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Impact of Social Media and Political Activism: An Analysis

Inderjeet Singh

MA Student, Department of Political Science, GKU, Talwandi Sabo

Dr.Sukdev Singh

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, GKU, Talwandi Sabo

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Correspondence:

E-mail: indrajeet@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Social media has transformed the way citizens participate in politics by providing digital platforms for communication, collaboration, and collective action. Research highlights how networked communication enables individuals and communities to create, share, and disseminate political information beyond traditional media structures. It also examines the role of participatory culture, online collaboration, and digital networks in encouraging civic engagement, public discourse, and collective political action. This study focused on the Balluana village of Bathinda District on the behalf of 100 male and female respondents. The paper further discusses both the opportunities and challenges associated with social media, including misinformation, digital inequality, and online manipulation, while emphasizing its growing significance in strengthening democratic participation and citizen activism in the digital age.

1.1 Introduction:

Social media has emerged as one of the most influential tools in shaping political mobilization and activism in the twenty-first century. Platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, and YouTube have transformed the nature of political communication, participation, and public engagement across the world. These digital platforms enable individuals, political groups, civil society organizations, and governments to communicate rapidly and directly with large audiences. The rise of social media has significantly altered traditional political processes by creating new opportunities for citizens to express opinions, organize movements, and influence policy decisions. Social media has profoundly transformed political mobilization and activism by expanding communication, increasing political awareness, and facilitating citizen participation.

It has empowered ordinary individuals to organize movements, challenge authority, and advocate for social justice on a global scale. At the same time, the misuse of social media through misinformation,

polarization, and digital manipulation presents serious democratic challenges. The overall impact of social media on politics depends on how responsibly it is used by citizens, governments, political parties, and digital corporations. As technology continues to evolve, social media will remain a central force in shaping political behavior, democratic Political mobilization and political activism are central concepts in political science and sociology that explain how citizens participate in political processes and social change. Different famous thinkers and encyclopaedias have interpreted these concepts in distinct ways.

According to Charles Tilly, political mobilization refers to the process through which groups acquire resources, organize people, and coordinate collective action to achieve political goals. Tilly believed that mobilization is essential for social movements and democratic participation because it transforms public grievances into organized political action. Similarly, Sidney Tarrow explained political mobilization as collective challenges by individuals who share common purposes and solidarity in interaction with elites and authorities, participation, and contemporary activism. The Constitution of India guarantees freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a), which forms the basis of media freedom. However, Article 19(2) allows reasonable restrictions to protect national security, public order, morality, and other public interests.

Social media has grown rapidly due to affordable smartphones, internet services, and digital technology. Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, and X have transformed communication, political participation, education, and public awareness. The Information Technology Act, 2000 and IT Rules, 2021 regulate digital communication and social media. They aim to prevent cybercrime, fake news, hate speech, and unlawful online content while making digital platforms more accountable. Media informs citizens, shapes public opinion, and encourages political participation. During elections, the Election Commission regulates media through the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and other guidelines to ensure fair campaigning and prevent misinformation and paid news.

The rapid spread of fake news, misinformation, hate speech, privacy violations, and digital surveillance has become a major concern. These challenges require a balance between freedom of expression, responsible communication, privacy, and national security. Digital media has increased political awareness and participation among youth, farmers, and rural communities in Punjab. Social media has supported protests, public campaigns, and local political discussions, but it has also contributed to misinformation and political polarization.

1.2 Political Mobilization and Political Activism:

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Political activism refers to organized efforts aimed at creating political or social change. According to David A. Snow and Sarah A. Soule, activism is a form of collective action undertaken to promote or resist social and political change through organized public efforts. Activism may include protests, advocacy campaigns, demonstrations, strikes, and online movements.

1.3 Review of Literature:

Howard and Hussain (2013) studied digital media during the Arab Spring. Their research demonstrated that social networking platforms helped activists organize protests, bypass government censorship, and communicate with international audiences. The study concluded that social media significantly contributed to modern democratic activism and political change movements.

Jenkins (2016) studied participatory culture and digital political engagement. The research found that social media encourages collaborative activism and public participation by allowing users to create and distribute political content independently. The study concluded that digital culture has fundamentally altered the relationship between citizens and political communication.

Kumar (2017) analyzed changing electoral politics in India and highlighted the increasing role of social media in political campaigning and voter mobilization. The study noted that political parties increasingly use online advertisements, hash tags, and digital outreach strategies to attract young voters. The research concluded that social media has become a major instrument of electoral communication and political persuasion in India.

Singh and Charvak (2019) examined social media and political mobilization among students of University of Delhi. The study revealed that university students actively use social networking platforms for political debates, election discussions, and protest participation. The authors observed that social media acts as a digital public sphere that encourage youth political awareness and civic engagement. The research concluded that digital communication technologies have significantly transformed political participation among educated urban youth in India.

Navsharan Singh (2021) studied the role of digital communication during the Indian farmers' protest. The study found that farmers from Punjab effectively used social media to coordinate demonstrations, share live updates, and gain support from national and international communities. The author concluded that digital activism played a central role in sustaining the protest movement and strengthening collective political identity among farmers.

Munir and Zaheer (2025) examined the role of social media strategies in political mobilization and voter engagement. The study highlighted that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X enable political actors to communicate directly with citizens and mobilize supporters rapidly. The researchers observed that digital campaigns significantly influenced youth participation and strengthened political narratives. The study further concluded that social media has become a central instrument of political communication and democratic participation in South Asian societies.

Perveez Ahmad Khan (2025) analyzed the impact of social media on political mobilization and voter behavior in emerging democracies, including India. The study revealed that digital platforms have increased political awareness, electoral participation, and grassroots activism, especially among young voters. The author found that social media reduces barriers to civic participation and strengthens real-time interaction between political leaders and citizens. However, the research also emphasized challenges such as misinformation, digital polarization, and online manipulation. The study concluded that social media possesses both democratic and disruptive political potential in modern democracies.

Ashwini, Vishwanatha, and Puneeth (2025) studied social media as a platform for political resistance and dissent in Indian society. The research highlighted the role of hashtag activism, digital resistance, and online campaigns in mobilizing citizens against social and political injustices. The authors found that online communication enables marginalized groups and activists to challenge authority through memes, slogans, and digital narratives. The study concluded that social media has transformed political activism in India by expanding democratic participation and creating new spaces for dissent and resistance.

Singha and Ghosh (2025) explored everyday online resistance within India's increasingly controlled digital public sphere. The study emphasized that citizens use coded language, anonymous accounts, memes, and regional platforms to express dissent and avoid censorship. The researchers argued that social media enables subtle forms of political activism even under conditions of surveillance and digital authoritarianism. The study concluded that online resistance in India is evolving beyond large-scale viral campaigns into everyday acts of political expression and mobilization.

Anamika (2025) examined the combined role of artificial intelligence, big data, and social media in shaping political behavior in India. The study found that digital technologies significantly influence political campaigns, voter targeting, and political communication strategies. The author highlighted the increasing use of data analytics and social media by Indian political parties to mobilize voters and influence public opinion. However, the research also warned about privacy concerns, political manipulation, and threats to democratic integrity arising from algorithm-driven political communication.

1.4 Objectives of the Study:

- The study the role of social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube in influencing political activism and participation in the village.

- To analyze the impact of social media on political awareness and political mobilization among youth, farmers, and other social groups

1.5 Research Methodology:

The present study is primarily based on descriptive and analytical research methodology. Both primary and secondary sources of data are used for the study. Primary data are collected through self structured interview-schedule with residents of Village Balluana. Respondents include youth, farmers, women, labourers, and other social groups to understand their awareness and use of social media for political communication and participation. Secondary data are collected from books, research articles, journals, newspapers, government reports, and online sources related to social media for the present study a total sample size of 100 respondents has been selected through the random sampling method

1.6 Major Findings:

This chapter presents the major findings derived from the analysis and interpretation of data collected from the respondents of Village Balluana, District Bathinda (Punjab). The chapter highlights the role of social media platforms in political awareness, political mobilization, voting behavior, and political participation among different social groups such as youth, farmers, women and laborers.

- The study found that 58% of respondents belonged to the age group of 18–35 years. This indicates that younger individuals constitute a significant segment of social media users and are more actively involved in political communication through digital platforms.
- The study revealed that 83% of respondents use social media platforms. This finding indicates that social media has become a common and influential medium of communication and information sharing in Village Balluana.
- WhatsApp emerged as the most frequently used social media platform, preferred by 49% of respondents. Its accessibility and ease of communication make it the dominant platform for social interaction and political information exchange.
- Around 61% of respondents reported sharing political posts, videos, and messages online. This suggests that social media users are not merely consumers of information but also active participants in political communication.
- 71% of respondents follow political news or political leaders on social media. This demonstrates that digital media has become a significant source of political updates and leadership communication.
- More than half of the respondents (54%) believe that social media motivates political participation. Digital platforms encourage citizens to engage in political discussions and civic activities.

- 60% of respondents believe that social media helps organize political meetings, campaigns, and protests. The findings highlight the effectiveness of digital platforms in political mobilization and coordination.
- The study revealed that 60% of respondents believe social media influences farmers regarding agricultural policies and farmers' movements. Digital media has become an important source of agricultural and political information for farmers.
- The study found that 66% of respondents believe social media has strengthened political mobilization, while 66% also agree that it positively contributes to political participation. Overall, social media is perceived as a powerful instrument for democratic engagement, political awareness, and civic activism in Village Balluana.

1.7 General Discussion:

The present study examined the role of social media in promoting political mobilization and political activism among the residents of Village Balluana, District Bathinda (Punjab). The findings indicate that social media has become a significant medium for political communication, awareness, and participation, particularly among youth and farmers. A large proportion of respondents actively use platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X to obtain political information, follow political leaders, share political content, and participate in online discussions. These findings support the argument that digital platforms have transformed traditional patterns of political participation by enabling faster communication, broader dissemination of information, and greater citizen engagement.

The study further reveals that social media has contributed positively to political mobilization by facilitating the organization of political meetings, campaigns, and public movements. Respondents perceived digital platforms as effective tools for increasing political awareness and encouraging democratic participation. The dominance of WhatsApp as the primary communication platform demonstrates the growing importance of instant messaging applications in shaping public opinion and political discourse in rural areas. The findings are consistent with contemporary literature, which suggests that social media reduces communication barriers and strengthens participatory democracy by allowing citizens to engage directly with political issues and representatives.

Though, the study also acknowledges that the increasing influence of social media presents certain challenges. The rapid circulation of misinformation, fake news, political polarization, and digitally manipulated content can adversely affect informed decision-making and democratic values. Therefore, while social media has strengthened political activism and civic engagement, its democratic potential depends on responsible usage, digital literacy, and effective regulatory mechanisms. Overall, the study concludes that social media has emerged as a powerful catalyst for

political awareness, mobilization, and citizen participation in Village Balluana. At the same time, sustained efforts by government institutions, educational organizations, civil society, and digital platforms are necessary to promote ethical digital behavior, combat misinformation, and ensure that social media continues to serve as a constructive instrument for strengthening democracy and inclusive political participation.

1.8 Conclusion:

The study concludes that social media has emerged as an effective tool for political mobilization and activism in Village Balluana, Bathinda. Digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X have significantly enhanced political awareness by providing citizens with easy access to political information and opportunities for participation. The findings indicate that social media encourages civic engagement, facilitates political campaigns, and strengthens democratic participation, especially among youth and farmers. At the same time, the study recognizes challenges such as misinformation, fake news, and digital manipulation, which may negatively influence public opinion and democratic processes. Therefore, promoting digital literacy, responsible social media use, and effective regulation is essential to ensure that social media continues to contribute positively to democratic governance and informed citizen participation.

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