7	100.0
Total		300	100.0	100.0	

From the statistics above, about 65% of content on social media platforms is related to politics. The median value of political content on social media from the respondents is 70% while for most respondents at least 50% of the content they see on social media on a daily basis is political content.

7.3 Political Parties and Social Media Usage

Table 3.1 : Political Parties and Social Media Usage Statistics

Statistics		
Do you think political parties have realized the importance of social media and are making use of it alongside on-ground political activities?		
N	Valid	300
	Missing	0
Mean		4.17
Median		5.00
Mode		5

Table 3.2 : Political Parties and Social Media Usage Frequencies

Do you think political parties have realized the importance of social media and are making use of it alongside on-ground political activities?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Disagree	18	6.0	6.0	8.0
	Neutral	49	16.3	16.3	24.3
	Agree	73	24.3	24.3	48.7
	Strongly Agree	154	51.3	51.3	100.0
Total		300	100.0	100.0	

A question was posed if people think that political parties have realized the importance of social media and are making use of it alongside the regular on-ground activities. With the mean being 4.17 from the above statistics, most respondents tend to agreeing the same.

7.4 Elections and Social Media Activity

Table 4.1 : Election Time Activity Statistics

Statistics		
Do you agree that there is increased political activity in social media during elections?		
N	Valid	300
	Missing	0
Mean		4.37
Median		5.00
Mode		5

Table 4.2 : Election time online activity Frequencies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	1.7	1.7	1.7
	Disagree	11	3.7	3.7	5.3
	Neutral	25	8.3	8.3	13.7
	Agree	86	28.7	28.7	42.3
	Strongly Agree	173	57.7	57.7	100.0
Total		300	100.0	100.0	

The above statistics throw light on the political activity in social media during elections (local/state/centre). From the mean obtained (4.37), most respondents tend to agree that there is increased political activity online in the election period. In fact, popular media houses have taken multiple polls resembling the entry-exit polls style on their official pages. All the stakeholders, Political Parties, Politicians, current Government and its Opposition, Election Commission, Policy Makers and Voters contribute to the political content online and this is amplified during elections.

7.5 IT Cells on Social Media

Table 5.1 : IT Cell on Social Media Statistics

Statistics		
Are you aware or do you acknowledge the presence of "IT Cells" by political parties in social media?		
N	Valid	300
	Missing	0
Mean		1.52
Median		1.00
Mode		1

Table 5.2 : IT Cells presence on Social Media Frequencies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	194	64.7	64.7	64.7
	No	56	18.7	18.7	83.3
	Maybe	50	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

IT Cells are organizations in the mask of Pages or Groups or Individuals who help to amplify the effect of a political activity online. These days these IT Cells have become a challenge for the social media platforms as lot of fake news and propaganda is in circulation, which benefits a particular political party or politician to gain mileage in politics. Stats show that most people agree the presence of IT Cells by political parties in social media.

7.6 New Voices in Political Discussion

Table 6.1 : New Voices in Political Discussion Statistics

Statistics		
Do you think social media has helped bring new voices into the political discussion?		
N	Valid	300
	Missing	0
Mean		3.92
Median		4.00
Mode		4

Table 6.2 : New Voices in Political Discussion Frequencies

Do you think social media has helped bring new voices into the political discussion?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Disagree	17	5.7	5.7	8.3
	Neutral	61	20.3	20.3	28.7
	Agree	119	39.7	39.7	68.3
	Strongly Agree	95	31.7	31.7	100.0
Total		300	100.0	100.0	

There have been many new voices in the political discussions online like Dhruv Rathee, Akash Banerjee, Wali Rahmani, Kumar Shyam, Swati Khanna etc, who are active political participants in the social media with respect to Indian political landscape. A question was posed to the respondents if they think social media has helped bring in these new voices into political discussion and most of them tend to agree with the same.

7.7 Education Level vs Testing Variables

A one-way ANOVA is performed on Education Level as the independent variable (Categorical) and the testing variables from the hypothesis model, Social Media Activity (SMA), Political Efficacy (PE) and Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP) as the dependent variables (Continuous). This is to check if different education level groups behave/act/perceive differently w.r.t. the dependent variables.

Table 7 : ANOVA Table – Education Level vs Testing variables

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social Media Activity	Between Groups	9.780	5	1.956	1.693	.136
	Within Groups	339.729	294	1.156		
	Total	349.509	299			
Real-Life Political Participation	Between Groups	17.657	5	3.531	4.813	.000
	Within Groups	215.729	294	.734		
	Total	233.386	299			
Political Efficacy	Between Groups	2.056	5	.411	.515	.765
	Within Groups	234.763	294	.799		
	Total	236.819	299			

From the table, there exists a statistically significant difference between the Education Level group means with respect to Real Life Political Participation (RLPP) as the p-value obtained is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. While the scenario is different with the other two variables Social Media Activity and Political Efficacy where the significance value is greater than 0.05 indicating that there is no difference in the social media activity or the perception of its influence on politics within different Education Level groups.

7.8 Occupation vs Testing Variables

A one-way ANOVA is performed on Occupation as the independent variable (Categorical) and the testing variables from the hypothesis model, Social Media Activity (SMA), Political Efficacy (PE) and Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP) as the dependent variables (Continuous). This is to check if different occupational groups behave/act/perceive differently w.r.t. the dependent variables.

Table 8 : ANOVA Table – Occupation vs Testing variables

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social Media Activity	Between Groups	34.912	5	6.982	6.525	.000
	Within Groups	314.597	294	1.070		
	Total	349.509	299			
Real-Life Political Participation	Between Groups	24.498	5	4.900	6.896	.000
	Within Groups	208.888	294	.711		
	Total	233.386	299			
Political Efficacy	Between Groups	17.917	5	3.583	4.813	.000
	Within Groups	218.902	294	.745		
	Total	236.819	299			

From the table, there exists a statistically significant difference between the Occupation group means with respect to all the three testing variables Social Media Activity (SMA), Political Efficacy (PE) and Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP). The p-value obtained in all three cases is 0.000, which is less than 0.05.

7.9 Hypotheses Testing

7.9.1 Hypothesis 1

To test whether the political Social Media Activity (SMA) has a significant relationship and positively effects Political Efficacy (PE). Political social media activity is content generation, participation and engagement in political content on social media. Political efficacy is an individual's belief that they understand and can influence politics, the scale for which is borrowed from Niemi, Craig, and Franco (1991) and modified. Likert scale is used in the survey for both the variables, in a different format, while the Always to Never 5-point scale is used for social media activity, the Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree 5-point scale is used for political efficacy. Additionally, the Factor Analysis too grouped the questions into respective variables which helped in calculating the mean of them to arrive at the standard variable to test the hypothesis.

In the linear regression analysis, the assumptions are tested alongside to check for the normality, linearity, multi-collinearity, independence and homoscedasticity, which hold good to proceed with regression.

Table 9.1.1 : H1 Model Summary

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.519 ^a	.269	.267	.76203

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Activity
b. Dependent Variable: Political Efficacy

Table 9.1.2 : H1 ANOVA TABLE

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	63.772	1	63.772	109.820	.000 ^b
	Residual	173.047	298	.581		
	Total	236.819	299			

a. Dependent Variable: Political Efficacy
b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Activity

From the above tables, the R value which indicates the simple correlation is 0.519 (moderate positive relationship). The R-square value is 0.269, i.e., 26.9% variance in Political Efficacy (PE) can be predicted from Social Media Activity (SMA). As the p-value in the ANOVA table is 0.000 (less than 0.05), this regression model significantly predicts the dependent variable Political Efficacy (PE).

Table 9.1.3 : H1 Coefficients Table

		Coefficients^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.452	.136		18.076	.000		
	Social Media Activity	.427	.041	.519	10.480	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Political Efficacy

As the p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, there exists a significant relationship between the variables Social Media Activity (SMA) and Political Efficacy (PE). Also, the independent variable SMA positively effects the dependent variable PE. The regression equation is -

$$PE = 2.452 + 0.427 (SMA)$$

Therefore, the findings support the Hypothesis 1 (H1).

7.9.2 Hypothesis 2

To test whether the political Social Media Activity (SMA) has a significant relationship and positively effects Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP). Attending or watching meetings, contacting politicians, displaying symbols, signing a petition, boycotting a product for political reasons and political arguments are considered under real life political participation; measured with the help of scale by Cao (2008), which is modified to suit audience in this country. A forced 4-point Likert scale is used to measure the dependent variable RLPP, demanding the respondent to form an opinion without the safe 'neutral' option. The Factor Analysis grouped questions on RLPP into single dimension facilitating to compute a mean of the questions to arrive at a single variable.

In the linear regression analysis, the assumptions are tested alongside to check for the normality, linearity, multi-collinearity, independence and homoscedasticity, which hold good to proceed with regression.

Table 9.2.1 : H2 Model Summary

Model Summary^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.703 ^a	.494	.492	.62944

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Activity
b. Dependent Variable: Real-Life Political Participation

Table 9.2.2 : H2 ANOVA Table

ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	115.320	1	115.320	291.071	.000 ^b
	Residual	118.066	298	.396		
	Total	233.386	299			

a. Dependent Variable: Real-Life Political Participation
b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Activity

From the above tables, the R value which indicates the simple correlation is 0.703 (fairly strong positive relationship). The R-square value is 0.494, i.e., 49.4% variance in Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP) can be predicted from Social Media Activity (SMA). As the p-value in the ANOVA table is 0.000 (less than 0.05), this regression model significantly predicts the dependent variable Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP).

Table 9.2.3 : H2 Coefficients Table

Model		Coefficients ^a				Collinearity Statistics		
		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.415	.112		3.700	.000		
	Social Media Activity	.574	.034	.703	17.061	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Real-Life Political Participation

As the p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, there exists a significant relationship between the variables Social Media Activity (SMA) and Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP). Also, the independent variable SMA positively effects the dependent variable RLPP. The regression equation is -

$$RLPP = 0.415 + 0.574 (SMA)$$

Therefore, the findings support the Hypothesis 2 (H2).

7.9.3 Hypothesis 3

To test whether there exists a significant relationship between the variables Political Efficacy (PE) and Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP). The Pearson product-moment correlation is run on the continuous variables to test and determine the relationship.

Table 9.3 : PE vs RLPP Correlation Matrix

		Political Efficacy	Real-Life Political Participation
Political Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.428**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Real-Life Political Participation	Pearson Correlation	.428**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the table, as the p-value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance, there exists a statistically significant relationship between Political Efficacy (PE) and Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP). The correlation coefficient $r = 0.428$ indicating a moderate positive relationship between the variables.

Therefore, the findings support the Hypothesis 3 (H3).

VIII. CONCLUSION

Based on the research discussed and the findings above, it is established that social media has played a vital role in politics and will continue to do so in a much-amplified manner once political parties deduce the key to influence political beliefs of social media users. The results obtained conclude that political Social Media Activity (SMA) has a significant relationship and positively effects Political Efficacy (PE). Similarly, it also has a significant relationship and positively effects Real-Life Political Participation (RLPP). There also exists a moderate positive correlation between Political Efficacy (PE) and Real-Life Political Participation.

Indians got habituated to the newfound luxury of internet and social media and spend most of their time online. Like every other business out there, politicians and their parties as an entity are making their presence felt online and in fact making use of these platforms to influence people's minds and political opinions. Politicians have adapted to the changes brought in by these social media platforms and also make their presence felt in any new networking applications garnering mass attention from citizens.

One positive factor is that social media is making its users more politically aware. There is an increase in the time spent online to analyze and discuss politics. Additionally, social media also paves a path to form an opinion of the political events, decision and policy making and other political activities. But the negative side of it is that the social media can be abused to influence its users. We have IT cells amplifying political content and trending misinformation and propaganda which is acknowledged by the respondents. As quoted earlier, social media is as good as its user. Irrespective of how politicians use social media in their online political activities, it will continue to play a prime role in politics because of its large user base and its hold on them.

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APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire

The below is the survey questionnaire collected made with the help of Google Forms. This was circulated to people of different ages from different walks of life. This yielded 300 responses on which the above analyses were performed to test the hypotheses.

- 1) What is your Gender?
- 2) What is your Age?
- 3) Choose your Education level.
- 4) Choose your Occupation.
- 5) Are you on Social Media/ Social Networking sites?
- 6) Are you aware or do you acknowledge the presence of politics (political pages, politicians, political campaigns) in Social Media?
- 7) How much of what you see on social media is related to politics?
- 8) Do you think political parties have realized the importance of social media and are making use of it alongside on-ground political activities?
- 9) Do you agree that there is increased political activity in social media during elections?
- 10) Do you think social media has helped bring new voices into the political discussion? (Like Dhruv Rathee, Akash Banerjee, Wali Rahmani, Kumar Shyam, Swati Khanna etc)
- 11) Are you aware or do you acknowledge the presence of "IT Cells" by political parties in social media?
- 12.1) Do you follow political pages/politicians/campaigns online?
- 12.2) Do people in your circle follow political pages/politicians/campaigns in social media?
- 12.3) Do you engage/participate in political posts? (Like, Comment, Share, Discuss)
- 12.4) Do people in your circle engage/participate in political posts? (Like, Comment, Share, Discuss)
- 12.5) Have you ever posted your political beliefs online?
- 13.1) Have you contacted a politician, government official, local councillor?
- 13.2) Did you directly or indirectly (via another organization) work for a political party?
- 13.3) Did you watch or attend a political meeting?
- 13.4) Have you signed a petition(online/offline) for a social/political cause?
- 13.5) Did you boycott a product for political or ethical reasons?
- 13.6) Have you displayed a sticker, used a party symbol or any other support for a candidate/party?
- 13.7) Did you discuss/argue politics with someone?
- 14.1) I think I have a better understanding of the important political issues in India.
- 14.2) I consider myself qualified to participate in politics.
- 14.3) I feel I can do a better job than most others holding a position in public office.

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