Connectivism: Political Communication of Indian National Political Parties via Facebook

Poonam[1], Vikram Kaushik[2] and Amit Sharma[3]
[1]Research Scholar, [2]Professor,
[1&2]Department of Communication Management and Technology,
Guru Jambeshwar University of Science and Technology, Hisar, Haryana, India
[3]Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Manipal University Jaipur, Rajasthan, India
E-mail: vkaushik24@gmail.com, jmcamit@gmail.com

Abstract - **Connectivism approach tells how social media connect people for information exchange. Political persons connect people on social media to make them aware about their plan and ideology. The objectives of the study are to know the association between the main political person in Facebook post, their ideology, objectives of the Facebook post of Indian national political parties and presence of bias in the post. We conducted quantitative research with the help of content analysis method. We used cross-sectional research design for collection of data. Total 538 post form official Facebook page of Indian national political parties have been collected through purposive sampling. Result indicates that political ideology is reflected on the national political party's Facebook posts. While brick batting, image building and information sharing are the three main objectives of political posts of Facebook.**
Keywords: **Connectivist Approach, Social Networking, Indian Politics, Political Campaign, Ideology**

I. INTRODUCTION

Main person of politics needs an affordable media so that they can connect with public, they can do political communication. Social media has the power to connect individually because it can fragment its users on some parameter like age, class, gender and many more. State actors like politician and non-state actors like terrorist are also using social media for making their social connection strong and easy approachable (McNair, 2017). Social media have grown very rapidly in last 15 years and their impact is expanding day by day. The influence of social media like Facebook has been addressed on news media and common people. State and non-state actors could easily notice the power of user-generated content (Roese, 2018).

Facebook has 2.93 billion monthly uses in second quarter of 2022which is highest among the social media platform worldwide. It has taken about 13 years to achieve the goal (Dixon, 2022). Facebook is impactful because of its rich network. Meta is the mother organization of Facebook. It owns most popular social media platform Instagram, WhatsApp, Oculus and Facebook Messenger along with Facebook (Dixon, 2022). Facebook is an important tool of political communication and a study tool on three bases. First, it has activities like connecting people and opinion expression. Facebook is an ongoing database for human social behaviour. Second, high popularity is a major cause. The popularity is based on both side like Facebook is a popular medium and it helps to make people popular. And third, it gives strength to social ties. It integrated into everyone's life nowadays (Wilson *et al.*, 2012). Social media is a powerful tool of communication. As like other effective mass medium, social media has some demerits. One of such demerits is that it helps in spreading hate speech or dangerous speech. Dangerous speech means the language "one group of public use to fear and hate other group of publics." Facebook is a medium, people use it to make afraid their adversaries (Fink, 2018).

A. The Connectivism Approach and Mass Media

The connectivism approach was initially developed by the George Siemens, Stephens Downes, and others. It describes that information is supplied among the connections which are connected to each other with some common networks. As a result of this, the knowledge keeps circulating between this network (Spiro, 2012).The posts of social media make communication effective and connect people to learn something. All conversations regarding a particular domain of knowledge are being exchange via social media. This is an online classroom that gives proper learning about the subject which is being discussed on the virtual platform. Siemens called this approach as connectivism. It helps to share collective experience among the network (D'Alessandro, 2018).

The web 2.0 is no longer work as digital library in which people can only access information. This new technology has given wings to information collaboration and digital interaction globally. Web 2.0 has cleared the geographical and sematic barriers. Social constructivism is easily possible because of the technological advancement in the field of internet. Learning through interactions with others is being possible because of social interactions. Connectivism is theoretical approach which is associated with constructivism and social constructivism. Connectivism is achieved by the chaos and network. Connectivism is driven by the continuous discussion and alteration of knowledge (Monje, 2014).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The present part of the research is divided into two subthemes i.e., theoretical framework and practical framework.

A. Theoretical Framework: Connectivism Approach

New communication technologies like social media can be used to make people aware about the new learning process. Connectivism approach is a growing clarification or theory of learning with special reference to networks for collective learning. Connectivism approach is useful in making a strategy for developing connected learning atmosphere in society. Web 2.0 gives opportunity to make people capable to handle the challenges of globalization, and automation (Neubauer et al., 2011).

Digital convergence is given power to online learning. Many massive open online courses (MOOC) and open educational resources (OER) are accessible globally now. This is practical aspect of connectivism. People connect with other fellow scholars via online platform for collective learning. Growth of internet and small devices has given birth to new type of connective as well as collective learning. It is an advancement of traditional education structure and patterns (Ossiannilsson et al., 2016).

Vietnam passed cyber security bill in 2018.The bill was an attempt to limit the freedom of expression in the country. People started agitation against the law, but mainstream media showed very less prominence. While social media like Facebook played a very important role in spreading information of protest. Facebook played a vital role in public activism. Researcher also find out the existing dynamics of Vietnamese media like its censorship mechanism, its commercial incoming, its way to balance between the state, the market and users need of quality news (NGUYEN-THU, 2018).

Evaluations of information and communication technologies have given wings to the new 'smart' hyper-connected network. This new technology is based on artificial intelligence. Connectivism approach is application here in special reference to collective transmedia transmission. It results the development of a complex, highly automated and integrated global communication system (Galés & Gallon, 2019).

B. Practical Framework: Social-Media and Political Communication

A study to know the social media use of middle school students was conducted by Mortin and his fellows in 2018.They done a survey of 593 students to know about the digital footprints and concerns about the social media use. 40 percent of students replied that their parent doesn't monitor their social media use. However, most of students are afraid of cyber security issues like lack of privacy, bullying, stalking etc. Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube are the three top priority social media platforms for the students (Martin et al., 2018).

Mainstream media influences the public agenda. Feezell, in a study examine the role of mainstream media and social media in agenda setting. He did a survey of 210 participants to know the agenda setting effect on politically uninterested participants and interested participants. Two step flow theory is key approach that deals with effect of communication i.e., interpersonal communication. Results indicate that information spread by mainstream media and assisted by social media cause more impact on people then other medium. Fragmented audience on social media give positive impact to agenda setting through media (Feezell, 2018).

Prier (2017) did a study to understand the use of social media in the modern information age. The study is based on three dimensions i.e., social networking, propaganda, and information dissemination. Researcher conducted two case studies to know more about how state actor (Russia) and non-state actor (Islamic State-IS) use social media in spreading propaganda. Result indicates that both state and nonstate actors use social media to conduct their operations successfully. Social media is a tool for social networking and propagation of information (Prier, 2017). Social media is a valuable tool for propagation of political information. The information can be shared among the networks and it causes a powerful impact too without gatekeeping (Sharma & Goyal, 2018). Social media networks are impowering young minds and making them inform in the digital age. State actors are using social media to propagate their information and putting their agenda in the society (Kumar et al., 2021). Indian political parties are dependent on mass media for informing them about their policies and ideology. Political people commonly use social media for propagation of their opinion and to connect people. Twitter is most useful social media platform to spread information among public (Sharma et al., 2022).

III. METHODOLOGY

This part of research work contains research objectives, hypothesis, research design and sample design etc.

A. Research Objectives:
The research objectives of the present study are as follows.
1. To know the association between the main person of Facebook post and ideology indicated in the post of national political parties.
2. To find out the relationship between main political person in the Facebook post and the main objectives of the post of Indian national political parties.
3. To analyse the association between the main person of Facebook post and presence of bias in the post of Indian national political parties.

B. Research Hypothesis:
The alternative hypothesis of the present study is as follows.

Ha1: There is an association between the main person of Facebook post and ideology indicated in the post.

Ha2: There is an association between main political person in the Facebook post and the main objective of the post.

Ha3: There is an association between the main person of Facebook post and presence of bias in the post.

C. Types of Variables: We are collecting both dependent and independent variables for the present study. Main person of political post and presence of bias in the political post are independent variables. While ideology of the political post is a dependent variable because it is dependent on political party's nature.

D. Research Design: The present study is based on quantitative research. We used cross-sectional research design to conduct study. We did content analysis to meet the research objectives. We framed a codebook to collect the data from the Facebook post of Indian national political parties.

E. Sample Design: All Facebook posts of political parties are considered as the universe for the present study. All post posted on the official Facebook page of Indian national political parties are considered as sampling frame for the present study. Facebook post of national parties namely BJP, Congress, TMC and CPI (M) posted on official page are being considered as sampling unit for the study. Facebook page of these political parties are very popular. These parties have 1.5 crore to 5.2 lakhs followers (calculated on July 2021). Sample has been selected based on purposive sampling. Total 538 post from official Facebook page of above national political parties have been analysed based on priory coding.

F. Duration of the Study and Nature of Data: Total 538 Facebook post of selected national political parties have been collected between April 2, 2021, to May 26, 2021. Only primary data collected for the present study to meet the objectives.

IV. ANALYSIS

We did analysis based on cross tabulation and Chi-Squire test. We are considering four main variables for analysis i.e., main actor of political posts, ideology in the post, main objectives of the Facebook post and presence of bias in political posts.

TABLE I ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE MAIN PERSON OF FACEBOOK POST AND IDEOLOGY INDICATED IN THE POST.

The Main Person of Facebook Post	Ideology Indicated in Post			Total
	Right	No Ideology	Left	
Prime Minister	4.6%	95.4%	0.0%	100.0%
Chief Ministers	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Opposition Leaders	0.0%	96.1%	3.9%	100.0%
Union and State Cabinet	2.1%	97.9%	0.0%	100.0%
Other than Politician	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Executive Officials of Party	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Political people have their ideology, and it reflects on Facebook post. Table I indicates that in posts where the prime minister is presented as the main person, only 4.6 percent of posts reflect right-wing ideology. The remaining 95.4 percent of all posts show no ideology. In posts that portray the chief minister, executive officials of party and other than politician as key person,100% of all such posts reflect no ideology. Only 3.9 percent of posts that featured the opposition leader as the main person displayed 'left ideology'. However, the remaining 96.1 percent of the posts do not reflect any ideology. At the same time, only 2.1 percent of posts in which a central or state minister has been portrayed as a key person reflect 'right-wing ideology'. However, the remaining 97.9 percent of posts do not reflect any ideology.

TABLE II CROSS TABULATION BETWEEN MAIN POLITICAL PERSON IN THE FACEBOOK POST AND THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE POST

The main person of Facebook post	Main objective of the Facebook post					Total
	Agenda setting	Brick batting (An unfavourable remark; a criticism)	Information	Propaganda	Image building	
Prime Minister	15.4%	44.6%	20.0%	1.5%	18.5%	100.0%
Chief Ministers	0.0%	34.1%	7.3%	4.9%	53.7%	100.0%
Opposition Leaders	7.8%	64.3%	10.9%	3.1%	14.0%	100.0%
Union and State Cabinet	6.4%	27.7%	19.1%	8.5%	38.3%	100.0%
Other than Politician	5.0%	35.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Executive Officials of Party	13.6%	13.6%	27.3%	4.5%	40.9%	100.0%

Table II indicates that brick-batting is the main objective in 44.6 percent of Facebook post in which the prime minister (PM) is depicted as the main person. Although the purpose of 20 percent of posts is to give information, the purpose of 18.5 percent of posts is image building. The purpose of 15.4 percent of posts is also agenda setting. In 53.7 percent of posts portraying chief ministers of various states as key figures, the main objective is image building. However, another 34.1 percent of posts aimed at back batting. Back batting is the main motive in 64.3 percent of posts portraying the leader of the opposition as the main person.

However, another 14.0 percent of posts are aimed at image building. Image building is the main motive in 38.3 percent of posts portraying the union or state cabinet as the main person. However, another 27.0 percent of posts are aimed at back batting. A good number of posts (19.1%) have the objective of information sharing in the same category. Image building is the main motive in 40.9 percent of posts portraying the executive official of the political party as the main person. However, another 27.3 percent of posts are aimed at information sharing.

TABLE III THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE MAIN PERSON OF FACEBOOK POST AND PRESENCE OF BIAS IN THE POST.

The main person of Facebook post	Presence of bias in Facebook post			Total
	Not biased	Partially biased	Apparently (totally) biased	
Prime Minister	52.3%	23.1%	24.6%	100.0%
Chief Ministers	51.2%	34.1%	14.6%	100.0%
Opposition Leaders	38.0%	25.6%	36.4%	100.0%
Union and State Cabinet	55.3%	17.0%	27.7%	100.0%
Other than Politician	65.0%	15.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Executive Officials of Party	72.7%	18.2%	9.1%	100.0%

People have their own opinion. People's own ideology is often reflected in social media posts. Political parties do post to support their ideology in social media posts. In such a situation, sometimes bias starts appearing in political posts. Table III indicates that bias is rarely seen in Facebook's political posts. Most of the post/comment posted on official Facebook page found unbiased. Although post in which the main opposition leader is presented as the main character showed more apparently bias (36.4%) than others. At the same time, partial bias is relatively high in tweets (34.1%) in which the Chief Minister is presented as the main person. Facebook post in which, executive officials of the party are presented as main person, comparatively not biased i.e., 72.7%.

A. Hypothesis Testing: Hypothesis has been tested with the help of Chi-Square Test. Chi-Square test is best for hypothesis testing if data is nominal and ordinal in nature.

TABLE IV THERE IS NO ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE MAIN PERSON OF FACEBOOK POST AND IDEOLOGY INDICATED IN THE POST

Pearson Chi-Square Tests		
Pearson Chi-Square Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
33.207[a]	10	.000

(On the Basis of SPPS)

Pearson Chi-Square test indicates that there is an association between the main person of Facebook post and ideology indicated in the post because 'p' value 0.000 is less than the significance level 0.05. So, the null hypothesis 'There is no association between the main person of Facebook post and ideology indicated in the post' is rejected.

TABLE V THERE IS NO ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MAIN POLITICAL PERSON IN THE FACEBOOK POST AND THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE POST

Pearson Chi-SquareTests		
Pearson Chi-Square Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
185.880[a]	20	.000

(On the Basis of SPPS)

Pearson Chi-Square test indicates that there is an association between main political person in the Facebook post and the main objective of the post because 'p' value 0.000 is less than the significance level 0.05. So, the null hypothesis 'There is no association between main political person in the Facebook post and the main objective of the post' is rejected.

TABLE VI THERE IS NO ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE MAIN PERSON OF FACEBOOK POST AND PRESENCE OF BIAS IN THE POST

Pearson Chi-Square Tests		
Pearson Chi-SquareValue	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
41.691[a]	10	.000

(On the Basis of SPPS)

Pearson Chi-Square test indicates that there is an association between main political person in the Facebook post and presence of bias in the post because 'p' value 0.000 is less than the significance level 0.05. So, the null hypothesis 'There is no association between the main person of Facebook post and presence of bias in the post' is rejected.

V. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

National political party's Facebook posts that feature political people as key person often do not reflect any ideology. However, posts that feature the prime minister and other central or state ministers in the lead, reflect right-wing ideology partially. The posts in which leaders of opposition parties have been projected as key person, reflect left-wing ideology partially.

Brick batting, image building and information sharing are the three main objectives of posts of national political parties in which political person are depicted as the main person. However, in most posts featuring non-political people as key person, information sharing is the main objective. Most of the posts depicting leaders of opposition as key person, brick batting is the main objective, in these Facebook post prime minister is being criticised by the opposition leaders. Bias is rarely seen in posts of political party's official Facebook page. Although post in which the main opposition leader is presented as the main character showed more apparently bias than others. Partial bias is relatively high in posts in which the chief minister is presented as the main person. Facebook post in which, executive officials of the party are presented as main person found comparatively not biased.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Facebook posts say so much about the mind make-up of the personality. Present Study reveals that brick batting is the main objective in Facebook posts where the prime minister and the opposition leaders are the main actor. While Facebook posts with chief minister, union & state cabinet and executive officials of political parties as main players having the key purpose of Image building. Posts with the person other than politician having the big motive of only for spreading the information.

Study also reveals that the Facebook posts having executive officials of political parties, other than politician and union & state cabinet as main actor are less biased than the posts having prime minister, chief minister, and opposition leaders as the major players. Every individual, institution and party have its own ideology and responds accordingly. Study unfolds the connection between main person of the Facebook posts from the official page of political parties and ideology, key objective and bias indicated in that post.

Lindita Camaj (2015) also conducted a study related to political deliberation on Facebook. This discipline examines the potential of Facebook through comparative content analysis. But Camaj's screening is limited to electoral campaigns. This explores the technical role of moderators and moderators' political ideology for online deliberation.

Alexander Horn & Carsten Jensen (2022) explains the positional concreteness in political parties Facebook posts. In this, a new conceptualisation of policy signals is developed, which integrates policy objectives, policy instruments and how concrete these are. Drawing on issue competition research, a set of expectations is advanced about the importance of actors' control over outcomes for positional concreteness. But the present study has better results and updated information.

VII. CONCLUSION

Facebook posts featuring political figures rarely reflect ideology. Prime Minister and other central or state ministry people reflect right-wing ideology. Opposition leaders' major posts reflect left-wing ideology. Brick batting, image building, and information sharing are the goals of national political party blogs featuring political figures. Most non-political posts focus on information exchange. Most Facebook posts depict opposition leaders as prominent figures and criticise the Prime Minister. Facebook posts from political parties are rarely biased. Although posts featuring the main opposition leader were more biased. Posts featuring the prime minister are biased. Facebook post presenting party executives as unbiased.

REFERENCES

[1] D'Alessandro, M. (2018). Follow That Pig. *Gastronomica, 18*(3), 82-92.

[2] Dixon, S. (2022). Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 2nd quarter 2022. In https://www.statista.com/. Statista GmbH. https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/ number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/

[3] Feezell, J. T. (2018). Agenda Setting through Social Media: The Importance of Incidental News Exposure and Social Filtering in the Digital Era. *Political Research Quarterly, 71*(2), 482–494.

[4] Fink, C. (2018). Dangerous Speech, Anti-Muslim Violence, And Facebook In Myanmar. *Journal of International Affairs, 71*(1.5), 43–52.

[5] Galés, N. L., & Gallon, R. (2019). Educational Agility. In M. Kowalczuk-Walêdziak, A. Korzeniecka-Bondar, W. Danilewicz, & G. Lauwers (Eds.), *Rethinking Teacher Education for the 21st Century* (1st ed., 98–110). Verlag Barbara Budrich; DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvpb3xhh.10

[6] Kumar, S., Sharma, A., & Verma, V. (2021). Social Media a Tool for Social and Political Inclusion among Youth: A Study of Indian University Students. *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 4*(1), 82-89. DOI: https://doi.org/10.12944/CRJSSH.4.1.08

[7] Martin, F., Wang, C., Petty, T., Wang, W., & Wilkins, P. (2018). Middle School Students' Social Media Use. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society, 21*(1), 213-224.

[8] McNair, B. (2017). *AN Introduction to Political Communication*: Sixth Edition (6th ed.). Routledge. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315750293

[9] Monje, E. M. (2014). Integration of Web 2.0 Tools in a VLE to Improve the EFL Spanish University Entrance Examination Results: A Quasi-experimental Study. *CALICO Journal, 31*(1), 40-56.

[10] Neubauer, B. J., Hug, R. W., Hamon, K. W., & Stewart, S. K. (2011). Using Personal Learning Networks to Leverage Communities of Practice in Public Affairs Education. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 17*(1), 9–25.

[11] NGUYEN-THU, G. (2018). Vietnamese Media Going Social. *The Journal of Asian Studies, 77*(4), 895–908.

[12] Ossiannilsson, E., Altinay, Z., & Altinay, F. (2016). *Transformation of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education towards Open Learning Arenas: In P. Blessinger & T. Bliss (Eds.), Open Education* (1st ed., 159–178). Open Book Publishers; Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/j. ctt1sq5v9n.13.

[13] Prier, J. (2017). *Commanding the Trend. Strategic Studies Quarterly, 11*(4), 50-85.

[14] Roese, V. (2018). You won't believe how co-dependent they are. In P. Vasterman (Ed.), *From Media Hype to Twitter Storm* (313-332). Amsterdam University Press; DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt21215m0.19

[15] Sharma, A., & Goyal, A. (2018). Tweet, Truth and Fake News: A Study of BJP's Official Tweeter Handle. *Journal of Content, Community and Communication, 4*(8), 22-28. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31620/JCCC.12.18/05

[16] Sharma, A., srivastava, amitabh, Upadhayay, A., & Pandey, A. K. (2022). Twitter as Branding Tool: An Analysis of Tweets of Indian National Political Parties. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education, 14*(2), 2191-2207. DOI: https://doi.org/10.9756/INT-JECSE/V14I2.195

[17] Spiro, L. (2012). Opening up Digital Humanities Education. In B. D. Hirsch (Ed.), Digital Humanities Pedagogy (1st ed., *3*, 331–364). Open Book Publishers; DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307 /j.ctt5vjtt3.19

[18] Wilson, R. E., Gosling, S. D., Gosling, S. D., & Graham, L. T. (2012). *A Review of Facebook Research in the Social Sciences. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 7*(3), 203-220.