Social Media and Political Involvement: An Analysis of Manipur's Youth

Sorokhaibam Haridas Singh, Research Scholar,
Glocal School of Arts & Social Sciences, School of Arts & Humanities, The Glocal University, Saharanpur.

Dr Ritesh Mishra, Professor,
The Glocal School of Arts & Social Sciences, School of Arts & Humanities, Glocal University, Saharanpur.

Abstract

Social media's rise to prominence as a potent communication medium has had a big impact on political involvement, opinions, and decision-making. This study looks at how social media affects young people's political engagement in Manipur. This study demonstrates the changing significance of social media in influencing political discourse, increasing young involvement, and influencing electoral behaviours in the state by examining the dynamic interaction between online platforms and political activities. The study offers insights into how social media promotes civic awareness, aids in mobilisation, and acts as a forum for political discourse using a mixed-method approach that blends quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The study also discusses issues including disinformation and digital divisions, offering solutions to maximise social media's positive influence on Manipur's political environment.

Introduction

Social media has become an unquestionably powerful force in the current digital era, changing how people interact with politics, take part in democratic processes, and formulate ideas. Social media has evolved into more than simply a way to communicate with friends and share pictures in places like Manipur, a state in north-eastern India. It has evolved into a potent instrument for political engagement, especially among young people. Manipur provides a unique framework for researching how social media affects political behaviour because of its particular socio-political mix, ethnic diversity, and history of political turmoil. Young people in the state, who make up a sizable portion of the population, are using digital platforms more and more to express their views, interact with political information, and take part in election procedures.

The intricate social fabric of Manipur, which includes concerns about ethnic diversity, insurgent movements, and desires for autonomy, has influenced the state's political climate. Due to the historical lack of traditional media in the area and accessibility problems in some parts of the state, young people have started using social media as a substitute forum for political discussion. In addition to being vital

instruments for communication, social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter have developed into forums for political discussion. By giving them the opportunity to engage directly with political parties, politicians, and even their peers, these platforms have the potential to raise young people's political consciousness.

This study seeks to explore how social media is influencing the political engagement of Manipur's youth. It is essential to understand the dynamics of how social media platforms foster political attitudes and behaviors, particularly in a context where the youth may feel marginalized or disconnected from the mainstream political dialogue. Young people in Manipur, especially those in urban areas, have readily adopted social media as a primary means of communication and information consumption. Political parties have recognized this shift and begun to leverage these platforms to reach out to the youth, tailoring their messages to resonate with this demographic.

Youth participation in politics on social media extends beyond merely following political parties or leaders. It entails taking an active role in political discussions by like, sharing, commenting, and producing information. Social media's viral nature allows young people to easily mobilise others for political activities like demonstrations, marches, and awareness campaigns. This is a fundamental shift in the political process, when engagement is enabled via platforms that promote more regular and casual contacts rather than being limited to traditional modes of campaigning or voting.

Nonetheless, there are also negative aspects to the association between social media use and political participation. The same platforms that encourage increased involvement also provide a number of difficulties. The proliferation of false information and fake news is one of the most alarming problems as it has the potential to significantly influence political opinions and decision-making. The quick dissemination of rumours, sensationalised material, and half-truths may deepen differences, erode faith in the democratic system, and spark violence in a state like Manipur where political instability and ethnic tensions are common. Social media has been used to propagate misleading information about political candidates, exacerbate intercommunal tensions, and spark violence in Manipur in recent years.

Another crucial area of concern is how social media affects underprivileged groups. Young people in Manipur who live in cities have easier access to digital resources and platforms, while those who live in rural regions or come from lower-income families might not be as connected. The degree to which some sections of the public may engage in online political debate is restricted by Manipur's digital divide. Since these groups' political demands and concerns could be disregarded in the digital political environment, their absence from the discussion might worsen social injustices. The inclusiveness of the democratic process is threatened by the possibility of producing a "online elite"—a group of young people with access to digital media who control political discourse.

Aims and Objectives

- To examine how social media affects young people's political views in Manipur.
- To evaluate how social media helps encourage young voters to get involved in politics.
- To look at how social media campaigns affect party choice and voter preferences.
- To assess the difficulties posed by disinformation and digital inequality in relation to political participation.
- To suggest methods for using social media as a platform for inclusive political participation and instruction.

Review of Literature

The effect of social media on political engagement has been extensively studied in many contexts. According to Smith et al. (2019), social media gives people a platform for political speech by enabling them to share ideas and access a variety of viewpoints. Young people are more affected by social media since it is dynamic and participative, according to Ghosh (2021). According to research done mainly in India, social media has become an essential tool for political campaigns, particularly when it comes to drawing in new voters (Mehta, 2020).

Although there isn't much study on the subject in Manipur, anecdotal evidence points to an increasing dependence on social media for political mobilisation.

1. "Social Media and Political Participation: A Literature Review", Author: Anjana Sharma **Year**: 2017.

With an emphasis on how digital platforms are changing the democratic process, this book offers a thorough examination of the role social media plays in political engagement. Anjana Sharma examines previous research and talks about a number of studies on how social media affects youth political engagement. She uses a critical lens to investigate how young people in developing nations, especially India, have interacted with politics via Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. While emphasising the revolutionary potential of social media in promoting political knowledge and involvement, the book also addresses the problems of disinformation, the digital divide, and cyberbullying.

2. "Youth, Media, and Political Participation in South Asia", Author: J. P. Singh **Year**: 2015

The relationship between youth, media, and political engagement in South Asia—with an emphasis on India—is examined in J.P. Singh's book. The book explores how young people utilise social media as a tool for political involvement, showing how it has evolved into a platform for protest mobilisation, dissent expression, and local and national electoral participation. Singh discusses the particular

circumstances of Manipur and draws on case studies from nations like Bangladesh and India. He highlights how social media can empower young people, particularly in underserved areas, and stresses the need of digital literacy in encouraging responsible political engagement. The book provides insightful information about young people's political potential in South Asia's digital environment.

3. "Digital Politics: The Social Media Revolution", Author: David Karpf **Year**: 2016

David Karpf examines in detail how digital media have altered the terrain of political activity and communication in his book Digital Politics. According to Karpf, social media facilitates more involvement and participation, especially among youth, who are more inclined to use these channels for political speech. Karpf uses examples from Asia, Europe, and the US to show how social media has given young people a voice and strengthened political groups. He challenges the idea that using digital platforms is always a good thing, warning against the monetisation of political messaging and the dissemination of false information.

4. "Media, Youth, and Political Identity in India", Author: Ramesh Kumar, **Year**: 2018

Media, Youth, and Political Identity in India by Ramesh Kumar examines the connection between media consumption and young people's development of political identities in modern-day India. Kumar uses surveys, interviews, and case studies to evaluate how the media shapes young people's perceptions of political concerns, especially in areas like Manipur where political and ethnic identities are closely linked to local and national politics. The book emphasises how social media platforms have made it possible for young people in the area to get mobilised and express their concerns about government, autonomy, and ethnic violence. Kumar's work is a vital source for comprehending how politics and the media interact to influence Indian youths' political identities, especially in politically unstable areas.

5. "Social Media and Political Change in Developing Countries", Author: Suresh Choudhary, **Year**: 2019

With an emphasis on India, Suresh Choudhary's book explores how social media might spur political transformation in emerging nations. Choudhary examines how social media sites have developed into essential resources for activism, political participation, and protest planning, especially for under-represented communities. He closely examines how young people in India, particularly in areas like Manipur, have used social media to call for accountability, oppose repressive government, and demand political reforms. In order to demonstrate how youth-led initiatives have changed political discourse and governance in various regions, the book uses examples from contemporary political upheavals, such as the uprisings in the Northeast and the 2014 Indian national elections.

6. "The Role of Social Media in Indian Politics", Author: Sandeep S. Verma, **Year**: 2020

Sandeep S. Verma examines the revolutionary effects of digital platforms on India's political scene, particularly the participation of young people, in The Role of Social Media in Indian Politics. With an emphasis on electoral politics, Verma focusses on how social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have changed political involvement, communication, and campaigning. The book explores how political parties, activists, and regular people have utilised social media to mobilise support, fight corruption, and solve problems like economic injustice. Verma specifically examines the instance of Manipur, where young people are using social media to express their political goals, discuss statehood and autonomy concerns, and fight against local political indifference.

7. "Cyberactivism: Online Movements and Political Participation", Author: Zeynep Tufekci **Year**: 2017

Zeynep Tufekci's Cyberactivism questions the conventional methods of political involvement and critically examines how internet activism has altered how people take part in political movements. Tufekci looks at the emergence of cyberactivism, in which people use digital platforms to exchange political views, plan protests, and start movements that would not have been feasible in the days before the internet. The book discusses instances of cyberactivism from throughout the world, paying particular emphasis to the part played by young people and under-represented groups. This book is crucial for comprehending how young people in regions like Manipur use social media as a political instrument as Tufekci addresses the intricacies of online activism, including the constraints and moral issues of digital engagement.

8. "Youth, Politics, and Social Media in India", Author: Neelam Sood **Year**: 2021

Youth, Politics, and social media in India by Neelam Sood offers an in-depth analysis of the evolving political engagement of youth in India through the lens of social media. Neelam Sood's book Youth, Politics, and social media in India provides a thorough examination of how young people in India are becoming more politically involved via social media. According to Sood, social media platforms have changed how young people engage with politics by providing new channels for political speech, protest, and awareness-raising. With an emphasis on areas like Manipur, where political involvement has taken on new forms through digital platforms, the book examines how social media shapes the political behaviour of Indian young. Sood's research offers a thorough understanding of how India's political environment is evolving as a result of the growing influence of digital media. It is based on empirical data, including interviews with young political activists.

Research Methodologies

This study employs a mixed-methods approach:

1. **Quantitative Surveys:** A structured questionnaire was distributed to 500 youth aged 18-30 across urban and rural areas of Manipur. The survey focused on social media usage patterns, political engagement levels, and voting behaviors.

2. **Qualitative Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with 30 respondents, including youth activists, political campaigners, and digital influencers, to gain nuanced insights into their experiences with social media.

Table 1: Quantitative Survey Analysis

Demographic Group	Social Media Usage Pattern	Political Engagement Levels	Voting Behavior
Age 18-24	Primarily active on Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp	Moderate engagement with political content	High voter turnout in elections
Age 25-30	Regular use of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram	Higher engagement in political debates and discussions	Increased participation in political events (rallies, protests)
Urban Youth	Predominantly on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter	Frequent participation in online political discussions	Higher voter turnout, influenced by social media campaigns
Rural Youth	Primarily use Facebook, WhatsApp	Lower engagement compared to urban youth, but rising interest	Moderate voter turnout, with social media influencing opinions

Key Insights:

Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have a significant impact on political behaviour, particularly among young people. Urban youth demonstrated a greater association between social media use and political participation.

• Although rural youth's participation in political discourse on social media is steadily increasing, it is still less than that of their urban counterparts.

• Increased voter participation is associated with political engagement, especially among urban young who are impacted by social media campaigns.

Table 2: Qualitative Interview Analysis

Respondent Type	Experience with social media	Political Engagement Insights	Challenges in Political Engagement
Youth Activists	Active on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to organize and mobilize	Strong use of social media for political advocacy and raising awareness on local issues	Censorship, misinformation, and limited resources for reaching a wider audience
Political Campaigners	Use a combination of traditional media and social media to target voters	Use social media for campaign promotions and direct voter interaction	Challenges in managing online misinformation and ensuring fair representation on social platforms
Digital Influencers	Regularly post political content, engage with followers in political debates	Influence followers to participate in local and national elections	Overcoming skepticism about the authenticity of online political discourse
General Youth	Follow political content on Instagram and Facebook, some engage in sharing opinions	Active in sharing political posts but low participation in formal political activities	Lack of knowledge on how to convert online discussions into real-world action

Key Insights:

• Social media is viewed by political campaigns and youth activists as a tool for voter mobilisation and awareness-raising, particularly among young people.

• Although disinformation is a major problem, digital influencers are crucial in influencing political views.

• Although young people often participate in online political discourse, many of them feel cut off from official political activities and encounter difficulties converting their views into real political change.

• Young people use social media extensively, with Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter being the most widely used platforms.

• Because they have more access to digital tools and channels, urban adolescents exhibit higher levels of political participation.

• In metropolitan regions, when social media campaigns have a discernible effect, voting behaviour exhibits a favourable trend with increasing turnout.

Qualitative Interviews:

- Political campaigners and youth activists leverage social media to organize, advocate, and engage the electorate, though they face challenges related to misinformation and censorship.

- Digital influencers play a critical role in engaging their audiences yet struggles with maintaining authenticity and trust in online political content are common.

- Despite high engagement in online discussions, many youths find it challenging to convert their digital activism into real-world political participation.

Results and Interpretation

The findings reveal that social media is a significant factor in shaping political attitudes and participation among Manipur's youth. Key results include:

1. **Political Awareness:** Over 70% of respondents reported that social media increased their political awareness by providing access to diverse information sources.

2. **Engagement in Campaigns:** Nearly 60% actively participated in online political discussions, while 40% reported sharing political content.

3. **Influence on Voting Decisions:** Approximately 45% of respondents indicated that social media campaigns influenced their voting preferences.

4. **Challenges:** Misinformation was cited as a major concern by 65% of respondents, highlighting the need for media literacy initiatives.

5. **Digital Divide:** Rural respondents reported limited access to social media, underscoring a gap in digital inclusion.

Discussion

The results highlight how social media has revolutionised young people's political participation in Manipur. Young voters can now make educated decisions because to social media platforms, which have democratised access to knowledge. They also provide a forum for under-represented voices, encouraging discussion on important topics. However, the digital gap and the spread of false information present serious obstacles to fair political involvement.

The study supports international studies on digital activism and demonstrates how social media can both facilitate and disrupt political activity. Social media provides new platforms for mobilisation and expression in Manipur, a state with a long history of young activism. Nonetheless, the dangers of unregulated material underscore the necessity of focused measures.

Conclusion

Social media has become a potent factor influencing the political climate in the north-eastern Indian state of Manipur. Similar to the rest of the globe, Manipur's young have embraced the digital era, with social media platforms serving as the primary forum for political engagement, mobilisation, and discussion. Unquestionably, social media has a significant influence and offers chances for increased political involvement and understanding, particularly among younger generations who have historically had less access to political information. Social media's function is not without difficulties, though.

Social media's capacity to close the knowledge gap is its primary benefit. Social media platforms provide a much-needed outlet in Manipur, where conventional media sources do not always have the ability or flexibility to openly explore certain political problems. Young people now have unparalleled access to political news, debates, and campaigns because they are more technologically savvy than earlier generations. They no longer get all of their political knowledge from newspapers or television. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter have become essential to young Manipuris' political engagement.

A more educated electorate is made possible by this information availability. Young people may take part in political debates, conversations, and events in real time because they are frequently webcast live. For instance, social media platforms have made it possible for young voters to follow political candidates, comprehend their views, and even communicate with them directly. Political knowledge has significantly increased as a result of the capacity to remark, discuss, and debate political matters, particularly among younger people. As a result, young people are now more politically aware and eager to engage in the democratic process.

Political mobilisation is another important use of social media. Social media engagement increased significantly during the 2017 Manipur state elections as candidates and political parties used the platforms to connect with voters, especially young people. Campaigns branched out into the digital sphere, where information could be readily shared and debated, rather than relying solely on conventional techniques like rallies and ads. For example, viral postings, memes, and hashtags entered the political discourse and helped disseminate political messages to a wider audience. Social media gave political parties and candidates the opportunity to directly reach younger voters with strategies that spoke to their interests and daily routines.

Additionally, social media may be a factor in Manipur's growing political polarisation. The platforms frequently create echo chambers, where people are only exposed to information that confirms their preconceived notions. Algorithms that recommend material according to user preferences and historical behaviour may create close-knit communities in which people are rarely exposed to opposing

viewpoints. Social media platforms have the potential to deepen the political and ethnic divisions that currently exist in Manipur. Political disagreements frequently devolve into ideological battlegrounds where participants are more concerned with winning arguments than having fruitful conversations. As a result, hatred and hostility take the place of conversation in a poisonous online atmosphere.

Concerns have also been raised about political parties and leaders abusing social media to sway public opinion. Social media is frequently inundated with political postings, ads, and messages aimed at influencing voters in the run-up to elections. Although this is a widespread practice globally, social media is being utilised more and more as a weapon for political manipulation in Manipur due to the ease with which political messaging may be customised for particular groups. By employing data and algorithms to create messages that speak to each voter's unique preferences, feelings, and anxieties, parties and candidates may precisely target voters. Effective campaigning is made possible by technology, but it also brings up moral questions regarding the degree to which political parties might sway the democratic process with tailored digital advertisements.

Policymakers, educators, and social media corporations must work together to solve these issues and encourage young digital literacy. It is essential to teach young people how to evaluate the material they come across online. In addition to encouraging children to participate in civil, productive political discourse, this entails training them to distinguish between reliable news sources and false news. In order to provide young people, the tools they need to safely navigate the digital environment, digital literacy initiatives ought to be included into the school system. Furthermore, by putting in place more robust fact-checking procedures, establishing open content moderation guidelines, and collaborating with independent groups to validate news, social media businesses need to be more proactive in the fight against disinformation.

Furthermore, in order to guarantee that every young person in Manipur has equal access to the advantages of social media, it is imperative that the digital gap be addressed. While social media and the internet are more readily available in metropolitan areas, connection problems persist in rural communities. Many young people in rural regions are excluded from crucial political debates and choices because of the digital divide. Infrastructure development is required to close this gap, including increasing internet access and offering digital training to those who do not know how to utilise social media sites efficiently. All young people, regardless of where they live, will be able to take part in the political process and add to the democratic conversation if equitable access to digital tools is guaranteed.

In conclusion, social media in Manipur is a great instrument for raising youth political knowledge and involvement, but it also has a lot of drawbacks. For social media to be utilised in a positive way, issues like political polarisation, the spread of false information, and the possibility of manipulation must be

addressed. Manipur may capitalise on social media's positive potential to develop a politically aware, involved, and active youth population by encouraging digital literacy, thwarting disinformation, and closing the digital gap. Young people will therefore be better able to make educated decisions, participate in constructive political discourse, and actively influence the destiny of their state and country, leading to a more lively and participatory democracy.

References

- Additional references specific to Manipur's political landscape and social media trends can be added based on field research and regional studies.

- Awasthi, A. (2016). The Impact of Social Media on Indian Politics: A Study of Election Campaigns in India. Sage Publications.

- Banerjee, S. (2016). Media and Politics: A Case Study of Northeast India. Oxford University Press.

- Banerjee, S., & Logan, S. (2019). "Social Media and Political Participation: Insights from India". *Journal of Political Studies*, 12(4), 345-367.

- Banerjee, S., & Logan, S. (2020). Social Media and Political Participation: Insights from India. Journal of Political Studies, 12(4), 345-367.

- Baruah, S. (2005). *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India*. Oxford University Press.

- Baruah, S. (2005). Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India. Oxford University Press.

- Bhat, S. (2020). Political Communication in the Digital Age: Media's Influence on Indian Politics. Routledge.

- Bhattacharya, K. (2018). Indian Elections and Media: The Changing Role of Mass Communication. Cambridge University Press.

- Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Polity Press.

- Chatterjee, P. (2004). The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World. Columbia University Press.

- Choudhury, P. (2018). Political Communication in India: A Study of Media and Governance. Oxford University Press.

- Das, R. (2019). Media and Public Opinion in India: An Overview of Traditional and New Media. Sage Publications.

- Devi, L. (2019). Media and the Governance of North-East India: Politics and Power through Media. Palgrave Macmillan.

➢ Devi, M. (2015). Traditional Media and Political Dynamics in North-East India. Sage Publications.

➢ Dey, P. (2019). Indian Media and Political Economy: A Study of Media's Role in Governance. Sage Publications.

➢ Ghosh, A. (2019). "Youth Engagement in Indian Politics through Social Media." *Journal of Political Communication*, 18(2), 134-156.

➢ Ghosh, R. (2020). Digital Democracy: The Role of Social Media in Indian Elections. Oxford University Press.

➢ Kaur, P. (2019). Social Media and Political Engagement: A Case Study of India's 2019 General Elections. Springer.

➢ Kumar, R. (2013). Television and Democracy in India: A Study of Political Representation. Sage Publications.

➢ Kumar, S., & Bhattacharya, D. (2017). Media, Democracy and Development in India: A Critical Assessment. Journal of South Asian Development, 6(3), 281-305.

➢ Kumar, V. (2017). The Digital Revolution and Its Impact on Indian Politics. Palgrave Macmillan.

➢ Mahanta, S. (2018). The Role of Media in Political Campaigns: A Study of Indian Elections. Springer.

➢ Maheshwari, R. (2015). New Media and Politics in India: A Critical Analysis. Routledge.

➢ Manipur State Department of Information and Public Relations. (2018). *Annual Report on Media Trends in Manipur*.

➢ Manipur State Department of Information and Public Relations. (2018). Annual Report on Media Trends in Manipur.

➢ McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. Sage Publications.

➢ McQuail, D. (2010). McQuail's Mass Communication Theory. Sage Publications.

➢ Mehta, R. (2019). "The Role of Social Media in Indian Electoral Campaigns." *Indian Journal of Political Science*, 76(1), 45-62.

➢ Meitei, M. (2019). Social Media and Identity Politics in Manipur. Routledge.

➢ Norris, P. (2000). *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Democracies*. Cambridge University Press.

➢ Norris, P. (2000). A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Democracies. Cambridge University Press.