

Role of Social Media in Shaping Political Awareness Among Youth in Arunachal Pradesh

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¹Date of Receiving: 15 April 2026;

Date of Acceptance: 09 May 2026;

Date of Publication: 11 July 2026

Abstract

Social media has become an important source of political information for young people and plays a significant role in shaping political awareness. This study explores the role of social media in shaping political awareness among youth in Arunachal Pradesh using a qualitative research approach. A qualitative descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected through semi structured interviews with **50** young participants selected using purposive sampling. The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and experiences. The findings reveal that social media has become the primary source of political information among youth, increases political awareness, encourages civic participation, provides visibility to local issues, and promotes democratic engagement. However, participants also expressed concerns regarding misinformation, fake news, political bias, and the credibility of online information. The study concludes that while social media has strengthened political awareness and participation, its positive impact depends on responsible digital behaviour and media literacy. The findings contribute to the limited literature on political communication in Arunachal Pradesh and provide useful insights for educators, policymakers, media professionals, and future researchers.

Keywords: *Social Media; Political Awareness; Youth; Arunachal Pradesh; Political Participation; Digital Media; Qualitative Research*

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an important part of the daily lives of young people. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp are widely used to communicate, access news, share ideas, and discuss current events. Unlike traditional media, social media provides quick access to information and allows users to actively express their opinions. As a result, it has become an important source of political information for many young people.

Political awareness refers to understanding political issues, government policies, elections, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Social media has made political information more accessible and interactive, encouraging young people to participate in discussions and stay informed. At the same time, it also creates challenges because false or misleading information can spread easily, making it difficult to identify reliable sources.

This issue is particularly relevant in Arunachal Pradesh, where many young people actively use social media to discuss local issues, development, education, employment, elections, and government policies. However, very few studies have explored how social media influences the political awareness of youth in the state.

¹ *How to cite the article:* Ete L (July 2026); Role of Social Media in Shaping Political Awareness Among Youth in Arunachal Pradesh; *International Journal of Law, Management and Social Science*, Vol 10, Issue 3, 29-41

Therefore, this study aims to understand how social media shapes political awareness among youth in Arunachal Pradesh through a qualitative approach. By listening to the experiences and views of young people, the study seeks to provide useful insights for educators, policymakers, researchers, and others interested in promoting responsible digital citizenship and informed democratic participation.

Research Contributions

This study helps to understand how social media influences political awareness among youth in Arunachal Pradesh. The findings will encourage young people to use social media responsibly and make informed political decisions.

The study will support educators in promoting media literacy, help policymakers design better civic awareness programmes, and assist political and community organisations in engaging with youth more effectively. It will also add to the limited research on social media and political awareness in Arunachal Pradesh and serve as a useful reference for future studies.

Overall, the study aims to promote a politically aware, digitally responsible, and socially active generation of young citizens.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to understand how social media influences political awareness among young people in Arunachal Pradesh. The specific objectives are:

- i. To explore how young people use social media to obtain political information.
- ii. To understand the role of social media in shaping political awareness among youth.
- iii. To identify the positive and negative effects of social media on political understanding.
- iv. To explore the opinions of youth regarding the influence of social media on political participation.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- i. How do young people in Arunachal Pradesh use social media for political information?
- ii. In what ways does social media influence their political awareness?
- iii. What benefits and challenges do young people experience while using social media for political information?
- iv. How do young people perceive the role of social media in encouraging political participation?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent Studies on Digital Media and Indian Elections (2026 Review)

The literature reviewed by Manham (2026) also brought together several recent studies conducted on digital media and political participation in India. These studies collectively showed that social media has become one of the primary platforms through which citizens, especially young people, receive political information during elections. Political parties increasingly use Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, and X to communicate directly with voters and promote their election campaigns. While digital platforms encourage greater political participation and improve access to information, researchers also identified concerns such as misinformation, fake news, political polarization, and algorithm driven content that may influence public opinion. The review emphasised that social media should not only be viewed as a communication tool but also as a platform that shapes democratic attitudes and political behaviour. It recommended strengthening digital literacy and promoting responsible online communication so that young citizens can make informed political decisions based on credible information rather than misleading content.

Heinrich Böll Stiftung (2024, discussed in Manham, 2026)

The report published by Heinrich Böll Stiftung (2024), discussed in the review by Manham (2026), examined the growing influence of social media during the 2024 Indian General Elections. The report found that digital platforms have transformed political communication by enabling political parties, candidates, and citizens to interact more quickly than ever before. Social media encouraged public discussion, increased political awareness, and gave young voters greater opportunities to participate in democratic conversations. However, the report also raised concerns regarding misinformation, manipulated political content, and the limited regulation of online platforms during election periods. The authors argued that while social media has the potential to strengthen democracy, its benefits can only be realised when users possess the skills to evaluate information critically. The report therefore recommended improving digital literacy, strengthening fact checking mechanisms, and developing transparent policies for online political communication to ensure free and fair democratic participation.

Dhingra, R., & Mishra, M. (2025)

Dhingra and Mishra (2025) explored how social media influences the self esteem of adolescents in India. The researchers observed that social networking platforms have become an important part of everyday life and significantly affect how young people view themselves and interact with others. The study found that positive online interactions may improve confidence and encourage self expression, while excessive dependence on online approval can reduce self esteem and increase emotional stress. The authors explained that adolescents often compare themselves with others on social media, making them more vulnerable to feelings of inadequacy and social pressure. The study recommended promoting digital literacy, emotional resilience, and responsible social media use among young people. Although the research focused on psychological wellbeing, it also demonstrates that social media has the ability to shape attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour. These findings are relevant to the present study because political awareness is also influenced by how young people engage with online information and digital communities.

Martínez Iniesta, E., et al. (2025)

Martínez Iniesta and colleagues (2025) examined the relationship between social media use, addictive online behaviour, and self esteem among adolescents. Using data from more than six hundred participants, the study found that excessive and addictive use of social networking platforms was consistently associated with lower levels of self esteem. The researchers observed that certain online behaviours, including constant checking of notifications, emotional dependence on social media, and the need for continuous online engagement, negatively affected psychological wellbeing. The study highlighted that social media has become a powerful environment that shapes young people's daily experiences and perceptions. The authors suggested that digital education programmes should encourage healthy online habits while helping adolescents critically evaluate the content they consume. Although the research was conducted outside India, it provides valuable evidence that digital platforms influence youth attitudes and behaviour across different societies. These findings strengthen the present study by demonstrating that social media can significantly shape the thinking and responses of young people, including their political awareness.

Sam, A. J. (2024)

Sam (2024) examined how social media shapes political discourse and political perceptions among Indian youth. The study highlighted that social media has transformed the way young people receive political information and discuss public issues. Unlike traditional media, digital platforms provide immediate access to political news and allow users to interact, comment, and share their opinions freely. The findings revealed that social media significantly influences young people's understanding of political parties, leaders, and national issues. Many participants reported that online political discussions helped them become more interested in politics and encouraged them to seek additional information before forming opinions. However, the study also found that misinformation, political bias, and emotionally driven content can influence political perceptions in both positive and negative ways. The researcher concluded that social media has become an important source of political learning for Indian youth, but users should

develop critical thinking skills to distinguish reliable information from misleading content. These findings strongly support the present study, which explores political awareness among youth in Arunachal Pradesh.

Gupta, A., & Bhardwaj, S. (2024)

Gupta and Bhardwaj (2024) explored the role of Instagram in shaping political awareness among college students in Delhi. Using a mixed methods approach, the researchers collected data from 115 college students to understand how Instagram influences their political knowledge and civic engagement. The study found that Instagram has become an important platform for accessing political information because it presents news through images, short videos, reels, and interactive content that are attractive to young users. Most participants reported that Instagram helped them stay updated about elections, government policies, and current political events. At the same time, respondents expressed concerns regarding fake news, misinformation, and politically biased content circulating on the platform. The researchers concluded that Instagram plays a meaningful role in increasing political awareness among young people but emphasized the importance of media literacy to help users verify information before accepting or sharing it. The findings are highly relevant to the present study because they demonstrate how social media platforms influence political understanding among Indian youth.

Dogra, V., & Tripathi, C. (2024)

Dogra and Tripathi (2024) investigated how political memes shared on social media influence political participation among Indian youth. The researchers explained that memes have become a popular form of political communication because they simplify complex political issues using humour, images, and short messages. The study found that young people actively consume, share, and discuss political memes, making them an important part of online political conversations. While political memes increased political interest and encouraged discussions about current affairs, the study found limited evidence that they directly increased actual political participation, such as voting or joining political activities. The authors also observed that memes often reinforce existing political beliefs rather than changing people's opinions. They concluded that political memes contribute to political awareness and digital political expression, although their influence on real world political participation remains limited. This study highlights another way in which social media shapes political awareness among youth and supports the objectives of the present research.

Yolmo, U. T. L. (2023/2022)

Yolmo (2022) examined the evolution of political awareness, political interest, and political participation among Indian youth through the use of social media between 2014 and 2021. The study analysed changing patterns of political communication across two general elections and one state election. The findings showed that the use of social media for political communication increased steadily during this period. Young people increasingly relied on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp to obtain political information, express their opinions, and participate in political discussions. The study also found that social media helped increase political interest among youth by providing easier access to election campaigns, political debates, and government information. However, unequal internet access and differences in digital literacy continued to affect political participation in some regions. The researcher concluded that social media has become an important factor in strengthening political awareness and civic engagement among young Indians. These findings provide valuable support for the present study on youth in Arunachal Pradesh.

Riba, J., & Panigrahi, P. K. (2022)

Riba and Panigrahi (2022) conducted one of the earliest empirical studies on the relationship between social media and political awareness among youth in Arunachal Pradesh. The study was carried out in selected districts of the state and involved 300 young respondents from different educational and social backgrounds. Using questionnaires and interviews, the researchers explored how social media platforms influence political knowledge, political discussions, and civic participation. The findings revealed that social media had become the most preferred source of political

information, surpassing newspapers and radio among many young people. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter were widely used to access political news, election campaigns, and government information. Most respondents believed that social media increased their political awareness and encouraged them to participate in discussions on public issues. However, the study also warned that misinformation and politically biased content could negatively affect public opinion. The researchers concluded that while social media is an effective tool for political awareness, improving digital literacy is necessary to help young people distinguish authentic information from false or misleading content. This study is highly relevant to the present research because it focuses specifically on the youth of Arunachal Pradesh and provides important insights into the role of social media in shaping political awareness.

Youth Leadership and Digital Political Participation in Arunachal Pradesh (Riba & Panigrahi, 2021)

Riba and Panigrahi (2021) examined the changing pattern of youth leadership in Arunachal Pradesh in the context of increasing digital communication and political participation. The researchers discussed how social media has become an important platform for emerging youth leaders to communicate with citizens, raise public concerns, and mobilise support for social and political issues. The study observed that the younger generation is becoming more politically active because digital platforms provide opportunities to express opinions, organise campaigns, and engage directly with public representatives. The authors also highlighted that youth organisations and student bodies have increasingly used social media to create awareness about local governance, development issues, environmental concerns, and tribal rights. The study concluded that digital communication has strengthened youth participation in public life by making political discussions more accessible and interactive. Although the research focused primarily on youth leadership rather than political awareness, its findings clearly demonstrate that social media has become an important medium through which young people learn about politics and participate in democratic processes. These findings provide useful background for the present study.

Research Gap

Previous studies show that social media plays an important role in shaping political awareness and participation among young people. However, very few studies have focused on Arunachal Pradesh. Most existing research in the state has relied on quantitative methods, which explain trends but provide limited understanding of young people's personal experiences and perceptions.

Earlier studies have also given more attention to the positive impact of social media, while issues such as misinformation, fake news, and political bias have received less attention. In addition, the unique social, cultural, and political context of Arunachal Pradesh has not been explored in depth.

To address these gaps, the present study adopts a qualitative approach to understand how social media shapes political awareness among youth in Arunachal Pradesh. By exploring their experiences and perspectives, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges of social media in promoting informed and responsible democratic participation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study follows a qualitative research approach. A qualitative method is suitable because it helps the researcher understand the experiences, opinions, and viewpoints of young people in their own words. Instead of measuring political awareness using numbers, the study focuses on understanding how youth think, feel, and interpret political information shared through social media. This approach allows participants to freely express their personal experiences and provides a deeper understanding of the topic.

Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design.

A qualitative descriptive design is appropriate because the research aims to understand the everyday experiences and opinions of young people regarding social media and politics. The researcher collects detailed information through conversations with participants and analyses their responses to identify common ideas and patterns.

Population

The population of the study consists of young people living in Arunachal Pradesh.

The participants include university students, college students, young professionals, job seekers, and other youth who actively use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp. Participants are selected from different educational, occupational, and social backgrounds to obtain diverse perspectives.

Sampling Strategy

The study uses purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants who have direct experience with the topic. Only young people who regularly use social media and are willing to share their experiences are included in the study.

This method helps the researcher gather rich and meaningful information from individuals who can provide useful insights into the research problem.

Sample Size

A sample of **50 participants** was considered adequate because qualitative research focuses on obtaining rich and detailed information rather than collecting responses from a large population. The interviews continued until sufficient information was obtained and no major new themes emerged.

Profile of Participants

Variable	Description
Total Participants	50
Age Group	18–30 Years
Gender	Male and Female
Occupation	Students, Job Seekers, Young Professionals
Residence	Different districts of Arunachal Pradesh
Social Media Platforms Used	Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp

Data Collection Procedure

Data are collected through **semi structured interviews**.

Each participant is interviewed individually using a set of open ended questions. The interview provides enough flexibility for participants to explain their thoughts and experiences in detail.

The researcher first explains the purpose of the study and obtains the participant's voluntary consent. Interviews are conducted at a time and place convenient for the participants or through online platforms whenever necessary.

Each interview lasts approximately **30 to 45 minutes**. With the permission of the participants, interviews are audio recorded to ensure that all responses are accurately captured. Notes are also taken during the interview to record important observations.

After completing all interviews, the recordings are carefully transcribed. The researcher reads the transcripts several times and identifies common themes and patterns that answer the research questions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles are followed throughout the study. Participation is completely voluntary, and informed consent is obtained from every participant before the interview. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason. Their privacy and confidentiality are protected by using codes instead of real names. All information collected is used only for academic purposes and stored securely. The researcher presents participants' views honestly and accurately without altering their responses.

TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The trustworthiness of this study is ensured by following established qualitative research practices.

Credibility: Participants are encouraged to share their views openly, and follow up questions are asked when needed to gain a clear understanding of their experiences.

Transferability: Participants from different backgrounds are included, and the research process is described clearly so that readers can judge whether the findings may apply to similar situations.

Dependability: The study follows a clear and systematic process, with interview records and field notes maintained carefully to ensure consistency.

Confirmability: The findings are based on the participants' responses rather than the researcher's personal opinions. Interview data and field notes are used to support the study's conclusions.

The researcher maintained an audit trail throughout the research process by preserving interview recordings, field notes, coding sheets, and reflective notes. Peer discussions were conducted during theme development to improve consistency. Participants were also given opportunities to clarify their responses whenever necessary, thereby improving the credibility of the findings.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The interview transcripts were analysed manually using **Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step thematic analysis**. The researcher first read all interview transcripts several times to become familiar with the data. Initial codes were then generated from meaningful statements shared by participants. Similar codes were grouped together to form broader categories, which were later refined into major themes. The themes were reviewed several times to ensure that they accurately reflected the experiences and opinions of the participants. Finally, each theme was named and interpreted in relation to the research objectives.

The analysis generated **28 initial codes, 11 categories**, and finally **six major themes**.

Coding Process

Initial Codes	Categories	Theme
Watching political videos	Political learning	Political awareness
Following news pages	Political information	Political awareness
Sharing campaign posts	Civic participation	Democratic engagement
Reading comments	Public discussion	Civic engagement
Identifying fake news	Media literacy	Misinformation
Reporting false information	Responsible behaviour	Digital citizenship

Theme 1: Social Media Has Become the Primary Source of Political Information

Almost every participant indicated that social media has replaced traditional media as their main source of political information. Instead of waiting for television news or newspapers, participants reported receiving political updates instantly through Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp.

Many participants explained that they follow local news pages, journalists, political leaders, and public organisations to stay informed about current affairs.

One participant stated,

"Today everything is available on our mobile phone. We do not wait for television news anymore. Whenever something happens, we know about it immediately through Facebook or WhatsApp."

Another participant explained,

"Social media has made news available at our fingertips. We can watch videos, read comments, and understand different opinions within minutes."

The findings suggest that social media has become the most accessible source of political information for young people. Participants appreciated its speed, convenience, and ability to provide continuous updates throughout the day.

Theme 2: Social Media Increases Political Awareness and Civic Consciousness

A common finding was that social media has significantly improved political awareness among youth. Participants explained that they now understand government policies, elections, development issues, and public administration better than before.

Several respondents mentioned that they regularly watch interviews, political debates, documentaries, and awareness campaigns shared through YouTube and Facebook.

One participant remarked,

"Social media makes young people more aware because they can compare different opinions before forming their own views."

Another participant observed,

"Political movements from different countries inspire young people here. They make us realise that our voices also matter."

Participants believed that exposure to national and international political discussions encourages them to think critically about democracy, governance, and citizen participation. They described social media as an important platform for learning rather than only entertainment.

Theme 3: Social Media Encourages Youth Participation in Public Issues

The analysis revealed that social media encourages young people to speak openly about issues affecting their communities.

Participants highlighted that platforms such as Facebook and Instagram allow citizens to raise concerns regarding road conditions, education, unemployment, corruption, environmental protection, and local development.

Several respondents referred to online campaigns where public support encouraged government authorities to respond more quickly.

One participant explained,

"Earlier people discussed problems only among themselves. Now one Facebook post can reach thousands of people."

Another respondent stated,

"Social media gives ordinary people the confidence to ask questions."

Many participants believed that online discussions have strengthened democratic participation because citizens feel more connected with public issues and government activities.

Theme 4: Social Media Gives Voice to Local Issues in Arunachal Pradesh

A strong theme emerging from the interviews was that social media provides visibility to issues that receive little attention in mainstream national media.

Participants appreciated independent journalists, local news channels, and digital content creators who regularly report on issues affecting Arunachal Pradesh.

Topics frequently mentioned included:

- corruption,
- infrastructure,
- employment,
- education,
- elections,
- environmental protection,
- tribal identity,
- road connectivity,
- governance.

One participant commented,

"Many issues in Arunachal never appeared on national television. Social media has changed that."

Participants also believed that investigative reports shared online encouraged wider public discussion and increased accountability among public officials.

Theme 5: Misinformation and Political Bias Remain Major Challenges

Although participants recognised the benefits of social media, almost all of them expressed concern about fake news, misleading information, edited videos, and politically motivated content.

Many respondents admitted that they often encounter conflicting information on different platforms.

One participant stated,

"Sometimes it becomes difficult to know which information is true because everyone shares different versions."

Another participant explained,

"Many people believe information without checking the original source."

Participants suggested that users should verify information before sharing political content. They also emphasised the importance of media literacy so that young people can distinguish reliable news from misinformation.

Theme 6: Responsible Use of Social Media Strengthens Democracy

The final theme highlighted that participants viewed social media as a powerful democratic tool when used responsibly.

Most respondents believed that social media should encourage informed discussion rather than personal attacks, rumours, or hate speech.

Participants explained that respectful online discussions can increase political awareness and encourage young people to become responsible citizens.

One participant observed,

"Social media itself is not good or bad. It depends on how people use it."

Another respondent stated,

"If young people verify information before sharing it, social media can become one of the strongest tools for democracy."

Participants agreed that responsible digital citizenship is necessary to ensure that social media contributes positively to democratic participation.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that social media has become an important source of political information for young people in Arunachal Pradesh. Most Participants explained that they rely on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, to stay informed about political events, government policies, elections, and local issues. Compared to traditional media, social media provides faster access to information and allows users to participate actively by commenting, sharing opinions, and discussing public issues. This finding is consistent with the studies of

Riba and Panigrahi (2022), Gupta and Bhardwaj (2024), and Manham (2026), which also reported that social media has become one of the main sources of political information among young people.

The study further reveals that social media has contributed to increasing political awareness among youth. Participants explained that regular exposure to political news, debates, interviews, documentaries, and awareness campaigns has helped them understand political issues more clearly. Many participants also stated that social media enables them to compare different viewpoints before forming their own opinions. This finding supports the observations of Sam (2024), who found that social media encourages political discussion and helps young people develop informed political perspectives.

Another important finding is that social media has encouraged greater civic engagement among young people. Participants believed that online platforms provide ordinary citizens with an opportunity to raise public concerns and participate in discussions about issues affecting their communities. Local issues such as corruption, road conditions, education, employment, environmental protection, and governance were frequently discussed by participants. Many respondents felt that social media has made it easier for citizens to communicate directly with leaders, journalists, and government agencies. These findings are similar to those reported by Yolmo (2022), who concluded that digital platforms have strengthened political participation among Indian youth.

The study also found that social media plays an important role in giving visibility to local issues in Arunachal Pradesh. Participants appreciated the work of local journalists, independent media organisations, and digital content creators who use social media to highlight issues that often receive limited attention in mainstream media. Many respondents believed that online reporting has increased public awareness and encouraged greater accountability in governance.

Despite these positive findings, participants also expressed concerns about misinformation, fake news, political bias, and the rapid spread of unverified information. Many participants admitted that it is often difficult to distinguish between reliable and misleading information shared online. This finding agrees with the studies of Heinrich Böll Stiftung (2024) and Manham (2026), which highlighted misinformation as one of the major challenges associated with political communication on social media.

Overall, the findings suggest that social media has both opportunities and challenges. While it has improved political awareness, encouraged civic participation, and strengthened democratic discussions among youth, its benefits depend largely on the responsible use of digital platforms and the ability of users to critically evaluate the information they receive. The study therefore highlights the growing importance of digital literacy in strengthening democratic participation among young people in Arunachal Pradesh.

Unlike previous quantitative studies conducted in Arunachal Pradesh, the present study provides detailed qualitative evidence regarding how young people personally experience political communication through social media. The findings reveal that political awareness is not simply the result of exposure to political information but is also influenced by interaction, discussion, reflection, and critical evaluation of online content. This provides a deeper understanding of political awareness within the unique socio cultural context of Arunachal Pradesh.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

- i. **Educational Implications:** The findings highlight the importance of promoting media literacy and critical thinking among students so they can identify reliable political information and use social media responsibly.
- ii. **Policy Implications:** The study can help policymakers understand how youth access political information and support the development of effective digital awareness and civic education programmes.
- iii. **Political Implications:** The findings encourage political leaders and public institutions to engage with young citizens through social media in a transparent, responsible, and constructive manner.
- iv. **Media Implications:** The study emphasises the need for responsible journalism, fact checking, and accurate reporting to reduce misinformation on digital platforms.

- v. **Academic Implications:** The study adds to the limited research on social media and political awareness in Arunachal Pradesh and provides a foundation for future research on youth, digital media, and political communication.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- i. The study used a qualitative approach with a small number of participants; therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to all youth in Arunachal Pradesh.
- ii. The study included only young people who actively use social media, excluding those with limited internet access or low social media use.
- iii. The research was conducted within a limited time period, and changes in social media trends may influence political awareness over time.
- iv. The study explored participants' experiences and perceptions but did not measure political awareness quantitatively or compare different demographic groups.
- v. As social media content changes continuously, the findings reflect the context during the period in which the study was conducted.
- vi. Since the study adopted purposive sampling, participants were selected based on their experience with social media. Therefore, the findings represent information rich cases rather than statistically representative opinions of all youth in Arunachal Pradesh.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- i. Future studies may use quantitative methods with larger samples from different districts of Arunachal Pradesh to validate and extend the findings.
- ii. Comparative studies between urban and rural youth can examine differences in political awareness and social media use.
- iii. Researchers may explore the influence of individual social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and X on political awareness.
- iv. Longitudinal studies can examine how political awareness changes over time as digital media continues to evolve.
- v. Future research may investigate the impact of misinformation, AI generated content, political advertising, and digital campaigns on youth political participation.
- vi. Comparative studies across North Eastern states can provide a broader understanding of social media's role in political awareness and democratic engagement.

CONCLUSION

The present study explored the role of social media in shaping political awareness among youth in Arunachal Pradesh through a qualitative research approach. The findings indicate that social media has become an important part of young people's political lives by providing easy access to information, encouraging public discussion, and increasing awareness of political and social issues. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and X have enabled young people to follow current affairs, express their opinions, and engage in conversations about governance, elections, development, and public policies.

The study also found that social media has given greater visibility to local issues that often receive limited attention in traditional media. Participants believed that digital platforms have encouraged greater civic engagement and strengthened the voices of ordinary citizens. At the same time, the study highlights important challenges such as misinformation, fake news, political bias, and the difficulty of identifying trustworthy information. These challenges emphasise the importance of digital literacy and responsible use of social media.

Overall, the findings suggest that social media is neither entirely positive nor entirely negative. Its influence depends on how people use it and how critically they evaluate the information they receive. When used responsibly, social

media has the potential to strengthen political awareness, encourage informed decision making, promote democratic participation, and create a more active and responsible generation of young citizens.

The study also fills an important gap in the existing literature by providing a qualitative understanding of the experiences and perspectives of youth in Arunachal Pradesh. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to future research and support efforts to build a politically informed, digitally responsible, and democratically engaged society.

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