

Research Article

Influence of social media on the Political Choice Making: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract - In the last decade, there has been an enormous rise in the social media platforms. Social media has started influencing political choice making in various elections. The objective of the present study was to assess the impact of social media platforms in forming opinion about their political preferences. The study also aimed to examine the association between different demographic variables. Data was collected using Google forms. Hypothesis testing has been done to explore independence between various demographic variables. Further, binary logistic regression applied to find out the extent of influence of social media on political choice making among the respondents. Findings also revealed that there exists an association between many demographic variables like gender and voting frequency, gender and formation of political opinion from social media. It was additionally established that frequency of following social media platforms, trust in the news shared through social media platforms, activeness of political parties in using social media platforms, social media platforms circulate fake political news and optimism in current political climate drives political choice making.

Keywords: *Social media, Political Preferences, Elections, Demographic Variables.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Whom to vote is an important and recurring decision which is taken by every citizen. This decision is based on varying factors like existing attitudes, prior voting experiences and the various sources of direct and indirect communication (Redlawsk 2002). Prior research tells us that media along with peer communication and encounters with politicians directly impacts voting decision (Beck et al. 2002; Boomgaarden and Schmitt-Beck 2016; Schmitt-Beck 2003). The more we think we know who we are going to vote for, the greater the chances of switching (Alvarez and Franklin 1994). This is known as the concept of swing voters who either make last minute decisions based on the campaigns or no decision at all (Boomgaarden and Schmitt-Beck 2016; Geers and Bos 2016).

Advertisements in newspapers and televisions have been considered as the traditional way of influencing public opinion. In the last decade, there has been an enormous rise in the social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram that allow users to make and share content or to participate in social networking. These platforms are used by a wide section of the society (Newman et al. 2019) who use it to find

the direct link between political information and social media but also for possible direct communication with politicians and for peer discussions related to political issues (Aldrich et al. 2016; Beck et al. 2002). Due to this reason, the election campaigns have witnessed a considerable change not only in India and US but all around the world. During the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections Mr. Donald Trump and during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Mr. Narendra Modi aced their elections. One of the biggest reasons behind their historic win was the use of social media to reach out directly to the common masses. They started the trend and other parties followed suit and also began to use these platforms for their campaigns to keep their followers updated with the party's proceedings. Research backs that the rapidly growing medium has thus, become a direct influential space for politics and motivates citizens to vote in the campaign (Dimitrova et al. 2014; Holt et al. 2013; Kahne et al. 2013). Generally, before making a voting decision citizens refer to the various news available which may not always be uniform. Information has become digitized which has resulted in a widespread sharing of news via media channels resulting in the birth of hybrid media system (Chadwick 2017; Schulz 2014). In a hybrid media system, the source of the information is too complex to decipher since a lot of overlapping exists between channels yet the choice of the channel is a crucial factor and affects the political behaviour of the citizen (Dimitrova et al. 2014; Moeller et al. 2016). However due to the wide array of news channels the amount and diversity of the information is infinite. Social media gives a power buzzer option to varied information sources which make a single news stream. News is more personalized due to the push mechanism which works on algorithmic decisions thereby streaming information from pre-selected sources of a personalized news diet (Thorson and Wells 2015). Thus, social media offers a one-to-one personalized news experience with minimum effort from the recipient. Since the information is tailor-made by filling in the pre-selection of sources, it helps the individual by getting quicker access to sources and topics which are of higher relevance from the vote making decision view-point. This entire big data enabled circuit leads to an exposure of like-minded viewpoints which are referred to as 'filter bubbles' (Pariser 2011). This may also cause inadvertent viewing of content on social media (Fletcher and Nielsen 2017), although there is no conclusive proof in research which shows that members in a group echo the same thought process (Zuiderveen Borgesius et al. 2016). Keeping in mind the political context, information here refers to social media posts from friends, followers and politicians along with the original posts posted by news media on their social media handles. Social endorsements are another feature of social media where an information item is supplemented with social endorsements like views or reactions, recommendations from friends, the like-button of Facebook and the number of reads to be few of them. These endorsements fuel social evaluations by influencing the interpretation of an issue and drive user's selection of information (Messing and Westwood 2014). This research has been carried out for evaluating the degree of influence of such websites and applications on the political choice making among the masses.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A large database of research has been carried out on the influence of social media on politics all around the world. Dostie-Goulet 2009 examined the issue of creating political enthusiasm by assessing one of its key influencers, the web-based social networking. The book by Behnke 2010 discusses leaders, legislators, presidents and their initial steps with social platforms. Hellweg 2011 in her exploration research paper threw light on the ways in which legislators can utilize social media platforms effectively and join such online networking platforms for their professional benefits. Dwivedi 2011 explored the use of online networking platforms to provoke political exercises. It finishes up with discoveries that these platforms take part in advancing great administration and are perceived by numerous legislatures and arrangement creators in these nations. The article by Cisilin 2013 centered on current advancements in Indian governmental issues. It likewise gives brief rundown of effective online networking political battles. Kaur and Kaur 2013 had also discussed the impact of social media on politics globally. They have taken global elections and politics into consideration. Mohapatra 2013 examines media's role as a fundamental appendage of the current democracy. The article additionally calls attention to the enormous utilization of internet in Lok Pal development. Cook 2013 has written down about Middle Easterner Spring occasions that started in late 2010 which changed politics globally. The need for independent and free access to the Internet and its long-term benefits were realized. The research paper inspects that thought, through models that feature the perils related with it. Muniandy and Muniandy 2013 analyzed effects of web-based social networking in the political environment, explicitly in the Malaysia. Web-based social networking has transformed the people's lifestyle. Furthermore, a political perspective discusses the progressions brought by online life in the governmental issues of Malaysia. The paper by Parida and Das 2014 is about the impact of social networking sites on Odisha's politics. It examines the significance of social life over internet

and simultaneously underlines on the significance of imaginative thoughts for its compelling effect. It likewise brings up how government officials are utilizing online networking for charming more youthful populace. Furthermore, most likely Social media will end up being a game changing stage in future decisions. A consolidated report prepared by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung had been released in 2019 which discussed about the growth of social media applications and websites and their impact in structuring the political voting inclinations and minds in 2019 Lok Sabha Elections (2019Lokniti). The paper by Prior 2013 examined the increased emergence of partisan media which had contributed to political polarization thereby leading Americans to support more partisan policies and candidates. The paper by Zhang et al. 2010 found that reliance on social networking sites significantly increased due to civic participation and not political participation. Crawford 2009 studied how the different forms of online engagement led to a change in the configurations of the ideal listening subject. Joseph 2012 studied the role of social media in progressive political change with respect to Arab Spring uprisings. Beck et al. 2002 studied the social calculus which affected the personal calculus of voting. Benett 2012 observed that social fragmentation and the fall in group loyalties gave rise to personalized politics where individual personal opinions were replaced by group opinions. Lee and Ma 2012 indicated that sharing news through social media had a huge impact since the news could be diffused on a global scale. Ohme et al. 2018 in his results suggested that the exposure of social media on first-time voters was directly related and if the campaigners were persistent in their endeavors of using social media then there was an increase in their chances of winning. Verba et al. 1995 says that the choice of knowing whom to vote and actually going forward with the decision is an important part of the citizen's decision-making process. Kitchens et al. 2003 says that there is always a certain section of the voters who are undecided and remain so till the end of the voting day. Bartels 1986 and Kuklinski et al. 2000 found that the remaining section of the voters who are misinformed make wrong voting choices and repent later saying that they would have chosen differently had they known the facts properly. Sanders 2001 tells that the last choice which the voters might have would be to not turn up for voting but according to Strömbäck 2005 such a situation is supremely unfavorable to a democratic society's functioning since the basic purpose of a democracy is lost. Few researches have traced the origins of social media in the political environment globally but not specifically for India. Only a few researches have been carried out nationwide but it has not been carried out exclusively considering the state of West Bengal. Moreover, the researches have not been carried out on a general level irrespective of the age or profession. This research has tried to overcome these limitations and find out whether there is an association between people's political preferences and usage of social media platforms. Logistic regression is primarily used with dichotomous dependent variables but it can also be used in outcome variables with three or more categories (Wright 1995). Overall, we want to study the data collected and interpret a logistic regression analysis using the model coefficients and test the hypothesis.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The report's analysis is the result of online surveys being carried out in the months of February'2020 and March'2020. Primary data has been collected from a total of 443 respondents through Google forms. The place of study is restricted to Kolkata, West Bengal, India. The case processing summary has been depicted in [table 1](#). The questions framed for the survey are directed towards finding out the influence of such social media websites and applications on the people's political preferences. The questionnaire has been made in such a way to make it engaging and consisting of a wide variety of responses.

While making the questionnaires previous survey (Prior 2013; Zhang et al. 2010; Vaid 2019; Jaidka et al. 2019) has been referred and an initial pilot survey has been conducted. Then based on pilot survey result final questionnaire has been prepared.

First the collected responses were exported into Microsoft Excel and then transferred to SPSS software for data analysis. In SPSS, Cronbach Alpha test has been carried out to measure the reliability and the internal consistency of the data. After the reliability analysis, Chi Square tests were carried out between different variables to test their independence. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of the internal consistency and reliability of the data. If the value of Cronbach's Alpha is more than 0.7, then it shows high internal consistency.

Table1: Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	443	99.8
	Excluded	1	.2
	Total	444	100.0

Chi square test has been used for testing the relationships i.e. association between two categorical variables. Null Hypothesis is that, “1st variable is independent of the 2nd variable.” Alternative Hypothesis is that, “1st variable is not independent of the 2nd variable.” If the calculated probability (p) is less than or equal to the chosen significance level, we reject the null hypothesis. If it is more than the chosen significance level, we accept the null hypothesis. Logistic Regression has been applied to check whether individual’s political choice making is getting influenced by social media usage.

IV. INFERENTIAL DATA ANALYSIS

A reliability analysis depicted in [table 2](#), has been carried out with 19 items and the value of Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.837. The result suggests high internal consistency as the score is above 0.7 (Gliem and Gliem 2003)

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
.837	19

The study proposes to test the following hypotheses – H₀₁ to H₁₄ represented in [table 3](#), that the pairs of variables are independent. The empirical findings confirm that for the selected sample of the study, the above null hypotheses (of independence) H⁰¹, H⁰⁴, H⁰⁵, H⁰⁷, H⁰⁹, H¹⁰, H¹¹, H¹², H¹³ and H¹⁴ are rejected as the calculated probability is less than our selected level of significance (Alpha = 0.05). Irrespective of gender, most people express their personal views on politics and share such material on social media platforms very often. Most of the males as well as females always read political news and keep themselves updated. Majority of people irrespective of gender show only some trust in the news that is shared on such platforms. Majority of the males form political opinion from social media occasionally whereas most females tend to form it very often. Most people, regardless of any gender, feel that fake political news is shared on social media platforms very often. Majority of the respondents from the both the genders, agree that hatred and fear is being spread through social media. The empirical findings confirm that for the selected sample of the study, the null hypotheses (of independence) H⁰², H⁰³, H⁰⁶ and H⁰⁸ are not rejected as the calculated probability is more than our selected level of significance.

Table 3 –Test of Independence

Hypothesis	Testing the Independence of the following pair of Variables
H ⁰¹	Gender & Voting frequency.
H ⁰²	Gender & Frequency of watching news.
H ⁰³	Gender & Frequency of reading Newspaper (print).
H ⁰⁴	Gender & Frequency of reading Newspaper (online).
H ⁰⁵	Gender & Frequency of expressing personal views on politics (online).
H ⁰⁶	Gender & Frequency of sharing/forwarding political material.
H ⁰⁷	Gender & Frequency of reading political news online.
H ⁰⁸	Gender & Trust in the news shared on the social media platforms.
H ⁰⁹	Gender & Political opinion formation from social media.
H ¹⁰	Gender & Perception regarding fake political news on these media platforms.

H ¹¹	Gender & Perception of social media as a propagator of hatred and fear among people
H ¹²	Age & Frequency of expressing personal views on politics
H ¹³	Age & Political opinion making through social media.
H ¹⁴	Age & Perception regarding fake political news on these media platforms.

Note: Table 4 onwards A= ‘Always’, V= ‘Very often’, O=‘Occasionally’, R=‘Rarely’, N=‘Never’

Table 4: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Gender and Frequency of voting

		Being an eligible voter, how often do you cast your vote in the elections?						Chi-Square Tests				
Crosstab	Gender		A	V	O	R	N		χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)	
	Male	Observed	207	40	8	7	14	276	Pearson Chi-Square	13.770	4	.008
		Expected	196.9	44.2	15.0	8.7	11.2	276.0	Likelihood Ratio	13.549	4	.009
	Female	Observed	109	31	16	7	4	167	Linear-by-Linear Association	1.371	1	.242
		Expected	119.1	26.8	9.0	5.3	6.8	167.0				
	Total	Observed	316	71	24	14	18	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
		Expected	316.0	71.0	24.0	14.0	18.0	443.0				

Table 5: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Gender and Frequency of watching news

		How regularly do you do the following? (in a month), [watch news on tv]						Chi-Square Tests				
Crosstab	Gender		A	V	O	R	N		χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)	
	Male	Observed	155	59	40	18	4	276	Pearson Chi-Square	6.564	4	.161
		Expected	146.4	66.0	39.3	17.4	6.9	276.0	Likelihood Ratio	6.416	4	.170
	Female	Observed	80	47	23	10	7	167	Linear-by-Linear Association	2.012	1	.156
		Expected	88.6	40.0	23.7	10.6	4.1	167.0				
	Total	Observed	235	106	63	28	11	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
		Expected	235.0	106.0	63.0	28.0	11.0	443.0				

Table 6: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Gender and Frequency of reading Newspaper (print)

		How regularly do you do the following? (in a month), [read news paper/s]						Chi-Square Tests				
Crosstab	Gender		A	V	O	R	N		χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)	
	Male	Observed	159	58	41	12	6	276	Pearson Chi-Square	5.205	4	.267
		Expected	150.1	65.4	41.1	11.2	8.1	276.0	Likelihood Ratio	5.130	4	.274

	Female	Observed	82	47	25	6	7	167	Linear-by-Linear Association	1.684	1	.194
		Expected	90.9	39.6	24.9	6.8	4.9	167.0				
	Total	Observed	241	105	66	18	13	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
		Expected	241.0	105.0	66.0	18.0	13.0	443.0				

Table 7: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Gender and Frequency of reading Newspaper (online)

		How regularly do you do the following? (in a month), [read news online]							Chi-Square Tests			
Crosstab	Gender		A	V	O	R	N		χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)	
	Male	Observed	155	81	24	7	9	276	Pearson Chi-Square	33.125	4	.000
		Expected	127.7	91.0	31.8	12.5	13.1	276.0	Likelihood Ratio	33.515	4	.000
	Female	Observed	50	65	27	13	12	167	Linear-by-Linear Association	27.743	1	.000
		Expected	77.3	55.0	19.2	7.5	7.9	167.0				
	Total	Observed	205	146	51	20	21	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
		Expected	205.0	146.0	51.0	20.0	21.0	443.0				

Table 8: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Gender and Frequency of expressing personal views on politics (online)

		How frequently do you do the following on social media platforms? (in a month) [express your personal views on politics]							Chi-Square Tests			
Crosstab	Gender		A	V	O	R	N		χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)	
	Male	Observed	47	116	40	21	52	276	Pearson Chi-Square	14.503	4	.006
		Expected	34.9	115.9	43.0	23.1	59.2	276.0	Likelihood Ratio	15.948	4	.003
	Female	Observed	9	70	29	16	43	167	Linear-by-Linear Association	8.655	1	.003
		Expected	21.1	70.1	26.0	13.9	35.8	167.0				
	Total	Observed	56	186	69	37	95	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
		Expected	56.0	186.0	69.0	37.0	95.0	443.0				

Table 9: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Gender and Frequency of sharing/forwarding political material

		How frequently do you do the following on social media platforms? (in a month) [share/forward any political material]							Chi-Square Tests			
Crosstab	Gender		A	V	O	R	N		χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)	

	Male	Observed	35	135	35	18	53	276	Pearson Chi-Square	7.074	4	.132
		Expected	29.9	129.0	36.8	23.1	57.3	276.0	Likelihood Ratio	7.083	4	.132
	Female	Observed	13	72	24	19	39	167	Linear-by-Linear Association	4.818	1	.028
		Expected	18.1	78.0	22.2	13.9	34.7	167.0				
	Total	Observed	48	207	59	37	92	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
		Expected	48.0	207.0	59.0	37.0	92.0	443.0				

Table 10: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Gender and Frequency of reading political news online

		How frequently do you read news related to politics online [in a month]?						Chi-Square Tests				
Gender		A	V	O	R	N		χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)		
Crosstab	Male	Observed	131	99	28	8	10	276	Pearson Chi-Square	19.209	4	.001
		Expected	115.9	95.9	39.9	10.6	13.7	276.0	Likelihood Ratio	18.876	4	.001
	Female	Observed	55	55	36	9	12	167	Linear-by-Linear Association	15.464	1	.000
		Expected	70.1	58.1	24.1	6.4	8.3	167.0				
	Total	Observed	186	154	64	17	22	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
		Expected	186.0	154.0	64.0	17.0	22.0	443.0				

Table 11: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Gender and Trust in the news shared on the social media platforms

		How much trust do you have in the news shared on the social media platforms?					Chi-Square Tests				
Gender		L	S	N	A		χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)		
Crosstab	Male	Observed	27	134	91	24	276	Pearson Chi-Square	2.769	4	.429
		Expected	24.9	128.3	95.3	27.4	276.0	Likelihood Ratio	2.755	4	.431
	Female	Observed	13	72	62	20	167	Linear-by-Linear Association	2.676	1	.102
		Expected	15.1	77.7	57.7	16.6	167.0				
	Total	Observed	40	206	153	44	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
		Expected	40.0	206.0	153.0	44.0	443.0				

Note: L='Lot of trust', S='Some trust', N='Not much', A='Not at all'

Table 12: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Gender and Political opinion formation from social media

Do you form political opinion from social media?		Chi-Square Tests	
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Crosstab	Gender		A	V	O	R	N			χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)
	Male	Observed	20	73	108	37	38	276	Pearson Chi-Square	17.942	4	.001
		Expected	19.3	80.4	89.7	38.0	48.6	276.0	Likelihood Ratio	18.318	4	.001
	Female	Observed	11	56	36	24	40	167	Linear-by- Linear Association	1.785	1	.182
		Expected	11.7	48.6	54.3	23.0	29.4	167.0				
	Total	Observed	31	129	144	61	78	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
		Expected	31.0	129.0	144.0	61.0	78.0	443.0				

Table 13: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Gender and Perception regarding fake political news on these media platforms

		Do you feel that there is high circulation of fake political news on these media platforms?							Chi-Square Tests			
Crosstab	Gender		A	V	O	R	N			χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)
	Male	Observed	59	109	73	25	10	276	Pearson Chi-Square	11.829	4	.019
		Expected	49.8	114.6	68.5	27.4	15.6	276.0	Likelihood Ratio	11.850	4	.019
	Female	Observed	21	75	37	19	15	167	Linear-by- Linear Association	5.772	1	.016
		Expected	30.2	69.4	41.5	16.6	9.4	167.0				
	Total	Observed	80	184	110	44	25	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
		Expected	80.0	184.0	110.0	44.0	25.0	443.0				

Table 14: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Gender and Perception of social media as a propagator of hatred and fear among people

		Do you agree with the statement that 'social media propagates hatred and fear among people'?							Chi-Square Tests			
Crosstab	Gender		S	A	N	D	SD			χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)
	Male	Observed	64	106	89	12	5	276	Pearson Chi-Square	13.232	4	.010
		Expected	56.1	115.9	81.0	13.7	9.3	276.0	Likelihood Ratio	13.139	4	.011
	Female	Observed	26	80	41	10	10	167	Linear-by- Linear Association	2.808	1	.094
		Expected	33.9	70.1	49.0	8.3	5.7	167.0				
	Total	Observed	90	186	130	22	15	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
		Expected	90.0	186.0	130.0	22.0	15.0	443.0				

Note: S='Strongly agree', A='Agree', N='Neutral', D='Disagree', SD='Strongly disagree'

Table 15: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Age & Frequency of expressing personal views on politics

		How frequently do you do the following on social media platforms? (in a month) [express your personal views on politics]							Chi-Square Tests			
Crosstab	Age		A	V	O	R	N			χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)
	18-25	Observed	8	20	18	19	28	93	Pearson Chi-Square	46.004	12	.000
		Expected	11.8	39.0	14.5	7.8	19.9	93.0	Likelihood Ratio	44.199	12	.000
	26-39	Observed	20	64	15	8	30	137	Linear-by-Linear Association	11.196	1	.001
		Expected	17.3	57.5	21.3	11.4	29.4	137.0				
	40-59	Observed	24	87	30	8	26	175				
		Expected	22.1	73.5	27.3	14.6	37.5	175.0				
	60 & above	Observed	4	15	6	2	11	38				
		Expected	4.8	16.0	5.9	3.2	8.1	38.0				
	Total	Observed	56	186	69	37	95	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
Expected		56.0	186.0	69.0	37.0	95.0	443.0					

Table 16: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Age & Political opinion making through social media

		Do you form political opinion from social media?							Chi-Square Tests			
Crosstab	Age		A	V	O	R	N			χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)
	18-25	Observed	4	13	33	21	22	93	Pearson Chi-Square	32.227	12	.001
		Expected	6.5	27.1	30.2	12.8	16.4	93.0	Likelihood Ratio	33.157	12	.001
	26-39	Observed	14	52	32	18	21	137	Linear-by-Linear Association	5.318	1	.021
		Expected	9.6	39.9	44.5	18.9	24.1	137.0				
	40-59	Observed	10	51	69	16	29	175				
		Expected	12.2	51.0	56.9	24.1	30.8	175.0				
	60 & above	Observed	3	13	10	6	6	38				
		Expected	2.7	11.1	12.4	5.2	6.7	38.0				
	Total	Observed	31	129	144	61	78	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
Expected		31.0	129.0	144.0	61.0	78.0	443.0					

Table 17: Crosstab & Chi-square test for independence of Age & Perception regarding fake political news on these media platforms

		Do you feel that there is high circulation of fake political news on these media platforms?							Chi-Square Tests			
Crosstab	Age		A	V	O	R	N			χ^2 Value	D o F	Significance (2-sided)
	18-25	Observed	29	43	13	4	4	93	Pearson Chi-Square	45.635	12	.000
		Expected	16.8	38.6	23.1	9.2	5.2	93.0	Likelihood Ratio	46.618	12	.000
	26-39	Observed	17	72	30	10	8	137	Linear-by-Linear Association	14.277	1	.000
		Expected	24.7	56.9	34.0	13.6	7.7	137.0				
	40-59	Observed	28	53	59	22	13	175				

	Expected	31.6	72.7	43.5	17.4	9.9	175.0				
60 &above	Observed	6	16	8	8	0	38				
	Expected	6.9	15.8	9.4	3.8	2.1	38.0				
Total	Observed	80	184	110	44	25	443	N of Valid Cases	443		
	Expected	80.0	184.0	110.0	44.0	25.0	443.0				

From the exploratory results as depicted in table 4 we can conclude that gender and voting frequency are dependent. The table 4 crosstab shows that males more often cast their votes in the elections as compared to the females. Table 5 shows that gender and frequency of watching news are independent. Table 6 shows that gender and frequency of reading newspaper(print) are independent. Table 7 shows that gender and frequency of reading newspaper (online) are dependent. The crosstab shown in table 7 shows that once again males read more online newspapers than females. Table 8 shows that gender and frequency of expressing personal views on politics (online) are dependent. According to the crosstab in table 8 females keep their personal views up to themselves contrary to males. Table 9 shows that gender and frequency of sharing/forwarding political material are independent. Table 10 shows that gender and frequency of reading political news online are dependent. From table 10 we see that males slightly read more political news online than females. Table 11 shows that gender and trust in the news shared on the social media platform are independent. Table 12 shows that gender and political opinion formation from social media are dependent. According to the crosstab shown in table 12 males have a slightly higher political opinion formation from social media as compared to their counterparts. Table 13 shows that gender and perception regarding fake political news on these media platforms are dependent. Table 13’s crosstab shows that males are more prone to fake political news on social media. Table 14 shows that gender and perception of social media as a propagator of hatred and fear among people are dependent. According to crosstab shown in table 14 females viewed social media as a lesser propagator of hatred and fear when compared with males. Table 15 shows that age and frequency of expressing personal views on politics are dependent. The crosstab shown in table 15 says that people in the age group 26-39 largely express their personal views on politics and the people in age group 18-25 expressed the least. Table 16 shows that age and political opinion making through social media are dependent. Table 16’s crosstab people in the age group of 26-39 formulated their political opinions through social media. Table 17 shows that age and perception regarding fake political news on these media platforms are dependent. The crosstab shown in table 17 depicts that 18-25 year old’s believed media platforms circulated fake political news.

Here, additionally the researcher uses binary logistic regression as multiple independent variables and a single binary dependent variable is considered in the study.

A binomial logistic regression (often referred to simply as logistic regression), predicts the probability that an observation falls into one of two categories of a dichotomous dependent variable based on one or more independent variables that can be either continuous or categorical

Table 18: Dependent Variable Encoding

Original Value	Internal Value
No	0
Yes	1

The dependent variable is measured at the nominal level. To be more specific, here the dependent variable is “Does social media influences political choice making” which is categorical and having two categories. “Yes” is coded as 1 and “No” is coded as 0 (Table 18).

Table 19: Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	189.025	8	.000
	Block	189.025	8	.000

	Model	189.025	8	.000
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This tests the null hypothesis that all regression coefficients are zero. Since the p-value here is less than 0.05, we can reject the null and accept the alternative hypothesis which depicts that at least one of the b's (regression coefficients) is not zero that can build the regression model. From this table, we can get goodness-of-fit test where chi-square statistic is 189.025 with 8 degrees of freedom (DF) and have a significance level of $p < .001$. The p level of .001 shows that goodness-of-fit test results are robust and our model is trustworthy (Table 19).

Table 20: Hosmer and Lemeshow Test

Step	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	6.617	8	.579

The Hosmer–Lemeshow Goodness of Fit Test is the best test available to evaluate the fit of the Logistic regression model. For this test to provide evidence of a good fit, we need to fail to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we want values greater than .05 in the sig. column. The above table shows a chi-square value of 6.617 at 8 df with a significance level of .579. Therefore, we have additional evidence that our model is reliable (Table 20).

Table 21: Classification

Observed			Predicted		Percentage Correct
			Does social media influences political choice making		
			No	Yes	
Step 1	Does social media influences political choice making	No	87(TN)	52(FP)	62.6
		Yes	23(FN)	281(TP)	92.4
Overall Percentage					83.1

The classification table shows the results when the independent variables are inserted into the equation. Here, TP means True Positive, FP means False Positive, TN means True Negative and FN means False Negative. From the classification table, we find the sensitivity and specificity is 62.6% and 92.4%, respectively coming with an overall accuracy of 83.1% $(TP + TN)/\text{Total classifications}$ (Table 21).

Table 22: Variables in the Equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1	Frequency of following social media platforms	-.445	.142	9.791	1	.002	.641
	Trust in the news shared through social media platforms	-.586	.186	9.891	1	.002	.557
	Political parties are active in social media	-.141	.069	4.139	1	.042	.869
	Social media circulates fake political news	-.558	.152	13.504	1	.000	.573
	Social media propagates hatred and fear	-.003	.177	.000	1	.985	.997
	Optimism in current political climate	-.552	.145	14.455	1	.000	.576
	Constant	8.373	.834	100.742	1	.000	4330.107

The final binary logistic regression output that we present is called variables in the equation table which shows how each of the independent variables contributes to the equation. When looking at this table, the researcher should pay special attention to the significance column. Frequency of following social media platforms, Trust in the news shared through social media platforms, Activeness of political parties in using social

media platforms, social media platforms circulate fake political news and Optimism in current political climate drives political choice making which can be determined by observing that the significance value is less than 0.05 in the above cases (Table 22).

V. IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

From the data analysis we can observe that the males spend more time online than females whereas the amount of print media exposure is gender independent. Males also tend to speak their mind when it comes to putting forward their opinion. Since males express themselves more hence, they also spread news faster through social media. Females on the other hand due to less online presence usually believe that social media causes a softer impact on people's mind in relation to hate news spread through it. People in their late twenties and late thirties often express political opinions through social media and they largely believe that media platforms tilt more towards fake news as compared to real ones.

For a more participatory gender-neutral impact of social media on political decision making a gender sensitization programme targeting more women participation in electoral process is need of the hour. Though reservation of women has been given in certain electoral process, a periodic review of the same and more inclusive proactive policy will ensure women taking more interest in the political decision making. From the research we can observe even avid users of social media believe that many of the contents are fake. A robust mechanism needs to be developed to ensure authenticity of the news; at the same time ensuring freedom of speech. Provision for penal action for spreading fake news needs to be effectively implemented. In a democratic society social media is an essential provider of information (Colwell Quarles 1979; Downs 1957) since they supply information to voters which might make or break their choices and make them reconsider their reasons. If there was no social media exposure then the choice of voting would be less impacted by outside stimuli.

Due to the paucity of time we have only considered the urban population of Kolkata, West Bengal and further studies maybe done on urban-rural comparison, impact of education on the political mindset of the people, impact of income on the political mindset of the people, political mindset of the non-internet users, and political opinion of professional vs traditional workforce.

VI. DECLARATION OF NO CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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