To Study Influence Of Social Media On Young Voters In Pune

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Abstract:

Widespread belief in misinformation circulating online is a critical challenge for modern societies. This project is study of influence of social media on young voters in Pune. Aim of this project is to analyze understanding of media literacy among the youth as their main source of information; news is social media because it is more convenient and have easy access to internet. To make them understand importance of right to vote and value of their vote as it is not only about simple voting it's about making informed choice.

Keywords: Youth, Media Literacy, Social Media

Purpose of study:

To identify understanding of youth about concept of media literacy and how well informed they are before casting the vote.

Significance of study:

Few people are prepared to effectively navigate the online information environment. This global deficit in digital media literacy has been identified as a critical factor explaining widespread belief in online misinformation However; this study will help to identify the digital media literacy and people's ability to distinguish between low- and high-quality news online. Result or study of this project could be effective in fighting misinformation around the youth.

Introduction:

India has its largest ever adolescent and youth population. According to UNFPA projections, India will continue to have one of the youngest populations in the world till 2030. We all know that India is a democratic country. Today, India has the largest number of youths. A youth group is a class that consists of people from 14 years to 40 years of age.

Today India has the largest number of people of this age group in the country. This is a class that is most powerful physically and mentally. Those who take effort for the development of the country and their families. The backbone of India is the youth. The youth play the main role to make the country. The future of any country becomes beautiful by the youth of the country. As per a report by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), of the approximately 4,000–5,000 crore total advertisement and publicity spent in 2014 Indian Parliament elections, the digital platforms can expect to garner at least 400–500 crore. The target audience is predictably the youth, many of them first-time voters.

The power to vote for your country is an important part of a democratic country like India. While many in our country are eligible to cast a vote, few are enthusiastic about it. In the 2019 Lok Sabha

elections, the voter turnout was 67.11% which is the highest turnout in the history of India. With every election, there has been a positive increase in voter turnout. Such an increase in voting is a positive welcome, as each and every vote counts for a better future of our country. The law does not require citizens to vote, but voting is a very important part of any democracy. By voting, citizens are participating in the democratic process. Citizens vote for leaders to represent them and their ideas, and the leaders support the citizens' interests.

Digital media is all around us. Nearly every message is created or distributed using digital technology. On a positive note, this means it's now easier than ever for many people to access important information. However, at the same time, the rapid spread of misinformation threatens our democracy. Being able to navigate these digital media challenges is fundamental to being a well-informed member of society. Digital media literacy is the ability to access, analyse, create and use digital media. This includes everything from knowing how to find credible information online to being able to communicate using digital media. A few examples of digital media literacy include knowing how to use digital media technology, spot misinformation, create digital content and evaluate the social, cultural and historical impact of media. Digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills. India is one of the youngest nations in the world, and the first-time voter has strong opinions to express at the polls.

According to economics times, a survey conducted by a digital marketing company has claimed that nearly one-third of first-time voters were influenced by political messages on social media platforms in the general elections. As many as half of around 15-crore first-time voters received political messages through various social media platforms, said the report based on an online survey of around 25 lakh participants.

Political movement on social media was higher in 2019 Lok Sabha elections than in 2014, the report by ADG Online said."30 percent of 150 million first-time voters are engaged and influenced through social media platforms, political messages have reached out to 50 per cent of first-time voters through social media and the remaining 20 per cent are aware of the developments in the country," the report said.

Social media messages have a greater influence on youths, the report said, adding that more than 50 percent of voters influenced by social media are less than 25 years of age. As per the survey report, around 40 percent of youths (18-24 years) kept themselves updated about the political developments through at least one of the five social media platforms - Facebook, Instagram, Share Chat, WhatsApp and Twitter. The very nature of social media helped in amplifying engagement through comments, online interactions, trolls, posts, pictures showing support.

Anuj Sayal, Group Chairman, ADG Online, said, "Political parties have used big data analytics techniques for increasing mass outreach and conveying their key messages for the general elections."An expert said social media has served as the most important source of information for political developments, surpassing other mediums.

I think after covid –19, specifically youth became more aware about the false news and propaganda of different political parties during the election period. Initially people who worked in different media houses, experts and media students were the only ones who were completely aware of these political propagandas and used false news or spreading disinformation with purpose. But covid – 19 helped a lot of people to learn about digital media, its use and power and also consequences.

Today in the politics of India, only the elderly is dominated and only a few young people are in politics. One of the reasons for this is that the political atmosphere in India is deteriorating day by day and true politicians have been replaced by people greedy for power and wealth. In politics, the feeling of patriotism has been replaced by feminism, castes and sect. The way the tales of corruption of politicians are coming out every day, indifference towards politics is increasing among the youth of the country.

Even a youth who votes in India does not trust his / her chosen candidate. The youth will have to expand their thinking beyond communalism and politics. The youth will have to move forward in this matter. And in any such emotion, youth have to make decisions by thinking rather than drifting.

The relationship between politics and the mass media is closely related for the reason that media is a source in shaping public opinion and political beliefs. As a result, political figures and parties are particularly sensitive towards their media presence and the media coverage of their public appearances.

Review of Literature

According to global statistics, Indian population has taken to social media like ducks to water. Indians, on average, spend about 2.36 hours on social media daily. In India, the number of social media users will be growing in 2022 at a steady rate of 467 million due to deep penetration of internet connectivity among people. The number of Internet users in India has grown to a whopping 658 million, which is roughly 47% of the total population of India. Now, social media has become one of the most essential parts of daily internet usage in India.

Media is a broader term, and encompasses many different forms. Media is any communication outlet used to distribute information, entertainment and data. It is the method by which messages are distributed to an audience. When referred to as 'mass media' this is in relation to forms of media that can reach mass audiences in a short amount of time such as newspapers and television, social media platforms, etc. Media literacy is the ability to understand information that is presented to us and respond appropriately. We need to make a conscious effort to understand who generates and presents the information in which form. It also includes understanding relations between presenter, distributor and their associates. Media message and media impact are the pillars of term media literacy. Many of us shape our opinions based on media, stay connected with friends and family via media, and educate ourselves using media. Hence there's no doubt that the media influences our lives in many different ways. Despite many positives, there are many risks and issues within the world of media like fake news, Media bias, mental health concerns as well as access to media and the internet. Without cautiousness and care, these risks can make media consumption potentially problematic. Media literacy allows us to question the intent of the media and protect ourselves from any negative impacts of media.

Fresh readers say that the media has the power to showcase both the facets of a piece of information; it should work towards helping the common man to understand the difference between the real news and the fake news. Media has a strong hold on society. It can do more than just spread the news. It can influence public opinion also. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the media and the media personnel to ensure that they direct their efforts towards bringing forward the truth and only the truth.

In accordance with University of Michigan library Fake news is the news stories that are false: the story itself is fabricated, with no verifiable facts, sources or quotes. Sometimes these stories may be propaganda that is intentionally designed to mislead the reader. Misinformation is false or inaccurate information that is mistakenly or inadvertently created or spread; the intent is not to deceive. Disinformation is false information that is deliberately created and spread in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth. Fake news can be generated with different purposes or might have some reasons behind this like someone wanting to make money, regardless of the content of the article; Partisans who want to influence political beliefs and policy makers, Poor or untrained journalists.

In consonance with Aditi Someshwara900 million eligible voters, 45 million voters under the age of 25, 15 million first time voters. This is the pool of Indian citizens electing the next generation of leaders. With such a large number of young voters, they could potentially be game changers in future elections.

India, with the world's largest youth population, is soon to become the youngest country in the world with an average age of 29, along with an ever-increasing workforce, set to be 64% of the population by 2020. Not only does this indicate the specific demographic which is going to be most impacted by economic turbulence, but it also highlights the population which should care the most about their

vote. Hence, there have been increased efforts from innumerable political parties and organizations in mobilizing youth votes, as their vote matters most. The youth must vote to protect their fundamental rights, to celebrate democracy and to make their concerns heard. In order to solve problems common amongst youth, it is essential for them to understand their responsibility towards the country in voting. However, there is a difference between simply voting and making an informed choice. Voting for the sake of voting degrades the value of the vote and counteracts efforts to form strong, stable and moral governments.

It is important to understand where first-time voters obtain information about politics in an election campaign. Young adults use social media for a number of purposes. The possibility to personalize the news diet on these platforms can lead to a narrower information diet, while inadvertent exposure to information from their network might broaden their horizon. A few studies have investigated the use of social media as a source of political information in an election campaign. However, it is unclear how successful political actors are when it comes to appearing in a curated news diet of first-time voters, who might find this personal and accessible connection to political actors convenient but may not want to be bothered by a candidate running for parliament (Ohme, J. 2019).

Objective:
1. To find and make awareness about media literacy in youngsters.
2. To identify the source of information of young voters.
3. To make young voters aware about difference between simple voting and making informed choice.

Hypothesis:
Social media does not influence young voters during election in Pune district.

Research Methodology:
Quantitative research methodology is used to conduct this investigation.
- Sample size: 50
- Sample area: Pune, Maharashtra, India
- Sample group: Youth voters
- Sample age: 18 and above

Research questionnaire:
1. **Do you think voting is important?**
   - Yes
   - No
2. **Have you voted before?**
   - Yes
   - No/ First time voter
3. **From where do you get the information about candidate/ political party?**
   - Social media
   - Elders/ friends
   - Newspaper/ TV
   - Other
4. **Do you think youth participation is important for strengthening democracy?**
   - Yes
   - No
   - May be
5. **Do you cross check news/ facts present n social media?**
   - Yes

> ➢ No
> ➢ Sometimes

6. Do you know how social media houses work?
   > ➢ Yes
   > ➢ No
   > ➢ Have rough idea but not in detail

7. Have you heard of media literacy?
   > ➢ Yes
   > ➢ No

8. What is important to you?
   > ➢ Simple voting
   > ➢ Informed choice

9. Do you know how social media ads work?
   > ➢ Yes
   > ➢ No

10. What is reason behind youth not participating in politics?

Data analysis:

According to survey conducted by researcher, many people know voting is important but they are not aware about the value of their participation in this democratic process. 50 participants participated in this survey. Sample group is youth voters. It is not restricted to first time votes, it's for overall youth. Because there are many voters who have experienced voting but they are not completely aware or informed voters. This survey is conducted to understand authentic source of information, how they consumed information and from where too.

Do you think voting is important?
50 responses
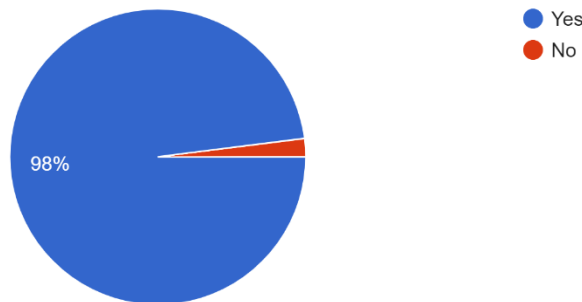
The researcher asked participants about importance of voting, 49(98%) participants said that it is important to vote but 1(2%) participant said it's not important which indicate there is no complete awareness about right to vote. There are people who do not understand the value of their vote.

Have you voted before?

50 responses

- Yes
- No/ first time voter

28%

72%
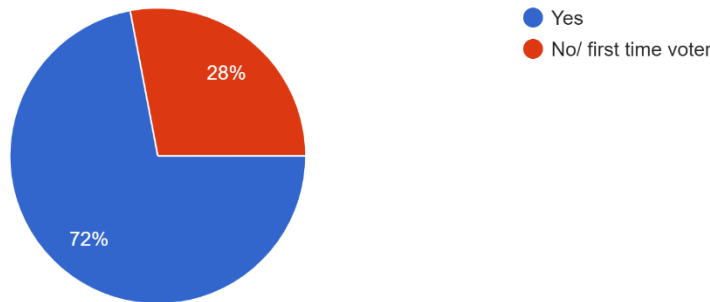
Further researcher asked participants about do they have voting experience or not. So that we can analyze even after having experience, how much they are informed voter or have value of their voting right. 36 (72%) participants have voting experience whereas 14 (28%) voters are first time voters and do not have voting experience.

From where do you get the information about candidate/ political party?

50 responses

- Social media
- Elders/friends
- News paper/ TV
- Other

46%

6%

18%

30%
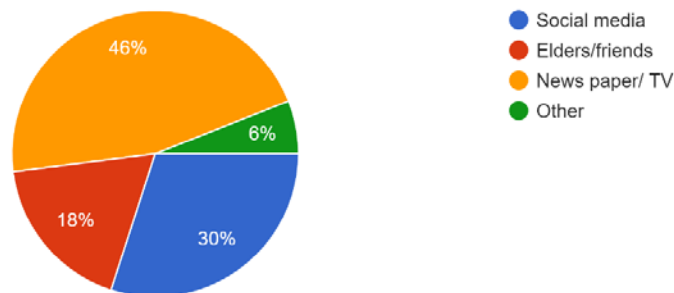
Researcher asked about voters' authentic source of information about the candidate or political party they are going to vote for. Here result says that 23 (46%) voters depend on newspapers or TV, 15 (30%) are go for social media, 9 (18%) trust their elders or friends as authentic source of information. And 3 (6%) voters depend on other sources.

Do you think youth participation is important for strengthening democracy?

50 responses

- Yes
- No
- May be

94%

6%
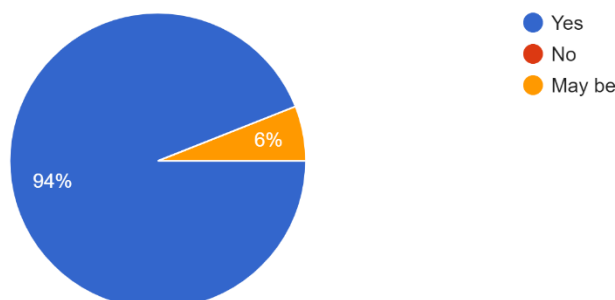
Later in this survey, researcher asked about do they think whether youth participation is really important for strengthening democracy or not. 47 (94%) participants agreed with that but 3(6%) participants were unsure about that which indicates that there is more need of awareness of value of voting right and participation.

Do you cross check facts/ news present on social media?
50 responses
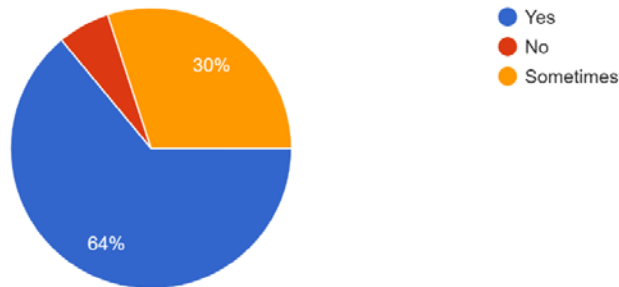
Further researcher asked about whether they cross check facts or news present on social media. Survey says that 32(64%) voters cross check facts/ news, 15(30%) votes check sometimes cross check which means sometimes but otherwise they trust that news. And the other 3(6%) do not cross check facts or news at all.

Do you know how media houses work?
50 responses
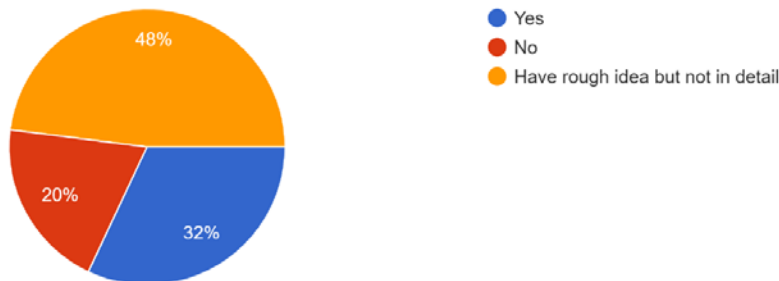
Further researcher asked participants if they are aware about work process of media houses. 28(48%) people are not completely aware about work process or practices of media houses, 16(32%) are completely aware about the process, 10(20%). Which means if people who are not completely aware about the process are trusting any news channel or newspaper they can manipulate their readers/ viewers.

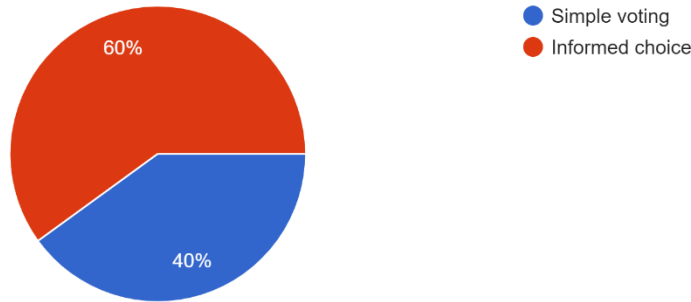Have you heard of media literacy?
50 responses
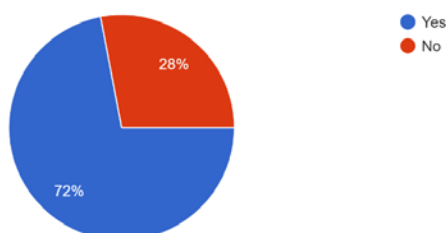
Later in this survey, researcher asked about have they heard about media literacy or not. Survey says that 36(72%) yes, they heard about media literacy and 14(28%) voters says, they didn't hear about it. Politicians can take advantages of such things.

What is important to you?
50 responses

● Simple voting
● Informed choice

60%

40%

Researcher asked participants about what is important to them simple voting or informed choice. Survey says that 30(60%) voters said that they'll go for informed based choice but 20(40%) said simple voting. which means 20(40%) of voters are just voting for fulfilling their duty not as responsible citizen.

Do you know how social media ads work?
50 responses

● Yes
● No

28%

72%
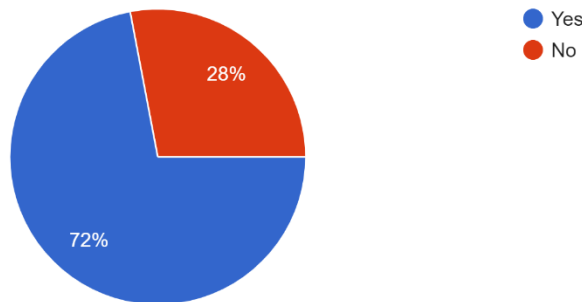
Later in this survey, researcher asked about do they know how social media ads work. 36(72%) voters are aware of how social media ads work but 14(28%) voters are not aware of it. Which is still big number and political parties can take advantage to all these flaws to manipulate them.

What is reason behind youth not participating in politics? (any one)
50 responses
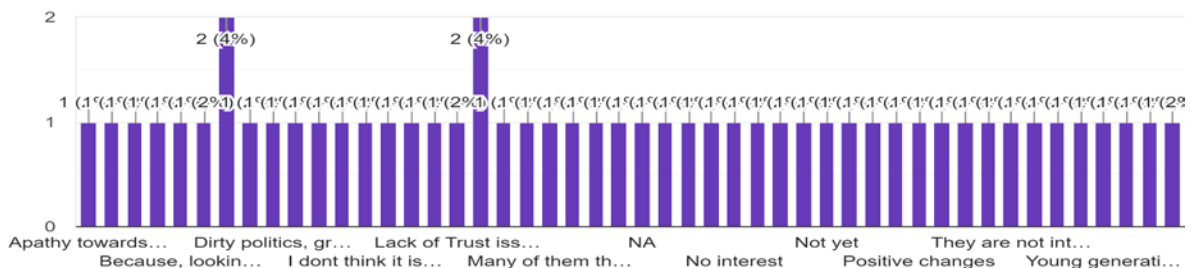
At the end researcher asked about the reasons of youth not participating in politics. From responses I came on conclusion youths' perspective is not much positive about the Indian politics. Indian politicians create much different image of it. Mainly youth belong to middle economic class hence they think politics is only for rich people, hence even many common peoples' families do not support their children to pursue carrier or participation in politics. Today youth does not show interest in politics because current image of politics like corruption, greedy politicians, nepotism, uneducated politicians, etc. There are some remarkable responses like, 'There is a perception that politics is suitable for people with enormous amount of money and muscle power. Common man is constrained with the question of earning daily bread. There is need for political reform which opens door for common man'; 'Today in the politics of India, only the elderly is dominated and only a few young people are in politics. One of the reasons for this is that the political atmosphere in India is deteriorating day by day and true politicians have been replaced by people greedy for power and wealth. In politics, the feeling of patriotism has been replaced by feminism, castes and sect. The way the tales of corruption of politicians are coming out every day, indifference towards politics is increasing among the youth of the country.': 'Once you go into it, you also have to play according to the rules of politics and the rules keep on changing based on the situations and i also think families which are used to living a routine life with a monthly pay cheque would not advise their children to enter such a volatile field.'; 'Youth have not understood the power of their vote. They have been engaged in superficial things (majority). Conscious should be developed regarding own references and understandings. Nowadays, politics has become a place where those people go who cannot contribute wisely as they have no real ideals in front. It has become a field where wise men have no value.' They also said, 'I think there is not a single reason that youth is not participating in politics, because the image of Indian politics. In our country in a family if any single person is decided to participate in politics, then their family is like " He is wasting his time for worst thing " this is the mentality of Indian families.'; 'Political parties are not thinking for their future. They are thinking for growing their party only.'; 'Most of the politicians are older in age, they created complicated environment in which most of the youth hesitate, they changed main moto about politics that youth can't understand even though youth can't get more exposure.'

Conclusion:

I have come on conclusion obtained by the conducted survey is that 30% people are still depend on social media as authentic source of media, which prove current hypothesis wrong hence the assumed hypothesis is accepted.2% people still don't think voting is important hence there is need of awareness. Even today also 6% people think participation youth does not affect strengthening democracy. 36% people do not cross check facts/ news present on social media and as we know fake news is the weapon for the politicians. 68% people does not have clear idea about the how media houses work and politicians can use this to set strategy/ propaganda. 28% people are not aware about media literacy. 40% people believe in simple voting rather than informed choice. 28% people does not know how social media ads run, in that case politicians can take help of SEO. From responses I came on conclusion youths' perspective is not much positive about the Indian politics. Indian politicians create much different image of it. Mainly youth belong to middle economic class hence they think politics is only for rich people; hence even many common peoples' families do not support their children to pursue carrier or participation in politics. Today youth does not show interest in politics because current image of politics like corruption, greedy politicians, nepotism, uneducated politicians, etc.

Here in this research I tried to cover topics like media literacy, influence of social media,
Awareness and value of right to vote, fake news, understanding of propaganda/ strategies of political parties using various mediums, difference between simple voting and informed choice also the reasons behind youth not participating in politics. So that for further study on this topic anyone can refer this

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