

Using Digital Platform as a Central Repository for Political Learning in Distance Education

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to close a theoretical informational void concerning the influence of social media on public policy debate. Findings from this study evaluate the efficacy of social media for political education in contexts where such platforms are not routinely integrated into formal curricula. The political and the nonpolitical are separated on social media, and vice versa. In this research, we create a cross-sectional survey of the representatives of IGNOU's undergraduate students in Delhi. There were a total of 977 respondents from the student body. According to the findings, kids are able to learn about politics by participation in political discussions on social media. Students' political knowledge increases in proportion to the amount of time they spend talking about politics on social media. When using social media does not require interaction with other users, it has little effect on political education. This research demonstrates that students learn about politics not just through online activities but also by talking to their friends and family about it. If you want to learn about politics on social media, you'll have to engage in political discourse. The extent to which pupils learn about politics is also influenced by students' sex, age, and financial resources. The findings suggest the need for more platform-specific research to verify the effects of social media activities in light of the unique features of each platform.

Keywords: Social Media, IGNOU, Financial Resources, Political Education.

INTRODUCTION

Using social media as a central repository for political learning in distance education can have several positive effects. One of the main benefits is that it provides individuals with convenient access to political information. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are designed to facilitate the sharing of information and resources, and this can be particularly useful in the political realm. Individuals can access a wide range of political news articles, opinion pieces, and academic research on social media, which can help them stay informed about political issues.

Social media can also facilitate productive political discussions. Many social media platforms have features that allow individuals to connect with like-minded individuals and engage in group discussions. This can be particularly valuable for individuals who live in areas with limited political discourse or who may not have access to traditional political forums, such as town halls or community meetings. By engaging with others on social media, individuals can share their opinions, learn from others, and participate in meaningful political discussions.

Another advantage of using social media as a central repository for political learning is that it can supplement traditional distance education materials. Online courses and programs are becoming increasingly popular, and social media can be used to enhance the learning experience. For example, instructors can create Facebook groups or Twitter hashtags to facilitate discussions and share resources with their students. This allows students to engage with the course material and each other, even if they are not physically present in the classroom.

However, there are also several negative effects associated with using social media as a central repository for political learning. One of the main concerns is the potential for misinformation and bias. Social media platforms are often used to spread fake news and propaganda, and this can have serious consequences in the political realm. Individuals may be exposed to inaccurate or biased information, which can influence their political beliefs and decisions.

Another concern is the potential for online harassment and bullying. Political discussions on social media can quickly become heated and contentious, and individuals may be subjected to personal attacks and threats. This can create a hostile and intimidating environment that is not conducive to productive political discourse. In some cases,

individuals may even be targeted by organized harassment campaigns, which can have serious mental and emotional health consequences.

To mitigate these risks, individuals can take several steps. First, it is important to fact-check any information that is encountered on social media before accepting it as true. This can involve conducting additional research, seeking out multiple sources, and consulting with trusted experts. It is also important to engage in civil discourse and to avoid personal attacks or derogatory language. Individuals can also report any harassment or bullying that they experience on social media, and social media platforms have policies and mechanisms in place to address these issues.

In summary, the use of social media as a central repository for political learning in distance education has both positive and negative effects. While it can provide individuals with convenient access to political information and facilitate distance education, it also carries the risk of misinformation, bias, and online harassment. By taking steps to mitigate these risks, individuals can maximize the benefits of social media for political learning while minimizing its negative consequences.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Praveen Kumar Singh and Sandeep Kumar Sharma (2018) published a paper titled "Exploring the Potential of Social Media for Political Learning: A Study of Indian Youth." The study examined how Indian youth use social media for political learning and found that social media can be an effective platform for political learning if properly utilized.

Utkarsh Agrawal and Pooja Sharma (2019) published an article titled "Role of Social Media in Political Learning: A Study of Indian Youth." The article discussed how Indian youth use social media for political learning and highlighted the need for critical evaluation of information shared on social media.

Ankur Mani Tripathi and Vivek Kumar Singh (2019) published a paper titled "The Role of Social Media in Political Learning: An Indian Perspective." The paper examined the impact of social media on political learning in India and suggested that social media can be a powerful tool for political engagement and activism.

Siddhartha Sarkar and Debalina Banerjee (2020) published an article titled "Political Learning in the Age of Social Media: A Study of Indian Youth." The article examined the impact of social media on political learning among Indian youth and suggested that social media can be an effective platform for political education and awareness-raising.

Students" by Jyoti Bhat and Shalini Nijhawan (2016): This study investigates the role of social media in political learning among distance education students in India. The authors found that social media can be an effective tool for political learning, especially for students who are unable to attend traditional classes.

"Social Media and Political Learning among Youth in India" by Priyanka Sharma and Sarika Singh (2017): This study explores the impact of social media on political learning among youth in India. The authors found that social media can be a powerful tool for political education and engagement, particularly for youth who are not politically active in traditional ways.

Performance of Political talk

"The Effect of Political Talk on Political Participation: Evidence from South Korea" by Eunji Kim and Jooho Lee (2019) . This study examines the relationship between political talk and political participation in South Korea. The authors found that political talk positively influences political participation and that the effect is stronger for those with higher levels of political knowledge. The study also highlights the importance of social media as a platform for political talk and participation.

"Political Talk in the Age of Social Media: How Online Communication is Changing the Political Landscape" by Markus Prior (2017)

This book explores the impact of social media on political talk and participation. Prior argues that social media has both positive and negative effects on political communication, with increased access to information and greater engagement among some groups but also a rise in

echo chambers and polarization. The book draws on empirical data from the United States and other countries.

"Political Talk on Social Media: An Analysis of Facebook Discussions During the 2016 US Presidential Election Campaign" by **Michael Hameleers and Rens Vliegenthart (2018)**

This study examines political talk on Facebook during the 2016 US presidential election campaign. The authors found that political talk on Facebook was predominantly negative, with high levels of incivility and personal attacks. The study also found evidence of selective exposure, with individuals more likely to engage in political talk with like-minded individuals.

"The Social Shaping of Political Talk: A Study of Online and Offline Political Discussion among Young Adults in Sweden" by **Maria Solevid and Katarina Giritli Nygren (2016)**

This study compares online and offline political talk among young adults in Sweden. The authors found that online political talk was more diverse and less hierarchical than offline political talk, with greater opportunities for marginalized groups to participate. However, the study also found that offline political talk had greater impact on political engagement and participation.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards distance education, making it more important than ever to understand how social media can be used to enhance political learning in online environments. However, there is a lack of research on the effectiveness of using social media as a central repository for political learning in distance education. This raises questions about the potential impact of social media on political knowledge, attitudes, and engagement in online learning environments. Additionally, ethical and privacy concerns related to the use of social media for political learning need to be addressed to ensure that users are not exposed to harmful or biased content. Therefore, the problem to be addressed in this study is to understand the effects of using social media as a central repository for political learning in distance education and to develop best practices for its ethical and effective use.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Increasing importance of social media: Social media platforms have become an increasingly important source of information and communication in today's society, particularly in the political domain. As such, it is important to understand how social media can be used to enhance political learning and engagement.

Distance education: The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards distance education, making it more important than ever to understand how social media can be used to enhance political learning in online environments.

Democratic participation: Political learning is a crucial component of democratic participation, as it helps citizens make informed decisions and engage in meaningful political discourse. Understanding how social media can be used to enhance political learning is therefore crucial for promoting a healthy democratic society.

Personalization and customization: Social media platforms have the ability to personalize and customize content based on individual preferences and interests. Understanding how this personalization affects political learning is important for ensuring that citizens are exposed to a diverse range of political perspectives and ideas.

HYPOTHESES

HO1: The students' political awareness is impacted by their participation in social media.

HO2 : Students can learn more about politics by discussing them on social media.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Respondent

This research was conceived using a cross-sectional survey of undergraduate college student representatives at IGNOU(Distance Education), Delhi.

Questionnaires were used to collect information, which was processed by researchers in the field. In this case, the sample is a statistically significant subset of students from the University chosen by the relevant Department. Researchers in the field also handed out

surveys to eligible students on their separate schools. Overall, 977 students participated in the poll.

Average age was 18.5 years ($SD=0.56$), with 323 men (33.06%) and 654 females (66.94%) making up the sample. Figure 1 displays the demographic breakdown of the sample. The respondents' financial situations are reflected in this study through their outlays. Figure 2 showed that IDR < 750,000 (28.25%), IDR 750,000-1,250,000 (35.82%) and IDR 1,250,000-2,000,000 (31.01%) were consumed students Monthly.

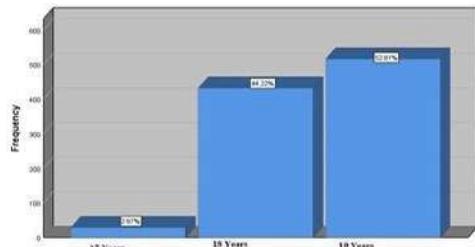


Fig. 1 : Age of Students

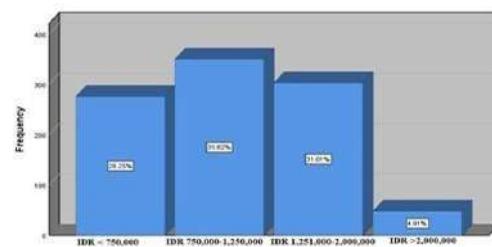


Fig.2 : Expenditure of Students

The Questionnaire

There were two sections to the research questionnaire. In the first section, students are asked basic demographic questions including their age, gender, preferred social media platform, and how often they use each. Specifically, quantifiable information is sought in the second section. The second section asks participants to respond to 15 statements on a five-point Likert scale, a common assessment instrument in social science research.

Get your hands on a reliable measuring device so you can stop guessing and start getting reliable results. The questionnaire was validated with a pre-test to 30 undergraduate students. In addition, questions that were thought to be too open to interpretation were taken out of the final form given to responders. After being briefed about the study's goals, respondents signed a consent form indicating that they were willing to take part in the survey and answer the questionnaire. They were also guaranteed that their anonymity would be protected.

Measurement

It was a 1-point gain for correct answers and a 0-point loss for wrong ones. Quantitative sums were calculated for all four queries. This attribute has a mean value Of 3.17 and $SD= 1.14$.

The following social media behaviours were measured using survey questions aimed at gauging respondents' activity levels: You can participate in political discourse by doing any of the following: 1) following politicians, 2) receiving information related to politics, 3) re-sharing other people's comments, 4) posting opinions relevant to current events, 5) posting personal experiences related to politics, 6) posting photos, videos, content, or current events, and 7) commenting on the varying political viewpoints of others. The average was 2.01, and the standard deviation was 0.73. The responses ranged from "never" (1) to "always" (5).

The most commonly requested questions in the political discussion section were to the conversations that respondents had about politics with 1) their families, 2) those who had different views, 3) their friends, and 4) complete strangers on social media. Ordering the answers from 1 (never) to 5 (always) (always). The average number of words per political debate was 1.81, with a standard deviation of 0.75.

Three different construct measurement models using CFA with maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). When used to a high sample size (more than 200), the Chi-square test shows great sensitivity (Zainudin, 2012). The values for the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were .028 (less than .08), .1757 (less than 3), .991 (more than .90), and .996 (more than .90). The three constructs are all up to par, thus more research into them is encouraged. We examine the Cronbach coefficient of the three multi-item scales to verify the reliability of the measurements. The correlation coefficients for participation in social media activities is 0.839, political discourse is 0.759, and political literacy is 0.731. A dependability scale minimum value of 0.70 is suggested. As a result, the results from all three measurements are within acceptable ranges, and the reliability is generally recognised.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were roughly 66.94% female and 33.06% male pupils. Ages ranged from 17 to 19 in Figure 1, with 19-year-olds making up slightly more than half of the sample.

If you look at Figure 2, you can see that 95.08 percent of students' monthly expenditures don't exceed IDR 2,000,000. Among the many forms of social media, students are most active on YouTube (41.97%), next Instagram (31.73%), and finally WhatsApp (9.21%).

As can be seen in Table 1, 69.3% of males and just 51.5% of females were able to correctly answer all questions based on the political information offered. On the other hand, 0.9% of males and 5.8% of females could not correctly answer any of the political knowledge questions. Just 4.2% of students got all the questions wrong in political knowledge, while 57.4% got it right.

Table 1 Gender-based political knowledge score of students

Political knowledge score						
	0	1	2	3	4	Total
Male	3	6	42	48	224	323
	(0.9%)	(1.9%)	(13.0%)	(14.9%)	(69.3%)	(100%)
Female	38	48	118	113	337	654
	(5.8%)	(7.3%)	(18.0%)	(17.3%)	(51.5%)	(100%)
Total	41	54	160	161	561	977
	(4.2%)	(5.5%)	(16.4%)	(16.5%)	(57.4%)	(100%)

Source: Field research. N = 977.

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Independent samples t-test by sex, as well as mean and standard deviation, are displayed in Table 3. Women and men engage in the same level of political engagement and online activity. Men, however, tend to know more about politics than women do.

Table 2 Independent samples t-Test of variables by sex (equal variances not assumed)

Variables	Mean	SD	Male Mean	Female Mean	t	df	p
Social media activity	2.01	0.73	2.07	1.98	1.823	605	0.069
Political Discussion	1.81	0.75	1.88	1.78	1.863	613	0.063
Political Knowledge	3.17	1.14	3.50	3.01	7.153*	868	0.000

SD: standard deviation. *p < 0.05. Total N = 977. Male = 323. Female = 654.

Table 3 One-way ANOVA by Age Group

Variables	Age group 17mean	Age group 18mean	Age group 19mean	F	df	p
Social media activity	3.12	2.03	1.98	1.185	2	0.306
Political Discussion	1.91	1.87	1.77	2.412	2	0.090
Political Knowledge	3.52	3.31	3.17	7.777*	2	0.000

N = 977. Age group 17 = 29. Age group 18 = 432. Age group 19 = 516. *p < 0.05.

Table 4 displays the findings of a One-way Analysis of Variance broken down by spending category. I divide my students' monthly spending into two categories: those who spend less than IDR 750,000 and those who spend between IDR 750,000 and IDR 1,250,000. Group III students' monthly spending of IDR 1,251,000 to 2,000,000. Spending group IV, meanwhile, includes those who regularly spend more than IDR 2,000,000. There are significant variations

Table 4 One-way ANOVA by Expenditure Group

Variables	Expenditure group I mean	Expenditure group II mean	Expenditure group III mean	Expenditure group IV mean	F	d f	p
Social media activity	1.92	2.06	1.99	2.23	3.493	3	0.01
Political Discussion	1.75	1.81	1.85	2.01	*	3	5
Political Knowledge	2.96	3.21	3.31	3.31	1.924	3	0.12
					5.093	4	0.00
					*		2

N = 977. Expenditure group I = 305. Expenditure group II = 374. Expenditure group III = 330. Expenditure group IV = 57. * $p < 0.05$.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance Regression model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significant
Regression	95.118	4	23.780	19.566	0.000
Residual	1181.301	972	1.215		
Total	1276.420	976			

Dependent Variable: Political knowledge

Predictors: (Constant), Sex, Political Discuss, Age, Expenditure

The main predictors of political literacy are broken down by age, income, political engagement, and sex in Table 6. The male B-coefficient (-0.439) indicates that men have a less influence on political knowledge than women do. Yet, the B-coefficient at age is negative (-0.224), showing that people's political knowledge declines as they get older. The B-coefficient for both spending (0.110) and political discourse (0.169) is positive, indicating that both factors lead to greater gains in political literacy. Based on the results in Table 7, it appears that neither social media use nor the interaction between social media use and political conversation significantly affects political knowledge. Moreover, it was reported that H2 was approved whereas H1 was not. Political discourse is highly beneficial; the more often students engage in political discourse via social media, the more they will grow in their understanding of politics. There is no multicollinearity between independent variables because the VIP values for each variable are less than 10, and the tolerance values for each variable are more than 0.1.

Table 6 Coefficients of Multiple Regression

Model	B	Std. Error	B	t	Significant	Tolerance	VIP
1. (Constant)Sex (male)	3.983 -.485	.132 .076	-.199	30.119 -6.357	.000 .000	1.000	1.000
2. (Constant)Sex (male) Political discuss	3.611 -.466 .188	.161 .076 .048	-.192 .124	22.376 -6.152 3.966	.000 .000 .000	.996 .996	1.004 1.004
3. (Constant)Sex (male) Political discuss Age	7.877 -.460 .177 -.230	1.194 .075 .047 .064	-.189 .116 .112	6.599 -6.104 3.738 -3.607	.000 .000 .000 .000	.996 .992 .995	1.004 1.008 1.005
4. (Constant)Sex (male) Political discuss Age Expenditure	7.509 -.439 .169 -.224 .110	1.197 .076 .047 .064 .040	-.181 .111 .109 .084	6.271 -5.805 3.574 -3.520 2.711	.000 .000 .000 .000 .007	.985 .988 .993 .983	1.015 1.012 1.007 1.018
R ² N	.475 977						

Dependent Variable: Political knowledge. $p < 0.05$

Table 7 : Excluded Variables

Model	β	t	Sig.	Partial Corr.	Tolerance	VIP	Min. Tolerance
4. Soc-Med act	.019	.499	.618	.016	.691	1.447	.689
Soc-Med	-	-	.685	-.013	.253	3.960	.252
act*Politicaldiscuss	.025	.405					

Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Sex, Political Discuss, Age, Expenditure

DISCUSSION

This research separated political debate from other forms of social media use that did not necessitate direct interpersonal communication. Students' responses to questions testing their political knowledge revealed that males had a larger percentage of right responses than girls. T-test results provide credence to the hypothesis that men have a deeper understanding of politics than women. These results are consistent with research on gender differences in education (Ferrn et al., 2019). When compared to students at other institutions, UPI students engage in significantly more social media activity. The findings indicate that participating in political discourse with others leads to increased political knowledge gained from the use of social media. The results support previous research showing that political knowledge can be increased through online dialogue (Park, 2017). The online community facilitates the review of previously learned material and its reinforcement through debate.

The survey found that male and female students, as well as pupils of different ages and socioeconomic backgrounds, had diverse levels of political knowledge. Consistent with past research, this one found that gender, age, and socioeconomic status all play a role. It is well established in the canon of conventional political science that one's socioeconomic standing is a strong predictor of political participation (Ridgeway, 2014). In a political science study, (Dolan, 2011) found that women scored lower than men on a test measuring political knowledge. Student civic learning shows that younger community students are more likely to conduct objective assessments of academic ideas and information, as reported by Malafaia et al. (2016).

Social networking sites included into the instructional framework have been used in earlier research. Students who participate in the Facebook groups for the mass media utilised as the discussion room for the course content have higher average course grades than those who do not (Bowman & Akcaoglu, 2014). Yet, pupils believed that professionals and experts in related fields aid their study on Twitter (Lackovic et al., 2017). Researchers hope that future studies will focus on how to best use preexisting social media platforms to monitor the results of political education.

Undergraduates might easily be exposed to biased political content when using social media. Nonetheless, their preexisting connections encourage them to have meaningful conversations with their contemporaries. Conversations on politics may be a rich source of learning for students, who can then actively absorb the information to expand their political literacy. Results from the current study corroborated those from earlier research by showing that participation in political discussions led to increased knowledge among group members (Dragseth, 2020).

FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Some possible areas for future research include:

Impact of Emerging Social Media Platforms: While the use of social media in political learning has been well-established, new platforms and features are constantly emerging. Future studies could explore the impact of these new tools on political learning and engagement.

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Most studies on the use of social media for political learning have been conducted in Western democracies. Future research could examine the impact of social media on political learning in other cultural and political contexts.

Long-term Effects: While many studies have examined the short-term impact of social media on political learning, the long-term effects are less clear. Future research could explore the lasting impact of social media on political attitudes and engagement.

Integration with Traditional Education: As online education becomes more prevalent, it will be important to examine how social media can be integrated with traditional forms of education to enhance political learning.

Ethics and Privacy Concerns: The use of social media for political learning raises important ethical and privacy concerns. Future studies could explore these issues in more depth and develop best practices for using social media as a central repository for political learning while protecting user privacy.

CONCLUSIONS

Social media has transformed the way people access, share, and discuss information and ideas about politics. With the rise of distance education, social media platforms have become a central repository for political learning for many students who may not have access to traditional classroom settings. The ability to access political content on social media from anywhere at any time is a key advantage of using social media for political learning in distance education.

One of the key benefits of using social media for political learning is the convenience and accessibility it offers. Unlike traditional distance education materials such as textbooks, social media provides up-to-date information on political issues, events, and trends. Social media platforms also enable users to interact with one another in real-time, which can help facilitate productive discussions and debates around political issues. Furthermore, social media can supplement traditional distance education materials by providing additional resources, such as articles, videos, and podcasts.

However, social media can also have negative effects on political learning in distance education. For example, social media can perpetuate misinformation and fake news, which can be damaging to political knowledge and engagement. Social media can also create echo chambers, where individuals are only exposed to political content that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, leading to increased polarization and decreased critical thinking.

Another potential negative effect of using social media for political learning in distance education is online harassment. Social media platforms can be breeding grounds for bullying, trolling, and other forms of harassment, which can discourage individuals from engaging in political discourse. To mitigate these negative effects, it is important for individuals using social media for political learning to critically evaluate the information encountered and fact-check any information before accepting it as true.

According to the findings, participation in online political discourse is a valuable source of education. Indeed, this result corroborates the findings of prior research. Even if social media isn't incorporated into the classroom, having students discuss politics can help them learn more about the topic. This study's findings do not support the idea that engaging in social media activities contributes to one's understanding of political issues, contrary to the findings of other studies. The novel finding of this study is that using social media and participating in political discussions both have differing effects on students' political learning. Nothing about using social media to learn about politics was shown to be beneficial, including reposting the comments of others, following political accounts, reading about politics, sharing one's own political experiences, or commenting on current events. Conversations between social media users are not involved in these events. In order to learn about politics on social media, users must engage in political discourse. These results have real-world promises of democracy that can get young people involved in politics. The findings of studies with greater generalisations will be further confirmed by subsequent investigations with an immense demographic scope.

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