

# Indian Journal of Modern Research and Reviews

This Journal is a member of the '*Committee on Publication Ethics*'

Online ISSN:2584-184X



## Research Article

# From Digital Distraction to Social Capital: Repurposing Social Media for Family-Led Sustainable Development in India @2047

**Umanath Singh**

Ph.D., Research Scholar, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication,  
Shri Khushal Das University, Hanumangarh, Rajasthan, India

**Corresponding Author:** \*Umanath Singh

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19706568>

### Abstract

As India marches toward the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, the family unit remains the bedrock of its socio-economic stability. However, the rapid proliferation of digital platforms has introduced a paradox. While enhancing global connectivity, it has often led to 'digital distraction' and the fragmentation of traditional family values. This paper, rooted in my PhD topic- 'Impact of Social Media on Family Values: A Study', transitions from a problem-centric analysis to a solution-oriented pathway for sustainable development.

The study argues that social media must be repurposed from a tool of passive consumption into a catalyst for Social Capital. By integrating primary data on changing familial interactions, the research identifies three transformative pathways for 2047. First, the Socio-Economic Pathway explores how family-led digital entrepreneurship can drive inclusive growth. Second, the Linguistic Pathway demonstrates social media's potential to preserve vernacular heritage and transmit intergenerational values, ensuring that technological progress does not lead to cultural erosion. Third, the Scientific Pathway proposes a framework for 'Value-Based Algorithmic Ethics' to safeguard mental well-being and domestic cohesion of the Indian society.

The findings suggest that treating social media as Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for households in India could enable more effective leverage of the 'Demographic Dividend'. The paper concludes that the sustainable transformation of India @2047 depends not only on technological adoption but also on the strategic re-bonding of the Indian family in the digital age. It provides policy recommendations for 'Family-Centric Digital Literacy' to ensure that the impact of social media shifts from eroding values to fortifying India's social fabric.

### Manuscript Information

- **ISSN No:** 2584-184X
- **Received:** 01-01-2026
- **Accepted:** 29-03-2026
- **Published:** 23-04-2026
- **MRR:**4(SP1); 2026: 138-143
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- **Plagiarism Checked:** Yes
- **Peer Review Process:** Yes

### How to Cite this Article

Singh U. From Digital Distraction to Social Capital: Repurposing Social Media for Family-Led Sustainable Development in India @2047. Indian J Mod Res Rev. 2026;4(SP1): 138-143.

### Access this Article Online



[www.mrrjournal.in](http://www.mrrjournal.in)

**KEYWORDS:** Social Media, Family Values, Social Capital, Viksit Bharat 2047, Sustainable Development, Digital Public Infrastructure

## 1. INTRODUCTION

India aims to become a developed nation by 2047, marking 100 years of independence through the Viksit Bharat @2047 vision. This vision highlights economic growth, technological progress, and global competitiveness, but its long-term success depends on social unity and cultural continuity. The Indian family, seen as the primary source of values, emotional support and resilience, is central to this foundation.

Over the past two decades, digital technologies and social media have transformed daily life in many ways. Social media has shifted how people communicate, spend their free time, work, and connect with others across generations. While these platforms make it easier to stay connected and find information, they also pose challenges for families, such as reduced face-to-face interaction, shorter attention spans, and increased screen time. This digital distraction has raised concerns about the erosion of family values and the weakening of intergenerational bonds.

## RESEARCH GAPS

Existing academic literature primarily focuses on the adverse psychological, social, and behavioural effects of social media, particularly among children and young people. While these concerns are essential, they provide little guidance on how to use digital platforms to support national growth. This paper aims to fill that gap by examining social media as a potential source of social capital when used in family-centred ways. Drawing on findings from a doctoral study on social media and family values, the paper presents a new framework that links digital use to the Sustainable Development Goals and the broader vision for India @2047.

## Conceptual Framework & Theoretical Anchoring

This paper draws on an interdisciplinary framework that integrates ideas from sociology, family studies, digital media research, and development theory. Here, social media is understood as more than technology; it is also a social space in which people shape norms, values, and relationships.

The concept of social capital is central to the discussion. Social capital refers to the networks, norms, trust, and reciprocal relationships that enable collective action and social cooperation. Within the family context, social capital manifests as bonding capital, characterised by emotional closeness and mutual support, and bridging capital, which connects families to wider communities and opportunities.

Family systems theory offers another perspective, viewing the family as a connected unit in which changes in one area, such as digital habits, can affect relationships, roles, and values. In terms of development, sustainable development is seen as a process that includes economic growth, social inclusion, cultural continuity, and well-being.

This paper also extends the concept of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), commonly used in Indian governance and services, to the household level. If digital platforms are treated as shared resources guided by ethics and collective

responsibility, they can support public and developmental goals, not just commercial ones.

Social capital, encompassing bonding, bridging, and linking dimensions, is deeply embedded in family values within the Indian socio-cultural context, where trust, reciprocity, and collective responsibility are central. This study is theoretically anchored in Social Capital Theory, Family Systems Theory, Digital Sociology, and the Sustainable Development framework. Together, these perspectives inform a conceptual model in which social media influences family practices, thereby generating social capital that ultimately contributes to sustainable development.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Scholarly research on social media and family life presents a complex and often contradictory picture. Numerous studies document the negative consequences of excessive social media use, including reduced family interaction, attention deficits, anxiety, and intergenerational conflict. Research focusing on adolescents highlights issues such as social comparison, cyber dependency, and diminished parental influence.

At the same time, emerging literature recognises the potential of digital media to maintain relationships, particularly in geographically dispersed families. Social media has been shown to facilitate emotional support, shared experiences, and collective identity formation when used purposefully. Studies on social capital further suggest that digital networks can complement rather than replace offline relationships.

However, there remains a significant research gap in understanding how the family can actively leverage social media to achieve development-oriented outcomes. Most analyses remain individual-centric and problem-focused, offering limited insight into how family-led digital practices can contribute to broader socio-economic and cultural goals. This paper addresses this gap by integrating perspectives on family, social capital, and development within the specific context of India's 2047 vision.

## 3. METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

This paper draws from my larger doctoral research project called 'Impact of Social Media on Family Values: A Study.' The research included surveys, interviews, and observations. We collected data from families of different ages and socio-economic backgrounds to examine how they use social media, interact with one another, and notice changes in their values.

In this paper, we focus on interpreting and developing ideas rather than only presenting statistics. We synthesise the findings to identify patterns and insights that could inform policy and support long-term national growth. During the research, we adhered to strict ethical guidelines, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and respecting family relationships.

#### 4. FINDINGS & INTERPRETIVE INSIGHTS

The study's findings indicate that digital distraction has become a routine feature of contemporary family life. Increased screen time, individualised media consumption, and algorithm-driven content have reduced opportunities for shared activities and meaningful conversation within households. Parents and children alike report difficulties in balancing online engagement with family responsibilities.

However, the data also reveal that families are not uniformly passive or vulnerable to digital disruption. Many households actively negotiate digital boundaries, adopt shared norms for technology use, and explore collaborative online activities. These practices suggest that the impact of social media on family values is not predetermined but contingent upon patterns of use, regulation, and collective orientation.

Contemporary family life increasingly reflects patterns of digital distraction, including excessive screen time, individualised media consumption, and reduced face-to-face interaction. However, alongside these challenges, there is a simultaneous emergence of digital bonding practices within households. Families are engaging in shared online activities such as collective content creation, digital entrepreneurship, and cultural participation through social media platforms. These practices foster cooperation, skill-sharing, and intergenerational interaction. The evidence indicates that families are not merely passive victims of digital disruption but possess significant agency to negotiate, regulate, and repurpose digital technologies. When guided by shared values and digital literacy, families can actively transform social media into a resource that strengthens relationships, builds social capital, and supports sustainable development.

##### Three Transformative Pathways for India @2047

Building on empirical insights derived from the doctoral study and supported by contemporary scholarship on digital society, this paper proposes three interrelated transformative pathways through which social media can be repurposed from a source of digital distraction into a generator of social capital and a driver of sustainable development. These pathways- socio-economic, linguistic-cultural, and scientific-ethical situate the Indian family at the centre of digital transformation and align with the long-term developmental vision of Viksit Bharat @2047. Rather than treating technology as an autonomous force, the framework emphasises socially embedded, value-oriented, and family-led digital engagement.

##### Socio-Economic Pathway: Family-Led Digital Participation and Inclusive Growth-

Today, social media platforms constitute robust economic ecosystems that extend far beyond entertainment and communication. They enable entrepreneurship, market access, skill development, and alternative livelihoods, particularly for populations traditionally excluded from formal economic structures. Within the Indian context, the family emerges as a critical socio-economic unit

capable of collectively leveraging social media for productive purposes.

Family-led digital entrepreneurship includes home-based businesses, small-scale online retail, content creation, local services, agri-marketing, and creative industries such as handicrafts, food enterprises, and cultural products. Social media platforms facilitate low-entry barriers to markets, enabling families to pool skills, labour, and resources while sharing economic risks. Empirical observations from the study suggest that when digital economic activities are undertaken collectively within families, they foster trust, cooperation, and interdependence-key components of bonding social capital.

This pathway holds particular significance for women and youth. Social media-based enterprises allow women to balance domestic responsibilities with income generation, thereby enhancing financial autonomy and social recognition. Youth contribute digital skills and innovation, while elders provide experience, cultural knowledge, and moral guidance, resulting in intergenerational collaboration. Such family-based economic engagement strengthens resilience against financial shocks and reduces dependence on precarious employment.

From a development perspective, this model aligns with inclusive growth by decentralising economic opportunity and reducing spatial and social inequalities. Family-led digital entrepreneurship complements national initiatives such as Digital India, Startup India, and Skill India, while simultaneously reinforcing family cohesion. Thus, social media, when strategically repurposed, can function as a catalyst for socio-economic empowerment grounded in family solidarity rather than individualistic competition.

##### Linguistic and Cultural Pathway: Preserving Heritage and Strengthening Identity:

India's cultural and linguistic diversity constitutes a vital dimension of its social capital. However, the dominance of homogenised, commercially driven digital content poses challenges to vernacular languages, traditional knowledge systems, and indigenous cultural expressions. The study indicates that excessive consumption of standardised digital media can contribute to cultural dilution and weaken intergenerational value transmission within families.

At the same time, social media platforms also provide unprecedented opportunities for cultural preservation and revitalisation. Families can actively participate in creating, sharing, and curating content rooted in local languages, traditions, rituals, folklore, and lived experiences. Such practices transform families from passive consumers into active cultural producers within the digital ecosystem.

Intergenerational storytelling, shared religious or cultural practices, and documentation of family histories through digital media reinforce continuity and belonging. When elders transmit narratives and values using digital tools familiar to younger generations, cultural knowledge becomes more accessible and relevant. This process strengthens bonding social capital within

families while also generating bridging capital by connecting cultural communities across regions and diasporas.

The linguistic pathway is significant in the context of Viksit Bharat @2047, as sustainable development must be culturally inclusive. Development divorced from cultural roots risks social alienation and identity erosion. By repurposing social media as a platform for vernacular expression and cultural affirmation, families contribute to social cohesion, pluralism, and mutual respect. This approach ensures that technological progress complements rather than compromises India's civilizational diversity.

**Scientific and Ethical Pathway: Value-Based Algorithmic Ethics and Digital Well-Being:** The rapid expansion of algorithm-driven social media has raised serious concerns regarding attention economies, mental health, privacy, and ethical governance. Algorithms increasingly shape what individuals see, think, and engage with, often prioritising sensationalism, polarisation, and prolonged screen engagement. The study highlights that unregulated digital environments can disrupt family harmony, intensify intergenerational conflict, and contribute to emotional stress and digital dependency.

In response, this paper advocates for a scientific and ethical pathway grounded in value-based algorithmic ethics. This approach calls for integrating ethical principles—such as well-being, responsibility, balance, and social harmony—into the design, regulation, and use of digital platforms. Families play a crucial role in operationalizing these values through everyday digital practices, norms, and collective decision-making.

Family-led digital regulation includes setting shared boundaries for screen time, encouraging mindful consumption, and fostering critical digital literacy. Parents and elders serve not merely as regulators but as ethical guides who model responsible digital behavior. Youth, in turn, contribute technological awareness and adaptability, creating a reciprocal learning environment within families.

At the policy level, this pathway underscores the need for platform accountability, transparent algorithms, and safeguards for mental health and family life. Ethical digital governance must move beyond individual user responsibility to recognise families as collective stakeholders in the digital ecosystem. This aligns with broader scientific discourse on responsible innovation and human-centred technology.

By embedding ethical considerations into both digital design and domestic practices, social media can support psychological well-being, emotional resilience, and domestic cohesion. Such an approach ensures that technological advancement contributes to human development rather than undermining it.

**Integrative Significance of the Three Pathways:** Taken together, the socio-economic, linguistic-cultural, and scientific-ethical pathways form a holistic framework for repurposing social media as a generator of social capital. These pathways are mutually reinforcing: economic empowerment strengthens cultural confidence, cultural rootedness supports ethical

engagement, and ethical digital practices enhance sustainable economic participation. At the centre of this framework lies the family as a mediating institution between technology and society.

In the context of India @2047, sustainable development cannot be achieved solely through infrastructure expansion or technological adoption. It requires a socially embedded digital transformation that strengthens families, communities, and shared values. By repositioning social media within a family-centric developmental framework, India can harness its demographic dividend while preserving social cohesion and cultural continuity.

### Social Media as Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

In India, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) facilitates access to services, information, and opportunities through digital tools. To date, DPI has primarily focused on governance systems, including digital identity, financial inclusion, and service delivery. This paper argues that social media, when well managed and connected to society, can also serve as a Digital Public Infrastructure for families and communities.

Seen this way, social media is more than a space for business or entertainment. It is a shared digital space that shapes how people communicate, trust one another, and collaborate. When families use social media thoughtfully and positively, these platforms help build social ties by supporting networks, shared values, and mutual support. Using social media as a family can facilitate information sharing, problem-solving, learning about civic issues, and participation in the digital economy and culture.

Thinking of social media as DPI shows the importance. Viewing social media through the lens of DPI highlights the need for ethical management, easy access, and accountability. Like other public infrastructure, social media should protect mental health, data privacy, and family well-being. Policies that promote digital literacy, equitable access, and transparent algorithms are essential to ensure that digital tools bring people together rather than divide them. In the digital world, social media as a digital platform can help India make the most of its young population. This idea aligns with the larger goal of Viksit Bharat @2047, which emphasises that lasting progress in the digital age relies not just on technology but also on strong social institutions that support everyone's growth.

Extending Digital Public Infrastructure beyond governance to households positions families as active agents of development. Through digital literacy, families can harness the demographic dividend and strengthen social trust networks. This family-centric digital engagement aligns with national missions, including Digital India, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The reconceptualisation of social media as a tool for generating social capital and supporting family-led sustainable development carries significant policy implications for India's

journey toward Viksit Bharat @2047. First, digital policy frameworks must move beyond an individual-centric approach and explicitly recognise the family as a critical unit of digital engagement. National digital literacy initiatives should therefore adopt a family-centric orientation, addressing ethical use, intergenerational communication, mental well-being, and responsible content consumption alongside technical skills.

Second, policymakers should encourage platforms to incorporate value-based and family-friendly design features, including transparent algorithms, culturally sensitive content moderation mechanisms, and tools that promote balanced screen time. Regulatory frameworks must emphasise platform accountability for the social impacts of digital technologies, particularly on family cohesion and psychological health.

Third, support should be extended to family-led digital entrepreneurship through targeted incentives, training programs, and access to digital markets, especially for women and youth. Integrating social media-based economic activities with existing schemes such as Digital India and Skill India can enhance inclusive growth.

Finally, community-level digital initiatives should be promoted to preserve linguistic diversity and cultural heritage through vernacular content creation. Collectively, these policy measures can ensure that social media strengthens India's social fabric while contributing meaningfully to sustainable development in the digital age.

## 5. CONCLUSION

As India advances toward the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, the challenge lies not merely in expanding digital access but in ensuring that digital technologies reinforce social cohesion and human well-being. This paper has demonstrated that social media, when repurposed through family-led, value-oriented practices, can transition from a source of digital distraction to a generator of social capital. By strengthening family bonds, preserving cultural continuity, and promoting ethical digital engagement, social media can contribute meaningfully to sustainable development. Ultimately, India's digital future depends on aligning technological progress with the resilience and values of its families.

The shift from digital distraction to social capital requires reorienting social media from passive, individual consumption toward purposeful, collective engagement. When families adopt value-based digital practices, online platforms can strengthen trust, cooperation, and shared identity. Recognising the family as the core unit of sustainable development ensures that digital progress reinforces social cohesion, resilience, and inclusive growth.

India @2047 demands the convergence of technological advancement with deep cultural anchoring and strong social cohesion. Sustainable national progress cannot be achieved through technology alone; it requires the conscious re-bonding of the Indian family in the digital age, ensuring that innovation strengthens relationships, values, and collective responsibility at the core of society.

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