Enhancing digital engagement: The importance of media literacy in social media

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ABSTRACT

Background: The rapid growth of social media platforms has fundamentally changed how individuals access, create, and share information. These platforms now serve as key sources of news, entertainment, and social engagement, presenting advantages and challenges to people and communities. As social media influences public discussions and the dissemination of information, the importance of media literacy in effectively navigating the intricate digital media environment has become increasingly clear. **Purpose:** This study investigates the relationship between social media dynamics and media literacy, focusing on how users engage with content, develop their viewpoints, and participate in online dialogues. **Methods:** This research employs a multidisciplinary approach, drawing insights from communication studies, psychology, and information science to thoroughly examine the changing media landscape and its implications for democratic participation. **Results:** The results showed that the majority of respondents used social media daily, mainly for entertainment, while only a minority felt comfortable openly voicing opinions. Social media influences democratic engagement, affecting political and social participation, although opinion change is still variable. Media literacy awareness is low, with most relying on the credibility of sources or seeking supporting information to verify content. **Conclusion:** Media literacy is essential for countering disinformation, promoting critical thinking, and encouraging responsible digital citizenship. **Implications:** This research emphasises the importance of media literacy education to improve critical thinking, counteract disinformation, and encourage responsible digital citizenship to create a more aware and participatory democratic society.

Keywords: Social media dynamics; digital media; media literacy; misinformation; digital citizen

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten years, there has been a significant increase in the use of social media platforms. There is open access to social networks, regardless of age and graphic demo (Hatamleh & Aissani, 2024). Digital media consists of content such as text, images, videos, and music, all of which are stored and shared digitally. This media can be accessed through smart phones, computers, websites, social media, and apps. This form of media allows respondents to quickly share information, stay connected, and enjoy entertainment from anywhere at any time. Web media, on the other hand, specifically refers to content shared through websites or the Internet, such as social media, blogs, and online videos. Web media is a subset of digital media.

In the past, information spread slowly through print media, word-of-mouth, and in-person conversations. Today, digital media provides instant access to global news, education, and entertainment. Communication has become faster and more efficient, allowing real-time connections through social media, email, and video calls. Online platforms have expanded business, healthcare, and education, making them more accessible. Unlike previous methods, digital media enables rapid sharing of ideas, encourages global cooperation, and equips individuals with tools for creativity and learning on a larger scale. Social media dynamics describe how individuals interact and engage with content on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This includes actions such as posting, commenting, liking, and sharing, which help drive trends and discussions. Social media connects respondents, influences opinions, and facilitates instant communication, which often has a significant impact on culture and society.

Social media plays an important role in shaping people's beliefs and values; therefore, media literacy is crucial in shaping opinion formation within society as it equips individuals with the skills to critically analyse information. Media literacy is defined as the ability to critically analyze and interpret media content, becoming increasingly important in the digital age to be able to compare and contrast between credible and non-credible sources, identify bias, and understand the impact of media on society (Livingstone & Third, 2017).

India has over 500 million social media users, making it one of the largest global social media markets. If we look at the data, 30% of Indian Internet users aged 15-29 use Instagram, making it the leading platform among this age group (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2023). Almost half of young Indians use Instagram multiple times a day, sharing personal content, researching trends, and following influencers are common uses of the platform. Instagram is a well-known social networking site where users can post stories, videos, and pictures. It is popular among young people and influencers, owing to its emphasis on creativity and visual

content. Instagram encourages interaction, self-expression, and trends in fashion, art, and lifestyle through features such as clips and direct messaging. Research shows that social media sites such as Instagram, facebook are crucial in shaping and influencing their views on social issues, lifestyle updates and their shopping habits (GlobalWebIndex, 2024).

Instagram provides news and information, but the abundance of false information on the platform highlights how important it is for users to be media-literate. Social media has become essential in everyday life to share experiences, inform friends and relatives about certain events, or even keep up with world news. This type of research has been conducted in India but not in other parts of the country. However, studies in Rajasthan on the same topic are lacking. I wanted to fill this gap and determine how Jaipur's youth view the dynamics of social media. This research will help understand the patterns of how young people use social media at different time intervals. Social media should not be praised without question, as research shows how social media helps and strengthens young people's political expression. Understanding the different power dynamics and "participatory intensities" that define participation is important (Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2019).

We assess whether young people's familiarity with mass media and their ability to critically evaluate news and advertising requires a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between ability groupings, Internet use, motivations for information use, and young people's civic engagement in a sizable metropolitan public high school. This research aims to examine how young people in Jaipur use social media, particularly Instagram, in their daily lives and analyse how this use affects their opinions, values, and engagement in social and democratic issues. The specific objectives of this study are to understand the dynamics of social media use among young people, identify their level of media literacy, and explain the relationship between social media use and the ability to think critically about digital content such as news, trends, and social issues. This study also aims to fill a gap in studies in the Rajasthan region and provide input for the development of media literacy education in the future.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilised a descriptive quantitative research methodology to explore a specific phenomenon within the population of Rajasthan, with an emphasis on Jaipur. This methodology focuses on collecting numerical data to uncover patterns, relationships, and trends related to a topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The descriptive design offers a systematic framework for analysing the subject matter. By using quantitative methods, this research guarantees objective data collection, which facilitates the statistical validation of the research results. The main objective

was to understand the current conditions and behaviours in the population, while offering insight into the underlying factors affecting the observed phenomenon.

A random sampling method was used to ensure unbiased representation of the data (Taherdoost, 2016). This technique gives every individual in the defined population of Jaipur an equal chance of being selected, thus reducing sampling bias and ensuring that the findings can be generalised to a wider population. The target population consisted of Jaipur residents aged 15–29 years. Given the demographic diversity of Jaipur, the sample was strategically selected to reflect variations in socioeconomic backgrounds, education levels, and occupational categories. A representative sample of over 200 respondents was collected through social media platforms to achieve statistical validity while ensuring practicality in data collection. A structured survey questionnaire served as the primary tool for data collection. A questionnaire was designed to collect demographic information and responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our results confirm the growing call for educators, community advocates, and policymakers to embrace media literacy as an essential tool for realising the promise of digital citizenship (Martens & Hobbs, 2015).The ability to accurately understand and create well-informed opinions about the world we live in and

our role in it are referred to as critical thinking in news. The change in news consumption across a modest age range during adolescence demonstrates how rapidly young people's access to news sources and technological environments is changing (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). The results show that young people often use digital media to obtain information because they carry digital devices. Young people with strong democratic literacy are also better equipped to support democratic norms and principles, make informed decisions - including voting - and monitor and critique democratic procedures. Along with the proliferation of mobile devices, digital technologies, as mediators of social relations and public life, have been viewed as important for citizenship growth (Jeong et al., 2012).

This requires consideration of the online environment in which many young people spend their time. This supports the lived citizenship argument put forward by Cohen et al. (2018), which emphasises understanding young people's civic engagement in relation to their everyday environments and activities. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate whether and how young people use social media to participate in participatory politics in their daily lives. Researchers have noticed how social media shapes public opinion during major sociopolitical movements, including the Peasant Protests in India in 2020.

Social media influenced the way respondents formed their opinions during demonstrations.

They found that "key narratives and influences on social media significantly affected public discourse, sentiment towards the protests, and the spread of information and misinformation". Social media drove political participation and support for the Peasant Protest, with a focus on the mobilisation component. Their study showed that "social media played an important role in mobilising support for protests, especially among younger demographics".

During the demonstration, the issue of false information on social media was emphasised. They found "many examples of misinformation and disinformation being spread deliberately to manipulate public opinion" through content analysis. Young people's use of social media is associated with their exposure to fake news, which, in turn, is related to the time they spend online. Research has linked news consumption on social media to fake news (Marchi, 2012). Evidence shows that young people are more likely to share false information online, and they cannot distinguish between what is fake and what is trustworthy, which is even more concerning (National Literacy Trust, 2019).

In addition, the majority of young people who encounter fake news lack the skills to assess and verify the reliability of online content. Young people are aware of the existence of fake news and the possible risks of exposure to it. Fake news is associated with tension and anxiety in addition to creating uncertainty and "damaging children and young people's self-esteem" (Figueira & Oliveira, 2017). The impact of fake news on young people's engagement in news remains unknown, although there are concerns about rising levels of news fatigue, news avoidance, and distrust of news media.

Figure 1 shows that the majority of respondents used English in communication, especially in social media communication. The percentage of the use of English reaches 78.8%, which shows that English is the dominating language in the digital world. This also shows that the role of English as an international language is the most frequently used language in accessing

various social media platforms to obtain global information and interaction across countries and cultures. Hindi, the primary language in India, is used by only about 20.2% of social media users. While this is a smaller percentage compared to English-speaking users, it still shows that there are still large populations in certain regions that prefer to use local languages to communicate online on social media. It can also be seen in the figure that there is a percentage of 1% of people who use social media in local languages. This shows that although local languages are rich in cultural diversity, they are not very popular or have limitations in the use of social media due to the lack of technical support on social media platforms.

This also shows that there is a cultural shift in the younger generation; they prefer to use language that is more common and practical in using social media, especially in conducting

Primary language(s) used on social media:
99 responses
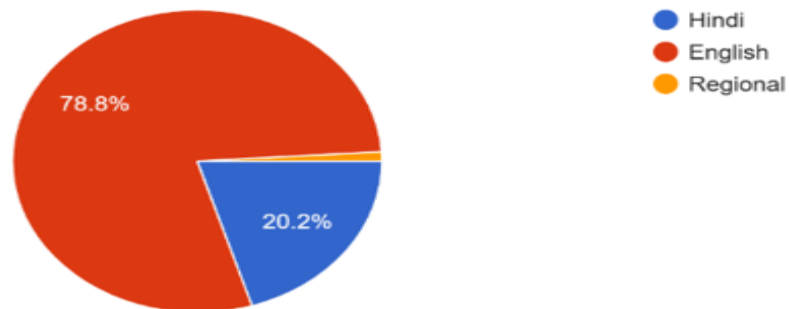
How often do you engage with content on social media?
99 responses
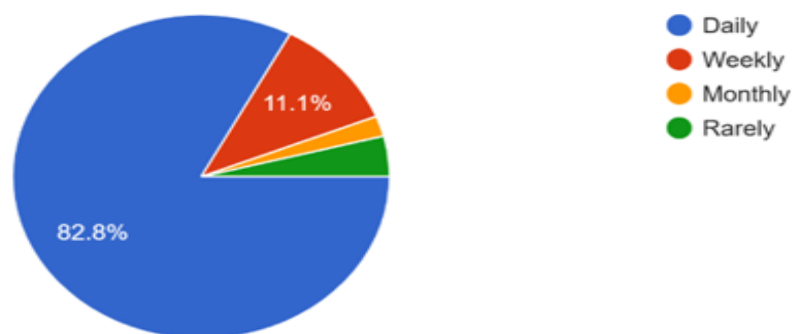
Source: Researcher's Report, 2025

Figure 1 Primary language(s) and how often engage with content on social media

digital interactions. Digitalization has made people dependent on social media as a source of up-to-date news information to get the desired information (Khan & Idris, 2019). Media literacy is a potential option for addressing and fulfilling the needs of young social media users. It is safe to say that the use of English has dominated digital communication in the modern world, followed by Hindi which is quite popular, while local languages still face challenges to survive.

The figure also shows that the majority of social media users are young people who use social media almost every day. Social media is the main medium of today's youth development, deeply affecting this age group (Kleemans et al., 2018). Children and adolescents are the most intense consumers of social media; hence, there is a need for media literacy (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). It can be seen that the percentage of users is 82.8%, which shows that social media has become an important part of young

people's daily social life, from communicating, seeking information, getting entertainment, and building social connections. In the figure, we can see a percentage of 11.1% who are weekly users of social media. This refers to the group which may consist of those who have limited access, such as less free time, or those who have consciously limited their use of social media to reduce distraction or other negative impacts.

The figure shows that 2% use social media on a monthly basis, suggesting that they may not rely heavily on social media or prefer other platforms to search for information and communicate. As for the group of young people who rarely use social media, at 4%, it can be seen that despite the popularity of social media, there is still a small group of young people who choose not to use the media actively, possibly for personal, technical, or other reasons. Social media has a major influence on the lives of young people. Intensive use by the majority of young people shows the important role of social media in their lives, but there are also groups of young people who rarely use social media, which shows the diversity of preferences among young people towards digital technology. Through informative, inspiring, and useful content, it is important to encourage positive digital engagement, which then addresses the gap in understanding digital literacy. There is a need for socialisation and education related to digital literacy and positive content to ensure that the acceptance and spread of negative content is avoided (Rahmawan et al., 2019).
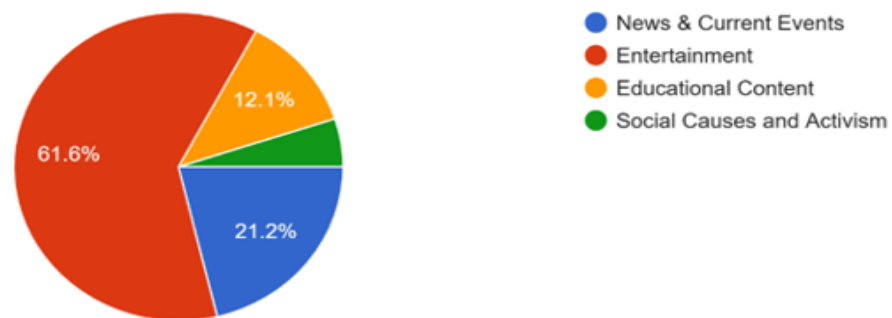
Figure 2 show, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents (61.6 %) used social media for entertainment purposes. This reflects that social media has become the main medium for entertainment, such as through videos, music, memes, or other forms of content designed to entertain social media users. The popularity of entertainment content shows how social media can change respondents' enjoyment of entertainment on a daily basis.

Social media is also used as a medium to get information on news and current events; the percentage is 21.2%, indicating that social media has also become an important platform for people to get actual information. This shows a shift in the pattern of getting news information, where people now more often rely on social media to get real-time information and news. The figure also shows that 12% of people use social media to obtain educational content, although this percentage figure is not as large as the use of entertainment and news, but social media has also been recognised as a platform that makes it easy to learn. Much educational content, such as online courses, tutorials, and many learning materials, is available, which provides a great opportunity for users to increase their knowledge.

Finally, only 5% used social media to watch social activities and activism. Although this percentage is small, it still shows that social media also acts as a medium to spread awareness of social issues and encourage social change in society. Overall, these data show that there are
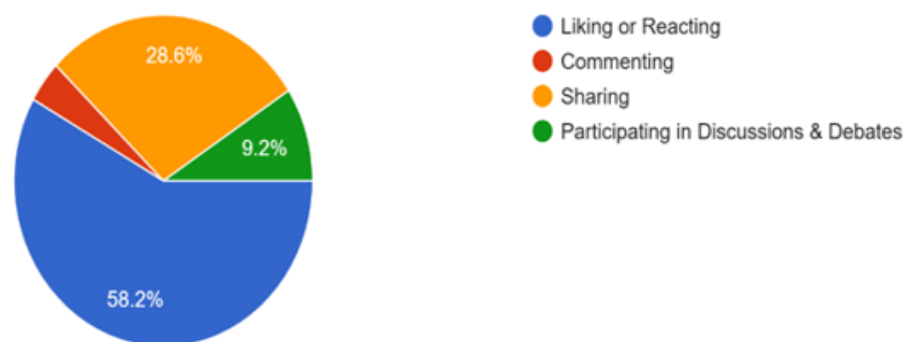
Source: Researcher's Report, 2025

Figure 2 Type of content most often and how usually interact with content on social

various functions in the use of social media, ranging from entertainment and education to activism. The dominant one is entertainment, which shows that it is still more widely used as a recreational medium compared to other purposes.

The figure also shows that how respondents interact with content on social media varies greatly, with the majority of respondents or users being more likely to react to content. As many as 58.2% of respondents choose to like or react to posts or content, this shows that most social media users are comfortable in passively interacting through simple features such as "like", "love" or other emoji reactions, as a form of appreciation for existing content. Engagement on social media, characterized by reactions in the form of liking, sharing, and commenting, is an integral part of the social media experience, but it can also increase the risk of addiction and misinformation if unchecked (Hatamleh & Aissani, 2024).

A total of 28.6% of the users chose to share content that caught their attention with other respondents. This interaction shows a more active engagement because users do not consume content personally but participate in spreading it. The content that is usually shared is relevant content that is interesting or important to share with friends or relationships. 9.2% of users participated in discussions and debates. This shows that social media has become a space for various opinions, but only a small percentage of users engage in deep and critical discussions. Most social media users choose to avoid conflicts or are uncomfortable debating in public spaces. Overall, these data show that social media user interactions are mostly passive and simple, such as liking and sharing content. In terms of discussions and debates, there is still less interest from many users, suggesting that the majority of users use social media for information consumption and entertainment rather than engaging in in-depth discussions.

Figure 3 shows that the majority of respondents did not feel entirely comfortable expressing their opinions openly on digital platforms. Only 9.2% of the respondents felt comfortable sharing their views on social media, which shows that some users feel confident and free in expressing their opinions. A total of 20.4% of respondents felt comfortable enough to share their views, although there were still certain limitations. This group tends to have a desire to have an opinion, but is more cautious in choosing topics and audiences.

About 25.5% of respondents felt neutral towards sharing their views on social media. This group does not typically have a strong preference for sharing their views, depending on the situation and type of relevant content. This suggests that a third of the users are in the neutral zone and do not have a strong drive to share their opinions consistently. The largest group was respondents who felt less uncomfortable sharing their views on social media; 39.8% of respondents had doubts and anxieties about sharing their opinions in public spaces such as social media, followed by 5% of respondents who felt very uncomfortable sharing their views on social media.

This group prefers to completely avoid sharing their opinions for various personal reasons. From these data, it can be seen that although social media has provided space for freedom of expression, the majority of users are still limited in using it to share their views because they feel uncomfortable and unsafe. Media literacy can equip young people with the ability to analyse, create, and respond to media messages critically and constructively (Martens & Hobbs, 2015).

The figure also shows that 35.4% of respondents feel that digital conversations on social media encourage open dialog, which is quite comfortable. This figure shows that a third of users believe social media can provide opportunities for them to speak freely and interact productively. This group felt that
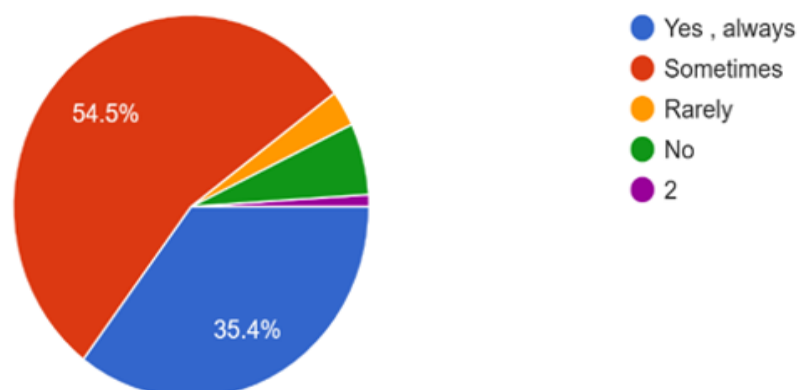
How comfortable do you feel expressing your views on social media?
98 responses

- Very comfortable
- Somewhat Comfortable
- Neutral
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Very uncomfortable
- 3
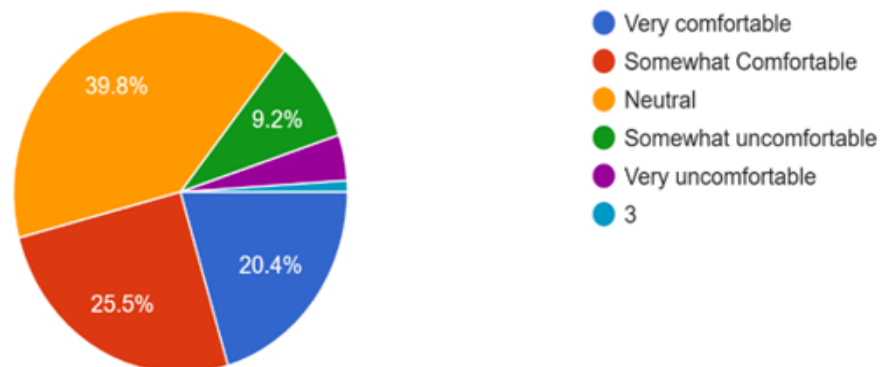
Do you feel that digital conversations on social media encourage open dialogue?
99 responses

- Yes , always
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- No
- 2

Source: Researcher's Report, 2025

Figure 3 How comfortable to feel expressing views and digital conversations encourage open dialogue on social media

social media provided support in encouraging dialog and sharing positive views and ideas. The majority of respondents (54.5 %) thought that social media only occasionally encouraged open dialog.

This suggests that users' experiences on social media depend on the specific situation and topic of discussion. In some conversations, users may feel encouraged to support healthy dialogue, but others may be inhibited by conflict or polarisation between other users. The other group felt rarely, never, or uncertain. A minority of respondents felt that open dialog rarely or never happens on social media, and a few respondents were uncertain. Social media platforms require users to possess digital and
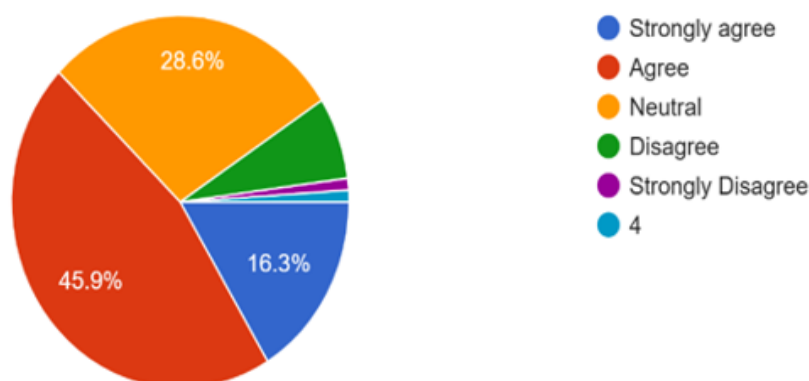
How often do you come across posts related to social or political issues on social media?
98 responses

How often do you come across posts related to social or political issues on social media?
Legend: Very Frequently, Occasionally, Rarely, Never, 1
34.7%, 13.3%, 46.9%
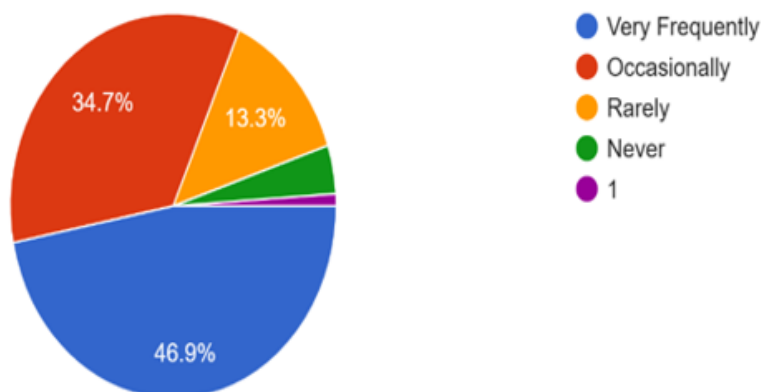
Do you believe social media positively influences democratic engagement?
98 responses

Do you believe social media positively influences democratic engagement?
Legend: Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, 4
28.6%, 45.9%, 16.3%

Source: Researcher's Report, 2025

Figure 4 How often posts related to social or political issues on social media and how positively influences democratic

critical thinking skills for responsible social media use (Curran & Ribble, 2017). The dissemination of distorted, inaccurate, or false information on social media can quickly lead to adverse effects, requiring critical thinking and strong media literacy initiatives (Figueira & Oliveira, 2017).

Figure 4 shows how often respondents find content posts related to political or social issues

on social media. Social media platforms can be tools to encourage political engagement, which allows young people to connect with like-minded individuals and participate in opinions or public debates (Alodat et al., 2023). A total of 46.9% of the respondents thought that it was very common to find political or social issues on their social media. This shows that almost half of the users were exposed to such content on

a regular basis. This suggests that social media has become a major platform for discussing and disseminating information related to social and political issues, whether through news, campaigns, discussions, or public opinion.

A total of 34.7% of respondents thought that they sometimes encountered social media content related to political or social issues. This group shows that, although they are not always exposed to such content, such issues are still present in their experience of using social media. This could depend on the type of platform used, the algorithms tailored to their preferences, or the network of friends. The figure also shows that only 13.3% of the respondents think that they rarely encounter political or social issues on their social media.

This suggests that some users are less exposed to this type of content, which may be due to their personal preferences, algorithmic filters, or lack of interest in these issues. There was also a small group of respondents who thought that they never encountered content related to social and political issues. Almost half of the respondents encountered political or social issues on social media quite frequently, and more than a third encountered such content regularly. This shows that social media is not only a place for entertainment but also serves as a medium to critically discuss issues.

The figure also shows respondents' perceptions of the impact of social media on democratic engagement. Most respondents (62.2 %) believed that social media has a positive role

in influencing democratic engagement. This group consists of respondents who strongly agree (16.3 %) and strongly believe that social media has a significant impact in promoting democratic engagement. This includes the ability of social media to raise political awareness and facilitate public discussion; 45.9% of respondents believed that social media can encourage democratic engagement which can be a tool for disseminating political information.

A total of 28.6% of respondents chose to be neutral, showing that they were not entirely sure whether social media had a positive impact on democratic engagement. A small proportion of respondents (8.1 %) disagreed that social media positively affects democratic engagement. This group includes respondents who disagree, where they doubt the positive impact of social media that allows for disinformation, polarisation, or other factors that can hinder democratic engagement. The last group of respondents strongly disagreed, completely rejecting the idea that social media supports democratic engagement. There is a need for media literacy, which consists of four hierarchically organised parts: technical skills, critical understanding, production and connection skills, and civic engagement (Zhang & Zhu, 2016). Digital citizenship is understood and practiced in four ways: ethics, media and information literacy, participation/engagement, and critical resistance (Choi, 2016).

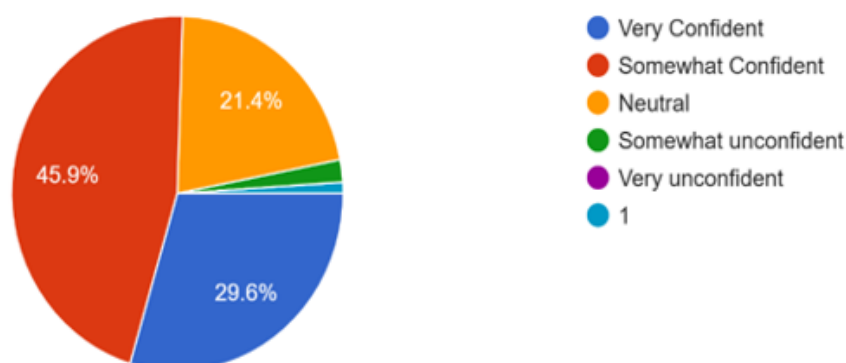Figure 5 shows how social media can

Have you ever changed your opinion on a social or political issue based on social media content?
97 responses
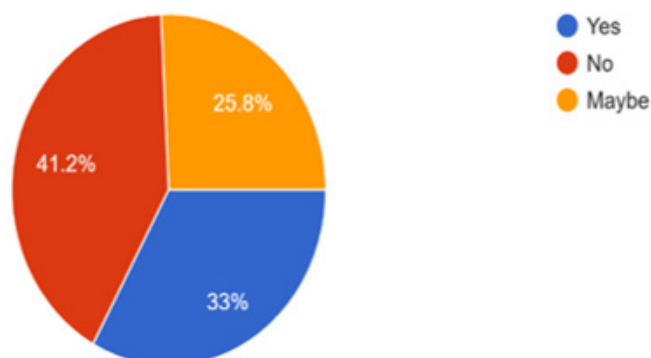
How confident are you in identifying misinformation on social media?
98 responses

Source: Researcher's Report, 2025

Figure 5 How social media content changed opinion on a social or political issue and how confident to identify misinformation on social media

influence respondents' opinions on social and political issues. A total of 33% of the respondents agreed with the statement that they have changed their opinions on social or political issues based on content on social media. This group shows that social media can have a significant influence as a source of information or opinions capable of changing and reshaping one's perspective on an issue. It can also be seen in the figure that 41.2% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that they have never changed their opinions on social or political issues based on content on social media. This group is the largest and has reflected the firmness of respondents' opinions, who have strong beliefs in their opinions and are not easily influenced by various kinds of social media content.

Finally, 25.8% of the respondents were unsure whether they had ever hollowed out their

opinions based on social media. The uncertainty felt by these respondents could be influenced by their unawareness of exposure to social media content that has indirectly influenced their perspectives or their opinions that may be formed by complex influences from various sources, including social media. While media literacy can influence political participation by encouraging the critical consumption of media content, it can also reduce the negative effects of inappropriate or false information, empowering individuals to engage in informed democratic participation (Limilia & Fuady, 2021). Social media literacy requires self-emphasis and the desire and ability to examine, analyse, and evaluate content on social media (Cho et al., 2024).

The figure also shows the level of respondents' confidence in identifying misinformation on social media. Only 29.6% of the respondents felt very confident that they were able to consciously identify misinformation on social media. This group reflects users who have a good understanding of evaluating information sources, using digital literacy skills, and actively checking facts. The largest group was 45.9% of the respondents who felt somewhat confident in recognising misinformation. Respondents in this group may have a basic understanding of misinformation identification but are not yet fully confident in their abilities.

Further, 21.2% of the respondents were neutral, showing a lack of confidence in their abilities. Finally, there were a small number of respondents who were not confident and very unconfident, suggesting that there is a need for better media literacy to help them understand how to recognise misinformation properly and effectively. Self-efficacy in detecting misinformation on social media is strongly influenced by factors such as education level, Internet skills, and the ability to search and verify information. This may indicate the importance of media literacy in reducing the spread of false information (Khan & Idris, 2019).

As shown in the figure 6, there is a need for media literacy in education in schools and universities to counter misinformation. Most respondents (76.5 %) agreed that media literacy education should be part of the curriculum in schools and universities. This group is divided into respondents who strongly agree, where almost 39.8% of respondents strongly support the importance of media literacy as an effort to fight misinformation; they realise that the ability to recognise false information or hoaxes is very important in this digital era. The next group of respondents agreed, with 38.7% of respondents seeing that literacy education can be a step towards building a critical and information-aware society.

A total of 16.3% of respondents were neutral to the idea, reflecting either a lack of understanding of how media literacy can help fight misinformation or doubts about the impact it will have. Finally, a small number of respondents (6 %) disagreed and
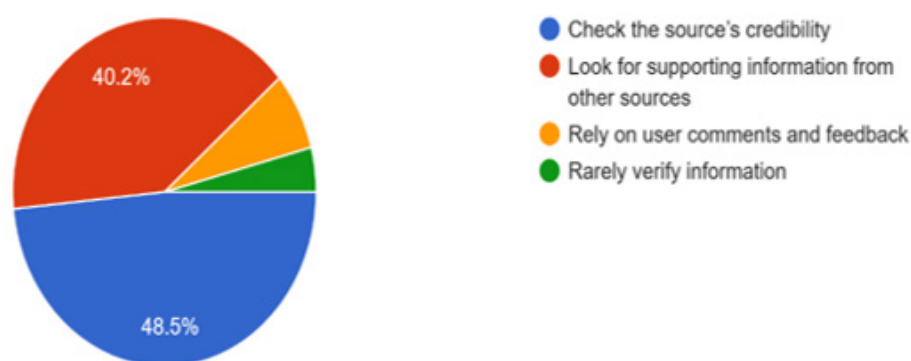
Do you think media literacy education should be a part of school and college curriculums to combat misinformation?

98 responses
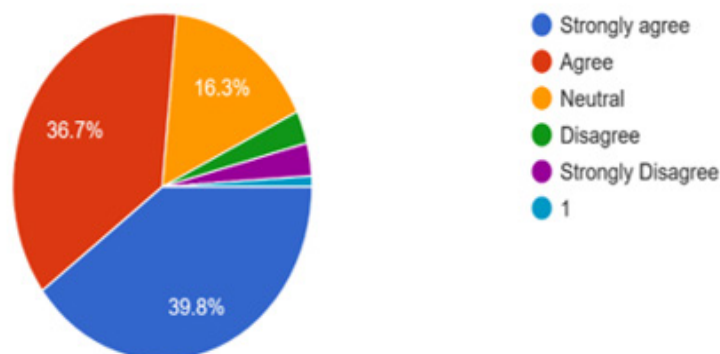
What steps do you usually take to verify the credibility of information on social media?

97 responses

Source: Researcher's Report, 2025

Figure 6 Are media literacy education should be a part of curicullums to combat and what steps are usually taken to verify the credibility of information on social media

strongly disagreed that media literacy should be included in the curriculum in schools and universities. This shows that respondents were not convinced that media literacy education was the correct solution. Educational programs that focus on media literacy can increase scepticism of media messages and encourage the reflective processing of information based on logic and credible sources (Austin & Pinkleton, 2016).

To bridge the digital literacy gap, education and socialisation are needed to ensure access to all citizens, including those with limited digital skills (Fardiah et al., 2024). Social media literacy can empower students to think critically when evaluating content and prioritise authentic discourse over performative actions in digital spaces   (Hayvon, 2024). Integrating social media in education can foster collaborative

learning and increase student engagement, as well as boost the potential of digital literacy as an essential component of modern pedagogy (Hamadi et al., 2021). The effective integration of digital platforms in education prepares students to navigate critically and contributes to the online environment by fostering balanced and informed digital literacy (Hutchison et al., 2016).

The figure also shows how to verify the credibility of the information on social media. A total of 49.9% of respondents stated that they usually perform a source credibility check as the main step to verify information. This shows that almost half of the respondents were aware of the importance of checking the background of the source before trusting the information. A total of 40.2% of respondents sought supporting information from other sources to ensure the accuracy of the information, showing an awareness of the importance of comparing information from multiple perspectives.

7.1% of respondents rely on comments and feedback from other users to determine the credibility of information. While user comments can sometimes provide additional insights, this can be risky, as comments are often unverified or come from biased personal opinions. This group may be more vulnerable to misinformation if it relies too much on other people's comments or views without further checking the information. Finally, 4% of the respondents said they rarely verified any information on social media. This shows that this group tended to accept information without questioning the credibility of the source. Respondents from this group are likely to obtain information in a hurry and always believe it because of a lack of awareness of the importance of verifying the credibility of information sources.

Media literacy can empower users to critically analyse and evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and bias of online information, ultimately fostering responsible and ethical digital citizenship (Latif et al., 2023). Improving digital media literacy is important to equip users to navigate the rapidly evolving and resilient social media ecosystem, especially when addressing the spread of fake news (Kaur et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Social media plays an important role in modern society, especially among young people. This study provides significant insights into social media usage patterns among young people. Most (82.8%) used social media daily, mainly for entertainment (61.6%), followed by news and current events (21.2%). Educational content (12%) and social activities (5%) had a smaller share. Interaction on social media is high, with 58.2% liking or reacting to posts and 28.6% sharing content. However, only 39.8% felt comfortable openly expressing their views. Digital conversations are considered to encourage open dialog by 35.4%, but the majority are still undecided. Social media often

exposes users to political or social issues, with 46.9% frequently encountering such content and 62.2% recognising its influence on democratic engagement. Changes in opinions on these issues were mixed: 33% agreed that their views had changed, while 41.2% disagreed.

Awareness of online behaviour was moderate, with only 29.6% confident in their social media literacy, although 76.5% supported integrating media literacy into the school curriculum. When verifying information, almost half (49.9%) checked the credibility of the source, and 40.2% sought confirmation from other sources, although a minority relied only on user comments or rarely verified information. These findings highlight the need for increased digital literacy and critical engagement to encourage the responsible and informed use of social media.

There is a clear need to improve digital literacy, as many users lack confidence in navigating social media responsibly. This underscores the importance of integrating media literacy into education to equip users with the skills to critically assess information and meaningfully engage online. In addition, the public recognises the need to verify information; however, most still rely on unverified sources, highlighting a critical area for improvement. Overall, while social media offers many benefits, encouraging a more informed, thoughtful, and responsible approach to its use is essential to maximise its positive impact on society. Given the widespread use of social media, especially

for entertainment and news, incorporating media literacy into educational curricula is essential. This will help individuals critically evaluate content, understand bias, and verify the credibility of information. Users should be aware of how social media can shape their opinions on political and social issues. Regular campaigns to understand algorithms, echo chambers, and content moderation practices can improve users' critical thinking skills.

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