

# RECEPTION OF POLITICAL MEMES: SHAPING VIEWS AMONG YOUTH

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**Abstract:** This research paper investigates the reception and influence of political memes among the youth demographic. Recognizing the role of political memes as a potent tool for political discourse in the digital age, this study aims to understand how these memes shape the political views and participation of young people. The research methodology includes quantitative and qualitative methods, such as surveys to gauge the extent of meme consumption and its correlation with political awareness. The study also addresses the potential for misinformation spread through political memes, emphasizing the need for digital literacy among young internet users. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into the transformative role of political memes in youth political engagement and discourse in the digital era. Reception theory can be used as theoretical framework for the study.

**Keywords:** Political memes, Perception, Reception, Meme culture.

## INTRODUCTION

Social media is everywhere, impacting each and every citizen even the people who can't read and write, communication technologies changing the information dissemination and information understanding with multifaceted media forms and platforms. The most popular social media platforms based on the number of monthly active users are Facebook (3.030 billion), YouTube (2.562 billion), WhatsApp (2 billion), Instagram (2 billion), WeChat (1.313 billion), TikTok (1.09 billion), Messenger (1.03 billion), LinkedIn (930 million), Telegram (800 million), and Snapchat (750 million).

### Usage by Youth

The most popular social media platforms among youth vary depending on the region. In the United States, YouTube is the most common online platform teens use, with 95% saying they ever use this site or app. Among the social media sites included in this survey, TikTok has become the most popular among teenagers after making its debut in North America a few years ago.. Instagram and Snapchat are both used by about six-in-ten teens.

In India, the 5 most used social media platforms (including messaging apps) in India (2023) are WhatsApp (531.46 million active users), followed by Instagram (516.92 million users), Facebook (492.70 million users), Telegram (384.06 million users), and Facebook Messenger (343.92 million users).

These statistics highlight the significant role that social media plays in our lives today, influencing the way we communicate, share information, and even conduct business

Social media usage among the youth in India is quite significant.

Here are some key insights:

- 54% of Indian social media users were between the ages of 20 and 39 as of the beginning of 2019.
- The majority of social media users are in the 12- to 15-year-old age range.
- Around 40% of urban Indian parents acknowledge that their 9–17 year-old children suffer from social media, video, and online gaming addictions.
- Six out of ten children in India between the ages of nine and seventeen spend more than three hours a day on social media or gaming websites, according to a nationwide poll.
- Teenagers between the ages of 18 and 24 spend too much time on these apps; in India, Facebook and Instagram alone have 97.2 million and 69 million users in this age range.

These statistics highlight the significant role that social media plays in the lives of Indian youth today, influencing the way they communicate, share information.

### **Meme Consumption among Youth**

Memes have become a significant part of internet culture, controlling the narrative and drawing tens of millions of followers on popular meme pages on social media. They are often seen as the coffee of the digital age, providing a daily release of dopamine through a laugh at a favorite meme page.

### **The Role of Memes in Youth Culture**

Memes play a crucial role in the lives of young people. They have led to youth being completely immersed in them, reaching even the remotest places in the world through these youngsters. Current issues and happenings are often depicted through memes, grabbing the attention of youths on a wider scale. Memes provide a sense of comfort in an era where these internet jokes are familiar, but escalating international tensions are not.

### **Memes as a Source of News**

In the age of memes, young people are increasingly getting their news from them. When significant events occur, such as political developments or international tensions, memes often provide a way for young people to deal with their feelings about these events. However, memes and social media can dilute the gravity of the news due to the medium and character limitations.

Young people use humor, memes, satire, and other acts of engaging with or remixing popular culture as important tactics in the repertoire of digital civic engagement. They favor personalized engagement through digital networking, self-expression, protests, and volunteerism.

Meme consumption among youth through social media has become an integral part of their digital lives. It influences how they consume news, engage with social issues, and express themselves. However, it's important to be mindful of the potential for misinformation and to encourage critical thinking and media literacy among young users.

### **Political Memes in India:**

Memes have become a significant part of internet culture, and in India, they have found a unique place in the political discourse. They have radicalized our democracy, making political groups more responsive and citizens more politically aware and attentive.

In India, memes have become a tool for political satire and commentary. They are used to poke fun at politicians and political situations, often highlighting the absurdities and contradictions present. For instance, internet trolls are always ready to poke fun at politicians like Rahul Gandhi, Narendra Modi, and others.

### **The Impact of Memes on Politics**

The impact of memes on politics is profound. They have the power to shape public opinion and influence political discourse. In fact, during election seasons, political parties have been known to employ social media teams to create and distribute memes in an attempt to sway voters. However, it's important to note that while memes can be entertaining and informative, they can also be misleading or biased. Therefore, it's crucial for consumers of meme content to also seek out information from reliable news sources.

In conclusion, political memes in India have become an integral part of the digital lives of its citizens. They influence how people consume news, engage with social issues, and express their political views. As we move further into the digital age, the role of memes in India's political landscape is likely to grow even more significant

Memes play a significant role in the perception among youth on political issues, especially with situation and context. Memes satire, ridicule, entertain, and educate people on trending issues, especially in India, where political personalities have their own meme template. From Rahul Gandhi winking eyes to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath changing the names of the cities, every situation has been modified with text and visual reaction, which triggers humor and satire.



Image 1. (Source: Google)

The above meme satires political decisions of changing the cities name in Uttar Pradesh. The meme featured Barak Obama and Yogi Adityanath. When Yogi Adityanath asked Barak Obama to change his name to Om Baba, the meme ridiculed the government over the cities name changing policies. The meme educate people about the politics in the Uttar Pradesh.



Image 2. (Source: Google)

The above meme ridicules the government over the overpriced gas cylinders. With a metaphor from the movie Bahubhali, the meme maker renamed Narendra Modi with Thugbali with the tagline Jumla Jeevi, which means the person who makes false promises. These messages create awareness about the rates of essential food items and government actions. Although memes mostly criticize the government of the day, very political party devotees make memes of the opposite political party and their stand on issues.

Image 3. (Source: X( Formerly known as Twitter )

Basically memes are created with user generated content and above meme satires the political situation of changing India name to Bharat because opposition alliance named as their alliance as I.N.D.I.A. These mems with lighter humor educate people about the political scenarios.



Image.4 (Source: Facebook)



The above meme humors the political situation when congress leader Chidambaram was arrested. In 2010 Amith Shah was arrested and jailed over the allegations of extra judicial killings and that was the time congress leader Chidambaram was Home Minister of India, after 9 years Chidambaram was arrested over the allegations of wrongdoing, money laundering but this time Amith Shah is a Home Minister of India. The meme satires the political scenario that emerged over the years

Above meme ridicule the Andhra Pradesh political situation where government did not confirm the capital and there is an ambiguous understanding over the three capitals which were announced by the Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. In the memes famous comedian personality Bramhanandam and Amitabh's KBC show was featured and context created when Amitabh Bacchan asked the 1 Cr question about the capital of Andhra Pradesh .

Certainly above memes satires and ridiculing the situation that was emerged over the clarity of Andhra Pradesh capital.

Image 5. (Source: Google)



## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Definition and Conceptualization of Internet Memes:** The phrase "meme," which refers to a cultural unit that is transmitted by imitation, was coined by Richard Dawkins (Blackmore, 1999, p. 6). According to Dawkins, almost everything cultural—from "Happy Birthday" songs to architectural designs—is a meme. Blackmore (1999) went a step further and asserted that people are only passive vehicles for meme replication. When used in reference to a certain kind of digital ephemera, the term suggests human conduct that is anything from passive. Memes on the internet may take many different forms, such as parody movies of the newest popular music and still pictures that seem like editorial cartoons. According to Shifman (2014), online memes should be classified as unique

**Specifically, internet memes are**

- (a) A group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which
- (b) were created with awareness of each other, and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users. (Shifman, 2014, p. 41)

Melner (2012) has noted that certain meme research classified memes as speech. Rhetorical theories of visual communication also show that visual texts may include or express certain arguments (e.g., Helmers & Hill, 2004; Kjeldsen, 2000). Due to their strong visual component and intertextual references to many texts and events (D'Angelo, 2009), memes are compelling political communication due to a combination of these characteristics, which may be further understood by reading about literature. Memes contain perceivable visual arguments that have the potential to impact other kinds of political engagement, much like political cartoons and other visual forms of political communication.

Research on political entertainment has shown effects on efficacy and credibility measures, as well as knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes toward political issues, figures, and institutions (e.g., Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Becker, 2011; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010; Taniguchi, 2011; Tisinger, 2010). A portion of this body of work shows how political satire, especially in digital media, may affect how people view and feel about political figures (e.g., Baumgartner, 2008; Esralew & Young, 2012; Hoffman & Young, 2011; Rill & Cardiel, 2013; Young & Hoffman, 2012). When it

comes to its impact on viewers, entertainment is a serious business, according to the majority of political entertainment literature.

Memes' ability to affect mental models is probably dependent on how each individual reads or understands the meme's argument. Memes are complex textual and visual messages, therefore in order to grasp them, viewers must "decode" the meme (Hall, 1997).

This particular study will explore the meme consumption and its relation with political awareness among youth.

### **Political Memes and Participation**

In the digital era political expression on social media, political Inter-net memes have emerged as a popular form of participatory culture (Ross & Rivers, 2017; Shifman, 2014). Internet meme is larger term for a heterogeneous class of different digital meme forms (e. g., phrases, image macros, GIFs, videos, etc.). These digital items share "(a) [...] common characteristics of content, form, and / or stance, which (b) were created with aware-ness of each other, and (c) were circulated, imitated, and / or transformed via the Internet by many users" (Shifman, 2014, p. 41).

Internet memes become political when they refer to societal interests or conflicts, political actors, representative acts, or political decisions (Johann & Bülow, 2019). Memes on the internet are a particular type of appropriative and intertextual practices in computer-mediated communication, drawing from forms of "juxtaposition, brico-lage, pastiche, parody, and remix" (Huntington, 2019, p. 195) (Shifman, 2014). According to research, social media is a crucial component of people's political engagement both online and off (Knoll, Matthes, & Heiss, 2020). Additionally, globally rising political movements highlight the Internet's democratic potential (Ekström & Shehata, 2018). Due to the quick information spread on social media, these grassroots movements are becoming more and more well-known, which could hasten political change (Howard et al., 2011).

Social media's impact on society and politics has been extensively researched (Boulianne, 2015). However, more research is necessary due to emerging new technical possibilities and communicative dynamics. Visual user-generated material, such as movies, GIFs, images, and Internet memes, is becoming more and more prevalent on social media platforms (Highfield & Leaver, 2016). Opportunities for political participation shift as technology develops and new platforms for political expression appear on social media. Despite the fact that Internet memes are a creative form of political involvement rather than just funny nonsense (Ross & Rivers, 2019), empirical research of Internet meme usage and its relationships to political participation are scarce. More specifically, the opinions of Internet users on Internet memes have not received much attention in the literature (Huntington, 2019).

Participatory behaviors, such as the usage of Internet memes to express political opinions, are made possible by increasingly "porous boundaries" (Ekström & Shehata, 2018, p. 743) between non-political and political activity. As a result, participation research has consistently examined the variables influencing political engagement from a variety of theoretical and empirical angles. Political interest is one element that has consistently been connected to political speech and involvement. According to Blais and Labbé St-Vincent's (2011) mediation theory, person-ality is an indirect predictor of participative outcomes. The significance of personality factors for political interest that is directly related to involvement was proven by the empirical validation of their model.

Furthermore, political interest functions as both an antecedent and a consequence of political engagement, as demonstrated by Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995) in their widely accepted resource model of political participation. People who are engaged in politics not only consume political information but also incorporate sources other than traditional mass media into their media repertoires (Boulianne, 2011; Wolfsfeld et al., 2016). The social media political participation model, for instance (Knoll et al., 2020), highlighted the impact of both deliberate and accidental exposure to political content on social media platforms on users' perceptions and behavioral processes.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Audience reception theory, was developed by Stuart Hall in 1973. This theoretical framework emphasizes the role of the audience in making meaning from a literary text or any form of media. Key concepts

#### **1. Encoding and Decoding:**

Encoding: When creators (such as authors, directors, or media producers) construct a message, they encode it with shared rules, symbols, and cultural context.

Decoding: The audience's interpretation of the message depends on their individual cultural background, life experiences, and social context.

Variation in Decoding: Audience members may decode the same message differently, leading to multiple interpretations.

## **2. Meaning Creation:**

**Audience as Active Participants:** Reception theory asserts that meaning is not inherent within the text itself. Instead, the audience actively participates in creating meaning.

**Social Context Matters:** The way the audience perceives and understands a text can vary based on factors such as age, gender, religion, race, political views, ethnicity, class, culture, and mood.

**Distortion and Interpretation:** Sometimes, the audience's interpretation diverges from the intended meaning due to these contextual factors.

## **3. Categories of Readers:**

**Dominant Reader:** These audience members accept the work as given by the creator without additional interpretation.

**Negotiated Reader:** They engage with the work but may negotiate or modify its meaning based on their context.

**Oppositional Reader:** These readers actively challenge or resist the intended meaning, offering alternative interpretations.

## **4. Analyzing Reception:**

**Sources of Information:** Researchers analyze audience reception through various sources, including press releases, advertisements, fan letters, reviews, and social media.

**Scope:** Given the challenge of analyzing every individual's experience, researchers rely on aggregated data to understand audience reception.

In the context of political memes, audience reception theory provides valuable insights into how audiences interpret and engage with these digital artifacts. Here are some considerations when applying this framework to the study of political memes:

**Imagined Audience:** While memes circulate widely online, understanding the diverse imagined audiences for specific political memes is crucial. Different groups may interpret the same meme in distinct ways.

**Directionality and Ideology:** Reception theory challenges the notion of a fixed ideological direction in memes. Audiences may subvert or reinterpret memes, complicating straightforward ideological readings.

**Emotional Engagements:** Memes evoke emotions, and audience reception theory encourages exploring how memes resonate emotionally with viewers.

**Identity Work:** Memes often intersect with identity. Researchers can investigate how memes contribute to identity formation or expression.

**Changing Perceptions:** By examining audience responses, we can assess whether political memes influence or alter existing political perceptions.

In summary, audience reception theory reminds us that memes are not passive; their meaning emerges from the dynamic interaction between creators, content, and audiences. When studying political memes, considering the diverse ways audiences engage with and interpret them is essential.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study employs a survey method to understand the impact of political memes on youth. A random sampling technique was used to select a diverse group of 56 participants. The survey consisted primarily of closed-ended questions, supplemented by a few open-ended questions. The latter were designed to elicit detailed responses about the participants' experiences with political memes, and their correlation with political participation and misinformation.

The research methodology incorporates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the youth's perception of political memes. The qualitative data was gathered through open-ended questions, allowing participants to express their experiences and opinions in their own words. The quantitative data, on the other hand, was collected through closed-ended questions, providing measurable and statistically analyzable data.

In addition, a Content Analysis approach was employed to study the perception of memes. This involved examining the content of the memes, the context in which they were shared, and the reactions they elicited, to understand their influence on the participants' political views and participation.

This multi-method approach ensures a thorough analysis of the subject matter. It provides a robust framework for exploring the complex dynamics of political memes and their influence on youth political participation and misinformation. The study will explore below research objectives and outcomes

- This study aims to understand how these memes shape the political views and participation of young people.
- Survey method is applied to gauge the extent of meme consumption and its correlation with political awareness.
- The study also addresses the potential for misinformation spread through political memes, emphasizing the need for digital literacy among young internet users.

The findings will provide valuable insights into the transformative role of political memes in youth political engagement and discourse in the digital era.

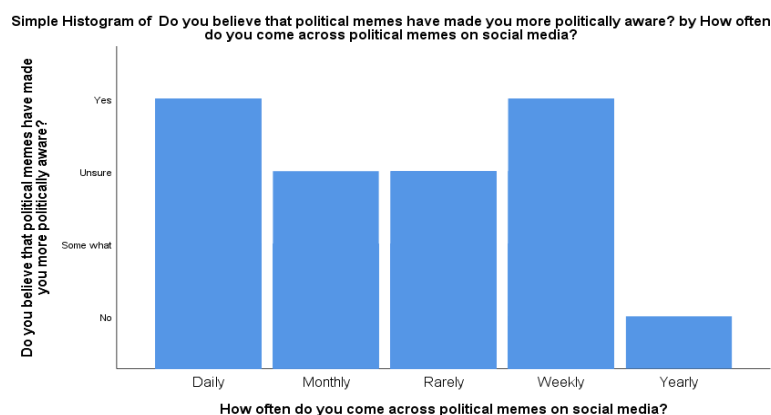
## Research Questions:

1. What is the influence of political memes on the political views and participation of young people?
2. What is the extent of meme consumption among young people, and how does it correlate with their political awareness?
3. What is the potential for misinformation spread through political memes, and how can digital literacy be promoted among young internet users to mitigate this?

## Data Analysis

Based on the responses it is very clear that students who come across the political memes daily and weekly are more aware of the politics and those who come across the political memes monthly and rarely are unsure about whether consuming political memes increase political awareness and finally those students who come across the political memes yearly are don't believe that consuming political memes increase their understanding of politics. The histogram clearly signify the relationship between political meme consumption and political awareness .

Figure 1. Meme consumption and political awareness



15. Do you believe that political memes have made you more politically aware?  
56 responses

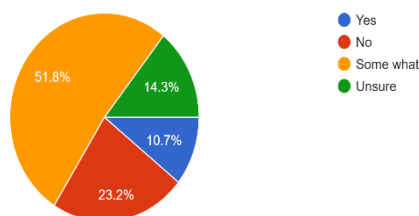


Fig: 2

4. How often do you come across political memes on social media?  
56 responses

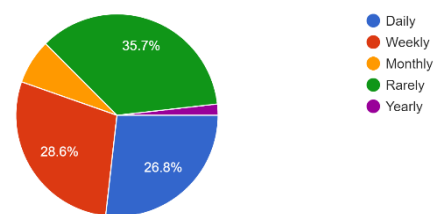
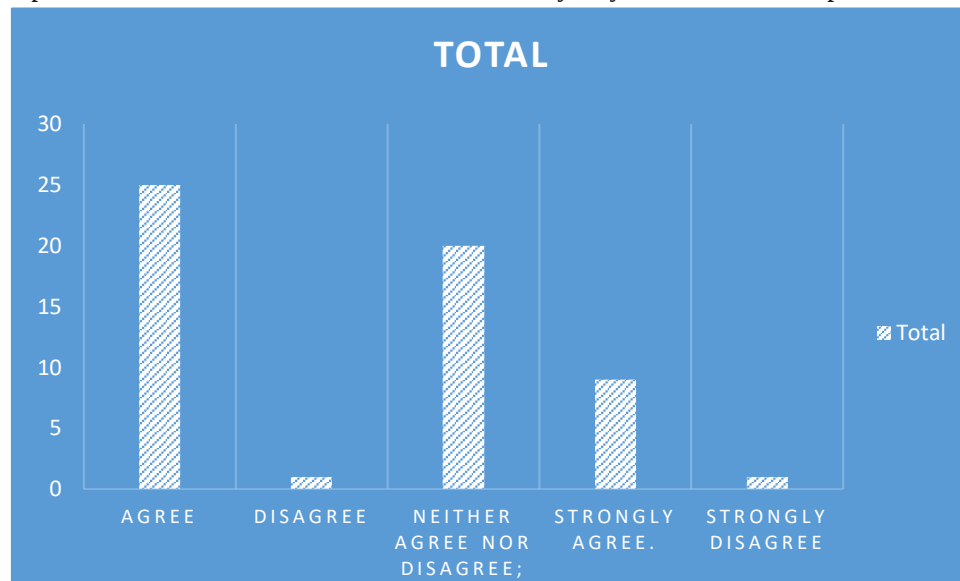


Fig: 3

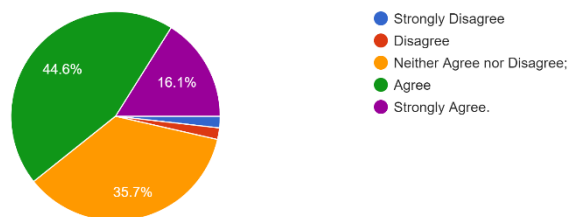
Students who consume political memes on a regular basis (daily or weekly) are more likely to be aware of current events and political issues than those who consume political memes less frequently (monthly or rarely). Students who consume political memes very rarely or yearly are less likely to believe that consuming political memes increases their understanding of politics.

The histogram clearly shows a positive correlation between political meme consumption and political awareness. In other words, the more political memes students consume, the more likely they are to be aware of politics.



**Fig 4. Political memes and its influence on understanding of political issues**

6. Do you believe that political memes influence your understanding of political issues?  
56 responses

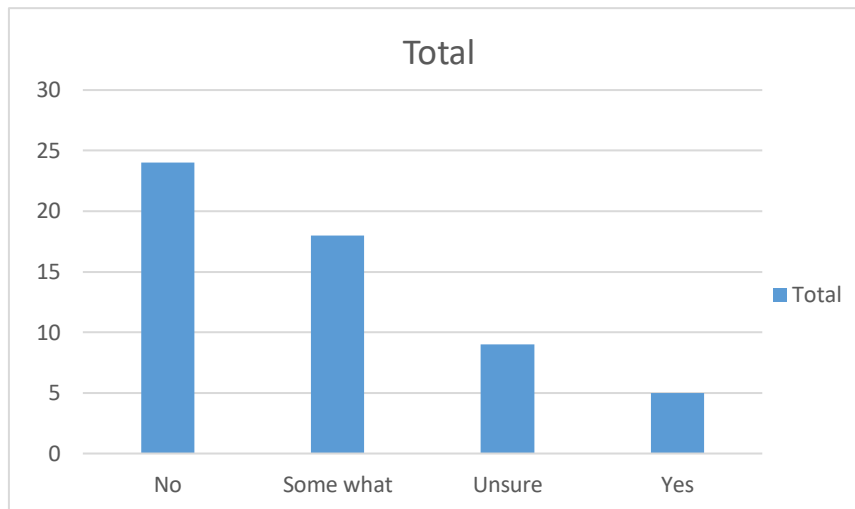


**Fig: 5**

Above responses indicate the that majority of the students believe that political memes influence their understanding of political awareness where as it is interesting to note that second majority of the students neither agree nor disagree with political memes influencing political understanding.

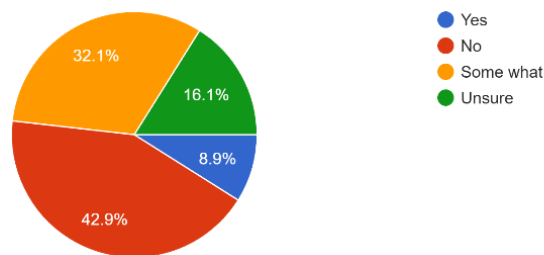
Minority of the students believe that political memes never influence their understanding of the politics

Have political memes ever motivated you to participate in a political discussion or activity?



**Fig 6. Political memes and its impact on political participation or discussion**

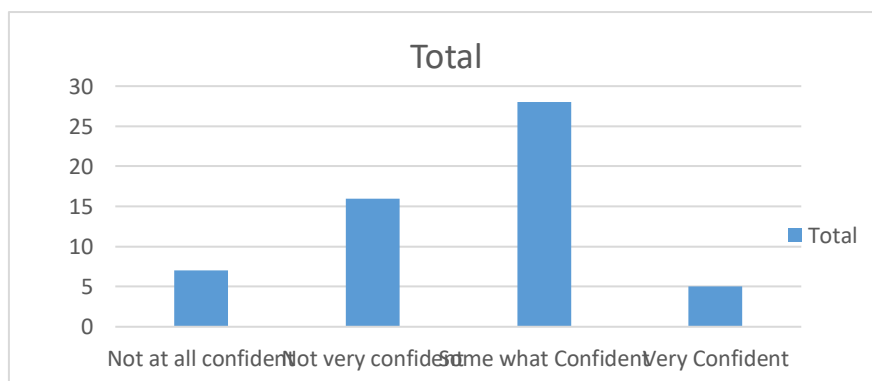
9. Have political memes ever motivated you to participate in a political discussion or activity?  
56 responses



**Fig: 7**

While encountering the information about the political memes and its impact on participation of political discussion, majority of the students reported that political memes never motivated them to participate and discuss political issues, and second majority of the students believe that somewhat memes influence them to participate in the political discussions and very few reported that they were discussed the political issue because of the memes that they have encountered

How confident are you in your ability to identify misinformation in political memes?



**Fig 8. Ability of the students in identifying the misinformation in political memes**

The above overall responses indicate that majority of the students somewhat can identify the miss information in political meme, second majority reported that youth are not very confident in

14. How confident are you in your ability to identify misinformation in political memes?  
56 responses

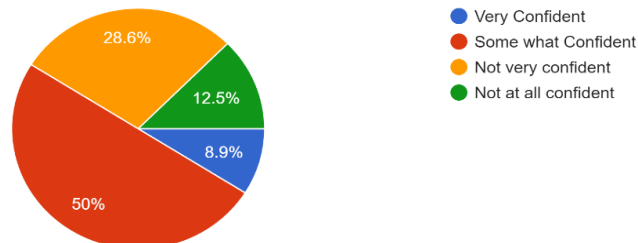


Fig: 9

Identifying political misinformation in memes and very few students reported that they are very confident in identifying misinformation in political memes

## Content Analysis of Open Ended Questions

Analyzed the open ended responses and broadly categorized into themes based on the research question responses

- Can you recall a political meme that changed your perspective on a political issue?

**Absence of Impact:** Many respondents indicated that they either haven't been exposed to political memes that influenced their perspectives or couldn't recall such instances. This suggests that a significant portion of the sample hasn't directly experienced a substantial shift in their political viewpoints due to memes.

**Negative Perceptions of Political Figures:** One respondent mentioned that memes related to Rahul Gandhi made them think negatively or humorously about him. This illustrates that political memes can contribute to shaping public perception of political figures, possibly reinforcing existing biases or stereotypes.

**Influence on Geopolitical Perspectives:** A respondent cited a meme that focused on the Israel-Palestine conflict, specifically portraying Israeli Jews as oppressors in Palestine. This indicates that political memes can influence one's views on complex geopolitical issues, potentially framing the narrative in a certain way.

**Party Perception and Ideals:** Another respondent mentioned that a meme against the Congress party changed their perspective on the party and led them to realize a disparity between the concept of secularism they were taught and the party's actual actions. This highlights the potential of political memes to challenge or reshape one's perception of political parties and their ideals.

**Satirical Critique:** The meme involving Rahul Gandhi and Modi, which pokes fun at Rahul Gandhi's capabilities, underscores the role of humor in political memes. This particular meme critiques a political leader and questions his ability to govern, potentially impacting the individual's perception of Rahul Gandhi's competence.

**Jagan's speech about Britishers:** The individual mentions a meme related to Jagan's speech about Britishers fighting for freedom. This suggests that the meme influenced their perspective on Jagan's understanding of history and political positions (In the speech YS Jagan Mohan Reddy CM of Andhra Pradesh mistakenly talks about the history) .

**Negative Stereotyping:** The mention of a meme that portrays Muslims as terrorists is concerning, as it suggests that political memes can be used to reinforce stereotypes and prejudices. This type of content can have detrimental effects on public perception and contribute to discrimination.

**Influence through Media Form:** A respondent mentioned being influenced by edited videos of politicians with emotional or dramatic music. This highlights that it's not just images and text but also multimedia content like videos that can shape one's perception of politicians and political issues through emotional engagement.

In summary, while a significant portion of respondents claimed that political memes had no discernible impact on their perspectives, several responses demonstrated that political memes can indeed influence political viewpoints. These influences can range from shaping perceptions of political figures, parties, and historical events to reinforcing stereotypes

and ideologies. The responses also indicate the importance of humor, emotion, and satire in the construction of political memes and their potential to impact public opinion.

#### **Political memes and motivation to participation in a political discussion or activity**

**No Impact:** These students clearly indicated that political memes have not motivated them to participate in political discussions or activities. This suggests that for a portion of the respondents, political memes are not a significant driver of political engagement.

**Unsure:** Two respondents were unsure whether political memes had ever motivated them to participate in political discussions or activities, indicating that their influence might not be easily identifiable or direct.

**Engagement in Political Discussions:** The respondent mentioned that they and their friends often engage in debates and discussions about socio-political and cultural affairs. Although the student did not provide a specific meme as an example, this response suggests that political memes might serve as conversation starters, prompting discussions among peers.

**Positive Meme about Modi:** This student cited a specific example where they saw a meme that highlighted the positives about Modi. This meme motivated them to discuss Modi's achievements and the development of the country with their friends, leading to a positive debate. This response illustrates how political memes can stimulate political conversations and discussions.

**General Discussion:** The final response mentions "general discussion." While it does not provide a specific example or indicate whether the motivation came from a meme, it suggests that the student is involved in political discussions. The exact role of memes in this general discussion is not clarified.

In summary, while a few students explicitly stated that political memes did not motivate them to engage in political discussions or activities, one student described how a positive meme about Modi prompted them to discuss political topics with friends. The responses suggest that the influence of political memes on political participation may vary, with some students being more responsive to them as conversation starters or motivators for political discussions. Additionally, a few students were uncertain about the impact of political memes on their political engagement, indicating the complexity of this relationship.

#### **Findings**

##### **Influence on Political Views:**

**Perspective Alteration:** Some respondents mentioned that certain political memes have impacted their views on specific political figures, parties, and geopolitical issues. For instance, memes about political figures like Rahul Gandhi or Modi led some individuals to perceive these figures in a different light, either negatively or positively, impacting their opinions about the individuals' capabilities or the party's ideals.

**Challenging Ideals:** Memes could challenge preconceived notions, such as one respondent noting how a meme regarding the Congress party made them reassess their understanding of secularism versus the party's actions.

**Reinforcement of Stereotypes:** There were mentions of memes reinforcing negative stereotypes, such as portraying Muslims as terrorists. This suggests that some memes can perpetuate prejudices and potentially shape perceptions in a detrimental manner.

##### **Influence on Political Participation**

**Engagement Starter:** While the majority mentioned that memes did not motivate them to participate in political discussions or activities, there were indications that memes can serve as conversation starters, prompting discussions among peers. For instance, one student was prompted to discuss Modi's achievements with friends after encountering a positive meme about him.

**Uncertain Impact:** Some respondents were uncertain about the direct impact of memes on their participation in political activities, suggesting that the link between meme exposure and subsequent participation might not always be explicit or easily identifiable.

Overall, political memes seem to have the potential to impact the political views of young people by influencing their perceptions of political figures, parties, and complex issues. However, the influence on their active participation in political activities or discussions appears to vary among individuals, with some seeing memes as conversation starters while others don't perceive a significant motivational impact.

#### **Meme consumption among young people and its correlation with their political awareness**

##### **Extent of Meme Consumption:**

The frequency of meme consumption varies among young people. Students reported encountering political memes on a daily, weekly, monthly, or even yearly basis, while some indicated rare exposure.

Those who come across political memes more frequently (daily or weekly) constitute a larger portion of the sample compared to those who encounter memes less often (monthly or rarely).

#### **Correlation with Political Awareness:**

**Higher Consumption, Greater Awareness:** The research suggests a positive correlation between the frequency of meme consumption and political awareness. Those who consume political memes more regularly (daily or weekly) tend to be more aware of current events and political issues.

**Lower Consumption, Uncertain Awareness:** Conversely, students who encounter political memes less frequently (monthly, rarely, or yearly) are less certain about the impact of memes on their political awareness. Some are unsure whether memes increase their understanding of politics, and those who encounter memes very rarely or yearly tend not to believe that memes enhance their understanding of politics.

#### **Histogram Representation:**

The histograms support the positive correlation between political meme consumption and political awareness, showcasing a trend where higher exposure to political memes corresponds to higher levels of political awareness.

Overall, the more frequently young people consume political memes, the more likely they are to have heightened political awareness. This implies that frequent exposure to political memes might contribute to an increased understanding of political issues and current events among.

#### **Potential for Misinformation in Political Memes**

**Identifying Misinformation:** A majority of students reported being somewhat able to identify misinformation in political memes, while a significant portion was not very confident in their abilities. Very few expressed high confidence in identifying political misinformation in memes.

**Categorized Themes:** The open-ended responses revealed instances where political memes impacted perceptions, altered perspectives, reinforced stereotypes, and challenged ideals. Some memes portrayed misinformation regarding historical events, political figures, parties, and societal issues.

#### **Promotion of Digital Literacy:**

**Educational Efforts:** To mitigate misinformation, educational initiatives focused on digital literacy can play a pivotal role. Schools, colleges, and other educational institutions can integrate courses or modules specifically addressing media literacy, critical thinking, and fact-checking in the digital sphere.

**Resource Distribution:** Providing accessible resources and tools for fact-checking and source verification can empower young internet users to discern reliable information from misinformation in political memes.

**Critical Thinking Skills:** Teaching critical thinking skills is essential. Encouraging individuals to question the validity of information, scrutinize sources, and understand the context behind memes can help in developing a more discerning approach to online content.

**Awareness Campaigns:** Public awareness campaigns can inform individuals about the prevalence of misinformation in memes, the potential consequences of believing and sharing false information, and the importance of responsible sharing.

By promoting digital literacy, educational efforts, critical thinking, and providing accessible resources for fact-checking, young internet users can develop the skills necessary to critically assess the information presented in political memes. This, in turn, can help mitigate the spread of misinformation and enable them to engage with online political content more responsibly.

### **CONCLUSION**

Our findings indicate that political memes affect the way youth perceive politics but may not influence to participate in discussion but it will impact the way they perceive issues and personalities. Youth are not equipped to understand misinformation through memes and it is clear indication of need for the digital literacy skills in the digital age. Through survey question it was found that majority of the students are using Instagram and that's where they come across the memes with intertextual styles. Memes consumption increase the political awareness and less number of students only fact check the memes.

Political memes have the potential to influence the political views of young individuals by shaping perceptions of political figures, parties, and complex issues. There exists a positive correlation between the frequency of political meme consumption and political awareness among young people. There is a potential for misinformation in political memes, affecting perceptions, reinforcing stereotypes, and challenging established beliefs.

Promoting digital literacy among young internet users is crucial to equip them with the skills necessary to identify and counteract misinformation in political memes.

### **Diverse Impact and Influences.**

Responses varied among individuals, suggesting that the impact of political memes on perspectives and participation is not universally consistent. The content and themes of political memes can influence views on political figures, parties, and complex issues, potentially reinforcing biases or stereotypes. Education initiatives, critical thinking skills, and accessible resources for fact-checking are essential to empower young individuals in discerning the accuracy and implications of political memes.

In conclusion, political memes play a significant role in shaping the political views and awareness of young individuals, but the potential for misinformation spread through these memes necessitates a concerted effort to promote digital literacy and critical thinking skills to ensure responsible engagement with political content on the internet.

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