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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal providededicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

W H I T E B L A C K
L E G A L

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ELECTORAL POLITICS: IN SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TAMIL NADU LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION

2021

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ABSTRACT:

The paper discusses the use of social media in state election campaigns, using the 2021 Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly elections as a case study. Tamil Nadu is India's sixth-largest state, with 63 million registered voters. The state's executive body is the Legislative Assembly. Social media is a 21st-century platform and tool that enables a country and its societies to generate, express, and exchange their opinions around the world. People of all ages are drawn to this tool's capacity to connect to the rest of the world quickly and simply. Political parties have begun to use social media as a hot tool for election promotion in order to connect, influence, and express their objectives in order to gain more visibility or a majority. People today rely on social media, and political parties try to reach out to them through it. Democracies are wondering if social media can

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be used to predict election outcomes in this age of electronic transformation, when social media has become the means and end all of communication. With the rising popularity and use of social media, this study seeks to determine whether the use of social media had an impact on the outcome of the 2021 Legislative Assembly election. The goal of this research paper is to better understand how social media influences people's voting decisions. According to the findings of the research, social media has a major impact on voting preferences, particularly among young voters.

Keywords: Tamil Nadu legislative assembly, Social media, election, Voters.

1. INTRODUCTION:

India is a socialist, secular, democratic republic and the largest democracy in the world. The modern Indian nation-state came into existence on August 15, 1947.

India is a constitutional democracy with a parliamentary system of government, and at the heart of the system lies a commitment to hold regular, free, and fair elections. These elections determine the composition of the government, the membership of the two Houses of Parliament, the State and Union Territory Legislative Assemblies, and the Presidency and Vice-Presidency.

People cannot directly rule themselves or others in a democratic system because it is neither essential nor practical. Therefore, electing representatives from among the people to serve in government is the most common type of democracy in modern society. Elections are required and helpful in a democracy to choose the representatives.

Elections are a means through which citizens in a democracy can exercise their right to vote for the leaders who will govern them on a regular basis and implement change if necessary. Changes in the government's policies may result from elections.

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA HAS TRANSFORMED POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS:

Social media may not be new to the general public. However, the importance of using social media in political campaigns did not become recognizable until the 2008 United States presidential elections, when then-candidate Barack Obama campaigned. Political candidates can reach a larger

audience in real time through the power of social networking.

According to Pew research from 2022, the main social networks for news are Twitter (53%), Facebook (44%), and Reddit (37%). Surprisingly, TikTok (33%) isn't far behind these sources..

IN TAMIL NADU LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (2021):

Tamil Nadu is India's largest spender on online political advertising, with the two major Dravidian parties increasingly splurging on social media campaigns in the run-up to the Assembly elections. Data from Google's transparency report, which includes political advertising on Google and YouTube partner domains, shows that between February 19, 2019 and March 25, 2021, political parties and related organizations spent ₹46.61crore, totaling 19,071 advertisements, throughout the Google platform.

Tamil Nadu contributes the highest share at 12.52 crore, or 27 percent, of the total ad spends on Google. Other election-bound states, including West Bengal, Kerala, and Assam, spent 2.85 crore, 36 lakh, and 17 lakh, respectively.

"Internet usage and average mobile phone usage in Tamil Nadu are very high when compared to other states, " political analyst Sumanth Raman said, adding that " nearly 75–80% of people in Tamil Nadu use smartphones."As a result, political parties should use YouTube and social media platforms to reach out to voters."

"Political advertisements have become far more sophisticated." "Both the DMK and the AIADMK have really stepped up their storytelling of their respective positions," adding that "in the next elections, probably even 50% of the money will be spent on social media campaigns." However, the flip side of internet campaigning is that there is a lot of fake information that gets mixed in, and sadly, it is not accidental but planned."

"While social media campaigns may have no impact on committed voters such as party cadres or those who have traditionally voted for a particular party for decades," "they may influence the choices of first-time voters, youngsters, and fence-sitters."

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- ❖ Electoral Politics and its impact on Indian Voting system
- ❖ Impact of social media on voters
- ❖ Whether social media will be used during the general assembly election

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- This study found that social media has a significant effect on the voting intentions of young people, especially those in the age group of 18 to 28. The results showed that the respondents' voting behaviour was highly influenced by the comments, tweets, and remarks made by politicians on social media.(Bhuvanesh Kumar Sharma et.al., 2017)
- Political marketing is an integral part of the political process, and social media has created new ways to market campaigns. Political use of social media can influence political participation, interest, and knowledge during the 2019 general elections in Andhra Pradesh, and should be used to engage, tap, educate, and bring change. (G. Rakesh Naidu et.al., 2021)
- This study explores the impact of political communication on voting behavior in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. The researcher scanned the content of newspapers and television channels of these three states over 18 months and conducted a survey among the voters of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. The findings indicated that mass media, especially political communication through newspapers and television channels, had an impact on voting behavior of the people of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. The highest rating of the media impact was given to Karnataka due to its scientific use of the media for political propaganda or its credibility. (Nirmal Jacob et.al., 2010)
- Social media has become an important platform for citizens to interact with political, social and economic happenings, but there is no standard regulatory mechanism to restrict or guide content.(Singh, Rahul et.al., 2023)

4. METHODOLOGY:

The study is non-doctrinal, non-empirical, and qualitative research in which the convenience sampling method is used. The secondary data is collected from students and working professionals through the interview method using Google Forms.

5. DATA ANALYSIS INTERPRETATION:

The results from the questionnaire is shown through the following table:

- **Table 1 : Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	13	31%
Female	29	69%
Total	42	100%

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of male and female study respondents.

- **Table 2 : Age**

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18	-	-
19 - 25 Years Old	41	97.6%
26-35 Years old	-	-
36 - 45 Years Old	-	-
46 - 50 Years Old	-	-
above 50	1	2.4%
Total	42	100%

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of the age of the study respondents.

- **Table 3 : Religion**

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Hindu	33	78.6%
Christian	6	14.3%
Muslim	3	7.1%
Jains	-	-
Buddhists	-	-
Total	42	100%

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of religion among the study respondents.

- **Table 4 : Qualification**

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Higher secondary	5	11.9%
UG	37	88.1%
PG	0	-
Total	42	100%

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of qualifications of the study respondents

- **Table 5 : Occupation**

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Student	41	97.6%
Employment	1	2.4%
Total	42	100%

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of occupation of the study respondents.

- **Table 6 : Residential Area**

Residential Area	Frequency	Percentage
Urban	33	78.6%

Rural	0	0%
Semi-Urban	8	19%
Semi-Rural	1	2.4%
Total	42	100%

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of the residential area of the study respondents.

- **Table 7 : Are you aware of the term "electoral politics"**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	71.4%
No	10	23.8%
Maybe	2	4.80%
Total	42	100%

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of the study respondents awareness of the term electoral politics.

- **Table 8 :Have you voted in the most recent Tamil Nadu Assembly Election (2021)?**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	27	64.3%
No	15	35.7%
Total	42	100%

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of the study respondents votes in the Tamil Nadu Assembly Election (2021).

- **Table 9 : What criteria did you use to cast your vote for a candidate?**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Party	7	16.7%

Caste	0	0%
Religion	0	0%
previous services provided to the constituent	7	16.7%
Personality, expertise, and services provided to people	24	57.1%
Rating of social networking sites	1	2.4%
Others	3	7.1%
Total	42	100%

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of the study respondents' criteria for casting votes.

- **Table 10 : Have you shared any videos or photos on social media about politics or political parties?**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	83.3%
No	7	16.7%
Total	42	100%

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of the study respondents who shared political content on social media.

- **Table 11 : Do you believe that social media will inevitably be used during the general assembly election, especially to distribute information about political parties**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	37	88.1%
No	5	11.9%
Total	42	100%

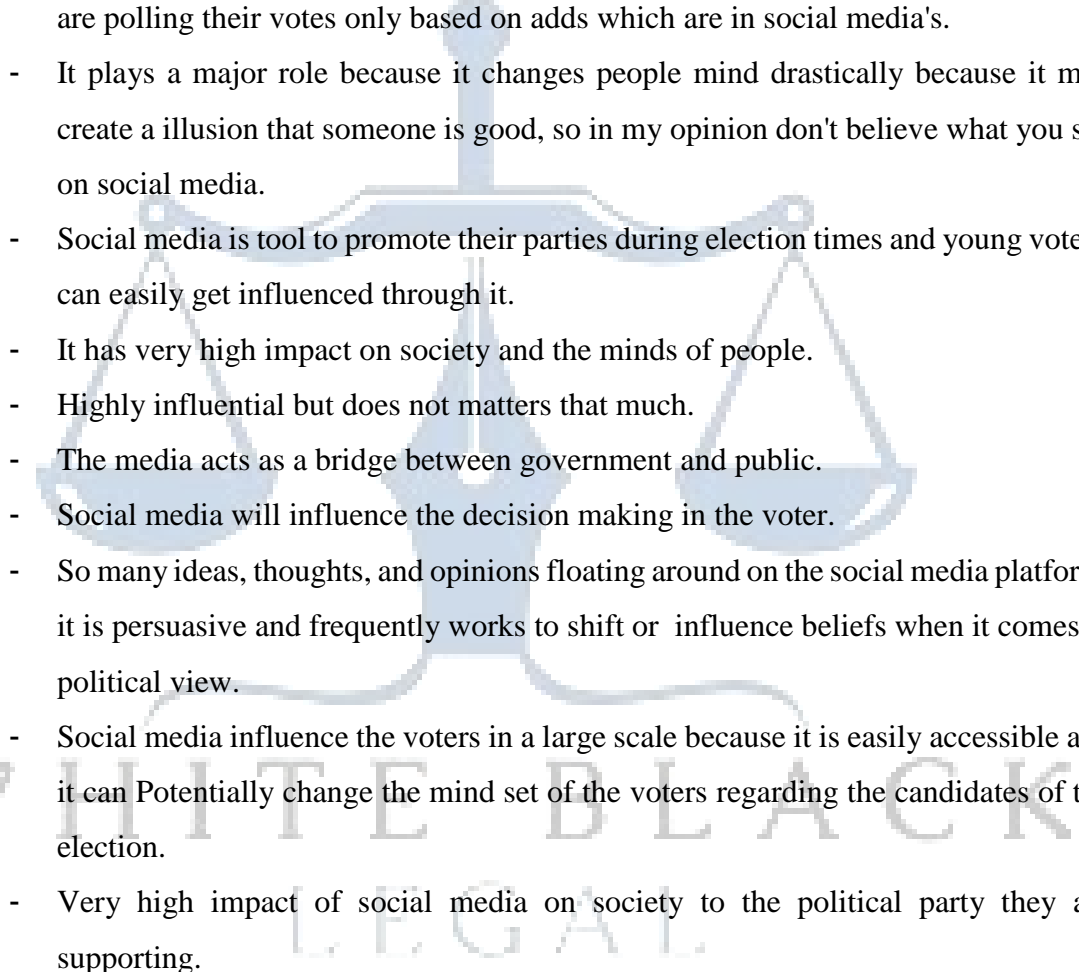
The above table shows the respondents' views on the use of social media during the election to distribute information.

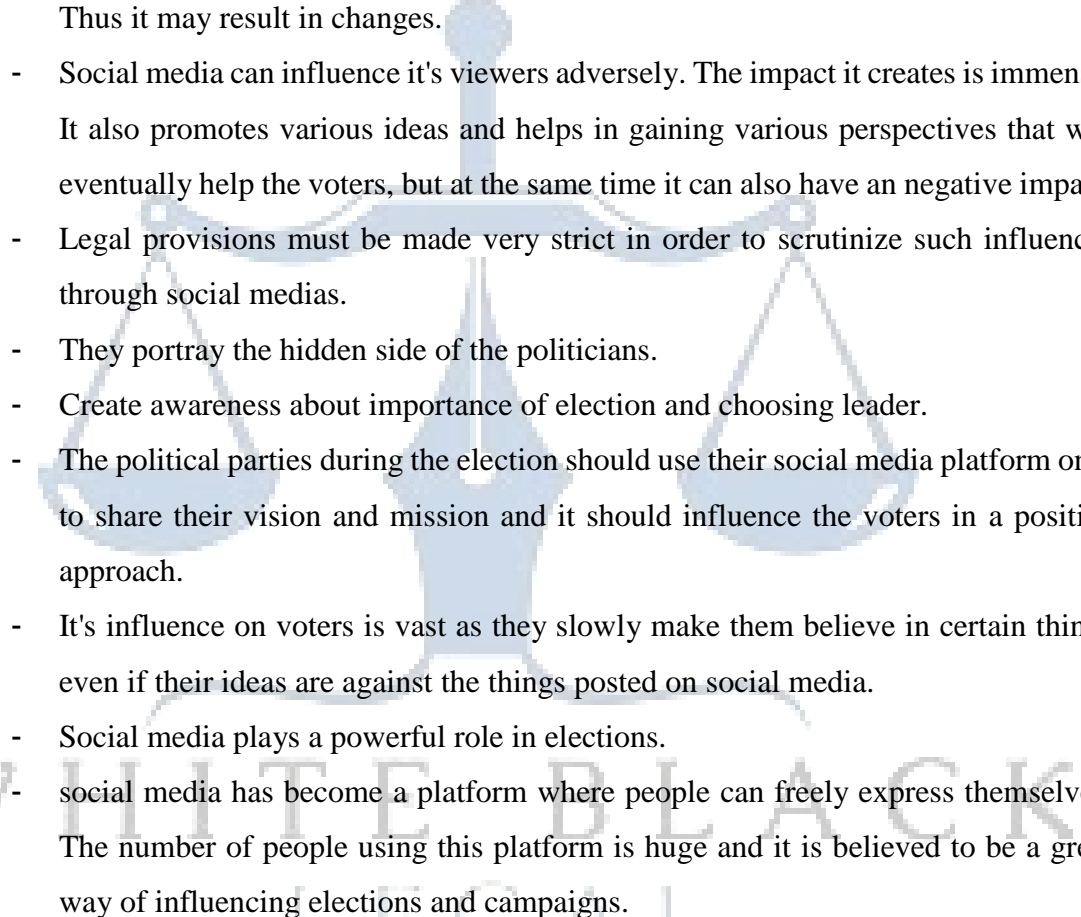
- **Table 12 : Have you ever changed your mind or political views after viewing anything on social medias?**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	18	42.9%
No	10	23.8%
Maybe	14	33.3%
Total	42	100%

The above table shows the frequency and percentage of the study respondents' perspectives on changing their political views after using social media.

- **The study respondents opinion about the influence of social media on voters are mentioned below,**
 - A communication platform such as social media is persuasive, and often works to change or influence opinions when it comes to political views because of the abundance of ideas, thoughts, and opinions circulating through the social media platform.
 - Need to be kept in control.
 - Nowadays social media platform is so biased to particular ruling party in Tamil Nadu.
 - Youngsters are the most influenced by social media during campaign. People active in social media are also part of this group.
 - Social media can create positive as well as negative influences here the negative impact is higher.
 - The youth of this generation is highly invested in politics

- 
- Influence of social media on voters will definitely change the public mindset on the politicians and the public might vote according to the information provided by the social media and the information provided by the influence will be wrong for most of the time.
 - Social media strongly influence the people.
 - Social media plays a vital role during election periods it's creates a impact on people to whom they should vote. And also many youngsters aged between 19 to 23 they are polling their votes only based on adds which are in social media's.
 - It plays a major role because it changes people mind drastically because it may create a illusion that someone is good, so in my opinion don't believe what you see on social media.
 - Social media is tool to promote their parties during election times and young voter's can easily get influenced through it.
 - It has very high impact on society and the minds of people.
 - Highly influential but does not matters that much.
 - The media acts as a bridge between government and public.
 - Social media will influence the decision making in the voter.
 - So many ideas, thoughts, and opinions floating around on the social media platform, it is persuasive and frequently works to shift or influence beliefs when it comes to political view.
 - Social media influence the voters in a large scale because it is easily accessible and it can Potentially change the mind set of the voters regarding the candidates of the election.
 - Very high impact of social media on society to the political party they are supporting.
 - They may have an impact on a sporadic basis.
 - Ideas, thoughts, and opinions can be circulating through the social media platform and media acts as a bridge between government and public. Politicians are becoming more and more active on social media. whether getting influence by social media young voter will cast their vote in coming election .With the help of social media will it possible for political parties to get vote from young voters.

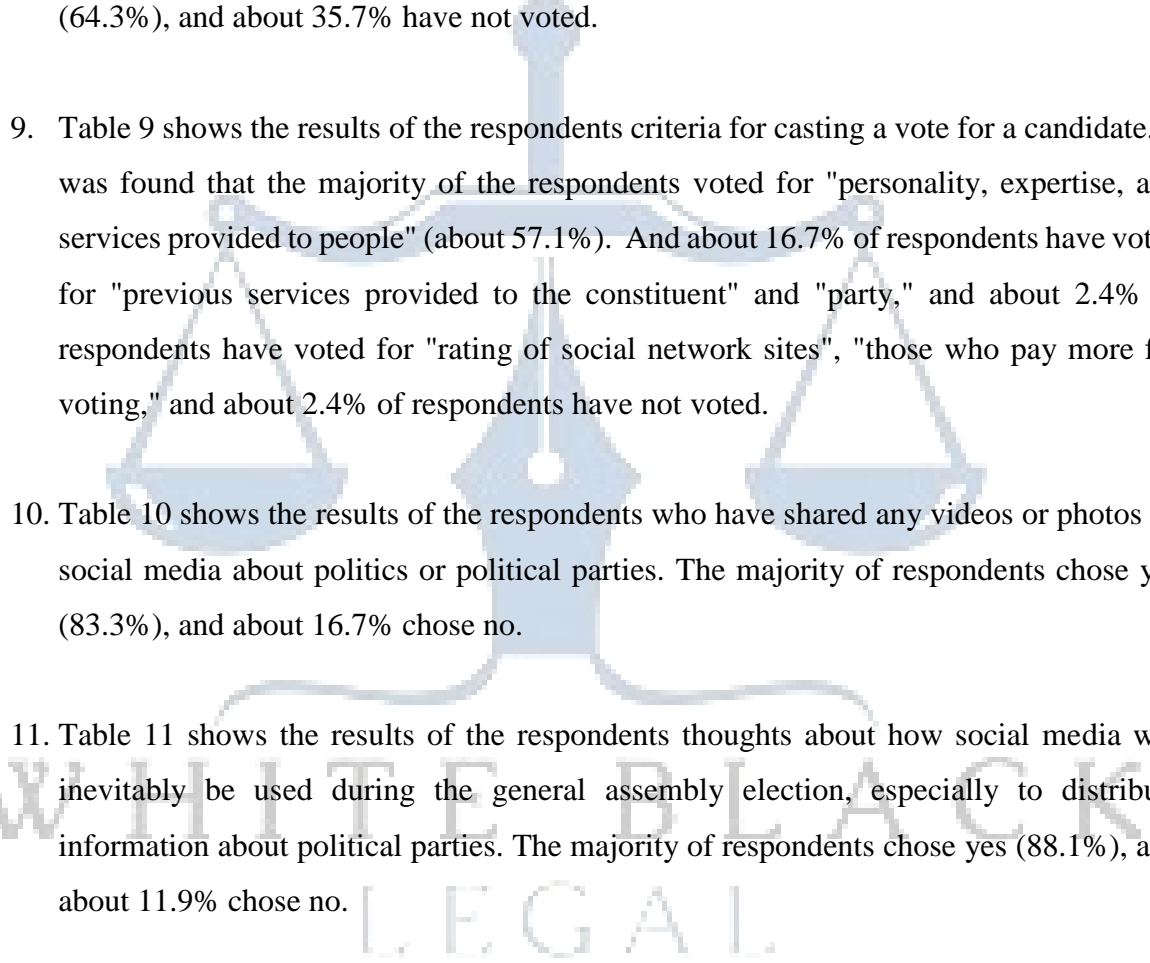
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- Whatever they influence in social media it's a part of our society . Its the persons their own opinion to vote themselves we cannot predict it .everyone has their own different perspectives ,so influencing in social media doesn't affect the voters I think personally.
 - Bad influence about other party in their channel.
 - Election ink system would be better.
 - The thoughts shared in social media do have an impact on people who r voting. Thus it may result in changes.
 - Social media can influence it's viewers adversely. The impact it creates is immense. It also promotes various ideas and helps in gaining various perspectives that will eventually help the voters, but at the same time it can also have an negative impact.
 - Legal provisions must be made very strict in order to scrutinize such influences through social medias.
 - They portray the hidden side of the politicians.
 - Create awareness about importance of election and choosing leader.
 - The political parties during the election should use their social media platform only to share their vision and mission and it should influence the voters in a positive approach.
 - It's influence on voters is vast as they slowly make them believe in certain things even if their ideas are against the things posted on social media.
 - Social media plays a powerful role in elections.
 - social media has become a platform where people can freely express themselves. The number of people using this platform is huge and it is believed to be a great way of influencing elections and campaigns.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

RESULTS:

The following words reflect the survey results based on the role of social media in electoral politics:

1. Table 1 shows the results of the distribution of male and female respondents from the survey. It is found that the majority of respondents are female (about 69%), whereas the male is only about 31%.
2. Table 2 shows the results of the distribution of age groups among the respondents from the survey. It is found that the majority of respondents are from the age group of 19 to 25 (about 97.6%), and the number of respondents from the age group above 50 is only about 2.4%.
3. Table 3 shows the results of the distribution of religion among the respondents from the survey. It is found that the majority of respondents are Hindu (about 78.6), about 14.3 respondents are Christians, and about 7.1% respondents are Muslims.
4. Table 4 shows the result of the distribution of the educational qualifications of the respondents. It is found that the majority of respondents have UG qualifications (about 88.1%), and about 11.9% of the respondents have higher secondary education.
5. Table 5 shows the result of the distribution of the occupations of the respondents from the survey. It was found that the majority of the respondents are students (about 97.6%), and the number of respondents who are employed is only 2.4%.
6. Table 6 shows the results of the distribution of the residential areas of the respondents from the survey. It was found that the majority of the respondents are from urban areas (about 78.6%), about 19% of the respondents are from semi-urban areas, and the remaining 2.4% of the respondents are from semi-rural areas.

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7. Table 7 shows the results of the respondents awareness of the term "electoral politics". The majority of respondents chose yes (71.4%), about 23.8% chose no, and about 2.4% of respondents chose maybe.
 8. Table 8 shows the results of the respondents who cast votes in the Tamil Nadu legislative Assembly in 2021. It was found that the majority of the respondents have voted about (64.3%), and about 35.7% have not voted.
 9. Table 9 shows the results of the respondents criteria for casting a vote for a candidate. It was found that the majority of the respondents voted for "personality, expertise, and services provided to people" (about 57.1%). And about 16.7% of respondents have voted for "previous services provided to the constituent" and "party," and about 2.4% of respondents have voted for "rating of social network sites", "those who pay more for voting," and about 2.4% of respondents have not voted.
 10. Table 10 shows the results of the respondents who have shared any videos or photos on social media about politics or political parties. The majority of respondents chose yes (83.3%), and about 16.7% chose no.
 11. Table 11 shows the results of the respondents thoughts about how social media will inevitably be used during the general assembly election, especially to distribute information about political parties. The majority of respondents chose yes (88.1%), and about 11.9% chose no.
 12. Table 12 shows the results of the respondents thoughts about whether they changed their minds or political views after viewing anything on social media. The majority of respondents chose yes (42.9%), and about 23.8% chose no and about 33.3% chose maybe.

13. From the opinion of the respondents about the influence of social media on voters, it is found that the respondents said that the social media often works to change or influence opinions when it comes to political views because of the abundance of ideas, thoughts, and opinions circulating through the platform, and they said that Youngsters are the most influenced by social media during campaign and Social media can create positive as well as negative influences here the negative impact is higher and It plays a major role because it changes people's minds drastically because it may create the illusion that someone is good, so in my opinion, don't believe what you see on social media and so on.

DISCUSSIONS:

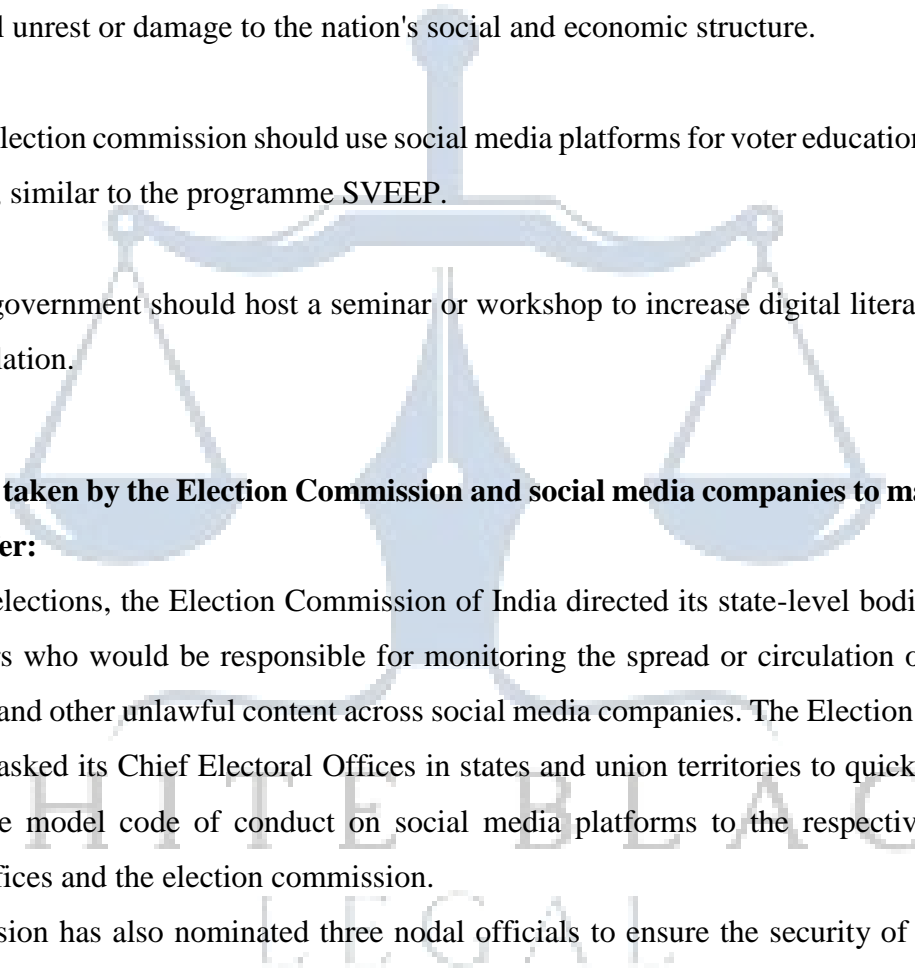
From the results, it has been observed and discussed that most of the study respondents are female, and most of them are from Tamil Nadu. It has also been found that most of them are from urban and semi-urban areas. It is important to note that most of the study respondents have an UG degree, although they are not employed, and most of the study respondents claim that the major problem is that social media influences voters on a large scale because it is easily accessible. The majority of the study respondents said that social media is a tool to promote their parties during elections, and young voters can easily get influenced through it. It also changes people's minds drastically because it may create the illusion that someone is good, so the respondents opinion is, "Don't believe what you see on social media.

7. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION:

SUGGESTIONS:

With increased internet and smartphone usage, social media is becoming a vital platform or another kind of formal media that is popular among other traditional media. The following are some ideas for making this medium an authorized means of knowledge distribution among its consumers. Also, for a healthy democracy, citizens should have the right to accurate information.

- a) As social media becomes an important media source for citizens, there should be a formal institutional framework regulating authority, similar to that of print media, television, and so on. This will help prevent the spread of misinformation among users.

- 
- b) During the period when the Model Code of Conduct is in effect, the Election Commission of India should issue strong guidelines to political parties/candidates so that no fake news or misinformation is broadcast by the opposition or any antisocial elements to acquire due advantage in favour by misusing social media.
 - c) There should be a proper framework in place to take action against individuals or organizations that spread misinformation on social media platforms, which might cause social unrest or damage to the nation's social and economic structure.
 - d) The election commission should use social media platforms for voter education on a regular basis, similar to the programme SVEEP.
 - e) The government should host a seminar or workshop to increase digital literacy among its population.

2. Measures taken by the Election Commission and social media companies to make the 2019 elections safer:

Prior to the elections, the Election Commission of India directed its state-level bodies to appoint nodal officers who would be responsible for monitoring the spread or circulation of fake news, hate speech, and other unlawful content across social media companies. The Election Commission of India has asked its Chief Electoral Offices in states and union territories to quickly report any breach of the model code of conduct on social media platforms to the respective company's grievance offices and the election commission.

The commission has also nominated three nodal officials to ensure the security of social media during elections. After gaining clearance from the director-general of media, their job was to immediately investigate code violation incidents and write to the corporations to take the necessary action. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Google, and the Internet and Mobile Association of India filed the voluntary code of conduct for the general election 2019 with the chief election commissioner in March. The corporations committed to establishing a high-priority dedicated reporting system for the ECI and to assign dedicated teams during the elections to take swift action in the event of breaches. The code of ethics was designed to discourage offensive or unacceptable

political ads.

The following are the actions made by social media companies to make elections safer:

- Facebook recently launched a special service for India called "Candidate Connect," which allows Lok Sabha candidates to record their electoral manifesto in the form of 20-second videos.
- Facebook intends to build an operations center in Delhi that will collaborate with teams in Menlo Park, Dublin, and Singapore to monitor election content.
- WhatsApp launched a tip line for users to report misleading information and fake news.
- Twitter's political ad policy and Ads Transparency Centre (ATC) in India have been increased.

3. How is Media regulated during Elections?

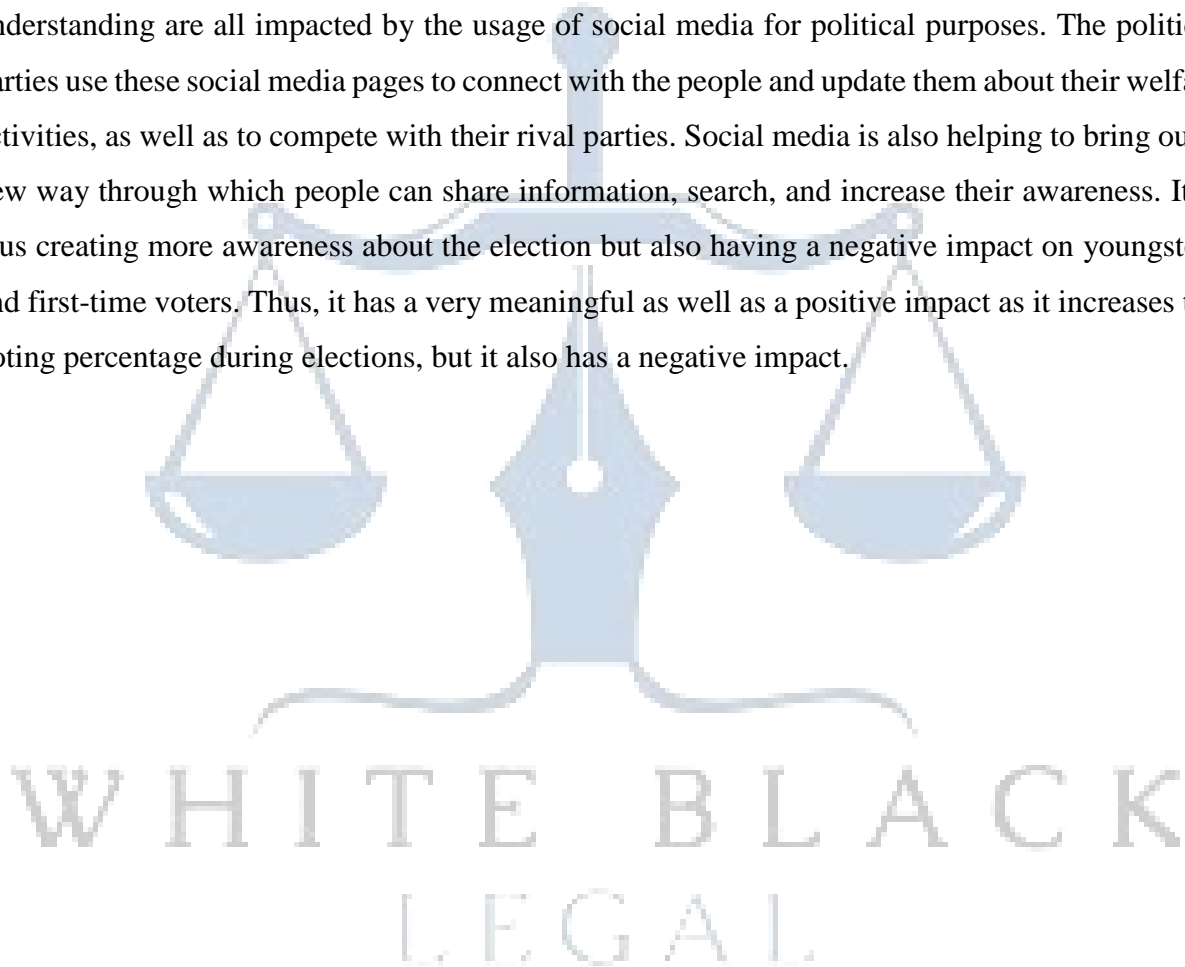
The Election Commission has no authority over the media. It does, however, have the obligation to execute the provisions of legislation or Court orders that may be related to media or specific areas of media operation. The regulations are as follows:

- Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, prohibits displaying any election matter by means of a cinematograph, television, or other similar apparatus during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of the poll.
- Section 126A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951: It prohibits the conduct of exit polls and dissemination of their results during the period mentioned therein, i.e., the hour fixed for commencement of polls in the first phase and a half hour after the time fixed for close of polls for the last phase, in all the States and Union Territories.
- Section 127A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951: The printing and publication of election pamphlets, posters, etc. is governed by its provisions, which make it mandatory to bear on their faces the names and addresses of the printer and the publisher.
- Section 171H of the Indian Penal Code prohibits incurring expenditure on, inter alia, advertisement without the authority of the contesting candidate.

Conclusion

According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's most recent poll, there are over 20 crore internet users in India and more than 18 crore mobile and cell phone internet users, with the

majority of them falling between the ages of 18 and 35. There are roughly 10 crore voters between the ages of 18 and 23 who are casting their first vote. According to a report titled "Social Media Impact on the Tamil Nadu Election 2016" released by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and The Campaign 360, about 92% of social media users in Tamil Nadu are following the election on social channels, with 28% of the 234 constituencies likely to see netizens play a significant role in determining the winner. Thus, social media is very important for influencing the general public during elections. People's capacity for political involvement and political understanding are all impacted by the usage of social media for political purposes. The political parties use these social media pages to connect with the people and update them about their welfare activities, as well as to compete with their rival parties. Social media is also helping to bring out a new way through which people can share information, search, and increase their awareness. It is thus creating more awareness about the election but also having a negative impact on youngsters and first-time voters. Thus, it has a very meaningful as well as a positive impact as it increases the voting percentage during elections, but it also has a negative impact.



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