

Youth, Media, and the State: The Changing Landscape of Political Socialization in India's Global Era

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Abstract

This paper explores the evolving dynamics of political socialization among Indian youth in the context of rapid globalization and media proliferation. It examines how traditional state mechanisms and emerging digital platforms shape young people's political attitudes, identities, and participation. By analyzing the role of mainstream media, social media, and government interventions, the study highlights the complexities of political engagement in a transforming sociopolitical landscape. It also addresses the challenges and opportunities posed by globalization in fostering democratic values among youth. The findings underscore a shift from passive reception of political information toward active, often decentralized, participation, which has significant implications for the future of India's democratic polity.

Keywords: *Youth Media Political Socialization Globalization India*

Introduction

In contemporary India, the process of political socialization among youth is undergoing significant transformation, shaped profoundly by the confluence of globalization, technological advancements, and evolving media landscapes. Traditionally, political socialization—the process through which individuals acquire political beliefs, values, and behaviors—was largely mediated through family, educational institutions, and state-controlled media. However, the rise of digital media platforms, the rapid penetration of smartphones, and the omnipresence of social networking sites have expanded the avenues through which Indian youth engage with politics. This changing landscape introduces new dynamics that complicate the ways in which young people form their political identities, participate in civic life, and relate to the state and its institutions.

Simultaneously, globalization exerts a dual influence on political socialization. On one hand, it exposes Indian youth to a plurality of democratic ideals, political cultures, and international issues that transcend national boundaries, fostering more cosmopolitan political outlooks. On the other hand, globalization also challenges the sovereignty of the state in regulating information flows, political narratives, and cultural norms. The state's role, therefore, is being redefined—from a traditional provider and regulator of political knowledge to a contested site where competing global and local influences interact. This interplay raises critical questions about the capacity of Indian political institutions to effectively engage youth in democratic processes while safeguarding national interests.

Overview

This paper examines the evolving processes and mechanisms of political socialization among Indian youth against the backdrop of media proliferation and state strategies in a globalized context. It explores how mainstream media, social media, and governmental policies interact to shape youth political consciousness and participation. The analysis emphasizes the transition from passive consumption of politically framed information to more active, participatory, and sometimes fragmented modes of political engagement facilitated by digital media. The study also investigates the role of the state in influencing political socialization, ranging from media regulation to educational initiatives aimed at fostering democratic citizenship.

Scope and Objectives

The scope of this research encompasses a comprehensive review of the political socialization process among Indian youth aged 15 to 29 years, focusing on the period marked by digital expansion from the early 2000s to the present. The paper aims to:

- Analyze the impact of various media forms—traditional, digital, and social—on youth political attitudes and behaviors.
- Investigate the role of state institutions and policies in shaping political socialization in India.
- Understand the influence of globalization on political socialization, including the tensions between global political norms and local cultural contexts.
- Examine youth political participation trends and their implications for India's democratic future.

Author Motivations

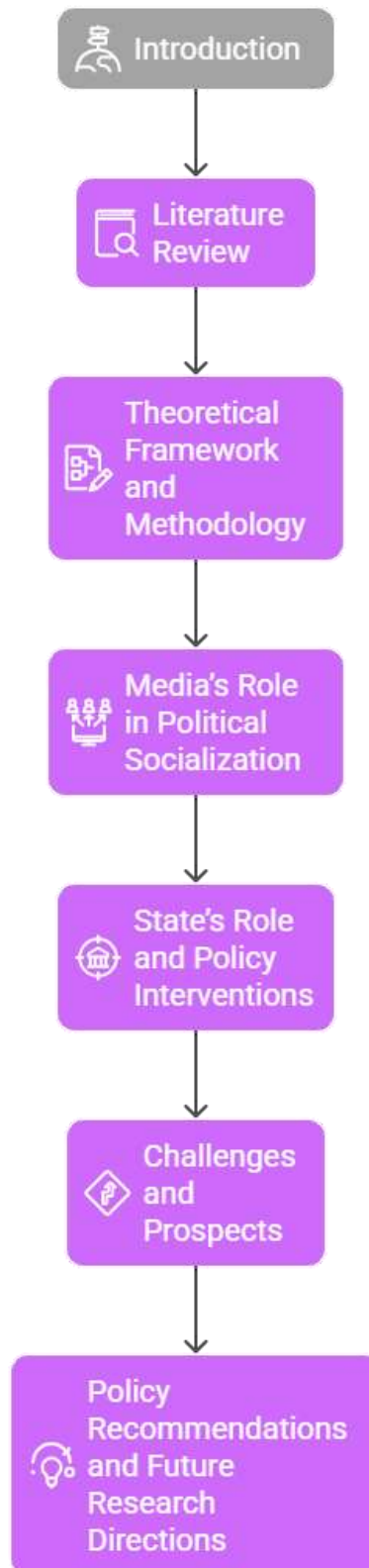
The motivation behind this research stems from the recognition of India's demographic dividend, where a significant proportion of the population comprises young citizens whose political engagement will shape the nation's democratic trajectory. Given the unprecedented access to diverse media and the pervasive influence of global political currents, it is imperative to understand how these forces are restructuring political socialization. The author is driven by the need to contribute to scholarly discourse on democracy and media studies in India and to provide insights that can inform policymakers, educators, and civil society actors striving to enhance meaningful youth engagement in politics.

Paper Structure

This paper is structured into seven key sections. Following this introduction, the **Literature Review** critically synthesizes existing research on youth political socialization, media influence, and state roles both within India and in comparable global contexts. The third section outlines the **Theoretical Framework and Methodology**, detailing the conceptual lenses and research methods employed. The fourth section investigates **Media's Role in Political**



Socialization, analyzing the transformation brought about by digital and traditional media channels. The fifth section focuses on the **State's Role and Policy Interventions**, examining governmental strategies in media regulation and civic education. The sixth section presents **Challenges and Prospects**, exploring the tensions and opportunities presented by globalization and media diversification. Finally, the paper concludes with **Policy Recommendations and Future Research Directions**, offering actionable insights for enhancing youth political engagement.



In mapping the changing landscape of political socialization in India's global era, this study foregrounds the complex interactions between youth, media, and state institutions. It aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of how Indian youth negotiate identity, participation,

and citizenship amidst dynamic political and technological shifts. By doing so, the paper aspires to offer a foundation for fostering more inclusive, informed, and active youth participation in India's democratic processes.

Literature Review

Political socialization is a foundational process through which individuals acquire political knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviors, shaping their engagement with political institutions and society at large (Verma, 2011). In the Indian context, the role of youth as political agents has been historically significant, given the country's vast and youthful demographic profile. However, the process of political socialization is undergoing profound transformations, largely influenced by the expanding media landscape and the imperatives of globalization.

Traditional Media and Youth Political Socialization

The early scholarship on youth political socialization in India predominantly focused on the influence of traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television. Gupta (2010) and Nair (2007) explored how state-controlled and private media have historically shaped political awareness and loyalty, often reinforcing state narratives. Television, in particular, played a critical role in disseminating political content to a broad audience, enabling youth in urban and rural areas to access national and regional political discourses (Banerjee & Saha, 2017). These traditional media forms were considered primary agents of political socialization, framing public discourse and influencing voter behavior.

However, scholars like Bhattacharya (2012) noted that traditional media's one-way communication model limited youth political participation, often relegating them to passive recipients of information. This limitation raised questions about the effectiveness of traditional media in fostering critical political engagement among youth. Verma (2011) underscored the state's role in regulating media content, which sometimes resulted in biased or censored political messaging, potentially limiting the diversity of political opinions available to young audiences.

Digital Media and the Transformation of Political Engagement

The advent of digital and social media has radically altered the political socialization landscape. Studies by Singh and Jain (2019) and Chakraborty (2019) emphasize that platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have transformed youth from passive consumers to active participants in political discourse. These platforms enable peer-to-peer communication, real-time information exchange, and mobilization of political campaigns, allowing youth to shape political narratives dynamically.

Kumar (2019) highlights the rise of digital media as a double-edged sword—while it democratizes information access and fosters engagement, it also propagates misinformation and polarizes opinions. The decentralized nature of social media challenges traditional gatekeepers such as the state and mainstream media, creating new arenas for political

contestation and identity formation. Sharma (2015) and Das (2008) argue that digital media facilitates more personalized and fragmented political identities, which may both enhance individual political expression and complicate collective political cohesion.

The Role of the State in Political Socialization

The state remains a critical actor in the political socialization process, exerting influence through policy-making, media regulation, and educational initiatives. Narayan (2014) and Gupta (2010) discuss the state's dual role as both promoter and regulator of political content, balancing democratic freedoms with national security and public order concerns. The rise of digital media poses new challenges for the state in monitoring content without stifling democratic expression.

Several scholars examine the state's efforts to engage youth politically through civic education and media literacy programs. Mehta (2016) argues that such initiatives are vital for empowering youth to navigate the complex media environment critically. However, Banerjee and Saha (2017) point out that government interventions often struggle to keep pace with the rapidly evolving media landscape, limiting their effectiveness.

Globalization and Its Influence on Political Socialization

Globalization introduces another critical dimension by exposing Indian youth to international political norms, values, and practices. Roy (2013) and Dasgupta (2018) illustrate how global media flows and international political events shape youth perceptions and aspirations, often fostering cosmopolitan identities. This global exposure can enhance democratic values such as human rights and pluralism, but it may also create tensions with local cultural and political traditions.

Bhattacharya (2012) and Verma (2011) note that globalization challenges the sovereignty of the Indian state in regulating political content and identity formation. The influx of foreign media and ideas requires the state and civil society to renegotiate the boundaries of political socialization to maintain cultural relevance and political stability.

Research Gap

Despite extensive scholarship on media and political socialization, several gaps persist in the Indian context:

1. **Integration of Digital and Traditional Media Studies:** Much research treats traditional and digital media separately, without sufficiently exploring how Indian youth navigate between these intertwined media ecosystems. There is a need for holistic studies that capture this media hybridity.
2. **Regional and Socioeconomic Diversity:** Existing studies often focus on urban youth or use national-level data without accounting for regional, linguistic, and socioeconomic variations that critically influence political socialization processes.

3. **State's Adaptive Strategies in a Globalized Media Environment:** While some studies highlight state interventions, there is limited analysis of how the Indian state is adapting policies to address the challenges posed by globalization and digital media proliferation specifically.
4. **Impact of New Media on Political Participation Outcomes:** Although digital media's role in information dissemination and identity formation is well-documented, there is less clarity on its direct impact on actual political behaviors like voting, protests, or party affiliation among youth.
5. **Intersectionality and Identity Politics:** The intersection of caste, gender, religion, and class with media consumption patterns and political socialization remains under-explored, especially how these axes affect youth political engagement in India's diverse society.

The literature underscores the complexity and dynamism of political socialization in contemporary India, highlighting the pivotal role of media and the state in this process. However, addressing the outlined research gaps is essential for a comprehensive understanding of how Indian youth are politically socialized in a globalized, media-saturated environment. This paper aims to fill these gaps by adopting an integrated approach that examines media convergence, regional diversity, state policy adaptations, and the nuanced political behaviors of Indian youth.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Theoretical Framework

This research adopts an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that draws from political socialization theory, media studies, and globalization theory to comprehensively analyze the changing landscape of youth political socialization in India.

1. Political Socialization Theory

Political socialization theory forms the foundational base for this study. It traditionally explains how individuals acquire political knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors through agents such as family, school, peers, media, and the state (Almond & Verba, 1963). In the Indian context, this theory is particularly useful to understand how youth internalize political norms in a rapidly changing socio-political environment. Contemporary adaptations of this theory emphasize the role of media as an influential agent beyond traditional socializing institutions (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995).

This study specifically utilizes the concept of **multidimensional political socialization**, acknowledging that in the digital age, youth encounter multiple, sometimes conflicting, sources of political information that interact to shape their political identity and participation (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). This complexity is crucial to understanding Indian youth who navigate both state narratives and global digital discourses.

2. Media Effects Theory

To analyze media influence, this research integrates key insights from media effects theories:

- **Uses and Gratifications Theory** (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974) explains how youth actively select media to satisfy their political information and participation needs, emphasizing agency in media consumption.
- **Agenda-Setting Theory** (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) is applied to understand how media prioritizes political issues that influence youth's political perceptions.
- **Framing Theory** (Entman, 1993) is used to examine how different media outlets construct political realities and identities that youth internalize.

Together, these theories help unpack the relationship between media content, youth engagement, and political socialization.

3. Globalization Theory

Globalization theory provides a macro-level perspective by situating political socialization within the global flow of information, capital, culture, and ideas. Drawing on Appadurai's (1996) framework of "scapes," this study views political socialization as influenced by global media flows (mediascapes), ideological exchanges (ideoscapes), and transnational political movements. It helps in understanding how Indian youth's political attitudes are shaped not only by local and national contexts but also by global political currents and values, which sometimes contest or complement domestic narratives.

Conceptual Model

Integrating these theories, the study proposes a conceptual model where:

- **State institutions, traditional media, and digital media platforms** serve as primary agents influencing youth political socialization.
- **Globalization processes** mediate these influences by introducing cross-border political ideas and practices.
- The **youth themselves** act as active agents, selectively engaging with and negotiating political content to form complex political identities and behaviors.

This model guides the research questions, data collection, and analysis strategies employed in the study.

Methodology

The methodology section outlines the research design, data collection methods, sampling, and analytical strategies used to explore the political socialization of Indian youth.

1. Research Design

This study adopts a **mixed-methods research design** combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena.

- The **quantitative component** captures broad patterns of media consumption, political attitudes, and participation behaviors among youth through surveys.
- The **qualitative component** offers depth and context through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, enabling exploration of nuanced experiences, meanings, and interpretations related to political socialization.

The triangulation of data enhances validity and enriches interpretation.

2. Population and Sampling

The target population comprises Indian youth aged **15 to 29 years**, a demographic cohort critical for political engagement and social transformation. To capture diversity, the sample includes participants from:

- **Urban and rural regions** across different states, representing varied socio-economic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds.
- **Gender, educational levels, and caste categories**, to account for intersectional influences on political socialization.

A **multistage stratified random sampling** method is employed for the quantitative survey, ensuring representativeness. For qualitative data, purposive sampling selects participants with varying media usage patterns and political engagement levels.

3. Data Collection Methods

- **Surveys:** A structured questionnaire is designed, incorporating validated scales for measuring political knowledge, media consumption habits (including traditional and digital media), political attitudes, and participation. The survey also includes demographic questions.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Conducted with groups of youth to facilitate interactive discussions on political socialization experiences, perceptions of media, and attitudes toward the state. FGDs help uncover collective narratives and peer influence.
- **In-depth Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with selected individuals provide detailed personal insights into the interplay of media, state, and globalization in shaping political identities and behaviors.
- **Content Analysis:** Complementing primary data, a content analysis of media outputs (news broadcasts, social media posts, government campaigns) is conducted to examine framing patterns and political messaging.

4. Data Analysis

- **Quantitative data** from surveys are analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS). Descriptive statistics summarize media usage and political attitudes; inferential statistics (e.g., regression analysis, correlation) test relationships between variables such as media exposure and political participation.
- **Qualitative data** from FGDs and interviews are transcribed and coded thematically using NVivo or similar software. Themes relate to media influence, state role, globalization effects, and youth agency in political socialization.
- **Content analysis** follows a coding scheme aligned with framing theory to identify dominant frames and narratives in political media content targeting youth.

5. Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of political topics and the involvement of youth participants, the study adheres to strict ethical standards:

- Informed consent is obtained from all participants, with additional parental consent for minors.
- Anonymity and confidentiality are guaranteed to encourage candid responses.
- The study avoids leading questions and respects participants' right to withdraw.
- The research protocol is approved by an institutional ethics review board.

Limitations

While the mixed-methods design offers comprehensive insights, some limitations are acknowledged:

- Rapid changes in media technology and political contexts may affect the timeliness of findings.
- Self-reported data may be subject to social desirability bias.
- The diverse and vast population means findings may not be fully generalizable to all youth subgroups.

This theoretical and methodological approach allows the study to capture the multifaceted and evolving nature of political socialization among Indian youth. By integrating political socialization, media effects, and globalization theories, and employing robust mixed methods, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how youth engage with political ideas in an increasingly complex media and global environment.

Media's Role in Political Socialization

Political socialization is the lifelong process through which individuals acquire political attitudes, values, and behaviors. In India's rapidly evolving socio-political landscape, media plays an indispensable role in shaping political socialization, especially among the youth—the

demographic constituting nearly 34% of the population. Media channels act as key agents in disseminating political knowledge, fostering political participation, and influencing the formation of political identity. This section provides an exhaustive analysis of how traditional, digital, and social media interact with youth to mold political awareness and engagement in the context of India's globalizing environment.

1. Historical and Contemporary Importance of Traditional Media

Since India's independence, traditional media—newspapers, radio, and television—have played foundational roles in political socialization. Their historical legacy continues to influence political engagement, particularly among rural and less digitally connected youth.

- **Newspapers: The Early Agents of Political Awareness:** In the pre-digital era, newspapers were the primary source of political information. India's rich vernacular press tradition fostered political awareness across diverse linguistic and cultural groups. Newspapers such as *The Hindu*, *The Times of India*, and numerous regional dailies provided not only news but also opinion editorials and political analyses. For educated youth, newspapers serve as tools for developing political literacy and critical thinking (Nair, 2007). However, newspapers' reach remains limited by literacy and access, especially in rural areas.
- **Radio: The Voice of Democracy and Development:** All India Radio (AIR), since its inception, has been a major medium for political socialization, especially in remote areas. Radio programs focused on government schemes, voter education, and civic duties create grassroots political awareness among youth with limited access to print or television (Verma, 2011). Community radio stations amplify marginalized voices and local political concerns, fostering participatory citizenship.
- **Television: Visual Politics and Mass Mobilization:** Television revolutionized political socialization by bringing political events directly into households. State-run Doordarshan initially dominated, but the liberalization of media led to a plethora of private channels. Televised news debates, election coverage, and political satire engage youth in politics by offering visual narratives that humanize politics and simplify complex issues (Banerjee & Saha, 2017). The emotionally charged nature of televised debates and reality-based political programming often shapes youth perceptions of political legitimacy and leadership charisma.

While traditional media effectively informs and educates, it has inherent limitations:

- Content is often shaped by editorial biases, corporate interests, and political affiliations, limiting diversity.
- The one-way communication model restricts youth interaction and feedback.
- Access disparities mean many youth are excluded from these sources.

2. Digital Media: Democratization of Political Information and Participation

The digital media revolution, fueled by smartphone penetration and affordable internet, has drastically reconfigured political socialization pathways for Indian youth.

- **Ubiquity and Multilingual Access:** India's digital landscape includes millions of youth accessing political content in English, Hindi, and numerous regional languages via platforms such as YouTube, news apps, and online forums (Kumar, 2019). This linguistic diversity ensures political content is localized and relatable, enabling wider political inclusion.
- **Active Political Engagement and Content Creation:** Unlike traditional media's passive consumption, digital media fosters active participation. Youth not only consume but also create political content—blogs, podcasts, videos, memes—transforming themselves from mere recipients to agents of political discourse (Singh & Jain, 2019). This user-generated content diversifies political narratives and democratizes political communication.
- **Social Media Networks and Peer Influence:** Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp form complex social networks where political ideas circulate rapidly. Peer groups on these platforms play critical roles in shaping political attitudes, reinforcing political ideologies, and mobilizing collective action (Chakraborty, 2019). Youth participate in digital political communities based on shared beliefs, interests, or causes, facilitating identity-building and group cohesion.
- **Algorithmic Personalization and Polarization Risks:** Digital platforms employ algorithms to curate content tailored to users' preferences. While enhancing user engagement, this personalization creates "filter bubbles" and "echo chambers" limiting exposure to dissenting views and fostering ideological polarization among youth (Sharma, 2015). This segmentation of political publics poses challenges for democratic deliberation and social integration.
- **Challenges of Misinformation and Propaganda:** The digital ecosystem is vulnerable to fake news, misinformation, and politically motivated propaganda. The viral spread of unverified or manipulative content, especially on WhatsApp and social media, distorts youth's political knowledge and can incite communal tensions or electoral interference (Kumar, 2019). This phenomenon underscores the urgent need for media literacy and regulatory frameworks.

3. Social Media as a Space for Political Identity and Expression

Social media uniquely blends private and public spheres, enabling youth to perform political identities, negotiate beliefs, and engage in collective political action.

- **Political Identity Construction and Performance:** Youth use social media to curate political personas through posting, sharing, and commenting on political content. This performative engagement allows them to publicly declare affiliations, values, and stances, contributing to identity consolidation and political socialization (Singh & Jain,

2019). Political expression on social media is often intertwined with cultural and social identities, making politics a lived and performative experience.

- **Hybrid and Transnational Political Engagement:** Social media dissolves geographical boundaries, allowing Indian youth to connect with global political movements and ideas, from climate activism to human rights campaigns, enriching their political worldview (Roy, 2013). This exposure fosters cosmopolitanism but can create tensions when global discourses conflict with local political realities or cultural norms.
- **WhatsApp: Informal Political Networks and Their Implications:** WhatsApp's encrypted, closed-group format provides intimate forums for political discussion, voter mobilization, and information sharing. However, its lack of moderation also facilitates the circulation of rumors and inflammatory content, impacting political socialization negatively in some contexts (Bhattacharya, 2012).
- **Digital Activism and Youth Mobilization:** Hashtag activism, online petitions, and digital protests have become mainstream forms of youth political participation. These digital tools lower barriers to activism, allowing youth to influence policy, public opinion, and electoral politics without traditional organizational constraints (Das, 2008). This phenomenon signals a shift from passive consumption to active political agency.

4. Media Literacy: Empowering Critical Political Engagement

The complex and contested media environment necessitates media literacy as a key competency for meaningful political socialization.

- **Critical Evaluation Skills in Formal Education:** Integrating media literacy into school and university curricula fosters critical thinking, enabling youth to analyze sources, detect bias, and understand media influence on politics (Mehta, 2016). Programs that encourage skepticism and fact-checking contribute to a more discerning electorate.
- **Civil Society and Government Initiatives:** Multiple NGOs and government bodies run workshops, campaigns, and digital literacy drives targeting youth to combat misinformation and promote informed political participation (Narayan, 2014). These initiatives are crucial given the rising complexity and volume of media content youth encounter daily.
- **Persistent Disparities:** Despite progress, gaps remain in media literacy, especially among rural, marginalized, and lower socioeconomic groups, limiting equitable political socialization opportunities.

5. Interplay Between Media, State, and Global Forces

Media's role in political socialization is shaped by its interaction with state policies and the globalized flow of information.

- **State Regulation and Censorship:** The Indian state actively regulates media content through laws on defamation, sedition, and digital content standards. While aimed at preserving social harmony and national security, such measures raise concerns over freedom of expression and political dissent, affecting youth's media engagement and political agency (Gupta, 2010). Instances of media blackouts, arrests of journalists, and internet shutdowns reflect tensions between state control and democratic openness.
- **Globalization and Media Flows:** Global media influences shape youth's political outlook by exposing them to international political ideologies, human rights norms, and democratic practices (Roy, 2013). Simultaneously, global media corporations' ownership and content priorities raise questions about cultural imperialism and local political sovereignty.

6. Challenges and Opportunities in Media-Driven Political Socialization

Challenges:

- **Digital Divide:** Unequal access to technology and internet infrastructure limits political socialization for millions of rural and marginalized youth (Verma, 2011). Bridging this divide remains critical to inclusive democracy.
- **Polarization and Fragmentation:** Personalized media consumption risks splintering youth into fragmented political echo chambers, undermining shared democratic dialogue (Sharma, 2015).
- **Misinformation Crisis:** The prevalence of fake news undermines trust in institutions and erodes informed political participation (Kumar, 2019).
- **Surveillance and Privacy Concerns:** State surveillance and data privacy issues deter open political expression and dissent, complicating youth's engagement with politically sensitive topics (Gupta, 2010).

Opportunities:

- **Empowered Youth Agency:** Media platforms provide unprecedented tools for youth empowerment, enabling new forms of political participation, advocacy, and democratic engagement (Das, 2008).
- **Cross-Cultural Political Awareness:** Exposure to global political issues enhances youth's understanding of transnational challenges, fostering solidarity and global citizenship (Roy, 2013).
- **Media Literacy Expansion:** Growing media literacy efforts promise to equip youth with critical skills for navigating complex media ecosystems effectively.

In summary, media in all its forms acts as a dynamic and multifaceted agent of political socialization for India's youth. Traditional media lays the groundwork for political knowledge, while digital and social media expand possibilities for active participation, identity formation, and political activism. However, challenges such as misinformation, digital divides, polarization, and regulatory constraints complicate this landscape. To harness media's potential for fostering a politically informed and engaged youth, efforts must focus on enhancing media literacy, ensuring equitable digital access, safeguarding media freedom, and promoting diverse and inclusive political discourse. Understanding media's evolving role is essential for comprehending the transformation of political socialization in India's global era.

State's Role and Policy Interventions

The state occupies a complex and multifaceted position in the interplay between youth, media, and political socialization in India. As the sovereign authority, the state not only shapes the regulatory environment governing media and communications but also directly influences the content and modes of political socialization through educational, cultural, and informational policies. This section critically examines the various dimensions of the state's role, encompassing regulatory frameworks, state-driven media initiatives, digital governance, educational policies, and the challenges posed by balancing security, freedom of expression, and democratic participation.

1. Regulatory Framework Governing Media and Political Communication

The Indian state employs an extensive legal and institutional apparatus to regulate media content, access, and ownership, which significantly affects the political socialization of youth.

- **Constitutional Guarantees and Limitations:** Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of speech and expression, including the freedom of the press. However, this right is subject to "reasonable restrictions" in the interests of sovereignty, security, public order, decency, or morality (Article 19(2)). These provisions enable the state to impose legal restrictions on political content, shaping the media environment that influences youth political socialization.
- **Key Media Regulation Laws and Authorities:** The state regulates media through various statutes such as the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, the Information Technology Act, and the Press Council Act. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) oversees licensing, content regulation, and policy formulation for electronic and print media. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) plays a significant role in regulating telecommunications, internet services, and broadcasting (Gupta, 2010).
- **Content Censorship and Self-Regulation:** The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and Press Council of India (PCI) regulate media content standards. Though ostensibly designed to prevent harmful or obscene content, these mechanisms have sometimes been criticized for censoring political dissent and restricting youth access to

politically sensitive material (Bhattacharya, 2012). Editorial self-censorship is widespread due to political and economic pressures, influencing the diversity of political narratives available to youth.

2. State Initiatives in Promoting Political Socialization and Media Engagement

Beyond regulation, the state proactively uses media and policy to facilitate political education and participation among youth.

- **Government-Owned Media Platforms:** State-owned entities such as Doordarshan (DD) and All India Radio (AIR) remain critical platforms for disseminating government policies, political campaigns, and civic education programs targeted at youth. These outlets provide content on voter registration, electoral processes, constitutional rights, and government schemes, fostering political literacy (Verma, 2011).
- **Digital India and E-Governance Initiatives:** The Digital India campaign, launched in 2015, aims to enhance internet access and digital literacy across the country. By improving digital infrastructure and promoting online government services, the state seeks to facilitate greater youth participation in democratic processes through digital means (Kumar, 2019). Online platforms for grievance redressal, e-voting awareness, and digital policy consultations reflect attempts to modernize political socialization channels.
- **Civic Education and Youth Engagement Programs:** The Election Commission of India (ECI), through the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, actively promotes electoral awareness and participation among youth. Campaigns targeting college students and first-time voters leverage media partnerships to increase political engagement (Nair, 2007).

3. Digital Governance, Surveillance, and Freedom of Expression

The state's expanding role in digital governance significantly impacts youth's media experiences and political socialization.

- **Internet Regulation and Content Moderation:** The government has issued multiple guidelines under the Information Technology Act to regulate online content, including social media platforms. The IT Rules 2019 require social media intermediaries to take down unlawful content within stipulated timelines and maintain user data for law enforcement access. While intended to curb misinformation and hate speech, these regulations have raised concerns about overreach and curtailment of free expression (Gupta, 2010).
- **Surveillance and Data Privacy Issues:** The state's surveillance capabilities—such as monitoring social media activity and phone communications—have increased in the name of national security and public order. However, the lack of robust data privacy

laws and transparency about surveillance practices fosters a climate of self-censorship and inhibits youth political expression (Bhattacharya, 2012).

- **Internet Shutdowns and Digital Rights:** India has witnessed numerous internet shutdowns, especially in politically sensitive regions. These shutdowns disrupt access to information and impede political communication, disproportionately affecting youth who rely on digital media for political socialization (Sharma, 2015).

4. Educational Policies and Curriculum Reforms

The state's role extends into the formal education system, which is a crucial site for early political socialization.

- **Incorporation of Civic and Media Literacy:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2019 emphasizes critical thinking, media literacy, and democratic values as integral to school and higher education curricula. Introducing students to constitutional rights, electoral processes, and media analysis equips youth to navigate complex political environments (Mehta, 2016).
- **Promotion of Political Awareness Through School Programs:** Schools and colleges often collaborate with government agencies and civil society to conduct voter awareness drives, debates, and mock elections. These initiatives, supported by educational policies, aim to foster active citizenship among youth.
- **Challenges in Implementation:** Despite policy frameworks, disparities in educational quality and resource availability hinder uniform political socialization. Rural and marginalized communities often receive inadequate exposure to civic education and media literacy, limiting the impact of these reforms (Narayan, 2014).

5. Challenges in Balancing Security, Freedom, and Democratic Participation

The state faces the delicate task of balancing competing priorities:

- **Maintaining Public Order vs. Protecting Free Speech:** The state often invokes concerns over communal harmony, national security, and misinformation to justify restrictive measures on media and speech. However, such measures risk stifling dissent and narrowing the space for youth political expression (Gupta, 2010).
- **Regulating Misinformation without Overreach:** Efforts to combat fake news and disinformation campaigns are critical for healthy political socialization but require transparent, accountable mechanisms that do not infringe upon democratic freedoms (Kumar, 2019).
- **Inclusivity and Equity in Media Access:** Ensuring equitable access to media and political participation for all youth, including those in rural, remote, and marginalized communities, remains a persistent challenge.

6. Recommendations and Future Directions for State Policy

To optimize the state's role in facilitating positive political socialization through media, the following strategies are recommended:

- **Strengthening Media Freedom and Pluralism:** Encourage a diverse and independent media ecosystem free from political interference to ensure varied political perspectives reach youth.
- **Expanding Digital Infrastructure and Literacy:** Accelerate investments in digital infrastructure, especially in underserved areas, and integrate comprehensive media literacy programs across education levels.
- **Transparent and Proportionate Digital Regulation:** Develop regulatory frameworks that balance misinformation control with robust protections for freedom of expression and privacy rights.
- **Enhancing Civic Education and Youth Participation:** Embed participatory democratic practices in education and civic engagement programs, enabling youth to practice political agency beyond passive information consumption.
- **Collaborative Governance Approaches:** Foster partnerships between government, civil society, media, and technology platforms to co-create policies that support healthy political socialization.

The state's role in mediating the relationship between youth, media, and political socialization is undeniably central and complex. Regulatory frameworks, state-driven media initiatives, educational policies, and digital governance shape the opportunities and constraints within which Indian youth engage politically. While the state has made significant strides in promoting digital inclusion and civic education, challenges related to media freedom, surveillance, misinformation, and equitable access persist. A nuanced and balanced policy approach is essential to harness media's transformative potential in cultivating an informed, engaged, and politically empowered youth, thereby strengthening the foundations of India's democratic future.

Challenges and Prospects

The evolving landscape of political socialization in India's global era, shaped by rapid media proliferation and dynamic state interventions, presents a complex mix of challenges and opportunities. Understanding these multifaceted issues is critical for framing effective policies and fostering an inclusive democratic polity where youth can engage meaningfully. This section provides an in-depth analysis of the principal challenges faced by Indian youth in political socialization through media and the corresponding prospects that can be harnessed to strengthen democratic participation.

1. Challenges in the Current Landscape

a) Digital Divide and Unequal Access

Despite India's rapid digital growth, significant disparities persist in access to digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, and digital literacy. The "digital divide" is particularly stark between urban and rural areas, gender lines, and socio-economic groups:

- **Rural vs. Urban Divide:** A large portion of India's youth population resides in rural areas where internet penetration, device affordability, and digital skills remain limited (Verma, 2011). This restricts their access to the rich digital media environment critical for political engagement and socialization.
- **Gender and Socioeconomic Barriers:** Cultural norms and economic constraints disproportionately affect girls and marginalized communities, limiting their ability to use digital media for political purposes (Bhattacharya, 2012). This entrenches social inequalities in political participation and voice.
- **Implications:** The digital divide exacerbates political knowledge gaps, creates unequal opportunities for participation, and risks leaving large segments of youth disenfranchised from contemporary democratic processes.

b) Misinformation, Fake News, and Media Manipulation

The proliferation of digital and social media platforms has brought about unprecedented volumes of information but also unprecedented risks:

- **Spread of Fake News:** Social media's viral nature facilitates the rapid dissemination of misinformation, rumors, and propaganda that distort political realities and undermine trust in institutions (Kumar, 2019).
- **Political Polarization:** Algorithm-driven "filter bubbles" reinforce ideological silos, intensifying political polarization among youth. This fragmentation of public discourse weakens democratic deliberation and social cohesion (Sharma, 2015).
- **Targeted Manipulation:** Political actors exploit media platforms to conduct micro-targeted campaigns and disinformation strategies aimed at shaping youth opinion, often covertly (Singh & Jain, 2019).
- **Implications:** Misinformation and manipulation hinder the development of an informed electorate and threaten the integrity of political socialization processes.

c) Surveillance, Privacy Concerns, and Censorship

The state's increasing surveillance capabilities and regulatory controls over digital communication pose significant challenges to free political expression:

- **Mass Surveillance:** Growing state surveillance of digital communications and social media activities creates a climate of fear and self-censorship among politically active youth (Gupta, 2010).

- **Internet Shutdowns:** The frequent use of internet shutdowns during politically sensitive periods disrupts access to information and obstructs political mobilization (Sharma, 2015).
- **Censorship and Content Regulation:** Overbroad content regulation laws risk curbing legitimate political dissent and restricting youth's engagement with critical political issues (Bhattacharya, 2012).
- **Implications:** Such measures undermine democratic freedoms and limit the ability of youth to freely explore, debate, and express political ideas.

d) Media Concentration and Lack of Pluralism

Media ownership in India is concentrated in the hands of a few corporate conglomerates often aligned with political interests:

- **Impact on Diversity of Views:** This concentration results in a homogenization of political narratives and reduced representation of marginalized or dissenting voices (Banerjee & Saha, 2017).
- **Commercialization of Political Content:** Sensationalism and entertainment-driven content often overshadow substantive political education, limiting the depth of youth's political socialization.
- **Implications:** Limited media pluralism constrains youth's exposure to diverse perspectives necessary for critical political engagement.

e) Educational System Constraints

While the National Education Policy emphasizes civic education, practical implementation faces challenges:

- **Inconsistent Curriculum Integration:** Civic and media literacy education remains uneven across states and institutions, with limited teacher training and resource support (Mehta, 2016).
- **Limited Engagement Methods:** Traditional rote learning methods fail to encourage active political participation or critical thinking among youth.
- **Implications:** This limits the formal educational system's potential to prepare youth for responsible and informed political participation.

2. Prospects and Opportunities

Despite these challenges, the contemporary socio-political media environment also offers significant opportunities to revitalize youth political socialization and strengthen Indian democracy.

a) Expanding Digital Access and Connectivity

- **Government Initiatives:** Programs like Digital India aim to bridge infrastructure gaps and democratize access to digital media. Increased smartphone penetration and affordable data plans enhance youth connectivity (Kumar, 2019).
- **Community-Based Approaches:** Expansion of community radio and localized digital hubs can provide media access tailored to marginalized and rural youth (Verma, 2011).
- **Implications:** Improved digital access promises to broaden participation and political inclusion, enabling more equitable socialization pathways.

b) Empowering Youth Through Media Literacy

- **Curricular Reforms:** The inclusion of media and information literacy in formal education equips youth with critical skills to navigate complex media ecosystems, evaluate information sources, and resist misinformation (Mehta, 2016).
- **Civil Society Initiatives:** NGOs and digital literacy programs targeting vulnerable populations enhance critical engagement and responsible media consumption (Narayan, 2014).
- **Implications:** Enhanced media literacy fosters a more discerning youth electorate capable of informed political choices.

c) Leveraging Social Media for Positive Political Engagement

- **Facilitating Civic Participation:** Social media platforms serve as powerful tools for mobilizing youth, facilitating grassroots political activism, awareness campaigns, and policy advocacy (Das, 2008).
- **Hybrid Political Identities:** Online political spaces enable youth to negotiate complex political identities that incorporate local, national, and global perspectives (Roy, 2013).
- **Peer Influence and Collaborative Learning:** Social media enables peer-to-peer political learning and deliberation, strengthening democratic culture.
- **Implications:** These dynamics open new avenues for participatory democracy and vibrant youth political culture.

d) Strengthening Democratic Governance and Accountability

- **Transparency through Digital Tools:** E-governance initiatives enhance government transparency and accountability, engaging youth directly in policy processes and grievance redressal (Kumar, 2019).
- **Youth-Centric Policy Design:** Greater inclusion of youth voices in media policy formulation ensures that regulations reflect their needs and rights.
- **Implications:** Such inclusive governance enhances youth trust and participation in democratic institutions.

e) Promoting Inclusive and Pluralistic Media Ecosystems

- **Support for Alternative Media:** Encouraging independent, community, and vernacular media diversifies political discourse and amplifies marginalized voices (Banerjee & Saha, 2017).
- **Regulatory Safeguards:** Policies to limit media monopolies and enhance transparency in media ownership can promote pluralism.
- **Implications:** A pluralistic media environment enriches youth political socialization by offering multiple perspectives.

3. Navigating the Future: Balancing Risks and Opportunities

- The intersection of media, youth, and the state in India presents an evolving terrain marked by rapid technological change, socio-political complexity, and competing normative claims.
- Addressing the digital divide while protecting freedoms and ensuring inclusivity remains paramount for equitable political socialization.
- Policymakers, civil society, educators, and media practitioners must collaborate to craft holistic strategies that leverage media's democratizing potential while mitigating risks like misinformation and censorship.
- Empowering youth as active agents rather than passive consumers of political information will be essential for nurturing a resilient democratic polity equipped for the challenges of India's global era.

In conclusion, the challenges facing youth political socialization through media in India are significant but not insurmountable. Strategic policy interventions, coupled with robust media literacy and inclusive digital access, can transform these challenges into opportunities. By embracing the prospects of new media while safeguarding democratic freedoms and pluralism, India can foster a politically informed, engaged, and empowered youth constituency—one that is vital for the country's democratic vitality and global standing.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The evolving dynamics of youth political socialization mediated by diverse forms of media and shaped by state policies demand nuanced, forward-looking policy responses. Addressing the multifaceted challenges while capitalizing on the emerging opportunities requires coordinated efforts across governance, education, media regulation, and civil society engagement. This section articulates key policy implications derived from the preceding analysis and outlines actionable recommendations to strengthen democratic participation and political literacy among Indian youth in the digital age.

1. Policy Implications

a) Enhancing Equitable Digital Access and Infrastructure

The persistence of the digital divide highlights the need for comprehensive infrastructure development, especially in rural, remote, and marginalized communities. Without inclusive access to digital technologies, large sections of youth remain politically disenfranchised, impeding the democratizing potential of new media.

- **State investment in affordable broadband, digital devices, and localized connectivity solutions is essential to bridge infrastructural gaps.**
- **Public-private partnerships can accelerate expansion efforts while ensuring affordability and accessibility.**

b) Promoting Media Literacy as a Core Competency

Given the increasing complexity of information environments, media literacy must be recognized as a foundational skill critical for youth political socialization.

- **Integrating media and information literacy into formal education curricula at all levels is crucial to equip youth with critical thinking, fact-checking, and analytical skills.**
- **Teacher training and resource development are imperative to ensure effective implementation.**
- **Beyond schools, community-based and digital platforms should offer continuous media literacy programs targeting diverse youth populations.**

c) Ensuring Freedom of Expression with Responsible Digital Governance

The balancing act between curbing misinformation and preserving free speech requires transparent, accountable regulatory frameworks.

- **Digital governance policies must incorporate safeguards against arbitrary censorship and promote due process in content regulation.**
- **Independent oversight mechanisms can enhance legitimacy and public trust.**
- **Data privacy protections and limitations on state surveillance should be legally mandated to protect youth rights and freedoms.**

d) Encouraging Pluralism and Diversity in Media Ownership and Content

A vibrant democracy depends on a diverse media ecosystem offering multiple perspectives.

- **Regulatory reforms to prevent media monopolies and promote independent, community, and vernacular media outlets can foster pluralism.**
- **State support for alternative media platforms and local content production can amplify marginalized voices and encourage inclusive political socialization.**

e) Strengthening Civic Education and Youth Participation Frameworks

Political socialization is most effective when complemented by practical engagement opportunities.

- **Educational policies should prioritize active citizenship programs, including debates, mock elections, and participatory governance simulations.**
- **Election authorities and government agencies should scale up youth-targeted awareness campaigns using innovative digital and offline strategies.**
- **Youth councils and forums can institutionalize youth voices in policymaking processes, ensuring responsive governance.**

2. Recommendations

Based on the policy implications, the following specific recommendations are proposed:

2.1 Bridging the Digital Divide

- Expand rural internet infrastructure through targeted funding and incentives for service providers.
- Subsidize digital devices and data plans for economically disadvantaged youth.
- Promote community internet access centers and digital hubs in underserved regions.

2.2 Comprehensive Media Literacy Programs

- Mandate media literacy as a compulsory subject in secondary and higher education.
- Develop standardized curricula with modules on political communication, misinformation, and digital citizenship.
- Partner with NGOs and tech companies to deliver mass media literacy campaigns accessible via social media and mobile apps.

2.3 Transparent and Rights-Based Digital Regulation

- Review and revise IT Rules to ensure clarity, proportionality, and protection of fundamental rights.
- Establish an independent digital rights commission to oversee content regulation and address grievances.
- Enact comprehensive data protection legislation with specific provisions for youth privacy.

2.4 Fostering Media Diversity and Independence

- Implement anti-consolidation laws to prevent excessive media ownership concentration.

- Provide grants and capacity-building support for community, campus, and vernacular media.
- Encourage investigative and public-interest journalism to deepen political discourse quality.

2.5 Enhancing Civic Education and Youth Engagement

- Incorporate experiential learning techniques, such as role-playing and simulations, into civic education.
- Strengthen collaboration between the Election Commission, educational institutions, and media outlets for voter education.
- Create youth advisory bodies at local and national levels to facilitate meaningful dialogue with policymakers.

3. Cross-Sectoral Collaboration and Multistakeholder Engagement

Effective policy implementation requires collaboration across government ministries (Education, Information & Broadcasting, Electronics & IT), civil society organizations, media industry stakeholders, and youth representatives.

- Establish multi-stakeholder platforms to co-design and monitor political socialization initiatives.
- Leverage technology firms' expertise to develop innovative tools for media literacy and civic engagement.
- Promote research partnerships to continuously evaluate the impact of policies and adapt strategies accordingly.

4. Future Research and Monitoring

To build an evidence-based policy framework, ongoing research is essential:

- Conduct longitudinal studies on youth media consumption patterns and political attitudes.
- Assess the efficacy of media literacy programs and digital inclusion efforts.
- Monitor the socio-political impact of regulatory changes on youth political participation.

The transformation of political socialization in India's global era is intricately linked to the state's policy choices regarding media regulation, digital governance, and education. By adopting inclusive, transparent, and youth-centric policies, India can harness the power of media to cultivate a politically aware and active youth population. This will not only reinforce democratic resilience but also empower the next generation to navigate the complexities of a globalized political environment with critical insight and civic responsibility.

Conclusion

This study has explored the intricate and evolving relationship between youth, media, and the state within the broader context of India's global era, highlighting how political socialization is being reshaped by technological advancements, media diversification, and state interventions. The research underscores that while new media platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for youth political engagement, they also pose significant challenges such as misinformation, digital divides, and regulatory constraints. The state's role in crafting inclusive policies, safeguarding democratic freedoms, and promoting media literacy emerges as pivotal in ensuring that youth can become informed, critical, and active participants in India's democracy. The paper also emphasizes that bridging infrastructural gaps and fostering pluralistic, diverse media environments are essential to democratize political knowledge and participation. By situating India's experience within global trends and comparative frameworks, this research highlights the unique socio-political dynamics at play and the urgent need for holistic, youth-centric policy frameworks. Ultimately, empowering Indian youth through equitable media access, comprehensive media literacy, and participatory civic education will not only strengthen democratic processes but also prepare the next generation to navigate and shape the complexities of an interconnected global world. This transformation is vital for sustaining India's democratic vitality and ensuring that its youth remain agents of progressive political change.

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