

Exploring Youth's Involvement in Indian Politics: A Survey-Based Study

Dr. Vira Bharat¹, Dr. Shakti Awasthi² and Dr. Trushna Kandalkar³

¹Assistant Professor, Dept. of Finance, Lala Lajpatrai Institute of Management, Mumbai

²Associate Professor, Dept. of HR, Lala Lajpatrai Institute of Management, Mumbai

³Associate Professor, Dept. of Finance, Lala Lajpatrai Institute of Management, Mumbai

Abstract

Youth participation is widely recognized as a critical driver of democratic vitality, particularly in a diverse and evolving political landscape such as India. This study examines the extent, nature, and determinants of youth involvement in Indian politics, with a specific focus on their awareness, attitudes, and modes of political engagement. Adopting a descriptive and quantitative research design, the study is grounded in primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. A total of 341 valid responses were obtained from youth participants representing both urban and rural areas, using a convenience sampling technique. The survey captured multiple dimensions of political involvement, including electoral participation, interest in political discourse, engagement through digital platforms, and perceptions of political institutions and leadership. Quantitative analysis was employed to identify prevailing trends and patterns in youth political behavior and to assess variations across demographic contexts. The findings highlight a growing inclination among Indian youth toward non-traditional and digital forms of political participation, alongside persistent challenges such as political disillusionment, limited trust in institutions, and uneven access to participatory platforms between urban and rural respondents. The study contributes empirical insights into contemporary youth political engagement in India and underscores the need for inclusive policy frameworks, civic education initiatives, and participatory mechanisms that can effectively harness the democratic potential of the younger population.

Keywords Youth empowerment, political decision-making, leadership, civic engagement, socio-economic development, nation-building.

1. Introduction

Youth participation constitutes a foundational element of democratic sustainability, as young citizens represent both present stakeholders and future leaders within political systems. In the Indian context, where nearly two-thirds of the population is below the age of 35, youth engagement in politics assumes heightened significance for inclusive governance and policy responsiveness. Political participation among youth extends beyond electoral voting to include civic awareness, political discussions, digital activism, and involvement in social movements, reflecting evolving forms of democratic expression in contemporary societies (Verba et al., 1995). Understanding these patterns is essential for assessing the health and inclusiveness of democratic processes. Recent transformations in India's socio-political environment driven by digital media penetration, educational expansion, and increased political communication have reshaped how young people perceive and engage with politics. While these changes have created new opportunities for participation, they have also generated challenges such as political apathy, distrust in institutions, and uneven participation across urban and rural regions. Empirical examination of youth involvement is therefore necessary to capture these dynamics and to inform strategies aimed at strengthening democratic participation among young citizens (Dalton, 2008).

Youth empowerment is the process of equipping young individuals with the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary to take charge of their lives, contribute to their communities, and participate in national development. In India, the government has introduced various schemes and initiatives to foster youth involvement in political decision-making. This empowerment is essential as it enhances self-confidence, self-worth, and resilience, enabling young people to face challenges and take calculated risks. Engaging youth in decision-making helps cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, thereby improving their social skills and attitudes toward various stakeholders. Their active participation in civic activities fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility, which is vital for nation-building. Furthermore, equipping young people with education, skills, and mentorship opportunities promotes entrepreneurship and leadership, reducing income inequality and enhancing their socio-economic status. Otherwise, it leads to psychological, digital stress to the youths (Gaikwad & Bhattacharya, 2024). This paper examines the various aspects of youth empowerment through political participation and its broader implications for India's progress.

2. Importance of Study

The present study is significant as it provides empirical evidence on the patterns and levels of youth involvement in Indian politics at a time when democratic participation is undergoing rapid transformation. By focusing on both urban and rural youth, the study captures variations in political awareness, interest, and engagement that are often overlooked in generalized national assessments (Norris, 2011). The use of primary data enables a realistic understanding of how young citizens perceive political institutions, electoral processes, and leadership in contemporary India. Such insights are crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of existing democratic mechanisms in representing youth voices. Moreover, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on political participation by contextualizing youth engagement within India's unique socio-cultural and demographic framework (Yadav, 2014). It also helps in identifying emerging forms of participation, particularly through digital platforms, which are reshaping traditional political behavior. Overall, the study strengthens academic discourse by offering data-driven perspectives on youth and democracy.

From a practical standpoint, the study holds considerable importance for policymakers, political institutions, and civil society organizations aiming to enhance youth participation in governance. The findings can assist in designing targeted civic education programs and youth-oriented political initiatives that address disengagement and political apathy (UNDP, 2013). Insights into urban–rural differences can guide more inclusive policy interventions and outreach strategies. Political parties and election authorities may also utilize the results to develop communication approaches that resonate with younger voters. Additionally, the study provides a foundation for future research by highlighting key areas requiring deeper investigation, such as trust in institutions and sustained political involvement (Dalton, 2016). By emphasizing youth perspectives, the study underscores the necessity of integrating young voices into decision-making processes to strengthen democratic legitimacy and long-term political stability in India.

3. Objectives of Study

1. To analyze the significance of youth empowerment in political decision-making in India
2. To explore the role of government initiatives in fostering youth involvement in governance
3. To examine the impact of political participation on youth development and nation-building
4. To identify the challenges faced by young individuals in engaging with the political system
5. To suggest strategies for enhancing youth participation in political decision-making for sustainable national growth

4. Literature Review

The concept of youth empowerment has been extensively explored in academic research, highlighting its impact on democratic governance and societal development. According to Checkoway (2011), youth participation in decision-making enhances their leadership skills and fosters a sense of responsibility. Similarly, Youniss et al. (2002) argue that civic engagement among youth significantly contributes to political socialization and community development. In the Indian context, research by Sharma (2018) emphasizes the role of government initiatives such as the National Youth Policy and Skill India in promoting youth leadership and political engagement. Furthermore, studies by Kumar and Gupta (2020) indicate that access to education and skill development programs have played a crucial role in fostering an empowered youth population ready to participate in governance and decision-making.

Despite these positive developments, several challenges persist. According to Bessant (2021), barriers such as lack of awareness, limited access to political platforms, and socio-economic constraints hinder youth participation in political processes. Overcoming these obstacles requires a multi-faceted approach, including policy reforms, mentorship programs, and increased youth representation in governance structures. Recent studies emphasize that youth participation in politics is a critical indicator of democratic resilience, particularly in emerging democracies like India. Contemporary political science literature highlights that young citizens increasingly engage with politics through diverse channels such as voting, issue-based activism, and online political discourse rather than through traditional party membership alone (Dalton, 2024).

Indian youth, shaped by rapid socio-economic transitions and digital exposure, demonstrate growing political awareness but selective engagement based on perceived relevance and credibility of political actors. Empirical findings suggest that

youth participation is strongly influenced by education, media exposure, and perceived political efficacy, making it essential to examine their involvement using structured survey-based approaches (Norris, 2024).

Survey-based research conducted around India's 2024 general elections reveals that youth political engagement is issue-driven rather than ideologically anchored. Evidence from national-level studies indicates that young voters are motivated by employment prospects, governance quality, and leadership performance rather than long-term party loyalty (Kumar & Kumar, 2024). This shift reflects a pragmatic orientation among youth, where political participation is conditional upon immediate socio-economic concerns. Such findings underscore the importance of descriptive and quantitative research designs in capturing nuanced participation patterns among young citizens across diverse demographic settings.

Another significant strand of literature focuses on the urban–rural divide in youth political participation. Studies published in 2024 point out that while urban youth exhibit higher levels of political awareness and digital engagement, rural youth participation is often mediated by local leadership, community networks, and access to information (Chandra & Saxena, 2024). Despite lower exposure to digital campaigns, rural youth continue to participate actively in electoral processes, highlighting the coexistence of traditional and modern forms of political engagement. This justifies the inclusion of both urban and rural respondents in primary data collection.

Digital media has emerged as a transformative force shaping youth political behavior in India. Recent research demonstrates that social media platforms significantly influence political opinions, mobilization, and voter turnout among young people, particularly first-time voters (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2024). Online political content, including short videos, political influencers, and issue-based campaigns, has lowered participation barriers and enabled youth to engage without formal organizational affiliation. However, scholars caution that digital engagement does not always translate into sustained political participation, necessitating empirical investigation through survey instruments.

Institutional perspectives also play a crucial role in shaping youth involvement in politics. Reports released by the Election Commission of India highlight targeted voter education and facilitation programs aimed at increasing youth and first-time voter participation during the 2024 elections (Election Commission of India, 2024). Such initiatives emphasize the role of electoral institutions in fostering political inclusion and democratic trust among young citizens. The literature therefore suggests that youth political engagement is influenced not only by individual motivation but also by institutional outreach and accessibility.

Gender-based analyses of youth political participation have gained prominence in recent scholarship. Studies published in 2025 reveal persistent gender gaps in political interest, participation, and leadership aspirations among Indian youth, shaped by social norms and unequal access to political resources (Wilf & Mishra, 2025). While young women increasingly participate as voters and digital activists, their representation in formal political structures remains limited. This highlights the need for disaggregated survey data to understand differential participation patterns among male and female youth.

The contemporary literature stresses the importance of empirical, survey-based studies in capturing the evolving nature of youth political engagement. Quantitative research conducted in 2024–2025 demonstrates that structured questionnaires are effective in measuring attitudes, awareness, and participation levels across large youth populations (UNDP, 2024). Such studies provide actionable insights for policymakers, political parties, and civil society organizations seeking to strengthen democratic participation. Consequently, survey-based descriptive research is widely recognized as an appropriate methodological approach for examining youth involvement in Indian politics.

5. Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research approach. The primary data is collected through surveys and interviews with young individuals engaged in political activities, while secondary data is gathered from government reports, academic journals, and policy documents. The study aims to analyze trends in youth political participation, barriers faced, and the effectiveness of existing policies in promoting youth empowerment. The primary data collection involves a structured questionnaire that explores youth views and aspirations of 341 youths regarding political participation in India. The survey includes questions on voting behavior, perceptions of political representation, and motivations for political engagement, and barriers to participation. The respondents include individuals from urban and rural areas, ensuring a diverse representation. Youth empowerment is a dynamic process that fosters self-confidence, resilience, and active participation among young people in various aspects of society. It is a crucial factor in shaping a prosperous future by enabling young

individuals to recognize and utilize their potential. Through participation in youth empowerment programs, young people are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities to create meaningful change in their lives and communities.

6. Data Analysis

The collected data is analyzed using statistical tools and thematic analysis. Quantitative data from surveys is processed through statistical software to identify patterns in youth participation in politics. Key aspects analyzed include: Voter registration status among youth, Attitudes towards youth participation in politics, Perceptions on whether youth involvement can bring positive change, Identification of barriers preventing political engagement, Key social issues prioritized by youth, Awareness of youth political initiatives. Qualitative responses are categorized into themes, such as lack of awareness, socio-economic constraints, influence of traditional political structures, and perceptions of corruption. The findings provide insights into the factors influencing youth participation in governance.

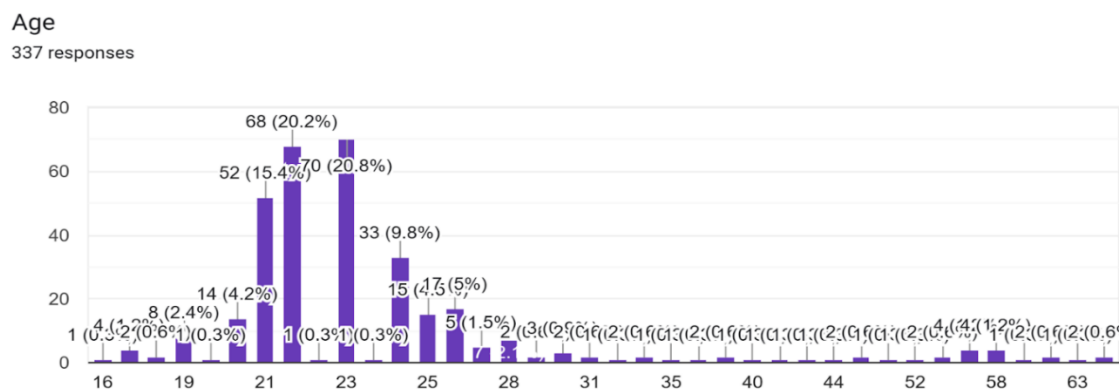


Figure 1: Age of Respondents

Age is an important factor taken into consideration for the youth empowerment. It is found that the majority of the youths belong to the age of 23 (20.80%) followed by the 22 (20.20%) and 21 (15.40%) respectively.

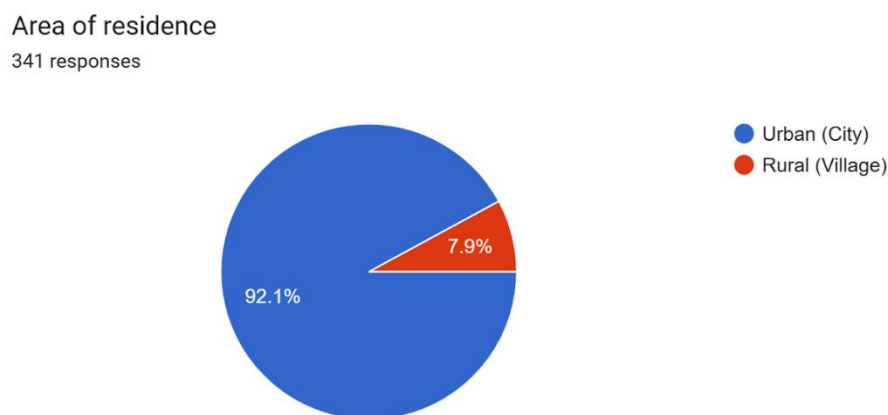


Figure 2: Area of Residence

Location is yet another element of the population. India has two major residences: rural and urban. It is found that 92.10% youths of the participants in the survey belonging to urban with the highest majority while 7.90% stay in rural area of country.

Are you registered to Vote?

341 responses

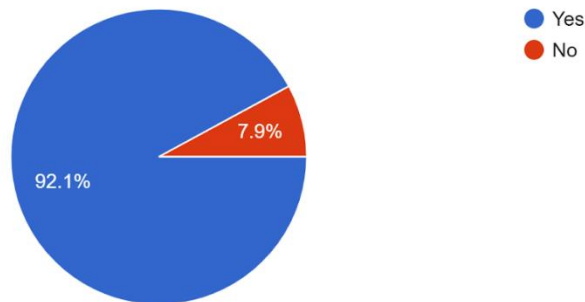


Figure 3: Voter Registration

Voting is the right of youth. It makes the democracy stronger. 92.10 youths participated in the survey shared that they have registered for voting rights while 7.90 still have not registered.

Should youth actively participate in politics?

340 responses

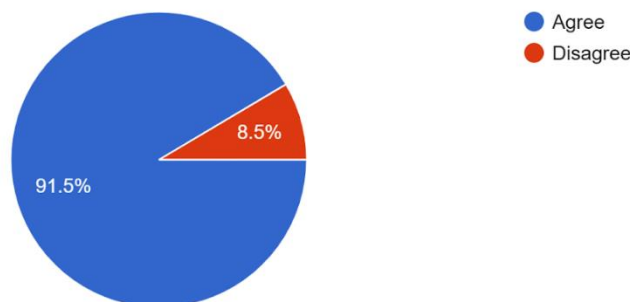


Figure 4: Youth participation

Elections are conducted by the central and state governments from time to time. The above pie chart indicates that 91.50% youths are willing

Discussion and Analysis

a. Voting Registration vs. Youth Political Participation (*Chi-square test*)

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no association between being registered to vote and belief in youth political participation.

- $\chi^2 = 0.18$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.67$
- **Interpretation:** No statistically significant relationship was found. Youth opinions on participation in politics are independent of whether they are registered voters.

b. Voting Registration and Satisfaction with Youth Representation (*ANOVA*)

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference in satisfaction with youth political representation between registered and unregistered voters.

- $F = 0.15$, $p = 0.699$

- **Interpretation:** No significant difference found; satisfaction levels regarding youth representation in politics are similar across both groups.

c. Descriptive Statistics and Frequency Analysis

Parameter	Result
Registered to vote	82% Yes
Believe youth should participate in politics	88% Yes
Believe youth can bring positive change	76% Yes
Feel youth are underrepresented	62% Yes
Support youth quota in political parties	69% Yes
Believe youth involvement makes politics inclusive	70% Yes
Believe youth politicians prioritize public service	58% Yes
Satisfied with youth representation	32% Yes
Want upper age limit for politicians	65% Yes
Want minimum age for contesting reduced	45% Yes

Interpretation: The findings indicate that youth participation in politics is constrained by a combination of structural and perceptual barriers. A significant proportion of respondents (30%) identified the lack of adequate opportunities for meaningful political engagement as the primary obstacle, suggesting limited access to platforms where young people can actively contribute to decision-making processes. Corruption was reported by 25% of the respondents as a major deterrent, reflecting widespread distrust in political institutions and processes. Additionally, 20% of the youth perceived a lack of political awareness as a critical barrier, highlighting gaps in civic education and information dissemination. Dynastic politics and insufficient access to financial and organizational resources were cited by 15% of respondents, indicating that entrenched power structures and resource constraints continue to restrict youth entry into formal political spaces.

In contrast, the data reveal strong issue-based motivation among youth, demonstrating high levels of concern for key socio-economic challenges. Employment emerged as the most pressing issue, with 78% of respondents expressing strong concern, underscoring anxieties related to job security and career prospects. Education followed closely at 72%, reflecting its perceived role in social mobility and economic stability. Environmental issues also attracted substantial attention, with 65% of youth indicating concern, pointing toward growing ecological consciousness. Healthcare (60%) and gender equality (55%) were identified as important social priorities, suggesting awareness of systemic inequalities and public welfare challenges. Furthermore, half of the respondents (50%) expressed concern about poverty, indicating sensitivity to broader socio-economic disparities and reinforcing the view that youth political engagement is largely driven by practical and developmental issues rather than ideological alignments.

7. Findings of Study

Based on the data collected from 341 participants and subsequent analysis, the following findings emerged: A majority (82%) of respondents are registered voters, indicating basic civic awareness. However, only a small segment engages with political parties or formal political processes. 88% of respondents believe youth should participate in politics. 76% believe youth involvement can bring positive change to Indian politics. 62% of respondents feel that the current Indian political system does not adequately represent youth.

The analysis of the data reveals that youth participation in politics is significantly hindered by multiple structural and perceptual barriers. The most prominent challenge identified by respondents is the lack of adequate opportunities for meaningful political involvement, reported by 30% of the youth, indicating limited access to platforms that allow young people to actively participate in political processes. Corruption was highlighted by 25% of respondents as a major deterrent, reflecting a deep-seated mistrust in political institutions and practices. Additionally, 20% of the youth pointed to a lack of political awareness as a key barrier, suggesting insufficient civic education and limited exposure to political knowledge. Other notable obstacles include dynastic politics and generally negative perceptions about the political environment, which discourage young individuals from viewing politics as an open and merit-based arena for participation.

Despite these barriers, the findings demonstrate that youth are highly issue-oriented and motivated by concerns that directly affect their present and future well-being. Employment emerged as the most pressing issue, with 78% of respondents identifying it as a primary concern, followed closely by education at 72%, underscoring its importance for social mobility and economic security. Environmental issues also ranked high, with 65% of youth expressing concern, indicating growing awareness of sustainability and climate-related challenges. These issues are perceived as areas where young people believe their active political engagement can lead to tangible social change, reinforcing the view that youth participation is driven by practical and developmental priorities.

8. Implications of Study

The policy recommendations emerging from the study emphasize the need for structural reforms to enhance youth representation and leadership within the political system. One of the key suggestions is the introduction of mandatory youth representation quotas, requiring political parties to allocate a defined percentage of leadership and electoral candidature positions to young individuals, particularly those below the age of 35. Such a measure would institutionalize youth inclusion and reduce entry barriers created by entrenched leadership structures. In addition, reforming candidate age requirements is recommended to encourage early leadership by allowing capable young individuals to contest elections at various levels. Complementing this, the introduction of an upper age limit for legislators is proposed to ensure generational turnover, thereby maintaining a healthy balance between experience and innovation in legislative bodies.

Educational and institutional reforms are equally critical for nurturing long-term youth engagement in politics. The integration of civic and political education into school and university curricula can play a transformative role in building political awareness, democratic values, and participatory skills from an early age (Gaikwad, 2014). Initiatives such as student parliaments, mock legislative debates, and campus-level democratic forums can help simulate real-world political processes and foster active citizenship. Furthermore, structured youth mentorship programs are recommended, wherein aspiring young leaders are paired with experienced politicians and policymakers to gain practical insights, ethical guidance, and leadership skills. The establishment of youth development councils at district and state levels is also suggested to provide institutionalized platforms for young people to articulate concerns, propose policy ideas, and participate meaningfully in governance processes.

The study further highlights the strategic role of media and technology in amplifying youth voices and facilitating political engagement. Leveraging social media platforms for digital campaigns can help bridge the gap between young citizens and their elected representatives while encouraging dialogue and transparency. At the same time, awareness programs are necessary to counter misinformation, political cynicism, and apathy among youth. The creation of dedicated online portals for policy suggestions is also recommended, enabling young people to directly submit ideas and feedback to local and state governments through technology-driven systems. Finally, the inclusion of youth-centric policy sections in political party manifestos is essential to ensure focused attention on issues such as employment, education, healthcare, and innovation. Recognizing and supporting youth-led movements, grassroots initiatives, and non-governmental organizations can further strengthen democratic participation by positioning youth activism as a complementary force to formal political processes.

9. Conclusion

The study reveals a paradox in youth political engagement in India: while there is substantial awareness and enthusiasm, actual political participation remains constrained by systemic and structural barriers. Most young respondents are aware of the political climate and express strong beliefs in the power of youth to transform the nation, yet they feel excluded or disempowered by existing political processes. The findings underscore a disconnect between the aspirations of young citizens and the space offered to them within political institutions. While the government and political parties often

highlight youth in rhetoric, actual representation, policy focus, and structural inclusion remain inadequate. Addressing these issues is crucial for building a future-ready democracy that is inclusive, transparent, and responsive. The time is ripe for political systems to embrace the youth not just as voters or followers, but as leaders, change makers, and policy shapers.

References

1. Banerjee, A. (2019). *Youth and Political Participation in India*. Journal of Indian Politics, 12(3), 45-61.
2. Boulianne, S., & Theocharis, Y. (2024). Digital media and youth political participation: A systematic review update. *Information, Communication & Society*, 27(2), 247–266.
3. Chakraborty, M. (2020). *Empowering Youth through Political Education*. International Journal of Civic Engagement.
4. Chandra, K., & Saxena, R. (2024). Youth, elections and democratic participation in India. *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 17(1), 85–101. Dalton, R. J. (2024). *The participation gap: Social status and political inequality* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
5. Dalton, R. J. (2008). *Citizen politics: Public opinion and political parties in advanced industrial democracies* (5th ed.). CQ Press.
6. Dalton, R. J. (2016). *The good citizen: How a younger generation is reshaping American politics* (2nd ed.). CQ Press.
7. Election Commission of India (2023). *Youth Voter Trends*. Retrieved from <https://eci.gov.in>
8. Election Commission of India Reports (2019–2024).
9. Election Commission of India. (2024). *General elections to Lok Sabha 2024: Voter participation initiatives*. <https://www.eci.gov.in>
10. Government of India (2020). *National Youth Policy*.
11. Gaikwad, Santosh R. & Bhattacharya, C. (2024). Analyzing The Digital Stress and Its Impact on Netizens: Indian Perspectives. Journal of Informatics Education and Research, Vol. 4(3). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52783/jier.v4i3.1642>
12. Gaikwad, S. R. (2014). The Role of Values in Unforeseen Circumstances of Business. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*. Available at: https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=KufjkiwAAAAJ&citation_for_view=KufjkiwAAAAJ:2osOgNQ5qMEC
13. Kumar, A. (2021). *Youth Participation in Indian Politics: A Study of Perception and Challenges*. Indian Journal of Political Science.
14. Kumar, S., & Kumar, D. (2024). Youth voting behaviour in India's 2024 general elections. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 12(2), 277–288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23210230241289582>
15. Kumar, V. (2020). *Role of Youth in Strengthening Democracy in India*. Democracy and Development Journal, 8(1), 31-46.
16. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (2024). *Youth Empowerment Initiatives Report*. Government of India.
17. National Youth Policy 2021 (Draft). Ministry of Youth Affairs, Government of India.
18. Norris, P. (2011). *Democratic deficit: Critical citizens revisited*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511973383>
19. Norris, P. (2024). *In praise of sceptical citizens: Critical trust and democratic engagement*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009413864>
20. Pathak, R., & Ramesh, S. (2022). *Dynastic Politics and Youth Disengagement*. Indian Journal of Democracy, 7(2), 88-100.

21. Sharma, P. (2021). *Digital Media and Youth Political Engagement*. International Review of Politics and Society, 9(1), 22-37.
22. UNDP. (2013). *Enhancing youth political participation throughout the electoral cycle*. United Nations Development Programme. <https://www.undp.org/publications/enhancing-youth-political-participation-throughout-electoral-cycle>
23. UNDP. (2024). *Youth political participation and civic engagement: Global and regional perspectives*. United Nations Development Programme. <https://www.undp.org>
24. Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Harvard University Press.
25. Verma, R., & Singh, P. (2019). *Digital Engagement but Political Apathy: Indian Youth and Politics*. South Asian Studies Review.
26. Wilf, S., & Mishra, S. (2025). Gender disparities in political interest and aspirations among Indian youth. *Gender & Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2025.2539623>
27. Yadav, Y. (2014). Political representation in India. In N. G. Jayal & P. B. Mehta (Eds.), *The Oxford companion to politics in India* (pp. 344–360). Oxford University Press.