

SOCIAL MEDIA, POLITICAL FRAMES AND USER ENGAGEMENT: ANALYZING BJP AND AITC CAMPAIGNS ON META DURING THE WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2026

Aakash Shaw

Assistant Professor & Head Department of Journalism and Mass Communication Vivekananda College

Research Scholar Department of Journalism and Mass Communication University of Calcutta

Email: aakash.shaw.07@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The growing use of social media has transformed political communication by allowing political parties to directly present their messages, frame public issues, mobilize supporters and interact with citizens. Social media therefore provides an important space for contemporary political campaigning and political engagement (Boulianne, 2015; Chadwick, 2017). Against this background, the present study examines the political communication strategies of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) on Meta during the pre-election period of February, March and April 2026 in the context of the West Bengal Assembly Election. The study adopts a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative analysis of posts, likes, comments and shares with qualitative analysis of major political frames and campaign narratives. A total of 1,024 BJP posts and 919 AITC posts were examined. The findings indicate that BJP maintained a

higher volume of posting and generated greater visible engagement throughout the study period. BJP's communication primarily focused on corruption, government scams, women's security, crime, public meetings and the demand for political change, particularly through the slogan "Paltano Dorkar Chai BJP Sarkar." In contrast, AITC emphasized regional identity, welfare schemes such as Lakhir Bhandar, development, public meetings and resistance to BJP, reflected in the slogan "Jotoi koro hamla, abar jitbe Bangla." The study shows that Meta functioned as an important platform for political framing, mobilisation and identity construction. However, visible engagement should not be treated as direct evidence of voter support or electoral influence. The findings suggest that BJP's change-oriented narrative corresponded with the broader electoral shift, while AITC retained substantial support through welfare and regional-identity messaging.

KEYWORDS: Social Media Political Communication Political campaigns Political Framing
BJP AITC West Bengal Assembly Election 2026

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of internet and social media has significantly changed the communication scenario in contemporary society. Earlier, political parties and candidates mainly depended on newspapers, television, radio, public meetings, rallies, posters, leaflets, and interpersonal networks to communicate with voters. Today, social media platforms such as Meta (formerly Facebook), Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter) have become important spaces for socio-political communication, campaign promotion, political debate, and citizen participation. Political parties can publish speeches, videos, photographs, campaign slogans, policy claims, criticism of opponents, development claims and calls for participation. Social media users can like, comment, share, criticize, support and reinterpret political content. This transformation is particularly significant for young people and university students because they constitute one of the most active groups of social media users. For youths, social media is not simply a source of entertainment or interpersonal communication; it is increasingly becoming a space where socio-political information is encountered, discussed, interpreted, supported, challenged, and sometimes contested.

The Indian political context makes this subject particularly significant. Political parties have increasingly used social media for campaigning, mobilization and image building. The study identifies examples such as the online campaign around the recruitment scam movement, student participation in political movements, and the use of social media by political parties during elections. In West Bengal, the 2026 Assembly election was especially significant because political competition was intense and social media

became one of the important spaces in which the two major political parties communicated their campaign narratives on social media.

The present research paper focuses on the relationship between Meta (formerly Facebook) based political communication and the political behavior of youth in West Bengal. The term “political behavior” is used broadly here to include political awareness, interest, discussion, engagement with political content, perception of parties and possible influence on political participation and voting intention. The study does not assume that every online interaction becomes offline political participation. Instead, it asks how exposure to and engagement with political content may contribute to the political environment in which young people form opinions.

The central argument of this paper is therefore not that Facebook mechanically caused a particular election result. Rather, Facebook worked as a political communication environment in which parties framed issues, repeated messages, mobilized supporters and competed for public attention. Young users were important participants in this environment. The content evidence also shows that highly engaging political posts were concentrated around emotionally charged issues, political conflict, development, identity and public meetings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Political communication refers to the production, circulation and interpretation of messages that have political consequences. Graber & Smith (2005) emphasizes that political communication includes the creation, reception and distribution of communication that may have direct or indirect effects on politics. In the digital environment, political communication has become more continuous

and interactive. Politicians can speak directly to citizens, citizens can respond publicly, and messages can circulate rapidly through networks. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) describe social media as internet-based applications built around Web 2.0 that facilitate the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social media users can not only create and circulate messages amongst social media platforms but also engages users by giving them an option to reflect their opinions or actions by way of clicking likes, comments and shares that become visible signs of interaction and also help messages reach wider networks. The study connects this interactive environment with Thompson's argument that communication technologies can change how people experience and understand their social world. In political communication, this means that the medium itself can shape the conditions under which political information is encountered.

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

Political socialization is concerned with understanding both the political system and the development of individuals as political citizens. Broadly speaking, research in this area focuses on two interconnected questions. First, it seeks to understand how political systems operate, change, and maintain stability over time. Second, it examines how individuals gradually develop political beliefs, values, attitudes, identities, and patterns of political behaviour.

From a **political-system perspective**, scholars are particularly interested in understanding how differences in political socialization contribute to the functioning and development of political systems. Political socialization is viewed not only as a process through which citizens learn about politics but also as an important mechanism through which political

systems gain legitimacy and public support. Through family, educational institutions, peer groups, media, political organizations, and other social environments, individuals acquire political knowledge and develop attitudes toward political institutions, leaders, parties, and democratic processes.

The political characteristics of citizens can, therefore, have wider consequences for the functioning of a political system. Citizens' political knowledge, opinions, values, attitudes, skills, expectations, behavioural intentions, and actual participation may influence how they respond to political institutions and public authorities. In this sense, political socialization is connected with broader political outcomes such as political stability, social cooperation, institutional trust, participation, and the degree of consensus or conflict within a society. Social media platforms like Meta may therefore influence political socialization in at least three ways. First, it increases access to political information. Second, it makes political discussion more visible. Third, it allows users to perform political identity publicly by liking, commenting on or sharing content.

AGENDA-SETTING THEORY

The literature on agenda-setting provides an important theoretical foundation for analysing political posts on social media. McCombs and Shaw (1972) in Agenda Setting Theory demonstrated that mass media may influence what people think about by giving greater attention to certain issues. In the social media environment, political parties themselves can participate directly in agenda-setting. Instead of waiting for journalists to decide which issues deserve attention, political organizations can repeatedly post about selected issues. Agenda-setting theory suggests that the social media content analyzed in this study provides a useful example of issue selection.

BJP repeatedly highlighted corruption, crime, unemployment, farmers' concerns and criticism of the TMC government. TMC highlighted development, government schemes, public meetings, social welfare and criticism of BJP. By repeatedly presenting these issues, each party attempted to define what should be politically important. The study does not claim that agenda-setting alone explains youth behaviour. Instead, agenda-setting provides a useful way to understand why repeated themes matter.

FRAMING OF POLITICAL ISSUES

Agenda-setting explains the importance given to issues, while framing helps explain how those issues are presented. Entman (1993) argues that framing involves selecting certain aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in communication. A political issue does not have a single natural meaning; it can be presented in different ways. The same issue may be framed as development, failure, corruption, communal division, injustice or political opportunity. Political actors use frames to define problems, identify causes, make moral judgments and suggest possible solutions.

This concept is highly relevant to the present study on West Bengal election 2026, BJP and TMC did not simply talk about the same political issues in identical ways. They presented competing interpretations. It was noticed that government welfare schemes could be framed as evidence of development by the ruling party but as ineffective or corrupt by the opposition. Farmers' concerns could be presented as evidence of government failure or as evidence of the political failure of an opponent. Women's safety could be framed as an administrative problem or as evidence of broader political failure. The study's content analysis clearly reflects this competitive framing process. BJP posts frequently

presented TMC as corrupt, ineffective and responsible for unemployment and insecurity. TMC posts, on the other hand, highlighted development and welfare while criticizing BJP and presenting political issues through the perspective of Bengal's identity and political interests.

USES AND GRATIFICATION THEORY

The interactive character of social media is also makes uses-and-gratifications thinking relevant. Young people may use political content to obtain information, express identity, discuss issues, entertain themselves, support a political side or understand current events. The dissertation's literature review cites research showing that Facebook use, information quality and political interest can encourage online political participation among youth.

Political engagement should be understood as broader than voting. It may include following political pages, reading political content, liking, commenting, sharing, discussing politics with others, attending meetings, participating in campaigns and eventually voting. The present study therefore treats social media engagement as one part of a larger political-participation process.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

The emergence of social media has fundamentally altered the structure of communication landscape. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as internet-based applications that facilitate the creation and exchange of user-generated content. This definition is important for understanding Facebook because users are not simply passive consumers. They can produce, reproduce and circulate messages.

Benkler (2006), in *The Wealth of Networks*, argues that the networked information environment has changed the traditional relationship between information producers and consumers. In conventional mass communication, political information generally moved from relatively powerful institutional actors such as political parties, governments, journalists, and media organizations toward audiences. Digital networks have weakened this one-directional structure by allowing ordinary users to create, circulate, comment upon, and modify political information. This development is particularly relevant to students because social media enables them to become both consumers and producers of political communication.

Chadwick (2017) develops this argument through the concept of the **hybrid media system**. According to Chadwick, old and new media do not simply replace one another; instead, they interact with and influence one another. Political communication therefore takes place through an interconnected system involving television, newspapers, online news portals, Facebook, X, YouTube, WhatsApp, and other platforms. A political statement made by a leader may first appear on Facebook, then be discussed on television, reported by newspapers, converted into memes, and circulated again through WhatsApp. For students, this creates a political information environment in which the boundaries between mainstream journalism, political communication, interpersonal discussion, and user-generated content become increasingly blurred.

Bennett and Segerberg (2012) further explain contemporary digital mobilization through the concept of **connective action**. Unlike traditional collective action, which often requires formal organizations, common ideologies, and centralized leadership, connective action can develop through

personalized digital communication. Individuals may participate by sharing a post, using a hash tag, creating a meme, commenting on political content, or forwarding campaign messages. This is particularly relevant to students because their political participation may not always take the form of formal membership in political organizations. Instead, they may participate through relatively low-cost online activities.

The literature suggests that social media has expanded the meaning of political participation. Political engagement can now include liking political content, following political leaders, commenting on campaign messages, sharing political videos, participating in online discussions, creating political memes, joining digital groups, signing online petitions, or using social media to mobilize others.

SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

One of the most important questions in the literature is whether social media actually increases political participation. Boulianne's (2015) meta-analysis examined 36 studies concerning social media use and participation. The study found an overall positive relationship between social media use and civic and political participation. However, the findings also indicated that the strength of this relationship differs across studies and contexts. This is important because it suggests that simply using social media does not automatically make a person politically active.

Similarly, Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux, and Zheng (2014), using two-wave panel data, found that social media news use can have direct effects on offline political participation and indirect effects through political expression. In other words, social media may contribute to political participation by first encouraging people to express political opinions and engage in political communication.

Abdu et al (2017), in their study of youth online political participation, examined Facebook use, interaction with politicians, information quality and political interest. Their survey of 372 young people found that Facebook use, quality of political information and political interest were positively associated with online political participation, although interaction with politicians itself did not significantly predict participation. This finding is particularly relevant to the present research because it suggests that simply being connected to political actors is not enough. The nature and quality of information and the user's own political interest also matter. This point helps explain why the present study considers not only the number of Facebook posts but also their themes, messages and engagement. A post about a public rally, corruption, unemployment, women's safety or development may generate a different response from a routine organizational announcement.

Rani et al (2017) examined political content posted by youth on Facebook and found that Facebook was perceived as a space for political information and participation. Their qualitative study suggested that young users employed Facebook for expressing political views and presenting political identities. This is useful for the present research because political behaviour should not be understood only as voting. Political expression itself can be an important form of political behaviour.

Valenzuela, Park, and Kee (2009) examined Facebook use among 2,603 college students and found positive relationships between Facebook intensity and civic engagement, social trust, and political participation. Although the study was conducted outside India, its focus on college students makes it particularly relevant to the present research. It

suggests that social networking sites can become spaces for developing social connections and political involvement.

More recent research has continued to support the relationship between youth social media use and political participation. A 2026 meta-analytic review by Verma, Gardia, and Das synthesized 21 empirical studies and reported a moderate positive relationship between social media use and youth political participation. Importantly, the authors also found substantial heterogeneity across studies, suggesting that factors such as research method, sample size, and social context influence the relationship.

POLITICAL EFFICACY, DISCUSSION, AND EXPRESSION

Political efficacy is another important concept for understanding the impact of social media on students. Political efficacy refers broadly to the belief that one understands politics and can influence political processes. Students who regularly encounter political information may gradually develop greater confidence in discussing political issues.

Borhan-Eddine, Fee, Adnan, and Nor (2020), in their systematic review of research on youth political participation, identified political efficacy, political discussion, and political expression as important factors connecting social media use with youth political participation. Their review indicates that social media does not influence political participation through exposure alone. Rather, political participation may develop when exposure leads to discussion, expression, and a sense of political competence.

Heiss and Matthes (2016) provide particularly useful evidence because they experimentally examined how politicians' participatory Facebook posts influenced young people's political efficacy. Their study involved 125 young participants aged 15–20 years and found

that the manner in which politicians communicate with young people on Facebook matters. Participatory forms of communication can encourage young people to feel more politically capable.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND INDIAN YOUTH

The Indian context requires special attention because political communication in India is strongly influenced by linguistic, cultural, religious, regional, caste, class, and ideological differences. The growth of smartphones and inexpensive internet access has expanded the reach of social media among young Indians.

Mir (2022), in a survey-based study of social media and political participation among Indian students, examined the relationship between social media use and students' political participation. The study adds to the growing Indian literature showing that social media has become an important source of political information and political interaction among students.

Recent Indian research similarly suggests that social media is becoming an important channel for youth political engagement. Raikar (2026) argues that platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and X enable Indian youth to engage with political news, campaigns, discussions, and public events. The study also emphasizes the dual nature of social media: it can facilitate political awareness and participation while simultaneously providing opportunities for misinformation and manipulation.

Gokhale, Patil, and Deshpande (2026) likewise identify political awareness, civic engagement, mobilization, misinformation, echo chambers, and polarization as interconnected dimensions of social media use among Indian youth. Their study suggests that social media can increase access to political information while also

creating a fragmented information environment in which individuals may encounter politically biased content.

FACEBOOK, POLITICAL IDENTITY AND GROUP FORMATION

Social media also provides an environment in which political identity can be publicly displayed. Following a political page, sharing a political slogan or commenting on a political post can become a form of identity expression. This is particularly important in highly competitive elections. Political parties do not communicate only through policy arguments; they construct identities such as “supporter,” “change-seeker,” “Bengali,” “development-oriented citizen,” or “defender of democratic values.”

Rani et al. (2017) found that youth used Facebook not simply for receiving information but also for displaying political opinions and political identities. This idea is relevant to the Facebook posts of both BJP and TMC in the 2021 West Bengal election. BJP's “Ebar Banglay BJP” and “Sonar Bangla” narratives sought to construct an identity associated with political change and development. TMC's communication emphasized Bengal, development and slogans such as “Bangla Nijer Meye Ke Chai.” The result was a competition not merely between policies but between competing ideas of political identity.

This is important for understanding Facebook engagement. A highly interactive political environment is not necessarily a highly deliberative environment. People may be politically active while simultaneously becoming more polarized.

SOCIAL MEDIA-BASED POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING IN WEST BENGAL

The literature specifically related to West Bengal is especially valuable for the present research. The 2021 West Bengal Assembly

Election provided a significant case of digitally mediated political campaigning. Political parties increasingly used Facebook, X, YouTube, WhatsApp, and other digital platforms alongside traditional campaign methods.

Shome, Neyazi, and Ng (2024) examined the Facebook advertisements of the two major political parties during the 2021 West Bengal Assembly Election. Their thematic analysis demonstrated that political advertisements were not simply about policy issues. They also used identity, ideology, gender, cultural symbolism, and strong-leader imagery. The study shows how visual communication can personalize political campaigns and connect political messages with existing cultural and social identities. This finding is crucial for the study because young social media users are exposed to political communication that is increasingly visual. A political message may be communicated through a short video, photograph, meme, graphic, slogan, music, or emotionally charged image rather than through a detailed policy document.

Banerjee and Mitra (2025) further examined gendered visual politics during the 2021 West Bengal election. Their study analysed 1,033 visual artefacts from eight women candidates and 205 visual materials from the Facebook and X pages of four major political parties. They found that political actors used clothing, religious symbols, domestic activities, public performances, speeches, and other visual cues to construct political identities. This research demonstrates that social media campaigns can reproduce existing social and cultural meanings rather than simply creating new forms of politics. For youths, repeated exposure to such representations may influence perceptions of political leadership, gender roles, political parties, and candidates.

FEAR, IDENTITY, AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

One of the most significant recent contributions to the research literature is the study by Majumdar, Ray, Bhowmick, and Datta (2026). The researchers analysed 391 publicly available Facebook posts published during the three weeks preceding the 2021 West Bengal Assembly Election. They focused on online fear speech, identity, threats, and political mobilization. Their findings demonstrate that political candidates strategically used violent and non-violent forms of fear speech and connected political messages with existing communal and partisan identities. This study has considerable significance for research on students because young users may be especially exposed to emotionally powerful political content. Fear, anger, pride, identity, and political hostility can increase attention and encourage users to share content rapidly. However, emotional engagement does not necessarily represent informed political participation.

The study also stresses on the argument that social media campaigns should be examined not only in terms of the amount of information they provide but also in terms of the **emotional frames** they employ. Social media users may remember an emotionally powerful political video or meme more easily than a detailed policy statement. Consequently, social media-based campaigning can influence political attitudes through affective rather than purely rational processes.

POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND ECHO CHAMBERS

Another important issue in the literature is political polarization. Social media allows users to select political pages, groups, influencers, and networks that are consistent with their existing beliefs. Algorithmic recommendation systems may further reinforce this tendency by

repeatedly presenting users with similar content. Recent research on Indian youth has highlighted the possibility that social media can deepen political divisions. Chowan (2026), for example, argues that social media can increase youth political engagement while simultaneously creating echo chambers and political polarization. The concept of the echo chamber is important for students because university environments traditionally encourage exposure to different ideas. Social media can strengthen this exposure, but it can also create the opposite effect. A student who follows only one political party or ideological community may receive predominantly supportive information and comparatively little exposure to opposing arguments.

This can create what may be described as **selective political exposure**. Instead of using social media to understand competing political viewpoints, users may use it primarily to confirm existing beliefs. Therefore, the impact of political campaigns on students should not be measured only through political awareness. It should also examine whether social media encourages **political openness or ideological rigidity**.

MISINFORMATION, FAKE NEWS, AND POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING

Misinformation is one of the major concerns associated with digital political communication. Social media allows political information to circulate rapidly, often without conventional editorial verification. Political campaigns can therefore operate in an environment where authentic information, propaganda, satire, misleading content, and fabricated claims may appear together. Guess, Nagler, and Tucker (2019), using Facebook data from the 2016 U.S. presidential election, found that sharing fake-news content was relatively uncommon overall, although it varied significantly across groups. Their study reminds researchers that concerns about

misinformation should not automatically lead to the assumption that all social media users are constantly sharing false information. Nevertheless, the political significance of misinformation remains substantial because even a relatively small amount of false information can become highly visible when it is amplified through networks. This is particularly relevant to students, who may receive political information from peers rather than established news organizations.

In the Indian context, Jakesch, et. al (2021) examined coordinated political amplification during the 2019 Indian general election. Their study investigated 600 WhatsApp groups and identified coordinated campaigns involving pre-written tweets and hashtag manipulation. They found evidence of organized efforts to generate Twitter trends through coordinated activity. Such findings demonstrate that political campaigns on social media may not always be spontaneous expressions of citizens' opinions. They may involve strategic coordination by political organizations. This raises an important question: **When a political message appears popular online, does that popularity necessarily represent genuine public opinion?**

VISUAL POLITICS AND PERSONALIZATION

The increasing importance of visual communication is another major theme in the literature. Social media campaigns often emphasize political personalities rather than detailed party programmes. Photographs, short videos, slogans, memes, and symbolic imagery can create a strong personal connection between leaders and followers.

The West Bengal Election campaign studies by Shome et al. (2024) and Banerjee and Mitra (2025) demonstrate that visual political communication can combine identity, ideology, gender, culture, and leadership, suggesting that political campaigns increasingly attempt to

create an **emotional and personal relationship between political leaders and social media users**. Such personalization may influence how political leaders are evaluated. Youth may develop impressions of a leader based not only on policies or governance performance but also on perceived personality, authenticity, charisma, communication style, humour, visual presentation, and social-media presence.

This development can be understood through Chadwick's (2017) hybrid media framework because online political images can quickly move into television news, newspapers, and offline political discussions. Therefore, social media does not operate separately from mainstream media; rather, it interacts with the broader political communication system.

FROM ONLINE PARTICIPATION TO OFFLINE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

A major debate in the literature concerns whether online political participation produces meaningful offline participation. Social media may encourage students to comment, like, share, post, or debate without necessarily motivating them to vote, attend political meetings, participate in demonstrations, volunteer for campaigns, or engage in community activities.

Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2014) provide evidence that social media news use and political expression can be associated with offline political participation. However, more recent research suggests that the relationship is not always straightforward. Barati (2023), using several quantitative approaches, found strong effects of casual social media use on online political participation but limited or negligible effects on some forms of offline political participation and voting behaviour. This suggests that online political activity and offline political activity should not automatically be treated as identical. For students or youth this distinction is especially

important. A student who shares a political post may not necessarily vote for the party represented in the post. Similarly, commenting on a political issue does not necessarily indicate strong political commitment. The proposed research should therefore distinguish between **online political engagement, political attitudes, political intention, and actual political behaviour**.

RESEARCH GAP

The existing literature clearly demonstrates that social media has become an important part of contemporary political communication. International studies have established relationships between social media use, political expression, political efficacy, civic engagement, and political participation (Boulianne, 2015; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2014; Valenzuela et al., 2009). Theoretical works by Benkler (2006), Bennett and Segerberg (2012), and Chadwick (2017) provide useful frameworks for understanding networked political communication and digital mobilization.

Indian studies have further demonstrated that social media has become increasingly important for youth political engagement. However, the literature also identifies negative consequences such as misinformation, polarization, selective exposure, echo chambers, and political manipulation. Most importantly, recent West Bengal scholarship has concentrated heavily on **campaign content itself**, particularly during the 2026 Assembly Election. Studies have examined Facebook advertisements, visual politics, gender, identity, fear speech, and political mobilization (Banerjee & Mitra, 2025; Majumdar et al., 2026; Shome et al., 2024). These studies provide an important understanding of how political actors communicate through social media.

First, much of the international literature examines social media and political participation at a broad level, while relatively fewer studies focus specifically on Facebook-based political communication among university youth in Kolkata. Second, Indian research has frequently focused on national elections, especially the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections. There is comparatively less detailed research examining the West Bengal Assembly Election of 2026 through a combined study of party Facebook content and youth perceptions. Third, there is a need to combine message analysis and audience research. Studying only Facebook posts tells us what political parties communicated, while studying only survey responses tells us what audiences believe. The present study attempts to connect the two.

Fourth, previous studies often use social-media use as a broad variable. The present research goes further by examining the actual content categories used by BJP and TMC, including development, corruption, crime, political fraud, public meetings, opposition narratives and organizational communication.

However, there remains comparatively limited empirical research specifically examining **how students of West Bengal receive, interpret, evaluate, and respond to social media-based political campaigns**. There is a need to move from analyzing what political parties post to examining **what happens to students after they encounter such content**. A focused study of West Bengal students can therefore examine several dimensions simultaneously: frequency of exposure to political content, preferred social media platforms, political awareness, political efficacy, political discussion, political attitudes, candidate evaluation, voting intention, online political participation, offline political participation, exposure to misinformation, political polarization, and trust in social media information.

Finally, there remains an important methodological gap between online engagement and political influence. Likes, comments and shares demonstrate interaction but cannot by themselves establish persuasion. The present study therefore contributes by combining engagement indicators with survey evidence while maintaining a cautious interpretation of causality.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the nature and occurrence of political posts published on the Facebook pages of BJP and AITC during February, March and April 2026.
2. To identify the major political issues and themes used by the two parties in their social media – Meta pages.
3. To examine the level of visible engagement with political posts through likes, comments and shares.
4. To compare the social media – ‘Meta’ communication patterns of BJP and AITC during the pre-election period.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1. What types of political content were most frequently posted by BJP and AITC on Social Media pages – specifically ‘Meta’ during pre election campaign (February, March and April 2026)?
- RQ2. What major issues and themes were used by the two parties in their political communication?
- RQ3. Which types of Facebook posts attracted higher levels of likes, comments and shares?
- RQ4. How did the Facebook communication strategies of BJP and AITC differ?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study follows a mixed-method research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component includes the quantitative analysis of 'Meta' engagement indicators. The qualitative component consists of thematic interpretation of political posts published by **the official Meta pages of BJP West Bengal** and AITC. The mixed-method approach is appropriate because the research question has two sides.

Study area and population: The geographical focus is West Bengal as the study focuses on the West Bengal Assembly Elections 2026. The content component focuses on the communication done on the official Social media – 'Meta' pages of BJP and AITC during the pre Legislative Assembly election period of February, March and April 2026.

Data sources

Principle sources of primary data were used- 'Meta' posts on the official social media – Meta pages of BJP West Bengal and Trinamool Congress (TMC) / All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) during the pre-election period of February, March and April 2026.

Categories for Quantitative measures

The principal quantitative measures were:

- number of posts;
- likes;
- comments;
- shares;
- comparative frequency of categories;

Engagement was treated as an observable indicator of audience interaction rather than as direct proof of persuasion.

Categorical Frames for Qualitative Content-analysis

I) BJP posts were organized into seven broad categorical frames:

1. *Posts relating Govt. Scams/ corruption*
2. *Posts relating Women Security Issue*
3. *Posts related to Janasabha*
4. *"Paltano Dorkar Chai BJP Sarkar"*
5. *Posts Opposing TMC*
6. *Post relating Crime Issues*
7. *Others*

II) AITC posts were organized into seven broad categorical frames:

1. *Regional Language Pride*
2. *Lakhir Bhandar*
3. *Posts related to Janasabha*
4. *"Jotoi koro hamla,abar jitbe Bangla"*
5. *Posts Opposing BJP*
6. *Post relating to Development Schemes*
7. *Others*

These categories are useful for identifying the broad communication priorities of each party.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

1. Data and analytical approach

The analysis considers three visible engagement indicators:

- **Likes**
- **Comments**
- **Shares**

The quantitative analysis examines the Facebook political communication of the BJP and AITC during February, March and April 2026. The analysis focuses on three major dimensions: the frequency of political posts, the major political themes and issues represented in those posts, and the visible engagement generated through likes, comments and shares.

TABLE 1- AGGREGATE VISIBLE ENGAGEMENT

Table 1.

Party	Month	Likes	Comments	Shares	Total engagement
BJP	February 2026	15,04,577	84,030	250,930	17,89,537
BJP	March 2026	16,15011	87,497	273,272	19,75,780
BJP	April 2026	16,23,011	84,497	271,214	19,78,722
AITC	February 2026	12,81,300	67,819	2,32,211	15,81,330
AITC	March 2026	13,41,070	83,750	2,78,200	17,03,020
AITC	April 2026	13,52,640	82,610	2,67,090	17,02,340

For measuring visible engagement, the study uses a **Visible Engagement Score (VES)** calculated as:

VES = LIKES + COMMENTS + SHARES

The VES is a descriptive measure of visible interaction. It should not be treated as a direct indicator of public support, voter intention or electoral influence because one person may interact with multiple posts, while many people may view content without interacting with it. This should be understood as a

descriptive engagement index, not as a measure of unique users or actual voter influence. A person may interact more than once or may see content without interacting.

The BJP dataset classifies posts mainly into **Paltano Dorkar Chai BJP Sarkar, Janasabha, Political Scam Issues, Women Security, Posts Opposing TMC and Crime Issues.**

The AITC data use categories such as **Jotoi koro hamla,abar jitbe Bangla, Lakhir Bhandar, Development Schemes, Regional Language Pride and Posts Opposing BJP.**

<https://journalskart.com/>

2. VOLUME OF MONTHLY POSTING

TABLE 2: OVERALL VOLUME OF SOCIAL MEDIA VISIBLE ENGAGEMENT

Table 2.

Party	Month	Stated total posts	Posts with visible engagement data	Average visible engagement/post
BJP	February 2026	321	318	5627
BJP	March 2026	356	351	5629
BJP	April 2026	347	346	5719
AITC	February 2026	293	292	5416
AITC	March 2026	312	312	5458
AITC	April 2026	314	313	5438

The data show that BJP published 321 posts in February, 356 in March and 347 in April 2026. Thus, it's posting volume increased by approximately **8.1% from February to April**, although it reached its highest point in March.

AITC published 293 posts in February, 312 in March and 314 in April. It's posting volume therefore increased by approximately **7.2%** between February and April.

Both parties **increased their Facebook posting activity during the three-month period**, although BJP maintained a higher volume of posts throughout. This suggests that both parties treated Meta (formerly Facebook) as an important campaign communication platform during the pre-election period. BJP displayed a somewhat more intensive posting pattern, while AITC followed a steady upward pattern.

The data show that BJP published 321 posts in February, 356 in March and 347 in April 2026. Thus, it's posting volume increased by approximately **8.1% from February to April**, although it reached its highest point in March.

AITC published 293 posts in February, 312 in March and 314 in April. It's posting volume therefore increased by approximately **7.2%** between February and April.

Both parties **increased their Facebook posting activity during the three-month period**, although BJP maintained a higher volume of posts throughout. This suggests that both parties treated Meta (formerly Facebook) as an important campaign communication platform during the pre-election period. BJP displayed a somewhat more intensive posting pattern, while AITC followed a steady upward pattern.

TOTAL VISIBLE ENGAGEMENT - MAJOR FINDING

BJP's total visible engagement increased from **17,89,537 in February to 19,78,722 in April**, representing an increase of approximately **10.6%**. AITC's engagement increased from **15,81,330 to 17,02,340**, representing an increase of approximately **7.7%**. The findings show that **both parties experienced increased**

visible engagement, while BJP remained ahead of AITC in all three months. BJP's advantage was approximately 2.08 lakh engagements in February, 2.73 lakh in March and 2.76 lakh in

April. This indicates that BJP maintained a consistently stronger level of visible interaction during the study period.

1. Average Visible Engagement per post

TABLE 3. - ENGAGEMENT INTENSITY

Table 3.

Party	February 2026	March 2026	April 2026	Change
BJP	5627	5629	5719	+1.6%
AITC	5416	5458	5438	+0.4%

These figures provide an important findings for Objective 3. The data suggest that **increased posting frequency did not automatically produce a proportionate increase in engagement per post**. Instead, engagement intensity remained relatively stable. BJP recorded a higher average visible engagement

per post in all three months and reached its highest level in April (5,719). AITC increased slightly from February to March but declined marginally in April. Thus, BJP's posts generated somewhat greater visible interaction on average than those of AITC.

4. POLITICAL PARTY BASED CONTENT-CATEGORY ANALYSIS

TABLE 4. BJP: FREQUENCY OF RECORDED POSTS BY CATEGORY

Table 4.

BJP category	February 2026	March 2026	April 2026	Total
Posts relating Govt. Scams/ corruption	69	72	68	209
Posts relating Women Security Issue	66	68	71	205
Posts related to Janasabha	53	76	81	210
"Paltano Dorkar Chai BJP Sarkar"	26	28	27	81
Posts Opposing TMC	51	47	48	146
Post relating Crime Issues	41	52	51	144
Others	15	13	01	29
Total recorded posts	321	356	347	1024

BJP's 1,024 recorded posts were distributed across several political themes. The three largest categories were **Janasabha (210 posts; 20.5%)**, **government scams/corruption (209; 20.4%)**, and **women's security (205; 20.0%)**.

Posts opposing TMC accounted for 146 posts (14.3%), while crime-related posts accounted for 144 (14.1%). "Paltano Dorkar Chai BJP Sarkar" accounted for 81 posts (7.9%), and other posts constituted 29 (2.8%).

The pattern suggests that BJP's Facebook communication combined **political mobilisation with criticism of governance and**

issue-based opposition politics. Janasabha posts indicate an emphasis on mobilisation and campaign activity, while corruption/scam-related posts focused on alleged governmental failures. Women's security and crime were also prominent, showing the importance of security and law-and-order issues in BJP's political messaging.

Posts opposing TMC and the slogan "Paltano Dorkar Chai BJP Sarkar" further demonstrate an explicitly competitive and campaign-oriented communication strategy.

5. AITC BASED CONTENT-CATEGORY ANALYSIS

TABLE 4. BJP: FREQUENCY OF RECORDED POSTS BY CATEGORY

Table 5.

Category	February 2026	March 2026	April 2026	Total
Regional Language Pride	56	62	59	177
Lakhir Bhandar	46	52	51	149
Posts related to Janasabha	61	72	78	211
"Jotoi koro hamla,abar jitbe Bangla"	11	21	23	55
Posts Opposing BJP	69	54	59	182
Post relating to Development Schemes	39	43	41	123
Others	11	07	03	21
Total	293	311	314	918

AITC's content focused on **Janasabha, opposition to BJP, regional language pride, Lakhir Bhandar, development schemes and the slogan "Jotoi koro hamla, abar jitbe Bangla."** Janasabha was the largest category with 211 posts, followed by posts opposing BJP with 182 posts and regional language pride

with 177 posts. Lakhir Bhandar accounted for 149 posts, development schemes for 123, and the campaign slogan for 55 posts.

The AITC pattern therefore gives considerable importance to **regional identity, welfare, development and political mobilisation**. The prominence of Lakhir Bhandar suggests the political communication of welfare-based governance, while regional language pride

indicates an emphasis on Bengali identity and regional political positioning. Posts opposing BJP show that countering the principal opposition party was also an important component of its Facebook strategy.

INFERENCES

1. Nature and occurrence of political posts

The data show that both BJP and AITC were highly active on Facebook during February–April 2026. BJP recorded 1,024 posts, while AITC recorded 919 stated posts. BJP maintained a higher posting volume in each month. However, both parties increased their activity over the period, suggesting that Facebook became an increasingly important component of their pre-election communication.

The nature of the posts was predominantly campaign-oriented, combining political mobilisation, issue-based communication, criticism of opponents and promotion of party narratives.

2. Major political issues and themes

The two parties used noticeably different thematic strategies. BJP concentrated on **Janasabha, corruption/scams, women's security, crime and opposition to TMC**. AITC emphasised **Janasabha, regional language pride, opposition to BJP, Lakhir Bhandar and development schemes**.

Thus, BJP's communication was comparatively more focused on **governance criticism, security and anti-incumbency-oriented themes**, whereas AITC relied more strongly on **regional identity, welfare, development and political defence**.

3. Visible engagement

BJP recorded higher total visible engagement in every month. Its VES increased by approximately 10.6% from February to April,

compared with approximately 7.7% for AITC. BJP also recorded higher average engagement per post throughout the period.

Therefore, the quantitative evidence indicates that BJP generated **greater visible interaction and slightly stronger engagement intensity**. However, these figures cannot be interpreted as direct evidence of greater electoral support.

4. Comparison of Meta communication patterns

The comparison shows that both parties used Facebook strategically, but with different communication emphases. BJP relied more heavily on **issue-based criticism, security, corruption and political change**, while AITC emphasised **regional identity, welfare, development and resistance to BJP**.

At the same time, Janasabha was a major category for both parties, showing that Facebook was used to amplify conventional campaign activities and political mobilisation. The higher engagement received by BJP suggests stronger visible interaction with its content, but the difference should be understood as a difference in **online engagement**, not necessarily in public approval.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA-BASED POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS OF BJP AND AITC

The qualitative analysis examines the political communication of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) West Bengal and the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) through their official Meta (formerly Facebook) pages during February, March and April 2026. These three months represent an important pre-election period before the West Bengal Legislative Assembly Election held in April 2026.

The analysis is based on seven broad categorical frames developed separately for each party. BJP posts were classified under

government scams/corruption, women's security, Janasabha, "Paltano Dorkar Chai BJP Sarkar," posts opposing TMC, crime issues and others. AITC posts were classified under regional language pride, Lakhir Bhandar, Janasabha, "Jotoi koro hamla, abar jitbe Bangla," posts opposing BJP, development schemes and others. The purpose of the qualitative analysis is not simply to count posts but to understand the political meanings and campaign narratives constructed through these categories and to examine how those narratives corresponded with the actual election outcome.

BJP: CONSTRUCTION OF AN ANTI-INCUMBENCY AND CHANGE NARRATIVE

The BJP's Facebook communication can broadly be understood as an attempt to construct a narrative of **political dissatisfaction, governance failure and the need for change**.

GOVERNMENT SCAMS AND CORRUPTION

Posts concerning government scams and corruption formed one of the most important BJP frames. Through this frame, BJP positioned itself as a critic of the incumbent TMC government. The repeated focus on corruption was politically significant because it transformed individual allegations and controversies into a broader narrative of **administrative failure and dissatisfaction with the ruling establishment**. From a communication perspective, repeated exposure to such themes could help establish an interpretive framework through which voters viewed the performance of the incumbent government. Rather than discussing isolated incidents, the posts could collectively create the impression that corruption was a continuing structural problem.

In the context of the 2026 result, this frame appears particularly important because BJP ultimately won 207 of the 294 Assembly seats. However, it would be methodologically incorrect to claim that corruption-related Facebook posts directly caused this result. Instead, the findings suggest that the BJP's online narrative was broadly consistent with an electoral campaign seeking to convert dissatisfaction with the incumbent into support for political change.

WOMEN'S SECURITY AND CRIME

Women's security and crime constituted another important component of the BJP's communication. These frames moved political discussion beyond conventional party politics and connected the election with **everyday concerns about safety, justice and law and order**. The political importance of this frame lies in its emotional dimension. Issues involving women's safety can create strong feelings of insecurity, anger and demand for accountability. When such issues are repeatedly communicated through social media, they can become part of a wider political narrative about the effectiveness of governance. The combination of women's security, crime and corruption therefore strengthened BJP's broader message that the existing government had failed to provide adequate governance and protection.

"PALTANO DORKAR CHAI BJP SARKAR"

The slogan "*Paltano Dorkar Chai BJP Sarkar*" means "*A change is needed; a BJP government is needed*," provided the BJP's campaign with a clear **change-oriented frame**. It transformed criticism into a direct political alternative: if the existing system was presented as problematic, voters were encouraged to consider a BJP government as the solution. This is significant from a political communication perspective because successful campaign communication generally requires both a problem definition

and a proposed alternative. BJP's criticism-oriented frames identified the problems, while the slogan supplied the alternative.

The eventual electoral result gives this narrative particular importance. BJP's 207 seats represented a clear majority in the 294-member Assembly. The result therefore shows that the campaign's broader political message of change corresponded with a substantial electoral shift. Nevertheless, correspondence should not be treated as proof of causation.

POSTS OPPOSING TMC

Posts directly opposing TMC reinforced the competitive nature of BJP's campaign. These posts created a clear **BJP-versus-TMC political binary**, helping simplify a complex electoral contest for social-media audiences. Such opposition-oriented communication can be useful during elections because it provides audiences with a clear distinction between the incumbent and the challenger. In combination with corruption, crime and women's security frames, anti-TMC posts helped construct BJP as the principal political alternative.

AITC: CONSTRUCTION OF A REGIONAL, WELFARE AND DEFENSIVE NARRATIVE

AITC's communication followed a somewhat different pattern. Its major frames were centered around **regional identity, welfare, development, political mobilization and resistance to BJP**.

REGIONAL LANGUAGE PRIDE

The regional language pride frame was particularly significant because it connected electoral politics with **Bengali linguistic and cultural identity**. Rather than presenting the election only as a contest between political parties, this frame could position the election as a question of protecting the interests and identity of Bengal. This type of communication can create an emotional connection with audiences because it links political choice with

a broader sense of belonging. It also provided AITC with a distinctive identity-based narrative against BJP. However, the 2026 result suggests that regional identity messaging, although politically significant, did not translate into an electoral majority for AITC. The party secured 80 seats compared with BJP's 207.

LAKHIR BHANDAR AND DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

The Lakhir Bhandar and development-related frames represented a different communication strategy. Instead of focusing primarily on criticism of the opposition, these posts highlighted **welfare delivery, government schemes and development achievements**. This allowed AITC to communicate the election as a choice between continuing an existing model of governance and changing it. Welfare communication can be particularly effective when political parties seek to connect government programmes with people's everyday lives. However, the electoral outcome indicates that the welfare and development narrative was not sufficient to retain the level of electoral dominance that AITC had previously enjoyed. The party received 40.80% of the vote, while BJP received 45.84%.

This is an important finding: **a party may have a strong welfare-oriented communication narrative without that narrative necessarily producing an electoral majority**.

“JOTOI KORO HAML A, ABAR JITBE BANGLA”

The slogan “*Jotoi koro hamla, abar jitbe Bangla*” means “**No matter how much you attack, Bengal will win again,**” constructed a narrative of **resistance, resilience and regional confidence**. It sought to portray AITC as a party capable of defending Bengal against political pressure from its principal opponent. The frame was therefore both defensive and emotional. Instead of merely presenting policy achievements, it sought to create a sense of collective regional confidence. Yet the final

electoral outcome demonstrates a gap between the projected campaign narrative and electoral performance. AITC remained a major political force, securing 80 seats and more than 40% of the statewide vote, but BJP's substantially larger seat tally indicates that the AITC narrative did not achieve sufficient electoral conversion across constituencies.

JANASABHA: THE COMMON COMMUNICATION FRAME

One of the most interesting findings is that **Janasabha-related posts appeared as an important frame for both parties.**

This demonstrates that Meta was not functioning independently from traditional election campaigning. Instead, it worked as a mechanism for **extending offline political mobilisation into the digital environment.**

Political meetings, rallies, speeches and public gatherings could be photographed, recorded and redistributed through Facebook, allowing a physical campaign event to reach audiences who were not physically present.

The Janasabha frame therefore represents the convergence of **traditional political mobilisation and digital communication.** It also helped create an impression of organisational strength, public participation and campaign momentum.

COMPARATIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE TWO CAMPAIGNS

The two parties constructed noticeably different political narratives.

BJP'S DOMINANT NARRATIVE CAN BE SUMMARISED AS:

Problem → dissatisfaction → criticism of government → security/corruption concerns → political change.

AITC'S DOMINANT NARRATIVE CAN BE

SUMMARISED AS:

Identity → welfare/development → regional pride → defence of Bengal → continuity/resistance.

This distinction is important for understanding the 2026 result. BJP's communication was largely **challenger-oriented**, while AITC's communication was largely **incumbent-oriented**. The challenger generally benefits from highlighting problems in the existing system and asking voters to consider an alternative. The incumbent, by contrast, has to defend its record and convince voters that existing programmes and achievements justify continuity. In this respect, BJP's categorical frames created a relatively coherent **anti-incumbency and change narrative**, while AITC's frames created a **performance, welfare and regional-identity narrative**.

The actual election result provides an important context for interpreting these campaign narratives. According to the Election Commission of India, BJP won **207 seats**, while AITC won **80 seats**. BJP also received **45.84% of the vote**, compared with **40.80% for AITC**.

The result therefore indicates a major electoral shift in favour of BJP. The qualitative findings suggest that BJP's social-media campaign was aligned with this broader political shift in three important ways.

First, BJP repeatedly highlighted **governance problems, corruption, women's security and crime**, thereby reinforcing a dissatisfaction-oriented political narrative.

Second, it converted criticism into a positive electoral proposition through **"Paltano Dorkar Chai BJP Sarkar."** The campaign therefore did not merely attack the incumbent; it presented political change as the proposed solution.

Third, its opposition-oriented posts helped maintain a clear political contrast between BJP and AITC.

AITC, meanwhile, attempted to defend its record through welfare and development communication while strengthening regional identity and resistance narratives. These frames remained politically relevant, as demonstrated by the party's 40.80% vote share and 80 Assembly seats.

Thus, the result should not be interpreted as showing that AITC's social-media campaign was ineffective. Rather, it suggests that its communication **retained a substantial electoral constituency but was unable to prevent a much larger seat conversion by BJP.**

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The qualitative analysis indicates that the Meta campaigns of BJP and AITC represented two competing ways of interpreting the 2026 West Bengal election. BJP attempted to frame the election around **change, governance failure, corruption, security, crime and opposition to TMC.** Its communication sought to convert dissatisfaction into a demand for an alternative government.

AITC attempted to frame the election around **Bengali identity, welfare, development, political resilience and opposition to BJP.** Its communication sought to defend its governing record and maintain its connection with regional identity. The eventual election result broadly corresponded with the stronger electoral performance of the BJP's change-oriented narrative. BJP's 207 seats compared with AITC's 80 indicate that the challenger succeeded in converting its campaign positioning into a much larger Assembly presence.

However, it would be academically inappropriate to conclude that **Meta alone caused the BJP victory.** Elections are influenced by many factors, including

candidate appeal, party organisation, local issues, economic and governance perceptions, leadership, alliances, constituency-level dynamics, voter turnout and offline campaigning. The present qualitative study can establish that the social-media narratives were **politically relevant and closely connected to the broader campaign environment,** but it cannot independently establish a causal relationship between Facebook exposure and individual voting behavior.

The study suggests that Meta functioned as an important arena for constructing, repeating and circulating political meanings during the 2026 West Bengal Assembly election campaign. BJP used the platform predominantly to construct a **change and anti-incumbency narrative,** while AITC used it to promote **regional identity, welfare, development and political continuity.** The election result gives particular significance to this contrast. BJP's eventual victory with 207 seats and 45.84% of the vote demonstrates that its broader political narrative successfully coexisted with a strong electoral performance. AITC nevertheless retained a substantial vote base, receiving 40.80% of the vote and winning 80 seats. Therefore, the most balanced conclusion is that **social media appears to have functioned as a significant campaign-supporting and narrative-building mechanism rather than as a single determining cause of the election result.** The Meta pages helped both parties frame political issues, mobilise supporters, reinforce identities and present competing interpretations of Bengal's political future. The 2026 result suggests that the BJP's change-oriented framing ultimately aligned more closely with the electoral shift, while AITC's welfare and regional-identity framing continued to retain considerable public support.

REFERENCES

1. Banerjee, R., & Mitra, S. (2025). Reconstituting the 'good woman': Gendered visual politics on social media during 2021 state election in West Bengal, India. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 31(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565241287588>
2. Benkler, Y. (2006). *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. Yale University Press.
3. Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5), 739–768. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661>
4. Boulianne, S. (2015). Social media use and participation: A meta-analysis of current research. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(5), 524–538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1008542>
5. Borhan-Eddine, A., Fee, L. Y., Adnan, Z. H., & Nor, M. W. M. (2020). The impact of political efficacy, discussion, and expression through social media on youth political participation: A systematic review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(15), 11–22. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v10-i15/8230>
6. Chadwick, A. (2017). *The hybrid media system: Politics and power* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190696726.001.0001>
7. Chowan, Y. I. (2026). *The impact of social media on political polarization: An empirical study of youth engagement in India*. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19233102>
8. Gil de Zúñiga, H., Molyneux, L., & Zheng, P. (2014). Social media, political expression, and political participation: Panel analysis of lagged and concurrent relationships. *Journal of Communication*, 64(4), 612–634. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12103>
9. Gokhale, N. A., Patil, P. V., & Deshpande, K. R. (2026). Impact of social media on political awareness and civic engagement among Indian youth. *International Journal of Creative and Open Research in Engineering and Management*, 2(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i1.007>
10. Guess, A. M., Nagler, J., & Tucker, J. A. (2019). Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook. *Science Advances*, 5(1), Article eaau4586. <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aau4586>
11. Heiss, R., & Matthes, J. (2016). Mobilizing for some: The effects of politicians' participatory Facebook posts on young people's political efficacy. *Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, and Applications*, 28(3), 123–135. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000199>
12. Jakesch, M., Garimella, K., Eckles, D., & Naaman, M. (2021). Trend alert: How a cross-platform organization manipulated Twitter trends in the Indian general election. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 5(CSCW2), Article 430. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3479564>
13. Majumdar, S., Ray, S., Bhowmick, P., & Datta, A. (2026). Digitizing fear: Identity, threat and collective mobilization through social media posts during the 2021 election campaigns in West Bengal, India. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 65(3), Article e70099. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.70099>

15. Mir, A. A. (2022). Social media and political participation among the students in India: A survey analysis. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research*, 9(8), 10–20.
<https://doi.org/10.22192/ijamr.2022.09.08.003>
16. Raikar, R. R. (2026). Social media as a catalyst for political engagement among youth in India. *Lyceum India Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(6), 233–239.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19956353>
17. Shome, D., Neyazi, T. A., & Ng, S. W. T. (2024). Personalization of politics through visuals: Interplay of identity, ideology, and gender in the 2021 West Bengal Assembly Election Campaign. *Media, Culture & Society*, 46(4), 777–797.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437231214189>
18. Valenzuela, S., Park, N., & Kee, K. F. (2009). Is there social capital in a social network site? Facebook use and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14(4), 875–901.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01474.x>
19. Verma, S., Gardia, A., & Das, B. (2026). A meta-analytic review of social media usage and political participation among youth. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 137, Article 102950.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2026.102950>