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# Media Literacy, Social Media Misinformation, and Democratic Participation in India: A Critical Review

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## Abstract

*Social media has been the catalyst for unprecedented growth in democratic communication, enabling greater access to information, political participation and public engagement. At the same time, digital platforms have contributed to the spread of misinformation, disinformation and AI-generated content, which pose severe obstacles to democratic governance and informed citizenship. The problem of misinformation has become a major challenge for electoral integrity, institutional trust, public discourse and civic participation in India where social media platforms have become an important source of information for millions of citizens. As a result, media literacy is gaining more scholarly interest as a key competency to enhance the democratic resilience in digitally mediated societies. This paper reviews the recent literature on the topic and critically analyses the linkage between media literacy, social media misinformation, and democratic participation in India. The review is based on interdisciplinary scholarship published from 2015 to 2026, which draws from communication studies, political science, journalism, education, information science and digital media research. The paper critically reviews prevalent theories and methods around misinformation, information verification, fact-checking practices and democratic participation, alongside empirical evidence, and considers current debates. Specific efforts are made to discuss conceptual and methodological shortcomings in the prevailing literature, particularly in the context of India and other contexts from the Global South.*

*The paper introduces a conceptual framework integrating the concepts of media literacy, information verification, susceptibility to misinformation, institutional trust, and democratic participation that emerged from the critical synthesis. It is suggested that future scholarship should go beyond descriptions of the prevalence of misinformation and toward theory-informed, mixed-methods and longitudinal research that can elucidate how media literacy contributes to democratic resilience. The paper ends with a wide-ranging research agenda and policy recommendations for educational institutions, government, electoral management institutions, social media and civil society organizations. This review builds on the interdisciplinary and fragmented studies of media literacy and helps to understand the literacy as a democratic skill which is crucial in the fast-changing digital.*

**Key-words** - *Media Literacy, Social Media, Misinformation, Democratic Participation, Digital Literacy, Information Verification, India, Democratic Resilience.*

## Introduction

Digital transformation of communication has changed democratic societies in its essence, thereby influencing the ways citizens access information, engage in public discourse, and interact with political institutions. Over the last 20 years, social media has transformed from being used for interpersonal communication to a powerful communication infrastructure that impacts our political views, public discourse, civic involvement, and democratic participation. They say everyone's mother is a witch, and as far as news and political content, this also seems to be the case, as platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram and X (Twitter) are the primary sources of information for people around the globe. They are powerful for their instant messaging, user generated content and interactive participation, which has created new opportunities for democracy, but also previously unforeseen information problems such as misinformation, information disorder and algorithmic public discourse (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024).

The way people are socially, politically and civically engaged has changed due to the emergence of digital communication. Newspapers, television and radio are not the only sources for political information for citizens. Instead, they're more inclined to see political content in their own personalized, algorithm-driven, social media feeds. These digital spaces give citizens the opportunity to voice their political opinions, to coordinate collective action, to be part of online deliberation and to directly interact with political actors. The same platforms can also be used to quickly disseminate misinformation, conspiracy theories, and manipulated media and AI-generated content, which can impact public opinion and influence the democratic process of decision making (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Misinformation has turned into an international issue for society, resulting in a substantial amount of research in the areas of communication studies, political science, journalism, psychology, education and information science. Inaccurate information has existed since the beginning of time; however, the amount, velocity and complexity of misinformation has increased dramatically, thanks to digital communication technology. Social media algorithms tend to favour content that aligns with their interests, potentially resulting in the spread of misinformation without necessarily being more prevalent than accurate reporting. In addition, the phenomenon of confirmation bias, selective exposure, echo chambers, and algorithmic personalisation aggravates citizens' vulnerability to misinformation by reinforcing citizens' views on the world and limiting exposure to viewpoints that challenge their own (Guess et al., 2020). The developments have raised several implications for democratic governance. In democracies, people's ability to critically analyze political information, participate in a collective discussion, and make decisions on elections based on information. Misinformation can impact political outlook, institutions' credibility and civic engagement, which can lead to a loss of democratic legitimacy. This has resulted in many scholars recommending that citizens be empowered to critically evaluate digital information is one of the most long-lasting ways to assure the resilience of democracy (Huang et al., 2024).

Media literacy is thus now a key topic in today's debates on misinformation and democracy. Media Literacy is the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, create and communicate with media messages; and has grown significantly in the era of digital transformation. In contemporary times, media literacy is considered a competency that possesses several facets such as digital literacy, information verification, algorithmic awareness, AI literacy, ethical communication, and critical civic engagement (Mansoor, 2024). Media literacy is not simply allowing a place for people to consume media, but empowering citizens to recognize misinformation, verify media digitally, and navigate persuasive messages; and communicating in a responsible manner in a democracy. This is one such relation which can be studied in India. India has been witnessing a revolution in Internet connectivity, smartphone usage and social media adoption over the last decade and has emerged as the world's largest democracy and among the fastest-growing digital societies in the world. Recent estimates suggest that hundreds of millions of Indians are getting political updates on a regular basis, primarily via WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Digital inclusion policies have taken a major step towards increasing Internet access and thus enabling more people to be able to participate in digital communication. Meanwhile, there has been increased exposure to election-related misinformation and public health, religious, public policy, and communal relations misinformation. The study of media literacy in India has its own set of challenges because of the multi-lingual, multi-cultural and socio-economically diverse communication world in India. Citizens' ability to differentiate between reliable and deceptive or manipulated information is not equal, and depends on their educational level, information literacy, language, media access, and political awareness. Conclusions drawn primarily in the context of western democracies may, therefore, not be applicable to India. Empirical studies related to media literacy, susceptibility to misinformation and democratic involvement in the context of India and the wider Global South are mostly absent of any theoretical integration and has been repeated in recent reviews (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024). Despite a rapid growth of research on misinformation since 2016, the current body of literature has several important limitations. First, there is a lack of research that investigates how multiple misinformation detection, platform governance, or information verification research streams relate to each other. Secondly, theoretical fragmentation persists (often based on isolated theory) with limited capacity to address the complexity of the DCE. Third, while the digital transformation of all developing democracies is rapid, empirical evidence is still geographically limited, North America and Europe. Finally, there are very few review studies that incorporate interdisciplinary scholarship, and that provide a general theory/construct that could inform future research. In the current context, the current paper aims to provide a critical review of the existing literature on social media misinformation and media literacy and democratic engagement that has focused particularly on India. This review is a critical synthesis type review in which existing theoretical insight and methodological developments, empirical results and open research questions are assessed instead of a chronological narrative review of previous research. Based on these syntheses, the paper proposes an integrated conceptual way to link media literacy, information verification, susceptibility to misinformation and general institutional trust and democratic participation. Finally, the review gives an agenda for future research for interdisciplinary scholarship and for evidence-based policy and media literacy programs in India and other democratic societies.

**Research Objectives**

- To review the current literature on Media Literacy, Social media misinformation and Democratic participation.
- To recognise the principal theoretical approaches and research developments in the area.
- To analyse the key research gaps in the existing literature.
- To suggest a conceptual framework and research agenda for India.

**Review Methodology**

The method used in this study is critical narrative review, which is a methodology that is used to synthesize interdisciplinary research on media literacy, social media misinformation and democratic participation. A critical review is not the same as a

systematic review, typically more focused on quantitative synthesis of results, a critical review investigates the nature of the theory under analysis, the methodological and conceptual debates and the creation of new perspectives. It is appropriate for the topic because it tackles more than one field of study such as communication studies, journalism, political science, education, information science, sociology and media psychology. The literature search was conducted in accordance with the principles of transparency, comprehensiveness and relevance. The analysis of the available studies was carried out in the internationally known and recognized scientific databases: Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, Dimensions and Crossref. Search terms included in the search strategy were Media literacy, Media and information literacy, Digital literacy, social media, Misinformation, Disinformation, Fake news, Information disorder, Fact checking, Democratic participation, Civic engagement, Political communication and India. Boolean operators were used to conduct searches to find journal articles, review papers, books, edited volumes, and key institutional reports, primarily from 2015 through 2026, but some older documents. It was noted that some groundbreaking work had been cited as suitable to provide an understanding of theory and how it has changed over time in relation to media education.

The criteria of inclusion emphasized that the publications were in English and then indexed in the databases Scopus or Web of Science, that they were empirical and/or theoretical, that they were peer reviewed, that they were systematic reviews or policy reports, and that they explicitly mentioned a focus on misinformation, social media, and democratic participation. Only studies that addressed information behaviour, the democratic implications, and media literacy of citizens were considered, but ones that solely discussed technical misinformation detection were omitted. Similarly, non-peer-reviewed opinion articles, duplicate publications, editorials and conference abstracts were not included because of methodological rigor.

The selected studies were not presented in chronological order, but rather they were analysed thematically. They were assessed in terms of the theoretical approach, research design, geographical aspects, main findings, methodological strengths and limitations. This thematic synthesis allowed identification of the most prominent or common research themes, assumptions, shared theory, and the most consistent research gaps. The last step of review incorporated these results and developed a conceptual framework to explain the interconnections between the different components of the review media literacy, information verification, susceptibility to misinformation, institutional trust, and democratic participation which will inform empirical studies in India in the future.

**Media Literacy in the Digital Age**

Over the last 30 years or so, there has been significant conceptual change in the field of media literacy. It was originally defined as the ability to receive, interpret, assess and produce media messages, but has grown enormously because of digital transformation, social networking technologies, algorithmic communication and AI. The citizens in the contemporary media environment need to learn to critically interpret media texts and to be able to understand how algorithms select and shape information, how digital platforms shape public discourse, and how synthetic texts influence political communication. Media literacy, thus, has become a multi-faceted competency that integrates digital literacy, information literacy, algorithmic literacy, AI literacy, news literacy, and critical civic engagement (Potter, 2019; Mansoor, 2024).

Media Literacy has always been linked to its democratic role, and this fact has been reinforced by international organizations. UNESCO defines Media and Information Literacy (MIL) as "a lifelong learning competency that empowers citizens to access, evaluate, create, and use information responsibly, effectively, and legally in their daily lives and to engage and participate in democratic societies. The MIL framework is not only about technology skills but also about critical thinking, ethical communication, verification of information, intercultural dialogue and civic participation. In a more digital society, these capacities are seen as essential to enhance democratic resilience and to decrease the influence of misinformation, disinformation and information disorder in society. More recently, scholars have also claimed that media literacy serves as a balancing mechanism that can enhance institutional accountability, increase citizens' resistance to misinformation and engender informed democratic participation (Mansoor, 2024). Social media has revolutionized the way people communicate. Digital platforms allow people to be listeners, viewers and producers of information, as opposed to conventional mass media, where the production and dissemination of information was mostly the domain of professional journalists and media organisations. It has become a participatory communication space that has empowered everyone to create content, as well as facilitated the spread of disinformation, politically motivated disinformation, manipulated multimedia and conspiracy narratives. As a result, academics are increasingly claiming that possession of the technical digital skills is not enough for successful democratic engagement. Rather, citizens need critical skills that allow them to assess the credibility of the source, detect persuasive arguments, check the accuracy of the information they find online, learn to identify algorithmic bias and to understand the social impact of online communication (Potter, 2019; Mansoor, 2024).

The case for media literacy as one of the best long-term solutions to combat the diffusion of misinformation has been bolstered by recent empirical evidence. Huang, Jia, and Yu (2024) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of 49 experimental studies with over 81,000 participants, finding that media literacy interventions were effective in boosting misinformation discernment, lowering belief in misinformation, and decreasing intent to share misinformation via social media. Their results also showed that repeated educational interventions had more positive results than the one-session programs, hence media literacy should be seen as an ongoing learning process and not a single intervention. Media literacy also helps to achieve other democratic outcomes, beyond the ability to resist misinformation. Muringa and Adjin-Tettey (2024) contended that media literacy contributes to democratic participation by empowering citizens to have more confidence in engaging with political conversations, to critically consider different political discourses, and to take informed civic choices. They conclude that, media literacy fosters responsible engagement in the democratic process and helps people to be less reliant on

emotionally charged and misleading information on the internet. The observations support the idea that media literacy should be considered as more than just an educational skill, but a democratic skill that is vital to informed citizenship.

Media literacy is also being separated from other concepts related to media, such as digital literacy, information literacy, news literacy and AI literacy. While there are overlaps in these concepts, there are also differences in emphasis. Digital literacy is mainly related to the technological skills needed to access and use digital technologies, while information literacy is about accessing, evaluating and managing information effectively. News literacy focuses on the understanding of the principles of journalism, the credibility of the sources and the processes of news production. The concept of AI literacy is a relatively new field in scholarship that addresses the capabilities, constraints, and ethical considerations of AI, such as generative AI and synthetic media, and their impact on the lives of citizens. These complementary literacy practices are now seen as critical for modern citizens to navigate as they face information environments that are being increasingly shaped by digital technologies, algorithmic recommendation systems, automated content production, and platform governance.

The literature thus illustrates the conceptual shift from ‘media literacy' to a more extended concept of ‘digital democratic competence'. Today, citizens are expected to not only critically consume media messages, but also to comprehend how digital information is created, disseminated, magnified, and manipulated through interconnected communication networks. In developing democracies like India, with the mushrooming of digital growth, the concept is significant for both the opportunities that have emerged for citizens to engage in civic participation and the issues of misinformation and information disorder that have emerged.

**Social Media Misinformation and Democratic Participation**

Social media has reshaped the modern information landscape by making the political communication process more rapid, accessible and interactive. Social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Telegram, and X (Twitter) are significant sources of political information, civic engagement and electoral communication for millions of people. The technologies have made citizen journalism and online activism and public deliberation possible and have increased democratic engagement, but they have also contributed to the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation. Therefore, the link between social media misinformation and democratic participation is now a focal point in communication studies. Wardle and Derakhshan's (2017) seminal work identifies three interconnected types of information disorder: misinformation, disinformation and malinformation. Misinformation is the dissemination of false information without any malicious intent and disinformation is the intentional creation of false information to influence opinion or action. Malinformation is unlike both in that it is the actual information that is malicious and harmful. While the categories are conceptually distinct, they have distinct implications for democratic governance as misinformation and disinformation shape’s public opinion, voting, trust in institutions, and political decision-making.

Interdisciplinary reviews in recent years suggest that research on misinformation has grown at a fast pace in the fields of communication studies, political science, psychology, computer sciences, sociology and information sciences. However, much of the literature is devoted to technologies for the detection of misinformation, computational methods and to governance of platforms, but not to how citizens can build resilience against misleading information through media literacy and critical information evaluation (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024). Unlike mass media, social media platforms are based on algorithmic recommendation systems that tailor content based on users' prior interactions, interests, and social network attributes. These algorithms enhance user engagement and information accessibility, but can also reinforce emotionally charged or sensational content, irrespective of its factual accuracy. There is growing evidence that algorithmic amplification, selective exposure, confirmation bias and echo chambers all contribute to the spread of misinformation and limitations in the scope of opportunities for critical engagement with a variety of perspectives among citizens (Zhang, Holton, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2024).

Zhang et al. (2024) also found a positive correlation between fake news literacy and political knowledge and epistemic political efficacy. Those with more confidence in their political information assessment skills significantly outperformed others in detecting misinformation spread via social media. These findings indicate that in addition to the accurate information being in reach, it is also important for citizens to trust their own judgment in assessing competing political claims in a critical way. These problems are especially relevant in the Indian context, as social media has become a core element of political communication, electoral campaigning, civic mobilization, and public debate among citizens. The use of WhatsApp has made it one of the leading and most influential platforms for information sharing across the country, featuring its multilingual support and encrypted messaging system. Encrypted communication can also make it more difficult to detect and moderate misinformation, which also reduces user privacy. Encrypted communication has added benefits for protecting users' privacy, but it also makes misinformation harder to detect and moderate. These, coupled with India's linguistic diversity, varying educational backgrounds and growing digital population, makes India a conducive environment for misinformation to spread and information to be disorganized.

Today, with the growing awareness of the issues surrounding AI, democratic communication is further complicated. With the advent of Generative AI technologies, text, images, audio recordings, and videos can now be rapidly created that are often indistinguishable from real copies by an average consumer. Synthetic voices, political communication generated by AI, and deepfakes are thus new challenges to electoral integrity and democratic participation. As scholars continue to debate the definition of media literacy, the concept of AI literacy, algorithmic transparency, and synthetic media evaluation are increasingly being proposed as key issues that should be incorporated into future media literacy frameworks. As AI-driven misinformation spreads to impact public discourse and democratic processes, these capabilities will grow more relevant over time. Despite such obstacles, research on media literacy today uniformly

points to its value as one of the most effective, long-term approaches to enhance democratic resilience. Media literacy does not depend solely on the regulation of the platforms and the detection of misinformation on technologies, but it is an ability of the citizens to critically assess digital information, verify political claims, identify persuasive techniques, and contribute to democratic discourse in a responsible manner. Well-designed media literacy interventions can have positive effects on misinformation discernment and decrease misinformation sharing, leading to more informed civic participation and healthier democratic communication, conclude Huang et al. (2024). The literature points to the need for more than information access to ensure democratic participation in the digital age. It demands citizens to have both cognitive and ethical skills and abilities as well as technological skills to cope with the ever-growing complexity of digital information environments. Enhancing media literacy is, thus, an educational need and a democratic demand in India and other emerging democracies faced with misinformation, algorithmic communication and Artificial Intelligence. The major themes that emerged from the literature reviewed, and their key findings and research limitations are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1. Major Themes Emerging from the Literature**

| Theme | Major Findings | Limitations |
|---|---|---|
| Media Literacy | Strengthens critical thinking and misinformation resilience | Limited longitudinal evidence |
| Social Media | Facilitates participation but amplifies misinformation | Algorithmic literacy underexplored |
| Democratic Participation | Broader than voting behaviour | Inconsistent measurement |
| Artificial Intelligence | Emerging concern for misinformation | Limited empirical evidence |
| Research Methods | Dominated by cross-sectional surveys | Need for mixed-methods and experiments |

**Research Gaps**

The critical synthesis identified a few critical areas of research that have been identified as gaps in the literature that will hinder the research and practice in theoretical advancements. To deepen understanding of the role of media literacy in democratic resilience in increasingly digital societies, it is crucial to tackle these limitations. The first big problem is the geographic focus on current scholarship. While there has been a significant increase in media literacy research, research from North America, Western Europe and Australia continues to be the source of much of the empirical work. The contexts are significantly different in India in terms of digital infrastructure, educational systems, linguistic diversity, pattern of political communication, and media regulation. Thus, it is not possible to transfer the theoretical methodologies from the western democracies to the Indian socio-cultural and political context without any modifications. Comparative research that compares across regions in Indian states, urban and rural areas and various socio-economic groups is therefore important (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024).

Another restriction is theoretical fragmentation. Empirical studies typically employ one of the theoretical frameworks, such as Media Literacy Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, or Information Disorder Theory. Each approach illuminates aspects of digital communication, but very few studies combine the complementary approaches to provide a full explanatory model of digital communication. Future scholarship should thus seek to create multi-dimensional theoretical constructs that explain the relationship between media literacy and information verification, institutional trust, political efficacy and democratic participation. The review also shows the absence of the mediation mechanism. Many studies focus on direct links between media literacy and susceptibility to misinformation, or between exposure to misinformation and political attitudes. Fewer studies explore the mediating role of information verification/fact checking behaviour, trust in institutions, political efficacy or algorithmic awareness. Likewise, although some demographic factors, such as education, age, gender, digital literacy, political interest, and social media intensity, are likely to affect media literacy outcomes have not been extensively explored as moderators. Another area of research that is still in need is the study of artificial intelligence. Generative AI technologies have revolutionized digital communication by creating a way to quickly generate highly realistic and synthesized content in text, audio, and visual formats. The existing frameworks of media literacy were mainly created prior to these technological developments and offer limited direction on how citizens can identify misinformation created by AI. AI literacy and algorithmic literacy should thus be part of more comprehensive understandings of media literacy and discussed in relation to democratic engagement in the future. In terms of method, the literature is still very much characterized by cross sectional surveys and computational analyses. These methods offer some good descriptive evidence but are not sufficient to explain a behavioural change or cause and effect relationships. There are few studies that focus on the development of media literacy over time (longitudinal studies), few studies that look at the effectiveness of media education on an experimental basis (experimental studies), and few studies that combine qualitative and quantitative methods (mixed methods). These would significantly contribute to the knowledge of the effects of media literacy on the democratic resilience in the context of dynamic digital communication. Lastly, there is typically a lack of assessment of the success of the media literacy programmes adopted by educational institutions, governments, election authorities or civil society organisations. Future research is needed to systematically assess policy interventions to identify effective policies to decrease susceptibility to misinformation in the context of promoting democratic participation. Policymakers struggle to create policy initiatives that can meet the challenges of rapidly changing digital information environments without such proof.

**Proposed Conceptual Framework**

In this study, the critical review shows that the field of media literacy, misinformation and democratic

participation has developed far, and that this research has helped to further the understanding of these topics. This research has added to the understanding of these concepts, as shown in the critical review in this study, which has advanced significantly existing scholarship. As noted, past research primarily has analysed the direct links between media literacy and susceptibility to misinformation, or between misinformation exposure and political behaviour, but has paid relatively little attention to the underlying mechanisms by which media literacy leads to democratic resilience. Based on the theoretical and empirical evidence synthesized in this review, this paper proposes an integrated conceptual framework in which media literacy is seen as the basic competency that affects democratic participation in the context of information verification and fact-checking behaviour, less susceptibility to misinformation, and less trust in institutions. The framework is based on the assumption that media literacy does not only focus on the technical aspects of working with digital media but should be understood rather as a democratic competence that can be considered multidimensional and involves critical evaluation, verification of information, ethical communication, algorithmic awareness, and responsible digital citizenship. It is expected that citizens with a higher level of media literacy will be more likely to engage in verification practices with multiple information sources, assess the evidence, consult professional fact-checking organisations, and scrutinise the credibility of the information they find online. The practices for verification then induce systematic fact-checking behaviour prior to the sharing and reacting to political information on digital platforms. The framework also suggests that good factchecking helps citizens become more resistant to misinformation by strengthening their ability to identify content that has been manipulated, understand and detect misleading narratives, and refute emotionally charged and politically motivated misinformation. Citizens' trust in institutions should also benefit from their greater resistance to misinformation, as they are less likely to form wrong perceptions about democratic institutions, electoral processes, and public governance if they use information that is verified. Fostering greater institutional trust, in turn, leads to more informed democratic participation, through increased civic engagement, political efficacy, constructive public deliberation and responsible electoral behaviour.

The proposed framework also acknowledges that these relationships will not necessarily be the same for all citizens. Media literacy, misinformation susceptibility, and democratic participation can be mediated by demographic and behavioural factors, including level of education, digital literacy, political interest, income and socio-economic status, and social media intensity. Younger people could have more technical digital skills, and at the same time be exposed to more algorithmic content. On the other hand, older adults' digital literacy might be lower, and they might be using more interpersonal information networks. In the same manner, literacy in education could enhance the capacity of people to think critically, thus elevating the impact of media literacy programs. Moderating influences emphasize the need to examine variation across population groups and to devise investigations that are sensitive to the context. This model of digital communication is different from previous conceptualizations, which looked at single aspects of digital communication, and combines elements of Media Literacy Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Information Disorder Theory and Democratic Participant Theory. Theoretical integration, such as this, offers a more holistic account of democratic resilience by recognizing that the civic, social, cognitive, technological, and institutional ways in which citizens react to misinformation are interdependent. Thus, the framework provides a theoretically sound platform for further empirical studies using mixed methods research, comparative analysis of Indian states, structural equation modelling and longitudinal research. In Figure 1, the relationship between the different components of the conceptual framework is presented. The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1, illustrating the relationship between media literacy, information verification, fact-checking behaviour, susceptibility to misinformation, institutional trust and democratic participation.

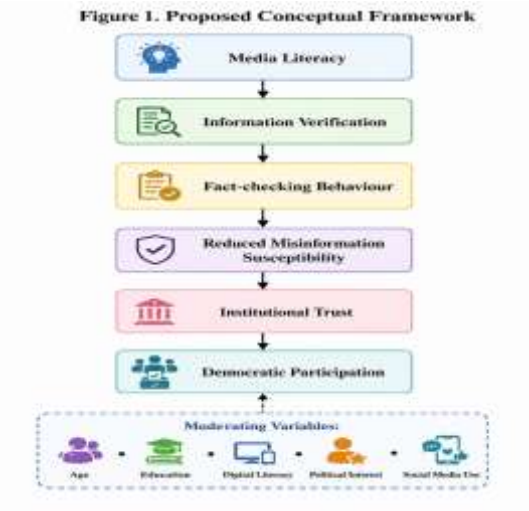



**Figure 1 Proposed Conceptual Framework**

**Policy Implications**

The results of this review are relevant to educational institutions, government, EMBs, tech companies, and civil society organizations. The evidence consistently shows that media literacy is not only an educational skill, but an integral part of the democratic skills and skills sets of citizens to engage in digital information environments in a responsible manner. Media literacy should be taught in the school and university curricula more widely and is not exclusively for communication or journalism programmes. The focus of teaching should be critical thinking, and how to evaluate sources, fact check, understand algorithms, communicate ethically and be AI literate. Such integration would help students to identify misinformation and facilitate responsible participation in the democratic process. Governments create a comprehensive national media literacy strategy which is consistent with the UNECE's media and information literacy framework. The strategies should create a space for cooperation between the ministries of education, information technology, higher education, and digital governance and focus on disadvantaged groups with reduced digital access and media literacy. Election Commission of India should further enhance voter awareness drives on election misinformation and digital manipulation and AI created political content. The cooperation with outside fact checking institutions, universities, journalists and civil society institutions

would enhance citizens capacity to fact check before engaging in electoral processes.

**Conclusion**

The growth of social media has revolutionized the way citizens communicate with one another politically in ways that afford more chances for political involvement even as it exposes them to misinformation, algorithmic manipulation, and AI-generated content. These changes have profoundly changed the skills and abilities needed for an informed democratic citizen and therefore, media literacy is becoming a more significant factor in shaping democratic resilience. This important review paper integrated the interdisciplinary studies about media literacy, social media misinformation and democratic participation with a specific focus on India. The review, it was found, has transformed media literacy from a traditional communication skill to a complex multiskilled, democratic competence that involves verifying information, engaging in critical evaluation and fact-checking, awareness of algorithms, AI literacy, and responsible digital citizenship. The review also highlighted significant gaps in the existing literature in terms of theory, methodology and geography, including the absence of adequate evidence from India and other settings in the Global South. The main added value of this paper is the conceptual integration of media literacy, information verification, susceptibility to misinformation, institutional trust and democratic participation. The paper, which brings together the various fields of communication studies, political science, journalism, and education, along with information science, offers a solid theoretical basis for future empirical studies. The research programme outlined in this document underscores the need to embrace interdisciplinary approaches, methodological creativity, cross-disciplinary research, and the analysis of policy implications for the study of democratic resilience in more digitized societies. Media literacy is not only a democratic intervention, but a long-term investment in democracy, from a practical point of view. Governments, educational institutions, technology companies, election authorities, journalists and civil society organizations need to work together to create evidence-based strategies that can help citizens acquire the skills they need to deal with an ever-evolving digital information landscape. In an age where AI and algorithmic communication are increasingly influencing public discourse, future scholarship and policy must be responsive to new technological problems and uphold core democratic norms of informed citizenship and critical inquiry, as well as responsible public engagement.

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