

# Digital Catalysts for Change: Evaluating the Influence of Social Media Engagement on Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) Among Youth in the Panvel-Tehsil Corridor

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**Abstract:** *The rapid "rurban" transformation of the Panvel-Tehsil corridor provides a unique socio-economic landscape to study digital civic engagement. While social media penetration is extensive, the extent to which it fosters Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) among youth remains under-researched, particularly regarding the influence of socio-economic disparities. This study evaluates how social media engagement influences ISR behaviors in youth aged 18–35. It examines the moderating role of socio-economic characteristics—including residential location (urban vs. rural), household income, and educational attainment—on digital social action. A mixed-methods research design was employed, utilizing a structured bilingual (English-Marathi) questionnaire. Data was collected from a stratified sample of respondents across urban hubs like New Panvel and surrounding rural village pockets. Statistical tools, including Pearson Correlation and T-Tests, were utilized to analyze the cognitive and cognitive dimensions of ISR. This study confirms that social media is a significant catalyst for ISR, though the nature of action is socio-economically contingent. Urban youth predominantly focus on digital advocacy and global awareness, whereas rural youth utilize platforms for localized community mobilization and resource sharing. Notably, education level emerged as a stronger predictor of "Responsible Digital Citizenship" (fact-checking) than geographical location. Social media effectively bridges the gap between awareness and action in the Panvel region. However, maximizing this potential requires digital literacy initiatives tailored to the region's specific socio-economic realities. The findings offer a strategic framework for leveraging localized digital networks for regional social development.*

**Keywords:** Individual Social Responsibility (ISR), Social Media Influence, Panvel-Tehsil, Youth Engagement, Rurban Dynamics.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of the digital landscape has fundamentally transformed how individuals engage with societal issues. In the contemporary era, Individual Social Responsibility (ISR)—defined as the voluntary commitment of individuals toward societal welfare—has increasingly been shaped by social media engagement. This transformation is particularly evident in emerging "rurban" corridors such as the Panvel-Tehsil region, where traditional rural frameworks intersect with rapid urban development. Social media has become a powerful force influencing the attitudes, behaviors, and social consciousness of youth. With the expansion of internet accessibility and technological advancement, young individuals—often referred to as "digital natives"—are deeply embedded in online environments that shape not only their communication patterns but also their values and perceptions of responsibility toward society.



In India, platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter) have become integral to everyday life, significantly transforming how youth access information, express opinions, and engage with social issues.

The influence of social media on youth in India is particularly significant due to the country's large and diverse demographic composition. Existing studies suggest that social media usage has reshaped cultural values, social interactions, and behavioral patterns among young individuals, thereby altering their understanding of social norms and responsibilities. Consequently, it becomes essential to examine whether digital engagement translates into meaningful socially responsible behavior. Beyond its role in entertainment, social media functions as a platform for civic engagement and awareness. It exposes youth to social causes, public issues, and community-driven initiatives, thereby contributing to the development of ISR. Furthermore, these platforms facilitate digital citizenship by enabling participation in discussions, mobilization of resources, and support for social movements. However, the impact of social media remains dual in nature. While it encourages awareness, activism, and participation, it may also lead to misinformation, superficial engagement (commonly referred to as "clicktivism"), and limited real-world action.

The region is undergoing rapid transformation driven by major infrastructure developments such as the Navi Mumbai International Airport and the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL). The Panvel-Tehsil corridor provides a relevant context for examining these dynamics due to its strategic location within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). This growth has resulted in a diverse youth population characterized by varying socio-economic backgrounds, ranging from urban professionals in New Panvel to agriculturally dependent youth in surrounding rural areas.

In this context, social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook have evolved into tools for communication, awareness, and social mobilization. However, the presence of a digital divide remains a critical factor influencing the extent and nature of engagement. Differences in income levels, educational attainment, and geographic location affect both access to digital platforms and the quality of socially responsible actions undertaken by youth. This study aims to examine whether social media engagement serves as a catalyst for meaningful social responsibility among youth in the Panvel-Tehsil corridor. Specifically, it seeks to explore whether variations in socio-economic and geographic contexts influence how youth perceive and practice ISR. By addressing these aspects, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital platforms can be leveraged to foster responsible citizenship and sustainable social development.

## **II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

- To examine the relationship between social media engagement and the level of ISR awareness among youth in the Panvel-Tehsil corridor.
- To compare the differences in types of ISR activities undertaken by urban and rural youth through social media platforms.
- To analyze the influence of educational attainment on fact-checking behavior and the ability to verify fake news among youth.
- To assess whether social media acts as an effective catalyst in transforming awareness into socially responsible actions among youth.

## **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**A. Research Design:** Convergent Parallel Mixed-Methods Design was employed. This allowed for the simultaneous collection of quantitative data (to test hypotheses) and qualitative data (to understand the "why" behind the numbers).

### **B. Sampling and Data Collection**

A total of 400 respondents were surveyed using a stratified random sampling technique.

- Strata 1 (Urban, n=200): New Panvel, Kamothe, Kalamboli, Kharghar.
- Strata 2 (Rural/Tehsil, n=200): Shedung, Gulsunde, Pale, Ajivali.



**Demographics:** All respondents were aged 18–35, with a balanced gender ratio (52% Male, 48% Female).

### C. Statistical Framework

The data was cleaned and analyzed using SPSS. Three primary tests were applied:

1. Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r): To test the strength of the relationship between engagement and awareness.
2. Independent Samples T-Test: To compare the means of Urban and Rural groups.
3. One-Way ANOVA: To determine the influence of education levels on digital literacy.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 4.1 Testing Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>): Social Media as an Awareness Catalyst

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>): There is no significant relationship between social media engagement and ISR awareness.

Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>): Increased social media engagement leads to higher ISR awareness.

Statistical Proof: The Pearson Correlation test was performed on "Time Spent on Platforms" vs. "Score on Local Issue Awareness."

- Result:  $r = 0.58$
- Significance:  $p < 0.01$

Interpretation: An  $r$  value of 0.58 indicates a moderate-to-strong positive correlation. This statistically proves that social media is a digital "Town Square" for Panvel. For every unit increase in purposeful digital engagement, there is a corresponding rise in awareness regarding regional issues like CIDCO water management or local MIDC pollution. We reject the Null Hypothesis.

### 4.2 Testing Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>): The Urban-Rural Behavioral Divide

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>): There is no difference in the type of ISR action taken by urban and rural youth.

Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>): Geographic location significantly influences the nature of ISR engagement.

Statistical Proof (T-Test): A T-test was conducted to compare "Systemic Advocacy" (tagging authorities) vs. "Mutual Aid" (community mobilization).

Group	N	Mean (Advocacy)	Mean (Mobilization)	P-Value
Urban	200	4.32	2.15	< 0.05
Rural	200	2.45	4.58	< 0.05

**Interpretation:** The T-test shows a significant variance ( $p < 0.05$ ). Urban youth in New Panvel utilize "Top-Down Advocacy," feeling more empowered to tag the PMC or CIDCO on X (Twitter). Rural youth in the Tehsil villages prioritize "Horizontal Mutual Aid," using WhatsApp for resource sharing and local crisis management. The "Rurban" corridor is thus divided not by intent, but by methodology.

### 4.3 Testing Hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>): Education vs. Geography in Fact-Checking

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>): Geography is the main predictor of the ability to verify fake news.

Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>3</sub>): Education level is a stronger predictor of fact-checking behavior than location.

Statistical Proof (One-Way ANOVA): We compared three education groups across both urban and rural zones: Secondary, Undergraduate, and Postgraduate.

- F-Ratio: 12.84
- Significance:  $p < 0.001$



**Interpretation:** The ANOVA results show that education is the dominant variable. A postgraduate student in a remote Tehsil village (Shedung) had a higher fact-checking score (Mean = 4.7) than an undergraduate in New Panvel (Mean = 3.2). This proves that cognitive training is the primary defense against misinformation, regardless of the "Rurban" divide.

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Metric/Result	SPSS Output Interpretation
H1: Engagement → Awareness	Pearson Correlation (r)	r = 0.58	Positive Linear Relationship
H2: Location → Action Type	Independent Samples T-Test	t-stat = 6.24 (p < 0.05)	Significant Group Differences
H3: Education → Fact-Checking	One-Way ANOVA	F-ratio = 12.84 (p < 0.001)	Significant Variance by Group

## V. DISCUSSION: THE "AWARENESS – ACTION GAP"

While the statistical tests prove that social media drives awareness, the qualitative analysis of the 400 responses reveals a significant hurdle: The Trust Deficit.

- **Slacktivism:** 65% of respondents "Shared" a social cause, but only 12% "Volunteered" physically.
- **Barriers:** The most cited barrier (40%) was a lack of trust in digital authenticity. Youth are afraid that their digital efforts are "shouting into a void" or that online NGOs are fraudulent.
- **Infrastructure Impact:** In Panvel, the "Action Gap" is also physical. Urban youth cited a lack of organized civic groups to join, while rural youth cited a lack of digital responsiveness from local government bodies.

## VI. CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Summary

The Panvel-Tehsil corridor is at a crossroads. Social media has democratized information, but it has not yet fully democratized social action. This study proves that while the "Digital Town Square" is active, it requires institutional validation to convert "Likes" into "Impact."

### 6.2 Strategic Recommendations

1. **PMC Digital Hubs:** The Panvel Municipal Corporation should establish "Verified Digital Grievance Cells." When a youth tags an authority, a "Verified Response" should be issued to close the trust loop.
2. **Bilingual Media Literacy:** Education is the key. Local colleges in Kharghar and Panvel must implement mandatory Marathi-English media literacy modules focused on identifying "Rurban" misinformation.
3. **Localized Gamification:** NGOs should use "Digital Badges" for offline actions. For example, a youth who participates in a Gadi River cleanup should receive a digital certificate shareable on Instagram, leveraging "Subjective Norms" to drive real-world ISR.

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**Appendix: Data Summary Table for the 400 Respondents**

Metric	Urban (New Panvel/Kamothe)	Rural (Shedung/Gulsunde)	Total Average
Primary Platform	Instagram / X	WhatsApp / Facebook	-
Avg. Daily Usage	4.2 Hours	3.5 Hours	3.85 Hours
Awareness Score (1-5)	4.1	3.6	3.85
Fact-Checking Score	3.4	3.2	3.3
Trust in Gov. Apps	22%	45%	33.5%

