

DETERMINANTS OF YOUTH'S POLITICAL NEWS CONSUMPTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL PERSPECTIVE

Muralidharan K ¹, Jayaseelan R ², Kadeswaran S ³, Soundra Rajan D ⁴, Chithra Lekshmi K S ⁵

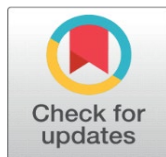
¹ PhD Research Scholar (Part-Time), Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

² Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Communication and Electronic Media, PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Communication and Electronic Media, PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

⁴ Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Communication and Electronic Media, PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

⁵ PhD Research Scholar (Part-Time), Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India



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Corresponding Author

Muralidharan K,
drmuralidharan1981@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

In the digital era, the manner in which individuals access political information has undergone significant transformation, with social media platforms emerging as the primary source for individuals aged 18–30 years. This study employs an expanded technology acceptance model (TAM) to investigate how factors, such as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust in platforms, and digital literacy, influence the political news consumption habits of young users in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. Utilizing a quantitative cross-sectional survey involving 250 participants from this region, the research examines the relationships between these elements and behavioral intentions related to political engagement on social media. The principal findings reveal that perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$) and trust ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < .01$) are significant predictors of behavioral intention, whereas digital literacy moderates the impact of ease of use on intention and consumption. Furthermore, perceived ease of use enhances perceptions of usefulness, aligning with TAM extensions in digital contexts. These findings underscore the role of social media in fostering civic participation, despite challenges, such as misinformation and echo chambers, particularly in a linguistically and culturally diverse region, such as Tamil Nadu. Theoretically, the study extends TAM by integrating trust and literacy into political communication. Practically, it provides insights for media outlets, educators, and policymakers to promote responsible consumption and counteract disinformation. Limitations include the cross-sectional design and focus on urban youth in Coimbatore, suggesting opportunities for longitudinal and comparative research. Overall, this research contributes to understanding youth digital behaviors in democratic processes and emphasizes the necessity for targeted interventions to promote informed political discourse.

Keywords: Social Media, Political News Consumption, Youth Engagement, Technology Acceptance Model, Digital Literacy, Misinformation, Political Communication



1. INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have significantly transformed the media landscape, transitioning news dissemination from traditional outlets to interactive platforms. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok have become predominant channels for political information, particularly among young individuals, who represent a digitally native demographic. Globally, young adults aged 18–30 spend considerable time online, with these platforms enabling real-time updates, user-generated content, and interactive discussions that influence political awareness and participation [Alodat et al. \(2023\)](#). This transformation presents opportunities for enhanced civic engagement, but also introduces risks such as exposure to misinformation, algorithmic biases, and polarized echo chambers that distort perceptions of political realities [Denniss et al. \(2025\)](#).

Youth constitute a pivotal demographic in the study of political communication, primarily due to their extensive use of social media and their potential impact on electoral processes. Research indicates that over 70% of young individuals in developed countries depend on digital platforms for news consumption, surpassing traditional media sources [Newman et al. \(2023\)](#). In emerging contexts such as India, particularly in regions like Tamil Nadu, social media plays a significant role in youth mobilization, as evidenced by local movements addressing issues such as environmental concerns and regional politics [Saad \(2020\)](#). However, this dependency also heightens vulnerabilities; misinformation proliferates swiftly, undermining trust in institutions, and fostering apathy or radicalization [Rocha et al. \(2021\)](#). For example, during elections, algorithmic curation frequently prioritizes sensational content, resulting in selective exposure and confirmation bias, a phenomenon exacerbated in multilingual areas such as Coimbatore, where Tamil and English content coexist [Papathanassopoulos et al. \(2025\)](#).

To comprehend these dynamics, it is imperative to employ a theoretical framework that accounts for the factors influencing technology adoption. [Davis's \(1989\)](#) technology acceptance model shows that perceived usefulness and ease of use shape user technology intentions [Granić and Marangunić \(2019\)](#). Extended applications in media studies incorporate contextual variables, such as trust and digital literacy, which are crucial in information-rich environments [Asghar et al. \(2023\)](#). In political contexts, the TAM elucidates how young individuals perceive social media as tools for news consumption, thereby influencing their engagement levels [Ting et al. \(2024\)](#).

The research problem is situated within the gap between the potential of social media for democratic empowerment and its associated risks, particularly for youth who lack robust evaluative skills. Despite the increasing usage of social media, empirical insights into the factors influencing its acceptance remain limited in regional Indian contexts, such as Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, where cultural and linguistic diversity may uniquely influence behaviors [Nazari \(2022\)](#). This study examines how trust and literacy, as augmented constructs of the technology acceptance model (TAM), shape the political news consumption behaviors of young individuals in this locale.

1.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study explores the factors influencing young adults' (aged 18–30) engagement with political news on social media platforms in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, through the application of an expanded technology acceptance model (TAM). The study is designed to fulfill the following specific objectives:

- 1) To investigate the influence, trends, and main social media platforms involved in the consumption of political news by young people in Coimbatore
- 2) To examine how perceived usefulness affects both the frequency and depth of political news consumption through social media platforms.
- 3) To evaluate how perceived ease of use affects youth engagement with social media for political information.
- 4) To explore how trust in social media platforms influences the behavior of consuming political news
- 5) This study assessed how digital literacy influences young individuals' capacity to critically assess and choose reliable political information found online.
- 6) This study aims to examine the interrelationships among the core components of the technology acceptance model (TAM), specifically perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, in conjunction with additional factors,

such as trust and digital literacy. The investigation focuses on how these elements influence behavioral intention and actual engagement with political news consumption.

1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) Which social media platforms and in what patterns do young people in Coimbatore primarily access and engage with political news?
- 2) To what extent does perceived usefulness predict the frequency and depth of political news consumption among young people?
- 3) How does perceived ease of use influence social media usage and sustained intentions to access political information?
- 4) What is the relationship between trust in social media platforms and youth political news consumption behavior?
- 5) How does digital literacy affect young people's capacity to evaluate and discern credible political information on social media?
- 6) How do perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust, and digital literacy influence young people's intention and consumption of political news in Coimbatore?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AS A MEDIUM OF NEWS CONSUMPTION

Social media has transformed how people discover news, shifting from traditional journalism to algorithm-driven feeds and user-curated content. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram enable incidental exposure to political news within entertainment settings [Newman et al. \(2023\)](#). Research shows that this fosters accessibility but fragments attention, with young people preferring short-form videos to in-depth articles [Herrero-Diz, P et al. \(2020\)](#). Critically, studies highlight how virality prioritizes emotional appeal over accuracy, thereby amplifying misinformation [Balakrishnan et al. \(2022\)](#). In comparative analyses, Western youth exhibit higher platform diversity, whereas WhatsApp and WeChat dominate peer-shared news in Asia [Feng et al. \(2021\)](#).

2.2. YOUTH POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Digital platforms catalyze youth civic actions from petitions to protests. Longitudinal studies have shown that social media correlates with increased participation, mediated by network effects [Marquart et al. \(2020\)](#). However, engagement varies by socioeconomic factors; marginalized youth leverage platforms for voice amplification yet face digital divides [Middaugh et al. \(2017\)](#). Critiques note that superficiality—likes over votes— is linked to low efficacy perceptions [Eckstein \(2019\)](#). Recent work integrates psychological traits and finds that extroverted youth are more active in online advocacy [Zhu et al. \(2019\)](#).

2.3. DIGITAL MEDIA AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Digital media reshapes communication flows, enabling direct interaction between politicians and citizens via live streams and memes [Jenkins and Jie \(2024\)](#). Hybrid models blend traditional and digital methods, with influencers emerging as opinion leaders [Venus and Kim \(2025\)](#). Syntheses reveal polarization through filter bubbles, although cross-ideological exposure occurs in diverse networks [Hoffmann \(2017\)](#). In elections, data analytics targets young people, raising ethical concerns about manipulation [Mohr and Kühl \(2021\)](#).

2.4. DIGITAL LITERACY AND INFORMATION CREDIBILITY

Literacy encompasses the essential verification skills necessary for effectively addressing misinformation. Although interventions have been shown to enhance judgment, significant gaps persist among young individuals [Costa and Sousa](#)

(2025). Research suggests a correlation between low literacy levels and the acceptance of false information, with social validation often prioritized over fact checking [Kastorff et al. \(2025\)](#). Critical analyses advocate the integration of educational approaches that consider cultural differences in assessing credibility [Dumitru et al. \(2022\)](#). The technology acceptance model (TAM) incorporates trust and literacy as factors affecting usage intentions [Lee and Chen \(2025\)](#). Studies indicate that perceived usefulness (PU) influences the adoption of news applications, with experience serving as a moderating factor [Sukmadewi et al. \(2023\)](#). Reviews critique TAM's emphasis on individualism and recommend the inclusion of sociocultural elements [Kundu \(2022\)](#).

2.5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The technology acceptance model (TAM), proposed by Davis in 1989, explains user technology adoption through two key factors: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). PU reflects how users believe technology will improve their performance, while PEOU indicates its user-friendliness. These factors influence technology usage intention and actual behavior [Davis \(1989, Scherer et al. \(2019\)\)](#).

In the social media domain of youth political news consumption, PU captures the belief that platforms deliver timely, accessible, diverse, and relevant political information that supports awareness, comprehension, and civic participation. PEOU reflects the intuitive navigation, mobile friendliness, and minimal effort required to discover and consume political content on platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and X [Alismaiel et al. \(2022\), Sukmadewi et al. \(2023\)](#).

Extensions of TAM in media and political communication research have addressed the original model's individualistic limitations by incorporating contextual variables [Kundu \(2022\)](#). For this study, two key extensions are particularly relevant:

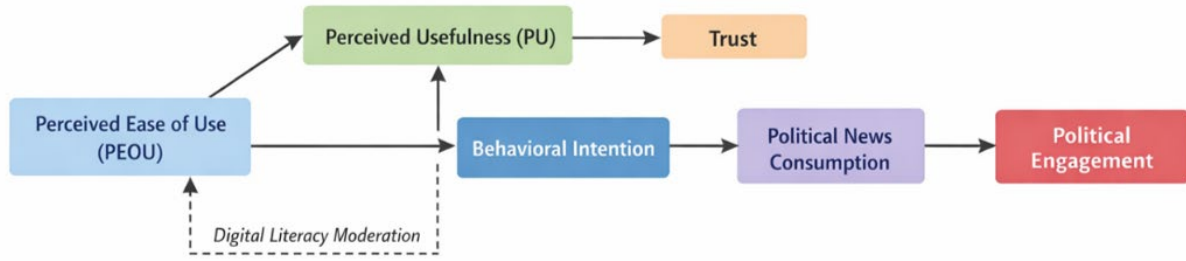
- Trust in social media platforms and their content, which includes the credibility of information, algorithmic fairness, and resistance to misinformation, serves as both a precursor to PU/PEOU and a direct predictor of behavioral intention [Rauniar et al. \(2014\), Na et al. \(2022\)](#).
- Digital literacy, defined as the ability to evaluate and interpret political content online, moderates the relationship between PEOU and behavioral intention, fostering informed consumption [Hassoun et al. \(2025\), Lee and Chen \(2025\)](#).
- Empirical studies in related domains, such as news applications, e-government, and mobile learning, indicate that the integration of trust and digital literacy significantly enhances the explanatory power of models in high-risk, information-rich contexts [Gupta et al. \(2022\), Ting et al. \(2024\)](#). In the field of political communication, the technology acceptance model (TAM) has been effectively employed to elucidate the role of social media in mediating political knowledge, interest, participation, and engagement among young individuals [Kim \(2023\), Ting et al. \(2024\)](#).

This study uses the technology acceptance model (TAM), enhanced with trust as an influencer and digital literacy as a moderator, to examine how young people aged 18-30 in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, consume political news by combining functional and sociocognitive elements in a misinformation-prone digital environment.

2.6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- **Conceptual Framework:** The proposed conceptual model extends the classic TAM structure as follows.
- **Core independent variables:** Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)
- **Extended predictor:** Trust in social media platforms
- **Moderator:** Digital Literacy
- **Mediator:** Behavioral Intention to use social media for political news consumption
- **Dependent variable:** Political News Consumption Behavior
- **Outcome:** Political Engagement

Figure 1



* Digital Literacy moderates the relationship between PEOU and Behavioral Intention

Figure 1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Key hypothesized paths:

- PU → Behavioral Intention → Political News Consumption
- PEOU → Behavioral Intention → Political News Consumption (moderated by Digital Literacy)
- Trust → Behavioral Intention → Political News Consumption
- Political News Consumption → Political Engagement

This framework aligns with TAM2/TAM3 extensions [Venkatesh and Davis \(2000\)](#) and modern uses in digital journalism and youth politics [Asghar et al. \(2023\)](#), [Ting et al. \(2024\)](#), presenting testable connections suitable for SEM or PLS analysis.

2.7. HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were derived from the theoretical and conceptual framework.

H1: The perceived usefulness of social media significantly influences individuals' behavioral intentions to engage with political news on these platforms.

H2: Perceived ease of use impacts intention to utilize social media for political information.

H3: Trust in social media platforms positively influences behavioral intentions to consume political news.

H4: Digital literacy moderates how perceived ease of use influences behavioral intention toward political news, with stronger effects at high literacy levels.

H5: Behavioral intention positively predicts political news consumption behavior on social media.

H6: Political news consumption on social media positively influences youth political engagement.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine young people's social media and political news consumption behaviors. Cross-sectional designs investigate relationships between variables at a specific time, allowing efficient data collection [Creswell and Creswell \(2018\)](#). This approach aligns with TAM applications in media studies for assessing perceptions [Scherer et al. \(2019\)](#).

3.1. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The target population comprised young people aged 18–30 years who actively used social media platforms for at least one hour daily. This age group was selected because of its high digital immersion and relevance to political engagement studies [Newman et al. \(2023\)](#). This study focused on young urban people in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India,

given the region's vibrant youth population, educational institutions, and increasing social media penetration amid local political dynamics Alodat et al. (2023).

Convenience sampling was utilized, supplemented by purposive elements, to ensure active participant involvement. Surveys were distributed online via Google Forms and shared through university networks and social media in Coimbatore's colleges and community centers. This method facilitated accessibility but may have introduced selection bias toward digitally savvy individuals Etikan et al. (2016). Using G*Power software, the sample size for the multiple regression analysis was calculated to achieve a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), with an alpha level of 0.05 and a power of 0.80, resulting in a requirement of at least 200 participants Faul et al. (2009). Of the 280 questionnaires distributed, 250 were returned as valid, representing an 89% response rate after removing incomplete or outlier data.

Figure 2

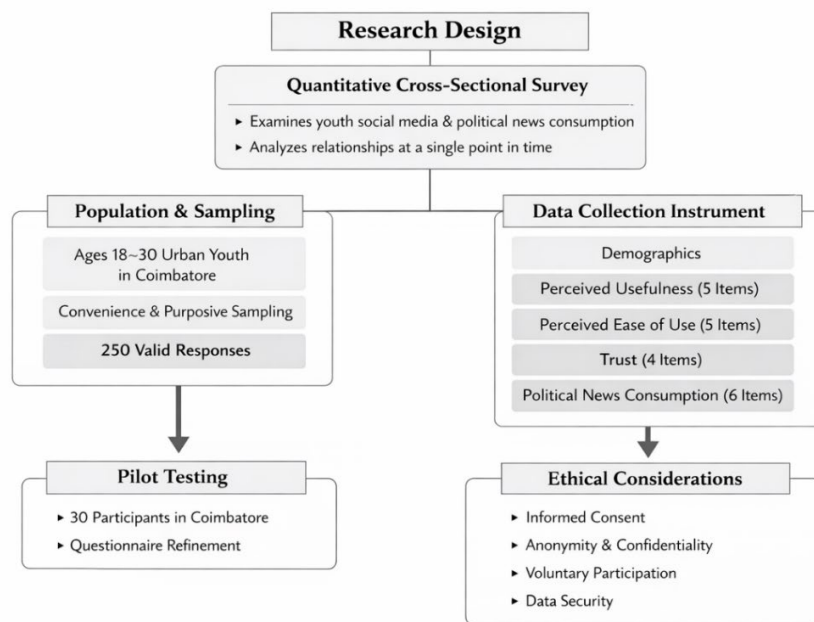


Figure 2 Schematic Representation of the Research Design and Methodology.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

A questionnaire was developed with five sections: demographics, perceived usefulness (five items), perceived ease of use (five items), trust (four items), digital literacy (six items), and political news consumption (six items). Items were adapted from Davis (1989), Gefen et al. (2003), Ng (2012), and Lee et al. (2013). Responses used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

A pilot test with 30 Coimbatore residents helped ensure clarity and reliability, leading to wording modifications aligned with Tamil Nadu preferences. Ethical considerations included informed consent, anonymity, voluntary participation, and data confidentiality per Institutional Review Board guidelines. Data collection spanned four weeks in early 2025, representing diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in urban Coimbatore.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Data analysis used SPSS version 27 and SmartPLS version 4 for structural equation modeling (SEM) to manage latent variables and evaluate mediation effects. Procedures included descriptive statistics, reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha >0.70), validity assessments (exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, average variance extracted >0.50, heterotrait-monotrait ratio <0.85), normality tests, and multicollinearity checks (variance inflation factor <5). Analysis included Pearson's correlation, multiple regression, and SEM with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Missing data (<5%) were

addressed through mean imputation. This methodology ensures rigorous testing of the proposed model, providing reliable insights into youth behaviors in Coimbatore.

4. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis commenced with cleaning and screening. No significant missing values or outliers were detected among the 250 responses. Normality was approximate, thus supporting the use of the parametric tests.

Table 1

Table 1 Participant Demographics (N = 250)			
Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	130	52.0
	Female	110	44.0
	Other	10	4.0
Age	18-22	140	56.0
	23-26	80	32.0
	27-30	30	12.0
Education	Undergraduate	160	64.0
	Postgraduate	70	28.0
	Other	20	8.0
Social Media Use (hours/day)	1-3	90	36.0
	4-6	120	48.0
	>6	40	16.0

Table 2

Table 2 Reliability and Validity Statistics			
Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Perceived Usefulness	0.88	0.91	0.62
Perceived Ease of Use	0.85	0.89	0.58
Trust	0.82	0.87	0.55
Digital Literacy	0.91	0.93	0.68
Political News Consumption	0.89	0.92	0.64

Table 3

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics		
Variable	Mean	SD
Perceived Usefulness	4.12	0.76
Perceived Ease of Use	3.98	0.82
Trust	3.45	0.91
Digital Literacy	3.67	0.88
Political News Consumption	3.89	0.79

Table 4

Table 4 Correlation Matrix (all correlations significant at $p < .01$)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. PU	1	.62	.48	.55	.58
2. PEOU		1	.51	.59	.52
3. Trust			1	.47	.49
4. Digital Literacy				1	.53
5. Consumption					1

Table 5

Table 5 Multiple Regression Results ($R^2 = 0.48, p < .001$)

Predictor	β	t	p
Perceived Usefulness	0.42	8.40	<.001
Perceived Ease of Use	0.18	3.00	<.01
Trust	0.31	4.43	<.001
Digital Literacy	0.22	4.40	<.001

SEM confirmed all paths (model fit: CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.06). H1–H6 were supported, with digital literacy significantly moderating the PEOU–intention link (interaction $\beta = 0.15, p < .05$).

4.1. DISCUSSION

The findings illuminate the intricate role of social media in the consumption of political news by young individuals, building upon previous research through the integration of the technology acceptance model (TAM) with trust and digital literacy. Perceived usefulness emerged as the most significant predictor ($\beta = 0.42$), aligning with studies suggesting that young individuals value platforms for delivering timely and relevant political information [Asghar et al. \(2023\)](#), [Newman et al. \(2023\)](#). This suggests that the perceived advantage of social media in enhancing political comprehension motivates its usage, thereby supporting Hypotheses H1 and H5. Moderate trust levels ($M = 3.45$) indicate skepticism; however, its significant effect ($\beta = 0.31$) supports H3, reflecting concerns regarding the impact of misinformation on platform credibility [Denniss et al. \(2025\)](#), [Rocha et al. \(2021\)](#). In Coimbatore, where regional politics frequently intersects with national issues, such trust dynamics may be shaped by local vernacular content and cultural narratives.

Perceived ease of use positively influenced usage (H2 supported), consistent with intuitive interfaces facilitating engagement [Granić and Marangunić \(2019\)](#). The moderating role of digital literacy (H4 supported) underscores its importance in evaluating information and mitigating risks, such as echo chambers [Hassoun et al. \(2025\)](#), [Kastorff et al. \(2025\)](#). The positive association between consumption and engagement (H6) reinforces the potential of social media for civic mobilization [Marquart et al. \(2020\)](#), [Zhu et al. \(2019\)](#). These patterns highlight how urban youth in Tamil Nadu navigate multilingual content.

In the realm of political communication, these results suggest that platforms reshape discourse and foster participation; however, interventions against biases are necessary [Papathanassopoulos et al. \(2025\)](#). Compared with Western contexts, Coimbatore youth exhibit similar patterns but demonstrate heightened vulnerability to misinformation owing to diverse linguistic landscapes [Nazari \(2022\)](#). Implications include the development of tailored digital literacy programs for educators and algorithm transparency for policymakers [Costa and Sousa \(2025\)](#). Locally, initiatives could capitalize on Coimbatore's educational hubs to promote Tamil-language fact-checking tools.

Overall, this study bridges the gaps in TAM applications and provides evidence-based insights into youth dynamics amid digital transformations in regional India.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that factors such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust, and digital literacy are pivotal in shaping how young individuals engage with political news on social media. All the proposed hypotheses were substantiated through a comprehensive statistical analysis. The principal findings underscore the significant predictive influence of usefulness and trust, moderated by literacy, thereby affirming the applicability of the technology acceptance model (TAM) in political contexts, particularly in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

Theoretically, this study extends the TAM with domain-specific variables and addresses critiques of its limited scope in media research [Scherer et al. \(2019\)](#), [Kundu \(2022\)](#). It enriches the political communication literature by elucidating how digital factors influence engagement, building on the work of [Kim \(2023\)](#) and [Alodat et al. \(2023\)](#), while providing regional insights into the behavior of Indian youth.

Practically, the implications are multifaceted: media organizations can optimize content for usefulness and ease by incorporating verification tools to build trust [Newman et al. \(2023\)](#). Policymakers in Tamil Nadu should regulate algorithms to curb misinformation, whereas educators should integrate literacy curricula tailored to local contexts to empower youth evaluation skills [Hassoun et al. \(2025\)](#). These strategies can enhance informed participation and mitigate risks, such as polarization, in diverse settings, such as Coimbatore.

This study has limitations: its cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions, and self-reported data may show social desirability bias. The focus on urban Coimbatore limits findings' applicability to rural Tamil Nadu or other Indian regions. Future research should consider longitudinal designs to track behavioral changes, cross-cultural comparative studies, or mixed methods for deeper qualitative insights.

In summary, as social media evolves, understanding acceptance factors is crucial for nurturing democratic youth. This study provides a foundation for interventions promoting responsible digital citizenship in Coimbatore and beyond.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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