

Political Propaganda and the Youth: The Impact of Social Media Platforms

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Abstract: *In the digital era, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for political communication, significantly influencing the perceptions and behaviours of youth. This study investigates how political propaganda spreads through social media and affects university students in Lucknow. As active users of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp, students are routinely exposed to political narratives—both factual and misleading. Despite their digital fluency, many lack critical media literacy, making them vulnerable to biased or emotionally manipulative content. A quantitative survey was conducted among 100 students from four major universities in Lucknow, using a structured questionnaire distributed online. The results indicate high levels of social media usage, moderate political engagement, and a notable gap in the ability to recognize propaganda. Instagram was the most used platform, with most participants encountering political content occasionally but not always verifying its authenticity. The study highlights the importance of media education and awareness to counter digital misinformation and enhance democratic participation among youth.*

Keywords: Political Propaganda, Social Media, Youth Engagement, Media Literacy, University Students, Digital Misinformation, Political Communication, Lucknow

I. INTRODUCTION

The landscape of political discourse has been continuously altered by the development of communication technology. Every technological development, from the printing press to television, has had an impact on how people interact with and distribute information. Social media has emerged as the most potent and extensive communication instrument of the twenty-first century. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, X (previously Twitter), YouTube, and WhatsApp have revolutionized political communication in addition to interpersonal relationships. (Chadwick, A., & Dennis,, (2019).)

The digital growth in India, the largest democracy in the world and the country with the second-largest internet market, has affected every facet of public life, including politics. With more than 700 million people using the internet and fast expanding social media following, political parties and leaders are using digital channels to reach voters, particularly young people (Kemp, 2023). According to (Tufekci, 2015), social media has unmatched benefits such as speed, interaction, cost-effectiveness, and the capacity to target particular audiences according to their location, interests, and behaviour. But this same authority also makes it possible to strategically employ manipulation, emotional appeals, and false information—all of which are traditional political propaganda techniques. (Wardle, C & Derakhshan, 2017)

Political propaganda is not new; it has always been employed to sway public opinion and strengthen governmental authority. The scale, speed, and sophistication of its operations have all changed in the digital age. Propaganda has grown more participatory, customized, and challenging to identify thanks to social media. Digital propaganda can be decentralized, crowdsourced, and disguised as acceptable conversation or entertainment, whereas old propaganda was frequently official and state-sponsored.



Youth stand out as a crucial group in this regard. They are the most influential and politically involved group of people, in addition to being the most frequent users of social media. In particular, university students are in a phase of life where ideas are being formed, values are being challenged, and political identities are emerging. As a result, their engagement with political content on the internet may have a lasting effect on their political views and civic conduct.

The capital of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, offers a unique location for this research because it is a major urban center that combines traditional political culture with expanding digital infrastructure, reflecting national trends while maintaining regional characteristics. It is also a prime location for studying how university students interact with political propaganda on social media because it is home to several prestigious universities and colleges, and it has seen active political mobilization, protests, and digital campaigns in recent years, which further emphasizes the importance of this research.

1.1 Key Terms

Propaganda

The deliberate spread of facts, concepts, or stories with the objective of furthering a certain political cause or ideology is referred to as propaganda. Instead of encouraging candid, critical discussion, it frequently combines facts with false information or emotionally charged material to sway public opinion and behaviour. Propaganda in the digital age can take many different forms, such as influencer-driven postings, distorted news, viral videos, and memes, which can quietly alter attitudes while seeming like regular online content. (Jowett, G. S., & O'Donnell, V., 2018)

Youth

In this study, "youth" refers to individuals between the ages of 18 and 29, with a particular focus on university students. This group is highly engaged in digital environments and is at a formative stage of developing political identities and values. Their high level of online activity, openness to new ideas, and growing civic awareness make them especially susceptible to influence from political content on social media (Loader, 2014). As digital natives, they consume and share political information rapidly but may lack the critical media skills to detect manipulation.

Social media:

Social media comprise online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp, that allow users to create, share, and interact with content in real-time. These platforms have become essential arenas for political communication, activism, and public discourse. However, their algorithms often prioritize engagement over accuracy, creating echo chambers and accelerating the spread of misinformation and propaganda (Van Dijck, 2013). As such, social media plays a dual role as both a democratizing force and a tool for manipulation.

Political Engagement

Political engagement encompasses a wide range of activities that connect individuals with political processes. These include voting, attending rallies or protests, participating in debates, signing petitions, joining activist movements, and sharing political content online. In the digital era, engagement is not limited to physical actions; it also involves how individuals interact with political information online. Digital tools have expanded the forms and reach of civic participation, making political engagement more accessible but also more vulnerable to manipulation and misinformation (Boulianne, 2015).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Political propaganda, in the form of false narratives, half-truths, and emotionally charged content, is increasingly influencing young people's political perceptions and behaviors. While social media is frequently praised for democratizing information and giving young people a voice, it has also turned into a platform for widespread manipulation. Digital propaganda differs from traditional propaganda in that it is subtle, quickly spreads, and frequently disguises itself in humor, satire, or activism.

Despite being digitally literate, university students may not possess the critical media literacy needed to navigate this complex environment; many do not understand how algorithms determine what they see or how political actors



strategically use bots, influencers, and fake news to sway opinions; as a result, they may unwittingly internalize biased narratives, aid in the propagation of propaganda, or lose faith in the political process.

Critical concerns are brought up by this growing concern: How does political propaganda function on social media? Which types of content have the most impact on young people? How do students view and respond to content that is politically charged? Do kids understand the deceptive tactics used online? With the help of a targeted case study of university students in Lucknow, this study aims to answer these fundamental concerns.

1.3 Significance of the Study

There are various reasons why this research is important. It starts by addressing the growing worry about propaganda and disinformation in the digital era, which compromises the integrity of democratic processes. Second, it advances our knowledge of how the digital information environment is influencing young people, who will be the leaders and decision-makers of the future. Third, by concentrating on a particular urban setting—Lucknow—it offers regional perspectives that can contribute to more extensive national conversations on political communication, media literacy, and young involvement.

Additionally, social media platforms, educators, and legislators can all benefit from this study. It emphasizes for teachers how important it is to incorporate media literacy into academic programs. It provides information to legislators so they can create laws that can stop the spread of political disinformation. It draws attention to social media firms' moral need to control content algorithms and stop platforms from being abused for partisan political ends.

Objective

- To examine students' exposure to political content on social media.
- To analyse their ability to identify propaganda and misinformation.
- To explore the role of media literacy in shaping responses to propaganda.

Hypothesis

- H1: Students' perceptions of political propaganda are significantly influenced by social media.
- H2: Increased exposure to political content affects students' voting decisions.
- H3: Frequent social media users are more likely to encounter and spread propaganda.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter deals with the intersection of social media, political propaganda, and youth engagement. It is organized under five key themes: the evolution of political propaganda, social media's role in shaping political narratives, youth engagement with political content, digital dynamics in the Indian context, and the role of media literacy in countering propaganda.

2.1 Evolution of Political Propaganda

The term “propaganda” has historically referred to deliberate attempts by state or institutional actors to shape public opinion during times of war or political upheaval. Jacques Ellul (1965) defines propaganda as a systematic manipulation of beliefs and behaviour to serve dominant ideological interests. Traditionally disseminated through print media, radio, and television, propaganda was often overt and centralized.

In today's digital environment, propaganda has evolved into more subtle, emotionally charged formats. Disinformation (deliberately false), misinformation (accidentally false), and malinformation (truth used maliciously) are now embedded in digital content. These messages align with existing biases, making them seem more organic and believable (Marwick, A., & Lewis, R., 2017)



2.2 Social Media and the Political Information Ecosystem

Social media has dramatically changed political communication. Castells (2012) noted that digital platforms have democratized information dissemination, empowering users to challenge authority while simultaneously offering new avenues for manipulation. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) are now primary sites for political campaigning and ideological framing.

The virality of content on social media means that emotionally resonant and misleading narratives often outperform factual information. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) found that fake news on Facebook during the 2016 U.S. elections attracted more engagement than mainstream news, driven by confirmation bias. Bots and algorithmic targeting further enhance the reach of propaganda (Tufekci, 2015)

2.3 Youth Political Engagement in Digital Spaces

Young people aged 18–29 is among the most active social media users globally. According to Pew Research Center (2018), more than half of youth in democratic societies use social media as their main source of political information. While these platforms offer exposure to diverse viewpoints, they also make youth vulnerable to ideological manipulation.

Banaji and Buckingham (2010) argue that digital fluency does not equate to critical media literacy. Youth may navigate digital tools efficiently but often fail to assess the authenticity or bias of political content. This leaves them susceptible to emotionally manipulative messages, particularly those tied to identity and belonging.

2.4 The Indian Digital Political Landscape

India's large and diverse digital population provides fertile ground for political propaganda. Scholars such as Udupa (2018) highlight how political parties in India have harnessed digital media to distribute partisan content and discredit opponents. WhatsApp, in particular, has been weaponized for micro-targeting voters through closed groups (Chaturvedi, 2016).

Sengupta (2020) emphasizes that narratives around nationalism, religion, and identity are central to propaganda in India. These emotionally resonant themes make political messaging highly effective among youth. Campaigns like #MainBhiChowkidar and #NoFarmersNoFood illustrate how digital slogans can drive mass participation, even in the absence of verifiable facts.

Urban youth, particularly university students, consume high volumes of political content online but often lack the habit of fact-checking (IAMAI, 2022). This raises concerns about their vulnerability to ideological influence, especially during elections and socio-political movements.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design to explore how social media contributes to the spread of political propaganda among youth in Lucknow. By survey method, primary data will be collected through a questionnaire that will be distributed digitally. The design is descriptive and cross-sectional in nature, aiming to capture the current attitudes, behaviours, and media consumption patterns of university students concerning political content on social media.

3.2 Population of the Study

The target population includes undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in both public and private universities in the city of Lucknow. For the purpose of this study, participants will be selected from the following institutions:

- Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (BBAU)
- University of Lucknow
- Babu Banarasi Das University (BBDU)
- Amity University, Lucknow Campus



These universities represent a diverse mix of students in terms of academic disciplines, socio-economic backgrounds, and digital engagement, making them suitable for a representative sample.

The questionnaire will be circulated online via Google forms, making it accessible and efficient for respondents. Only close-ended questions will be used to facilitate quantitative analysis and ensure uniformity in responses.

3.3 Sample Size

A total sample of 100 students will be selected for participation. This number is considered adequate for drawing meaningful insights while maintaining feasibility within the scope of this study. The sample will be proportionally distributed across the abovementioned universities.

Participant selection will also consider relevance to the research topic (i.e., active users of social media) and willingness to respond, given the voluntary nature of participation.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The study employs simple random sampling as its primary technique. This method is chosen to ensure fair representation across various strata such as:

- Gender (Male, Female, Others)
- Educational Level (Undergraduate, Postgraduate etc)
- Area of Residence (Central, urban etc).

3.5 Tools of Data Collection

The principal instrument for data collection will be a **self-administered structured questionnaire**, which will be distributed through **Google Forms**. The questionnaire is designed to gather information in the following key areas:

- **Demographic Information** (Age, Gender, Institution, Education Level)
- **Social Media Usage Patterns** (Frequency, Preferred Platforms)
- **Exposure to Political Content** (Types of content viewed, frequency)
- **Awareness and Understanding of Propaganda** (Recognition and perception)
- **Media Literacy Skills** (Ability to verify content, understanding of bias)

The structured format will ensure consistency in responses and ease of analysis using quantitative tools.

3.6 Data Analysis

Upon completion of data collection, the responses will be exported into **Microsoft Excel** for statistical analysis.

The results will be interpreted in light of the research objectives to derive meaningful conclusions and policy implications.

3.7 Theoretical Framework

This research is underpinned by two prominent theories of media influence:

3.7.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

Proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), this theory posits that the media significantly influences what people consider important by giving more attention to certain issues. Social media platforms today serve a similar function by promoting trending topics, hashtags, and recommended content, thereby shaping the public's perceived priorities.

In the context of this study, agenda-setting helps explain how consistent exposure to politically charged content can prioritize certain ideologies or narratives in the minds of young users.

3.7.2 Framing Theory



Framing theory, developed by Goffman (1974), suggests that the way information is presented—its "frame"—influences how audiences interpret it. On social media, political content is often framed emotionally, sensationally, or ideologically to attract engagement.

This theory helps the study understand how different styles of content delivery on social platforms can shape youth perceptions of political issues, especially when those messages are rooted in propaganda.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to ethical standards regarding informed consent, data privacy, and voluntary participation. Key ethical practices include:

- Participation will be entirely voluntary, with no incentives or coercion.
- The Google Form will include a **consent section** informing respondents about the purpose of the study, confidentiality of data, and their right to withdraw at any time.
- No personally identifiable information will be collected.
- The data will be used exclusively for academic purposes.

3.9 Limitations of the Methodology

While the methodology is designed for accuracy and inclusivity, certain limitations may impact the findings:

- The reliance on **self-reported data** may introduce response biases.
- An **online-only survey** might exclude students with limited internet access or digital literacy.
- The sample size of 100, while manageable, may not fully capture the diverse perspectives of all students in Lucknow.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the data interpretation of the survey conducted among 100 young individuals in Lucknow to examine. The data was collected through Google form.

Section 1 (Demographics)

Table 1: Age distribution of Responders

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-21	19	19%
22-25	77	77%
26-29	03	03%
30 and above	01	01%

The table number 1 reveals that the majority of participants fall within the 22–25 age group, accounting for 77% of the total sample. This highlights that the core demographic for the study is comprised of young adults who are in the most active phase of their university life and are likely to be highly engaged with social media platforms. The 18–21 age group follows with 19% representation, indicating substantial participation from early-year students as well. In contrast, the 26–29 and 30 and above age categories are minimally represented, with only 3% and 1% respectively, suggesting that older students either form a smaller segment of the university population or are less engaged with political discourse on social media. Overall, the data confirms that youth, particularly those in their early twenties, are the primary consumers and potentially the most influenced demographic when it comes to political content circulating on social media.



Count of Age Group:

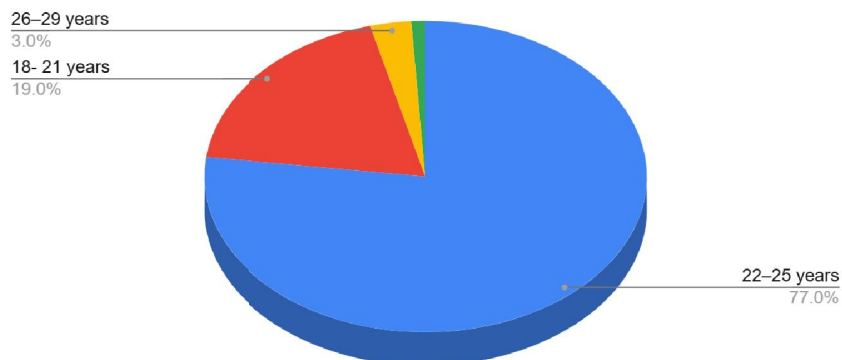
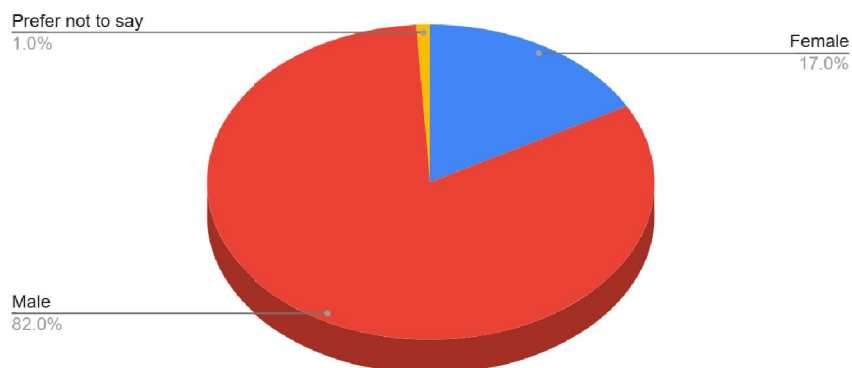


Table 2: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	82	82%
Female	17	17%
Prefer not to say	01	01%

Count of Gender:



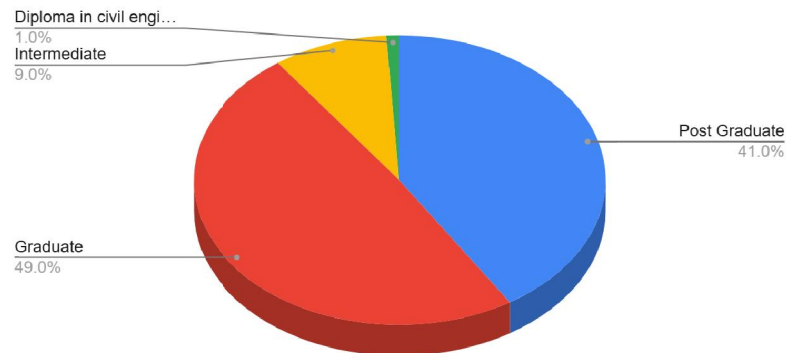
The table number 2 shows gender distribution indicates a notable imbalance, with male participants forming the majority at approximately 78%. Female respondents make up about 19% of the sample, while 3% chose not to disclose their gender. This distribution suggests that male university students were more responsive to the survey or possibly more engaged with political content on social media. Although the representation of female and undisclosed gender respondents is comparatively lower, their inclusion ensures that the study captures a range of perspectives. The gender disparity also highlights the need to explore whether gender plays a role in how youth perceive and interact with political propaganda on digital platforms.

Table 3: Education



Education	Frequency	Percentage
Intermediate	09	09%
Graduation	49	49%
Post Graduation	41	41%
Diploma	01	01%

Count of Educational Qualification:



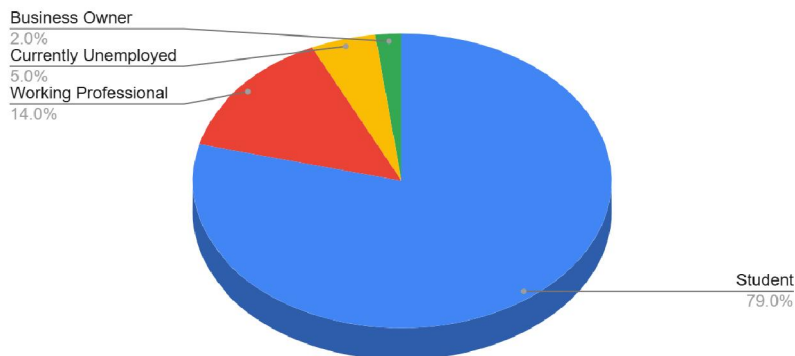
The table number 3 reveals that a majority are graduates, constituting nearly half of the sample population, followed closely by postgraduates. This indicates that the respondents primarily belong to a well-educated segment of the youth, who are likely to engage critically with political content on social media. A smaller portion of the participants comprises those with intermediate-level education. The dominance of graduate and postgraduate students in the data set reflects the academic focus of the study and ensures that the insights gathered come from individuals with a relatively high level of academic exposure, potentially making them more aware of media influence and political discourse online.

Table 4: Employment status

Employment	Frequency	Percentage
Student	79	79%
Working Professional	14	14%
Business Owner	02	02%
Unemployed	05	05%



Count of Employment Status

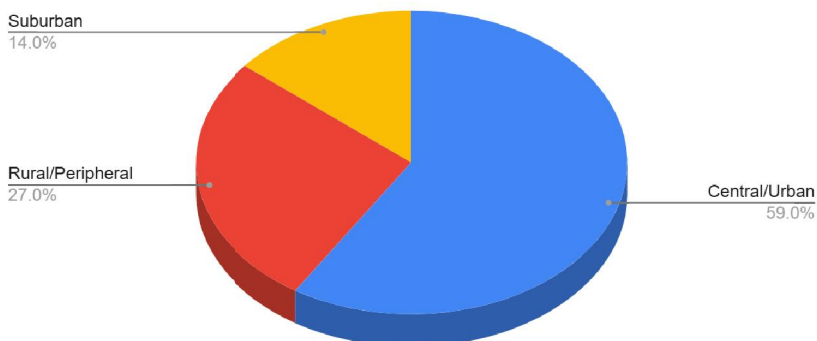


The table number 4 indicates that the overwhelming majority are students, highlighting the academic orientation of the sample population. This is consistent with the study's focus on university youth and provides a relevant demographic for examining the impact of social media on political awareness and propaganda exposure. A smaller segment of participants includes working professionals and individuals currently unemployed, while business owners form the least represented category. The dominance of students ensures that the findings are particularly reflective of the youth perspective in a university context, aligning with the objective of understanding how social media shapes political thought among emerging adults in Lucknow.

Table 5: Residence area

Area	Frequency	Percentage
Central/Urban	59	59%
Sub-urban	14	14%
Rural/Peripheral	27	27%

Count of Area of residence

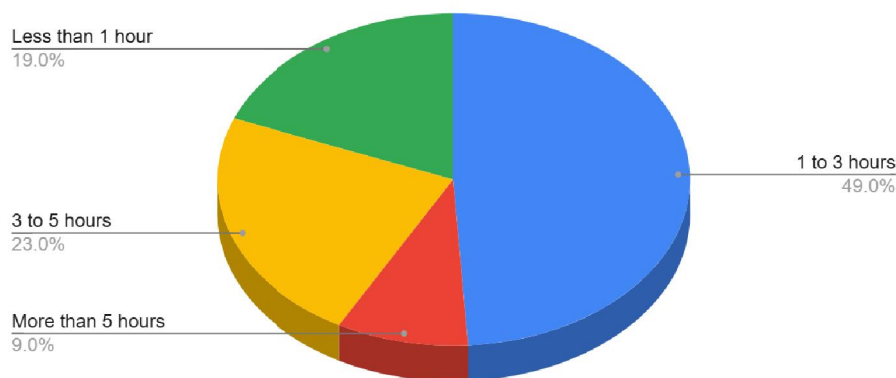


The table number 5 shows that a majority of respondents belong to central or urban locations, indicating a strong urban representation in the study. This is followed by individuals from rural or peripheral areas, with suburban residents forming the smallest group. The dominance of urban respondents suggests that the findings may primarily reflect the experiences and perspectives of those with greater access to technology, infrastructure, and media exposure—factors closely tied to the research focus on social media and political propaganda among youth. The inclusion of rural and suburban participants, however, ensures a diverse perspective, enriching the analysis with views across different living environments.

Table 6: Time spent on social media

Time	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	19	19%
1-3 hours	49	49%
3-5 hours	23	23%
More than 5 hours	09	09%

Count of 1. Daily average time spent on social media



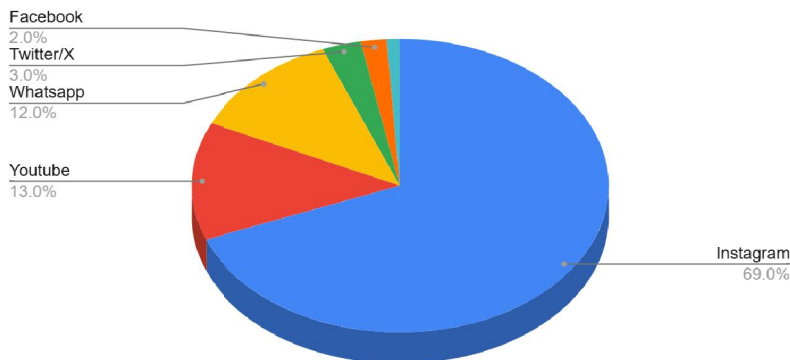
The table number 6 shows data regarding the daily average time spent on social media reveals that the majority of respondents, nearly half, spend between 1 to 3 hours online each day. This is followed by individuals who use social media for 3 to 5 hours, and then those who spend less than an hour daily. A smaller yet significant portion of participants indicated spending more than 5 hours per day on social platforms. These findings highlight a moderate to high level of daily social media engagement among the majority, which is crucial when examining the influence and reach of political content and propaganda on youth through digital channels.

Table 7: Frequent used

Frequently used	Frequency	Percentage
Instagram	69	69%
Facebook	02	02%
Twitter (X)	03	03%
Whatsapp	12	12%
Youtube	13	13%
Trading	01	01%



Count of 2. Most frequent used social media platform

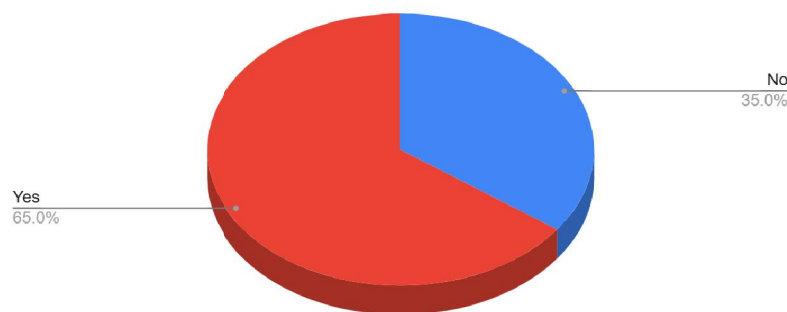


The table number 7 shows the most frequently used social media platforms among the respondents reveals a strong preference for Instagram, with nearly 70 individuals identifying it as their primary platform. This dominance suggests that Instagram plays a significant role in the daily social media habits of the youth surveyed. Following Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp are the next most popular platforms, though their usage is considerably lower, indicating that these platforms serve more specific or secondary purposes for users. Other platforms such as Twitter/X, Facebook, and Trading apps are used by only a small fraction of respondents, highlighting their relatively minor role in this group's social media engagement. The clear inclination towards Instagram indicates that it is likely the most influential platform for disseminating information, including political content, among the youth, which could have important implications for how political propaganda spreads and how social media shape public opinion in this demographic.

Table 8: Political account engagement

Political account following	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	65	65%
No	35	35%

Count of 3. Do you follow political accounts or pages on social media?

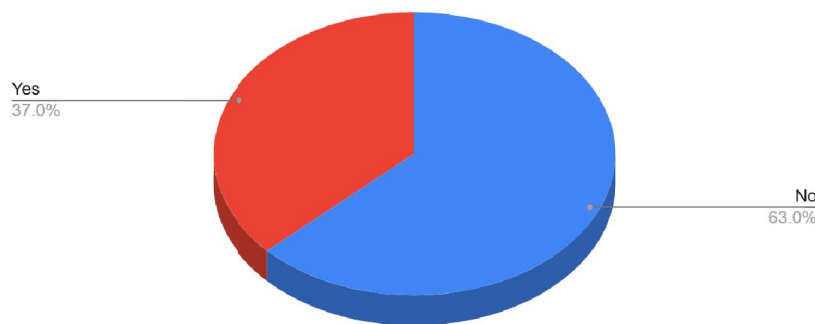


The table number 8 shows whether respondents follow political accounts or pages on social media indicates that a significant majority, approximately 65 individuals, do follow political content, while around 35 respondents do not. This suggests that social media serves as an important platform for political engagement among the youth, with many actively seeking information and updates from political sources. The high level of following political accounts points to the influential role social media plays in shaping political awareness and opinions within this demographic, potentially affecting how political propaganda is spread and received. However, the presence of a notable minority who do not follow political pages also highlights that not all youth engage with political content on social media, suggesting varied levels of interest and engagement within the group.

Table 9: Re-posting of Political content

Re-posting	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	37	37%
No	63	63%

Count of 4. Have you ever posted or reposted political content online?



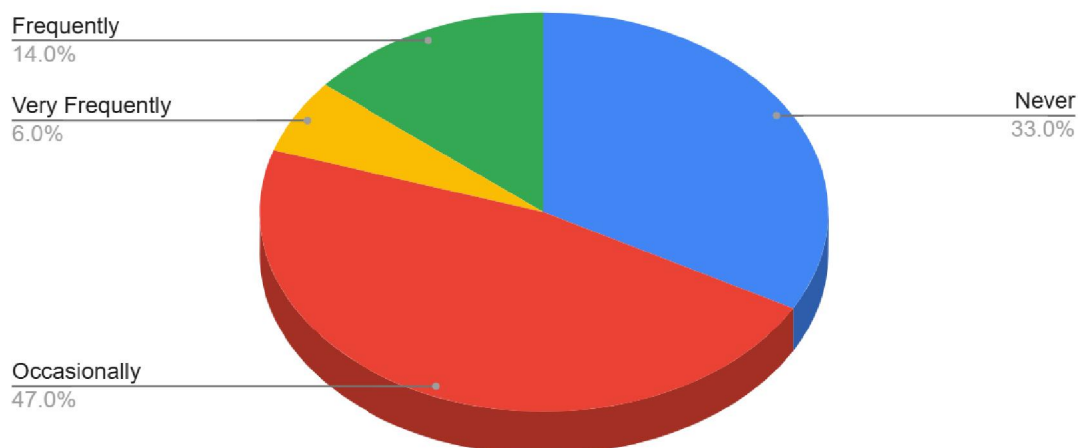
The table number 9 shows that a majority of respondents, approximately 63 individuals, have not posted or reposted political content online, while about 37 respondents have engaged in sharing political content on social media. This suggests that although a significant number of youths follow political accounts or pages, fewer actively participate in disseminating political information by posting or reposting content themselves. This could indicate a more passive form of political engagement where many prefer to consume political content rather than actively contribute to its spread. The reluctance to post or repost political content might be influenced by factors such as privacy concerns, fear of backlash, or a preference for observing rather than participating in political discourse on social media platforms.

Table 10: Political content encountering

Encountering	Frequency	Percentage
Never	33	33%
Occasionally	47	47%
Frequently	14	14%
Very Frequently	06	06%



Count of 5. Frequency of encountering political content online:



The table number 10 shows frequency of encountering political content online” shows varied exposure to political content among youth. While 47% encounter it occasionally, 33% report never seeing such content, indicating selective visibility possibly influenced by algorithms or personal preferences. Only 14% encounter it frequently and 6% very frequently. This suggests that although social media plays a role in spreading political propaganda, its reach among youth in Lucknow is uneven and largely dependent on individual engagement with political content.

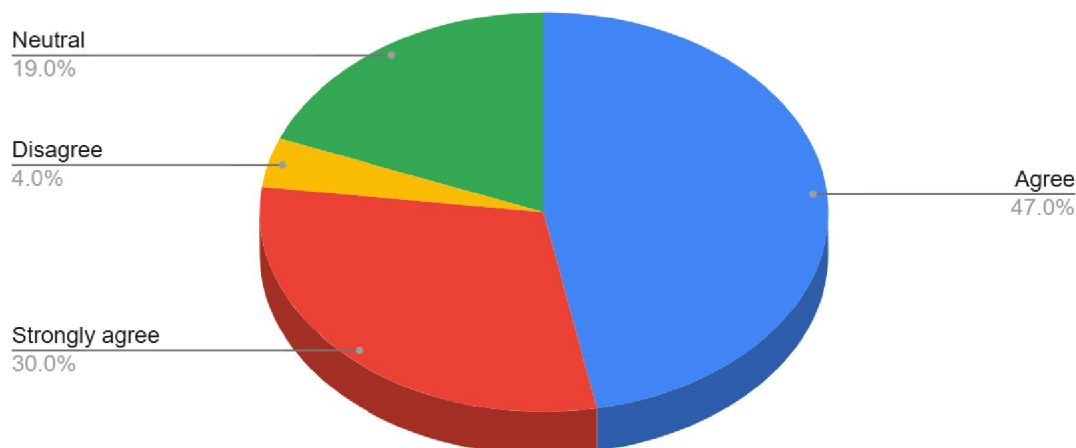
SEC B- Understanding pf political messaging

Table 11: Shaping thoughts

Shaping thinking	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	30	30%
Agree	47	47%
Neutral	19	19%
Disagree	04	04%



Count of 6. Social media shapes political thinking:



The table number 11 shows that social media shapes political thinking” highlights the perceived influence of social media on political views among youth. A significant majority—47% agree and 30% strongly agree—believe that social media shapes political thinking. Meanwhile, 19% remain neutral, and only 4% disagree. This indicates that most respondents acknowledge social media as a powerful tool in influencing political opinions, underscoring its central role in shaping youth perspectives in contemporary political discourse, especially in urban centers like Lucknow.

Table 12: One sided posts

One sided posts	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	47	47%
Strongly agree	30	30%
Disagree	04	04%
Neutral	19	19%



Count of 7. Political posts are often emotionally charged or one-sided:

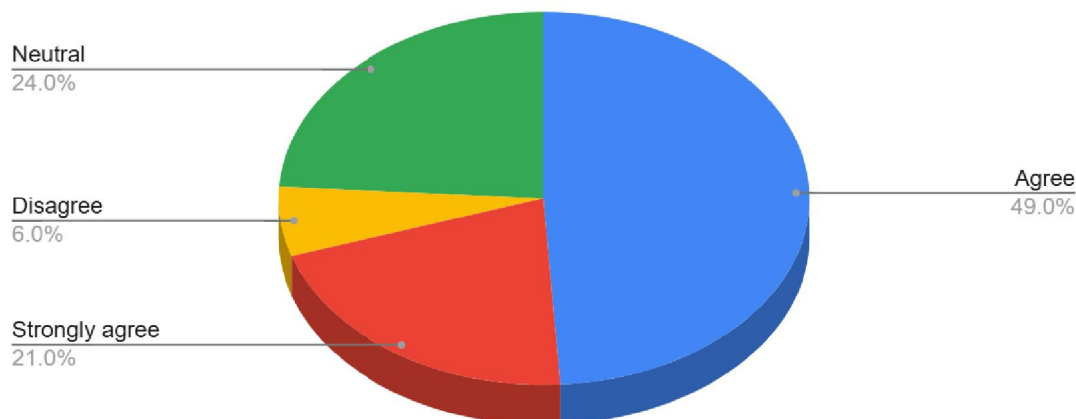


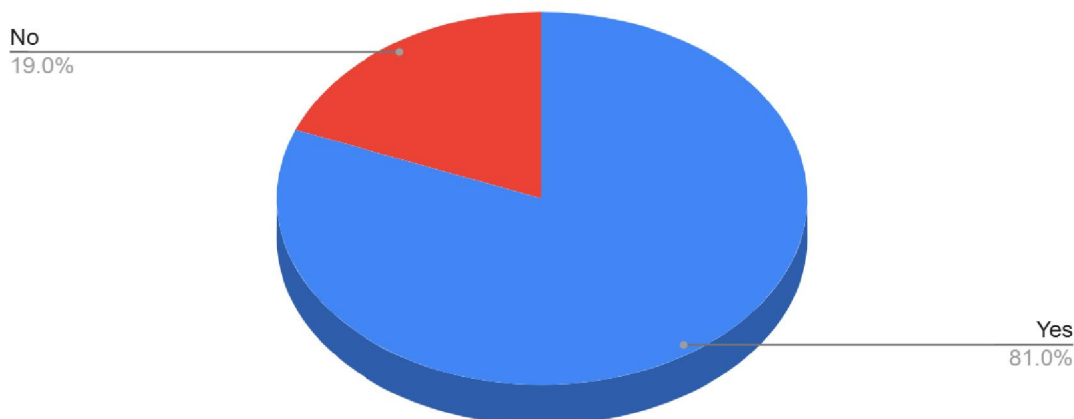
Table no 12 shows that Political posts are often emotionally charged or one-sided” reveals perceptions about the tone and bias of political content on social media. A majority of respondents—49% agree and 21% strongly agree—believe that political posts tend to be emotionally charged or biased. Meanwhile, 24% remain neutral, and only 6% disagree. This suggests that most youth recognize a tendency for political content online to provoke emotional responses or present one-sided views, reflecting the polarized and sensational nature of digital political discourse.

Table 13: Misleading information

Misleading political content	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	81	81%
No	19	19%



Count of 8. Have you identified misleading political content online?



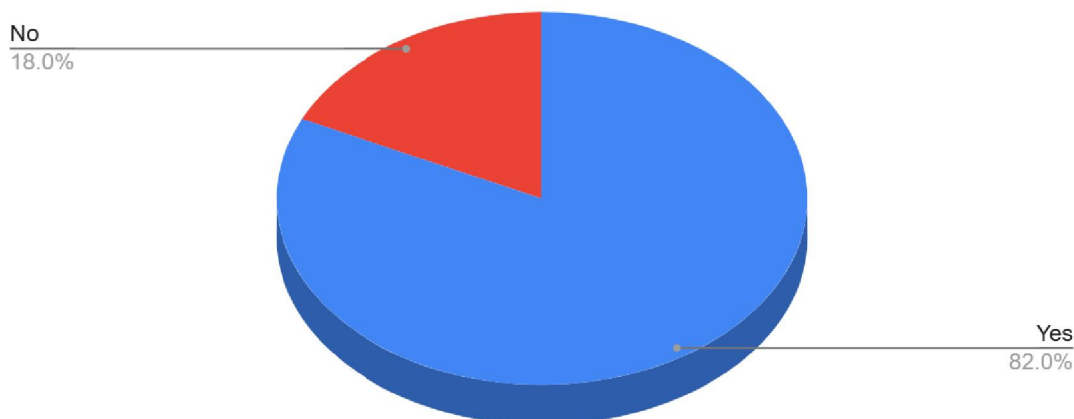
The table number 13 indicates that a substantial majority of respondents 81% reported encountering misleading political content on social media, while only 19% stated they had not observed such content. This finding is significant in the context of the present study, which explores the role of social media in the dissemination of political propaganda among youth in Lucknow. The high percentage of individuals who identified misleading content suggests that political misinformation is not only widespread but also easily recognizable by young users. This trend points to the powerful influence of social media platforms in shaping political perceptions and narratives. Moreover, the results emphasize the importance of promoting digital literacy among youth to help them critically evaluate the information they consume online and to mitigate the impact of politically motivated false or biased content.

Table 14: Paid Content

Paid Promotion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	82	82%
No	18	18%



Count of 9. Are you aware when political content is paid promotion?



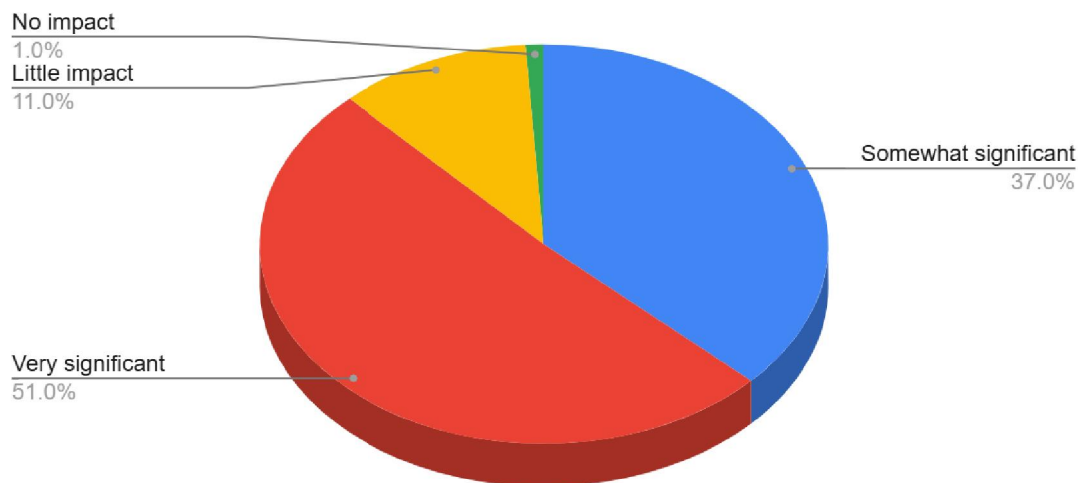
The table number 14 reveals that a large proportion of respondents approximately 87% are able to recognize when political content on social media is part of a paid promotion, while only about 13% are unaware of this distinction. This insight is crucial to the broader analysis of how political propaganda is disseminated through digital platforms, particularly among the youth in Lucknow. The high level of awareness suggests that young users are becoming increasingly discerning in identifying the nature and intent behind the content they engage with. It reflects a growing consciousness about the commercial and strategic aspects of online political messaging. This awareness can act as a safeguard against manipulation, as users who understand that content is sponsored may critically evaluate its message rather than accepting it at face value.

Table 15: Impact of propaganda

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Somewhat significant	37	37%
Very significant	51	51%
Little impact	11	11%
No impact	01	01%



Count of 10. Impact of political propaganda on youth opinions:



The table 15 illustrates the perceived impact of political propaganda on the opinions of youth. A majority of respondents believe that such propaganda has a considerable effect, with 53% indicating that the impact is "very significant" and 35% describing it as "somewhat significant." In contrast, only 10% of the participants felt it had "little impact," while a mere 2% believed it had "no impact" at all. These findings underscore the strong influence political content on social media can have on shaping youth perspectives. This is particularly relevant in the context of Lucknow, where young individuals are highly engaged with digital platforms. The high percentages reflecting significant impact suggest that political propaganda is not only reaching young audiences but is also effectively influencing their viewpoints and possibly their political behaviour. This reinforces the importance of addressing how political narratives are constructed and spread online, as well as the need for interventions that foster critical thinking and informed engagement among youth.

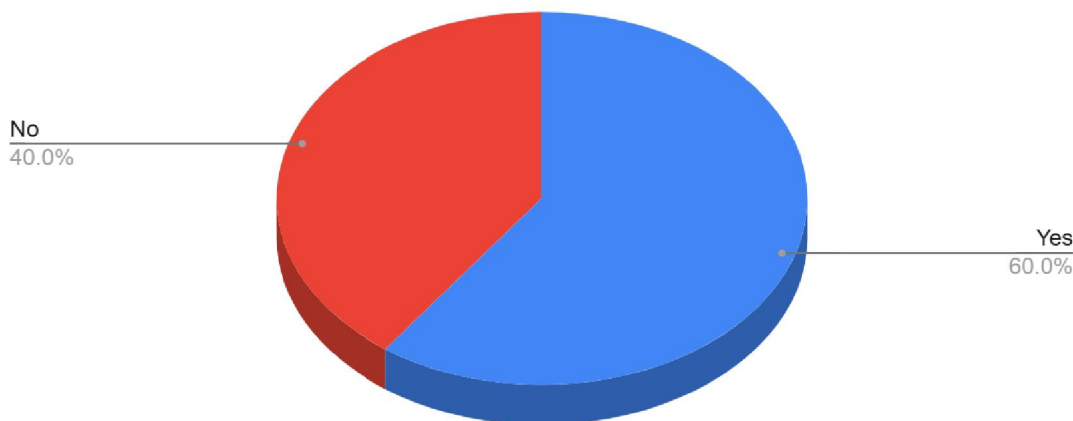
SEC C- Influencer on political engagement

Table 16: Change in perception

Impact on Perception	Frequency	Perception
Yes	60	60%
No	40	40%



Count of 11. Has social media ever changed your perception of a political leader or party?



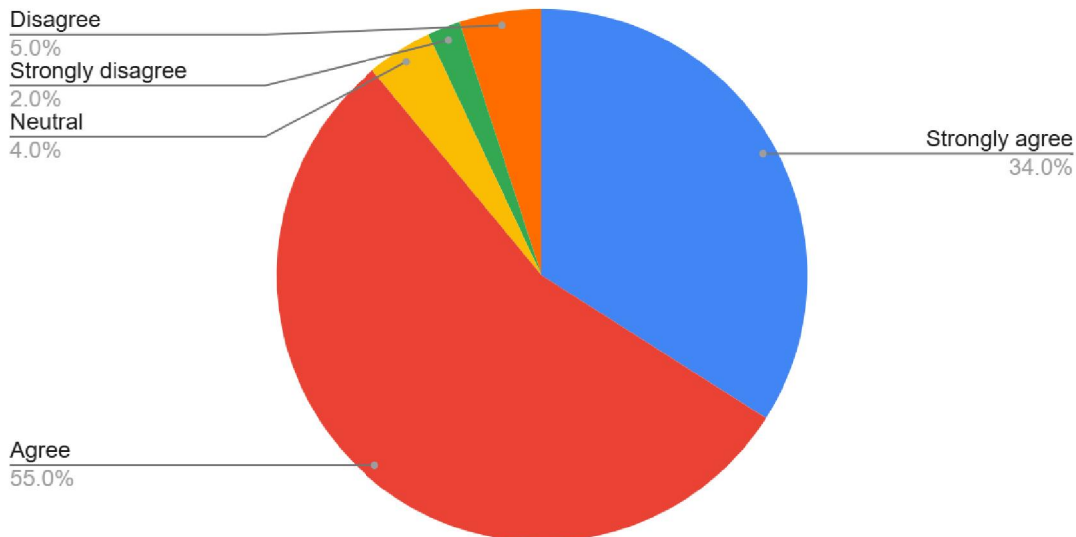
The table number 16 shows that a significant portion of respondents approximately 60% acknowledged that social media has influenced their perception of a political leader or party, while around 40% stated that their views remained unchanged by social media content. This highlights the powerful role that digital platforms play in shaping political opinions among the youth in Lucknow. The majority response indicates that social media does not merely serve as a source of information but also actively contributes to the formation and transformation of political perspectives. This finding reinforces the central theme of the study: social media is not a passive medium but an active agent in the dissemination of political propaganda. The ability of these platforms to alter perceptions suggests a strong potential for both positive engagement and manipulation, emphasizing the critical need for responsible content consumption and improved political awareness among young users.

Table 17: Influence of Political messaging

Influence	Frequency	Perception
Strongly agree	34	34%
Agree	55	55%
Disagree	05	05%
Strongly disagree	02	02%
Neutral	04	04%



Count of 12. Do you believe political messaging on social media influences youth?



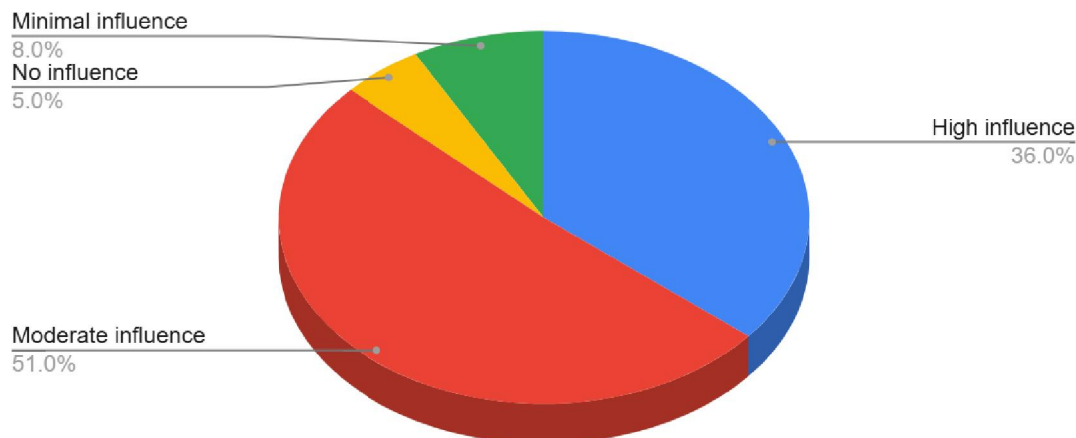
The table number 17 clearly indicates a strong consensus among respondents regarding the influence of political messaging on social media. A combined total of approximately 90% of participants either "agree" or "strongly agree" that such content significantly impacts youth. A small percentage remain "neutral," while even fewer "disagree" or "strongly disagree." This overwhelming agreement reflects a widely shared perception that political messaging through social media is not only prevalent but also highly effective in shaping the political views and attitudes of young people. In the context of Lucknow, where youth are highly active on digital platforms, these findings are particularly relevant. They affirm the idea that social media is a powerful tool for political engagement and persuasion. This also raises concerns about the ethical use of these platforms, as their influence can be harnessed both to inform and to manipulate. The results highlight the urgency of equipping youth with critical media literacy to help them navigate and evaluate political content responsibly.

Table 18: Influence on voting

Influence on voting	Frequency	Percentage
High influence	36	36%
Moderate influence	51	51%
Minimal influence	08	08%
No influence	05	05%



Count of 13. Influence of social media campaigns on voting preferences:



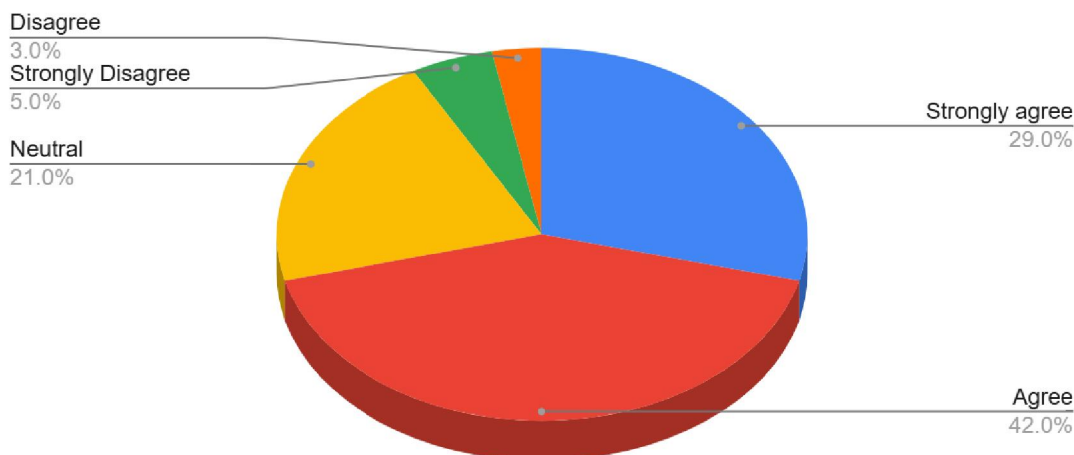
The table number 18 illustrates that social media campaigns play a notable role in shaping voting preferences among respondents. A significant portion of participants identified either a “moderate influence” or “high influence,” indicating that political messaging on social platforms has a tangible effect on electoral decision-making. In contrast, only a small segment of respondents reported “minimal” or “no influence.” This suggests that, for a majority, exposure to political content on social media contributes to the formation or alteration of voting choices. These insights reinforce the importance of digital platforms as strategic tools in modern political campaigns, especially among younger voters who are consistently active online.

Table 19: Ads Regulation

Ads Regulation	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	29	29%
Agree	42	42%
Neutral	21	21%
Strongly Disagree	05	05%
Disagree	03	03%



Count of 14. Need for regulation of political ads on social platforms:



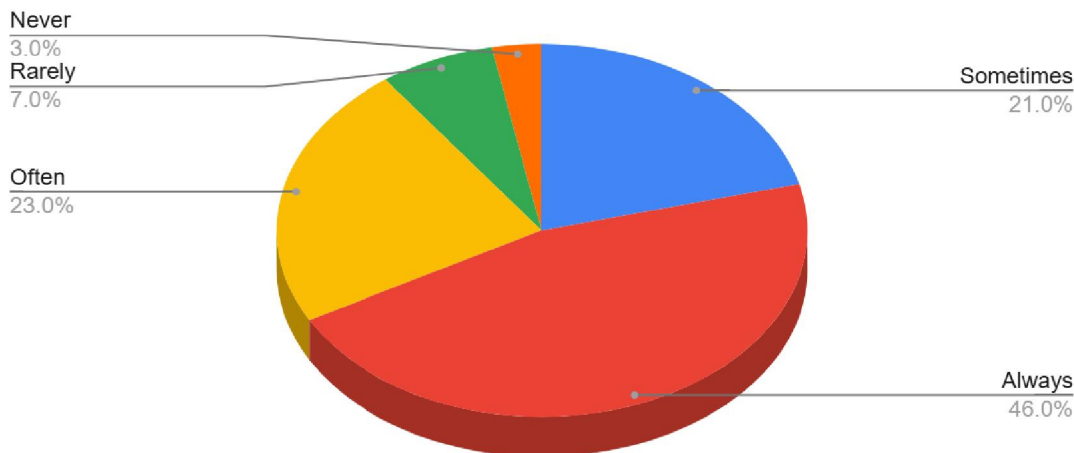
The table number 19 indicates public support for the regulation of political advertisements on social media. A majority of respondents either “agree” or “strongly agree” with the need for such regulation, reflecting widespread concern over the unchecked influence of political ads in digital spaces. A notable portion of respondents remained “neutral,” suggesting some uncertainty or lack of awareness about the implications of unregulated political content. Only a small percentage expressed disagreement. These results highlight a growing consensus on the necessity for accountability and oversight in online political advertising, which is crucial to preventing misinformation.

Table 20: Fact checking

Fact checking political information	Frequency	Percentage
Always	46	46%
Often	23	23%
Sometimes	21	21%
Rarely	07	07%
Never	03	03%



Count of 15. Do you fact-check political information before sharing?



The table number 20 reveals that majority of respondents demonstrate a proactive approach to verifying political information before dissemination. Most notably, "Always" is the most selected option, followed closely by "Often," suggesting that many participants place a high value on accuracy and credibility in political discourse. A smaller yet notable portion selected "Sometimes," indicating occasional verification, while very few respondents admitted to "Rarely" or "Never" fact-checking. These findings reflect widespread awareness of the risks associated with spreading misinformation and the importance of individual accountability in digital political engagement.

V. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The main conclusions drawn from the survey responses about how social media affects political behaviour and perception are covered in detail in this chapter. The investigation highlights patterns in perception, impact, and accountability by examining how people—especially young people—interact with political content online.

5.1 Social Media's Impact on Political Perception

The findings indicate that social media has a significant impact on people's perceptions of political leaders and parties, with most respondents admitting that exposure to online political content has shaped or changed their perceptions. This suggests that social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are not just tools for communication, but also actively shape political narratives and opinions, which is consistent with previous research showing the importance of digital platforms in political socialization and identity formation.

5.2 Influence of Political Messaging on Youth

Concerns regarding younger demographics' vulnerability to targeted political campaigns and disinformation, which can influence voting behaviour and political beliefs at an impressionable age, are highlighted by the finding that the majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the idea that political messaging on social media has a significant impact on youth.

5.3 Voting Preferences and Social Media Campaigns



The responses to the influence of social media campaigns on voting preferences were predominantly clustered around "moderate" and "high" influence. This implies that while not all voters are affected totally by what they see online, social media still maintains enormous power in directing or reinforcing voting decisions. It also raises the issue of digital political advertising ethics and the use of algorithm-driven content to sway electoral outcomes.

5.4 Attitudes Toward Regulation of Political Ads

A growing public awareness and concern about the lack of transparency and accountability in digital political marketing is reflected in the majority of respondents' support for stricter regulation of political ads on social media platforms. This indicates a desire for policies that guarantee the legitimacy and equity of political messaging online, perhaps through platform accountability, fact-checking, or disclosure of funding sources.

5.5 Fact-Checking Behaviour Among Users

Although the final set of data revealed encouraging trends in information verification habits, the presence of users who "rarely" or "never" fact-check highlights the need for additional digital literacy education. More than half of respondents said they always or often fact-check political content before sharing, which suggests a growing culture of digital responsibility and critical engagement that is especially important in preventing the spread of misinformation.

VI. CONCLUSION

The current study looked into how university students in Lucknow, a major Indian city and political center, were affected by political propaganda spread on social media. The results unequivocally show that social media platforms have taken over as a primary forum for political discourse, influencing young people's opinions, voting habits, and civic engagement. This represents a larger change in the way political discourse is carried out in the digital age, when conventional forms of influence are redefined by speed, accessibility, and interaction.

According to the findings, a sizable majority of students agree that political message has an impact on social media, pointing out in particular how powerful it is in influencing young people. This supports the idea that political attitudes and behaviours are greatly influenced by digital political information, a situation that is made worse by the individualized and algorithm-driven nature of these platforms. Social media makes people more politically informed and involved, but it also makes them more susceptible to manipulation by propaganda and fake news.

The study also showed that students are becoming more conscious of the necessity of regulating political advertisements and the significance of verifying information before disseminating it. This implies that media literacy is essential for enabling young people to interact critically with political content and fend off misleading strategies. However, the fact that some respondents hardly ever check political information suggests that there is a persistent lack of digital literacy that has to be filled by focused policy and education initiatives.

In conclusion, a multifaceted strategy is required to protect democratic processes due to social media's widespread impact on political communication. Enhancing media literacy among young people, enacting laws governing transparent and accountable information, and encouraging critical thinking abilities that allow consumers to separate reality from propaganda should be the main priorities. In order to guarantee that political participation on social media stays an empowering force rather than a means of manipulation, ongoing study and aggressive interventions will be crucial as digital platforms continue to develop.

The mechanics of digital political propaganda in one of India's major cities are clarified by this study, which offers insightful local perspectives from university students in Lucknow. These results have wider ramifications for comparable situations around the world, where digital media and youth involvement interact to influence democracy's future.

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