

# Social Media and Voting Behavior: The Impact of Demographic Factors on the Tendency to 'Like' Facebook Posts During Elections

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**Abstract** - This study examines voting behavior as expressed through social media, with a particular focus on Facebook, within contemporary democratic contexts. The primary objective is to analyze the tendency of voters to "like" Facebook posts related to societal issues, public needs, and aspirations during elections, and to assess the influence of demographic factors-namely age, gender, and educational qualification- on this behavior. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 400 Facebook-using voters from three districts of Uttarakhand: Uttarkashi, Dehradun, and Haridwar. The data were analyzed using the Chi-square test. The findings indicate that a majority of respondents tend to "like" posts concerning public issues during elections, reflecting a form of political expression and engagement. The results further reveal that age has a statistically significant influence on this behavior, whereas gender and educational qualification do not show a significant impact. The study concludes that "liking" Facebook content represents more than a routine digital action; it serves as a meaningful indicator of political awareness, preferences, and democratic participation.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Voting Behavior, Facebook, Political Expression, Democratic Participation

## **Introduction**

In modern democratic systems, voting behavior is regarded as a crucial indicator of citizens' political participation. With the rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), social media has significantly transformed the dynamics of political communication, public opinion formation, and civic engagement. Platforms such as Facebook not only provide citizens with access to information but also offer interactive spaces where individuals can express opinions, respond to political issues, and influence others. During elections, citizens actively engage with political content on Facebook by expressing their agreement, disagreement, and preferences through actions such as "likes," "shares," and "comments." Among these, the act of "liking" is a simple yet meaningful form of engagement that often signals support for a particular idea, issue, or concern. Despite its apparent simplicity, this behavior carries important implications for understanding patterns of political expression in the digital age.

However, such online behavior is not uniform across all individuals. Demographic factors—such as age, gender, and educational qualification—play a significant role in shaping individuals' political attitudes, their ability to process information, and their level of participation. While a substantial body of research has examined the relationship between social media and political participation, relatively limited attention has been given to the specific tendency of users to "like" Facebook posts during elections and the extent to which demographic variables influence this behavior.

Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this research gap by systematically analyzing the relationship between demographic factors and the propensity to "like" Facebook posts related to societal issues, needs, and aspirations during electoral periods.

### **Literature Review**

In the digital age, social media has established itself as a pivotal medium influencing political communication, public opinion formation, and voting behavior. Facebook, in particular, has provided citizens with a powerful platform for the exchange of political information, the expression of ideas, and public engagement on political issues. During electoral periods, "liking" a post on Facebook ceases to be merely a technical action; rather, it transforms into a symbolic gesture of support toward a specific idea, issue, leader, problem, need, or aspiration. Thus, the act of "liking" emerges as a significant analytical unit in the study of political communication and democratic participation. In her meta-analysis examining the relationship between social media usage and political participation, Boulianne (2015) clarified that social media indeed fosters political engagement. According to this study, social media connects citizens with information, draws them into political discussions, and cultivates a sense of participation among them. This finding is particularly pertinent to the present study, as activities such as "liking" posts on Facebook can be categorized as subtle forms of participation.

Valenzuela et al. (2012) found that active engagement on social networking sites like Facebook can enhance social capital, trust, and political participation among citizens. Their study suggests that online expressions—such as liking, reacting to, or sharing a post—integrate the individual into the broader political discourse. Consequently, the act of liking on Facebook can be regarded as a preliminary indicator of political interest and civic consciousness. The study by Bond et al. (2012) holds immense significance regarding the relationship between social media and voting behavior. Conducted on a sample of over 61 million individuals, this experimental study revealed that political messages displayed on Facebook, as well as the social activities of one's friends, can influence voting patterns. The study conclusively demonstrated that online "social signals" exert an influence on citizens' actual political behavior, particularly their voting decisions. This conclusion reinforces the notion that symbolic activities—such as "liking" on Facebook—can indirectly influence electoral decisions.

Loader et al. (2014) argued that social media has opened up new dimensions of political engagement, particularly for young people. For the youth, Facebook and other digital platforms

have proven to be more accessible, interactive, and participatory spaces compared to traditional political processes. Consequently, age-based differences emerge as a significant variable in understanding the behavior of "liking" on Facebook. Studying the relationship between social media usage, political expression, and civic participation, Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2012) found that online political expression also encourages offline participation. Their research demonstrates that social media serves not merely as a medium for information consumption, but also as a platform for active civic engagement. This finding underscores the need to view the tendency to "like" on Facebook as an active political signal, rather than simply as a passive response.

Analyzing the role of social media in the context of electoral campaigns, Kushin and Yamamoto (2010) noted that digital platforms provide voters with immediate access to political information, thereby fostering increased political participation and electoral interest. According to them, the repetition and visibility of political messages via social media shape voters' preferences. From this, it can be inferred that "liking" posts on Facebook related to specific problems, needs, and aspirations may serve as a medium for citizens to express their political preferences. Gondal et al. (2020) investigated the impact of Facebook-based political communication among university students and found that Facebook influences both political viewpoints and political attitudes. This study demonstrates that the youth demographic is receptive to political content on Facebook, and their online responses may be linked to their broader political behavior. This is particularly significant for studies examining the influence of age and education. Analyzing the impact of Facebook within the context of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Liberini et al. (2020) demonstrated that Facebook plays a pivotal role in the dissemination of political information and the formation of voters' preferences. This study provides evidence of the efficacy of social media within the electoral landscape and suggests that "liking" a post related to a specific issue on Facebook may serve as an indicator of a voter's political disposition.

Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) examined the role of fake news and social media in elections. Although their primary focus was on misinformation, this research remains significant as it clarifies that content available on platforms such as Facebook can influence voters' perceptions and electoral decisions. In this context, it becomes essential to interpret the act of "liking" a post not merely as an indication of personal preference, but rather within the broader framework of information, perception, and potential political influence. Bakshy et al. (2015) investigated exposure to ideologically diverse news and viewpoints on Facebook. They pointed out that Facebook users often reside within their own ideological echo chambers; nevertheless, the platform's structure offers—to a certain extent—opportunities for exposure to alternative perspectives. The significance of this study lies in the fact that the act of "liking" may reflect not merely support, but also an individual's information-seeking orientation and ideological leanings. Ellison et al. (2007), while studying the relationship between Facebook usage and social capital, found that Facebook provides individuals with networks, trust, and social connections. In a political context, it can be argued that an increase in social capital also enhances the prospects for political participation. Thus, "liking" a social or political issue on Facebook may also be linked to an individual's sense of civic engagement.

Putnam (2000) underscored the deep connection between social capital and democratic participation. Although his study belongs to the pre-social media era, the concept of social capital remains useful today in understanding the political role of platforms like Facebook. The act of "liking" on Facebook can be viewed as a modern form of building socio-digital capital and engaging in group-based political participation. In the Indian context, the political role of social media becomes even more significant, as electoral politics here is extremely extensive, diverse, and dependent on mass communication. Udupa (2018) analyzed trends in digital politics, online nationalism, and social media-based political communication in India. Her study demonstrates that social media has become an integral part of Indian political discourse. From this, it can be inferred that reacting to posts concerning local, regional, and national issues on Facebook may serve as a significant indicator of the political sensitivity of Indian voters.

Chakrabarty and Hazra (2016), highlighting the growing role of social media in Indian electoral politics, noted that digital platforms have given a new direction to election campaigning, voter outreach, and the rapid dissemination of political messages. The urban and educated voter segments, in particular, are more influenced by social media-based political content. On this basis, educational qualification can be considered a significant determinant of Facebook-based political activism. Ahmed and Jaidka (2013), while studying the relationship between social media and political expression among Indian youth, indicated that digital platforms provide young people with opportunities for political identity formation and expression. This study reinforces the view that it is natural to observe differences in the tendency to 'like' on Facebook across different age groups.

In the context of gender, numerous studies have clarified that differences may exist in the social media usage, political interest, and forms of expression adopted by men and women. Hayes et al. (2016) found that gender-based experiences and socio-cultural structures exert an influence on participation within the digital public sphere. This implies that the propensity to 'like' political posts on Facebook may also vary according to gender. Educational qualification has also been identified as a key determinant of political participation. In their study on civic engagement, Verba et al. (1995) linked education to political awareness, the availability of resources, and actual participation. In the digital era, this argument becomes even more pertinent, as individuals with higher education are better equipped to process political content available on social media in a more analytical manner and to articulate their responses to it. Consequently, the impact of education on the behavior of 'liking' Facebook posts constitutes a significant subject of research.

The aforementioned studies collectively demonstrate that social media-specifically Facebook-plays a pivotal role in influencing political participation, political communication, and voting behavior. However, the majority of studies within the existing literature tend to focus broadly on general political participation, social media usage, or electoral impact. There appears to be a relative dearth of specific analysis regarding the propensity to 'like' Facebook posts-during elections-that pertain to the problems, needs, and aspirations of oneself, one's locality, and one's country, as well as the specific influence of age, gender, and educational qualification on this behavior. It is this research gap that the present study endeavors to address.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To examine the tendency of voters to "like" Facebook posts during elections.
2. To analyze the influence of demographic factors (age, gender, and educational qualification) on the tendency to "like" Facebook posts.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the nature and extent of the tendency to "like" Facebook posts during elections?
2. To what extent do demographic factors (age, gender, and educational qualification) influence the tendency to "like" Facebook posts?

### **Research Methodology**

The present study is based on primary data collected from 400 Facebook-using voters aged 18 years and above, selected from three districts of the Garhwal region in Uttarakhand-Uttarkashi, Dehradun, and Haridwar. A structured, self-designed questionnaire was administered using Google Forms. Respondents were selected through a random sampling method. The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. An interpretative approach was adopted to understand patterns of behavior, while the Chi-square test (a non-parametric statistical tool) was employed to examine the relationship between demographic variables and the tendency to "like" Facebook posts during elections.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study is geographically limited to three districts of Uttarakhand, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Since data were collected through an online questionnaire, only individuals with internet access and active Facebook usage could participate, potentially excluding other segments of the population. Additionally, the responses are based on self-reported perceptions, which may be subject to response bias and individual subjectivity.

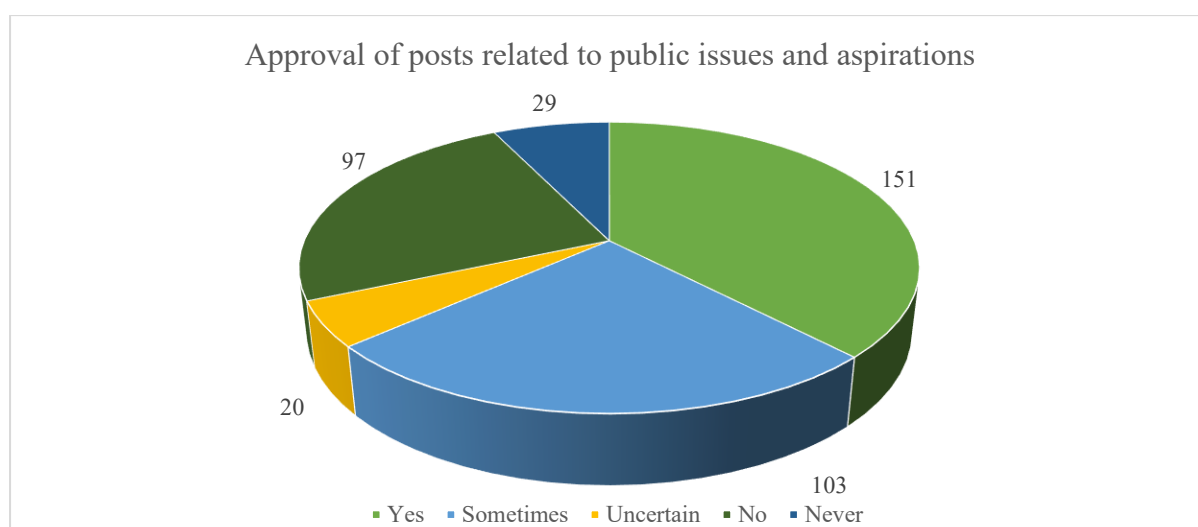
### **Data Analysis and Results**

In a democratic system, the expression of citizens' views regarding the problems, needs, and aspirations of their region, society, and nation is an important indicator of political activism. The strength and vitality of democracy largely depend on the active participation of its citizens; therefore, the study of political activism assumes significant importance. In the contemporary digital era, social media has emerged as a powerful platform for the articulation of public opinion, enabling individuals to express their views on a wide range of social, economic, and political issues.

In this context, the present study attempts to examine whether respondents express their approval by "liking" Facebook posts related to the problems, needs, and aspirations of their locality and the nation during elections. Facebook, being one of the most widely used social media platforms, provides a relevant space for such analysis. The responses obtained in this regard have been classified and presented in Table-01.

Table-01 Approval of Posts Related to Public Issues and Aspirations

Approval	Number	Percentage
Yes	151	37.75%
Sometimes	103	25.75%
Uncertain	20	5%
No	97	24.25%
Never	29	7.25%
Total	400	100%



A careful examination of the data presented in Table-01 indicates that 5 percent of the respondents remain uncertain about whether to "like" posts related to the problems, needs, and aspirations of their region and country during elections. Additionally, 7.25 percent of the respondents never engage in liking such posts, while 24.25 percent generally refrain from doing so. In contrast, 25.75 percent of the respondents report liking such posts occasionally, and 37.75 percent actively like them during the election period. Overall, a majority-63.50 percent-of the respondents exhibit a tendency to "like" such posts.

These findings are supported by existing literature. Bode (2016) suggests that voters are more likely to engage with Facebook posts that resonate with their personal needs or address specific local issues. Similarly, Boulianne (2015) observes that younger voters tend to prefer posts related to broader national aspirations, such as employment, education, anti-corruption measures, and environmental protection.

The predominance of respondents who "like" such posts reflects a form of digital political participation, indicating that Facebook serves as a meaningful platform for civic engagement and democratic expression. However, it is also noteworthy that approximately 31.50 percent of respondents do not engage with such posts. This lack of engagement may be attributed to several factors, including limited exposure to relevant content, reluctance to publicly express

personal opinions, lack of active information-seeking behavior, or simple inattention to such posts.

To examine the influence of the independent variable ‘Age’ on respondents’ opinions regarding the tendency to "like" posts related to societal problems, needs, and aspirations during elections, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H<sub>0</sub> (Null Hypothesis): Age has no significant effect on respondents’ opinions regarding "liking" posts related to problems, needs, and aspirations.

H<sub>1</sub> (Alternative Hypothesis): Age has a significant effect on respondents’ opinions regarding "liking" posts related to problems, needs, and aspirations.

Table-02 Approval of Posts by Age Group

Age Group	Yes	Sometimes	Uncertain	No	Never	Total
18-28 year	70	33	12	22	04	141
28-38 year	36	24	03	19	05	87
38-48 year	27	35	03	32	13	110
48-58 year	14	10	02	23	05	54
above 58 year	04	01	00	01	02	08
Total	151	103	20	97	29	400

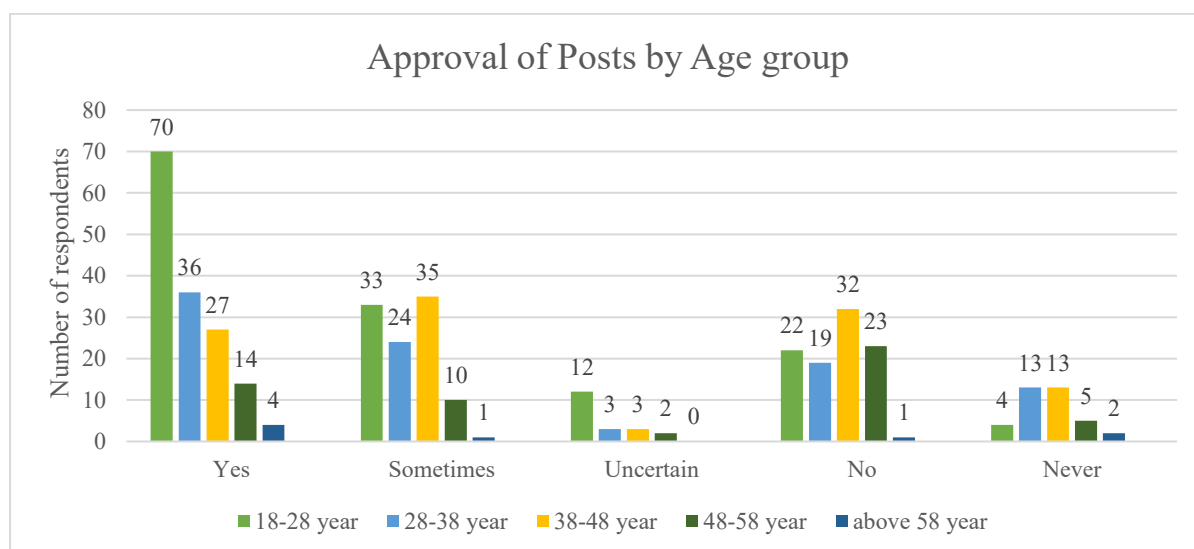


Table-03: Impact of Age on Approval for the Post

Test	Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Significance Level
Pearson Chi-Square	46.799	16	0.001

The data presented in the table indicate that the value of the Chi-square test statistic is 46.799 with 16 degrees of freedom ( $df = 16$ ). The corresponding p-value (0.001) is less than the conventional level of significance (0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected. It can thus be concluded that age has a statistically significant influence on respondents' attitudes toward "liking" Facebook posts related to the problems, needs, and aspirations of their region and country during elections.

The analysis further reveals that respondents belonging to younger age groups exhibit a higher tendency to "like" such posts. This may be attributed to the fact that younger individuals are generally more active on social media platforms like Facebook and are more inclined to express their opinions and reactions to the content they encounter online.

To examine the influence of the independent variable 'gender' on respondents' attitudes toward "liking" posts related to societal problems, needs, and aspirations during elections, the following hypotheses are formulated:

$H_0$  (Null Hypothesis): Gender has no significant influence on respondents' attitudes toward "liking" posts related to problems, needs, and aspirations.

$H_1$  (Alternative Hypothesis): Gender has a significant influence on respondents' attitudes toward "liking" posts related to problems, needs, and aspirations.

Table-04 Gender-wise Approval of Posts

Gender	Yes	Sometimes	Uncertain	No	Never	Total
Male	82	60	12	56	10	220
Female	69	43	08	41	19	180
Total	151	103	20	97	29	400

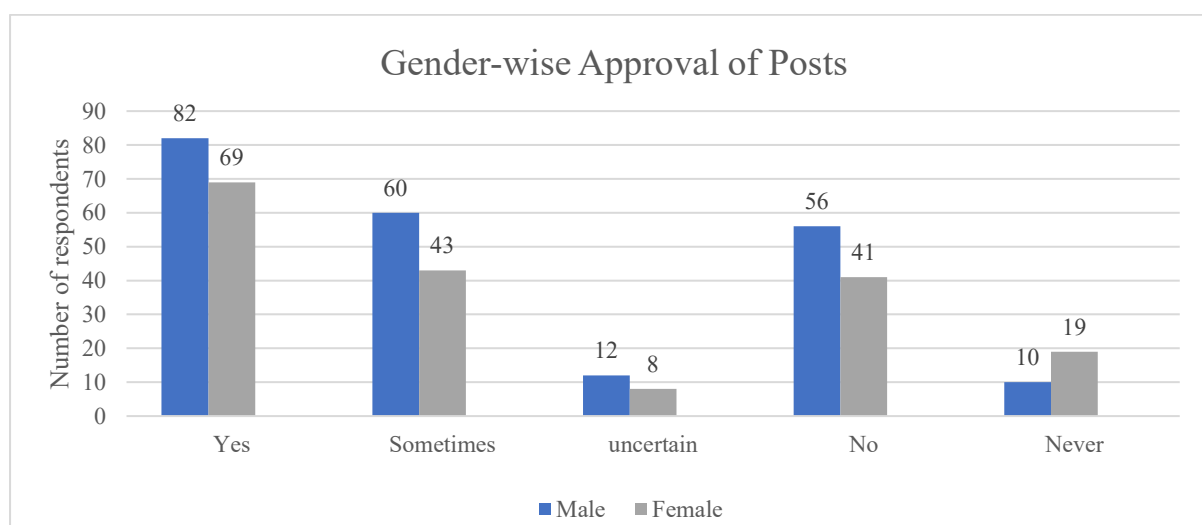


Table-05: Impact of Gender on Approval for the Post

Test	Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Significance Level
Pearson Chi-Square	5.897	04	0.207

The data presented in the table show that the value of the Chi-square test statistic is 5.897 with 4 degrees of freedom ( $df = 4$ ). The corresponding p-value (0.207) is greater than the standard level of significance (0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is not rejected. On this basis, it can be concluded that gender does not have a statistically significant influence on respondents' attitudes toward "liking" Facebook posts related to the problems, needs, and aspirations of their region and country during the election period.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that there is no substantial gender-based difference in how individuals express their reactions to information on Facebook. This indicates that both male and female users exhibit similar patterns of engagement in terms of "liking" such posts, resulting in the negligible influence of gender on this behavior.

To examine the influence of the independent variable 'educational qualification' on respondents' attitudes toward "liking" posts related to societal problems, needs, and aspirations during elections, the following hypotheses are formulated:

$H_0$  (Null Hypothesis): Educational qualification has no significant influence on respondents' attitudes toward "liking" posts related to problems, needs, and aspirations.

$H_1$  (Alternative Hypothesis): Educational qualification has a significant influence on respondents' attitudes toward "liking" posts related to problems, needs, and aspirations.

Table-06 Approval of Posts Based on Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Yes	Sometimes	Uncertain	No	Never	Total
High School	02	04	00	02	00	08
Intermediate	20	08	01	06	01	36
Graduate	52	31	06	19	06	114
Postgraduate	65	52	12	63	20	212
Other	12	08	01	07	02	30
Total	151	103	20	97	29	400

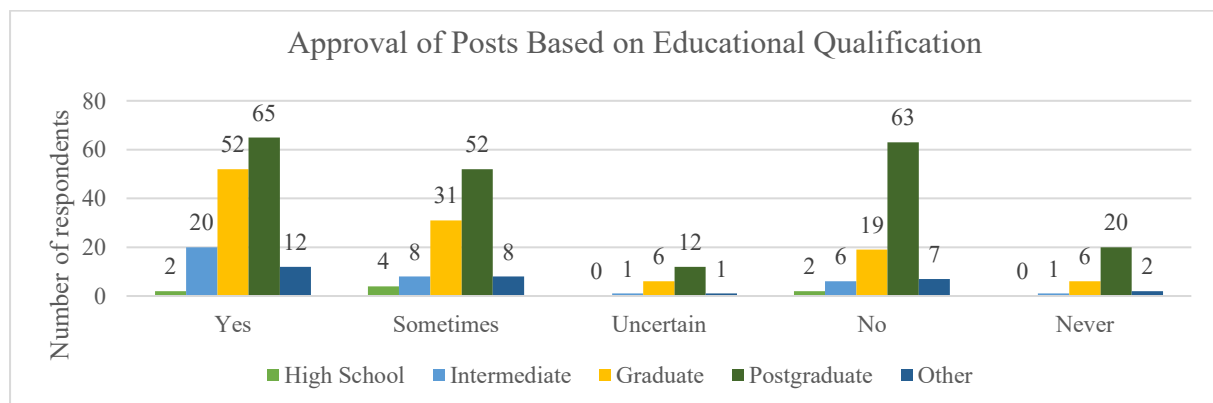


Table-07: Impact of Educational Qualification on Approval for the Post

Test	Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Significance Level
Pearson Chi-Square	21.232	16	0.170

The data presented in the table indicate that the value of the Chi-square test statistic is 21.232 with 16 degrees of freedom ( $df = 16$ ). The corresponding p-value (0.170) is greater than the standard level of significance (0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is not rejected. It can thus be concluded that educational qualification does not have a statistically significant influence on respondents' attitudes toward "liking" Facebook posts related to the problems, needs, and aspirations of their region and country during elections.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that Facebook, as a platform, allows users across different educational backgrounds to express their reactions with ease. The act of "liking" does not require specialized knowledge or higher educational attainment, making it an accessible form of participation for all users. This may explain why educational qualification does not significantly influence the tendency to "like" such posts during elections.

### Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that social media—particularly Facebook—has emerged as a significant medium of political participation in contemporary democratic systems. During elections, citizens express their opinions, preferences, and levels of engagement through actions such as "liking" posts, which can be linked to broader patterns of political behavior. The findings reveal that a majority of respondents (63.50%) engage in liking posts related to social and political issues, indicating that Facebook functions as an active platform for political expression. A statistically significant variation in this behavior is observed across age groups, with younger respondents showing a higher level of engagement. In contrast, gender and educational qualification do not exhibit any significant influence, suggesting that Facebook provides an inclusive and accessible space for political participation across diverse social groups. Thus, the tendency to "like" Facebook posts should not be viewed merely as a routine digital action; rather, it represents a subtle yet meaningful form of political engagement. This behavior contributes to the strengthening of democratic processes and may serve as an important indicator for future research on voting behavior and digital political participation.

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