

# Role of Social Media Literacy in Improving the Cybersecurity Measures: A Case Study in India

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51583/IJLTEMAS.2026.150300124>

Received: 01 April 2026; 06 April 2026; Published: 24 April 2026

## ABSTRACT

In the modern world social media literacy plays a significant role in enhancing cybersecurity measures specifically in India. Background information regarding the research topic has been discussed effectively along with highlighting the aim, objectives along with research questions that reflect as a foundation of the research. Besides this, lack of digital literacy in rural and urban areas of India has been discussed as an issue. In-depth literature review along with thematic implications such as “Protection Motivation Theory (PMT)” and “Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)” has also been illustrated in this research. Furthermore, the selection of “secondary data collection method” along with expected outcome has also been discussed in this report.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Literacy, Cybersecurity, Phishing, Cyberbullying, India Scams, Privacy, Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Research

Social media literacy reflects a crucial role in improving cybersecurity measures with the help of enabling users to recognize threats as well as practice safer online habits. Based on the ideas of Syafitri et al. (2022), social media literacy assists to empower individuals to become the initial stage of defence against social engineering attacks along with other malicious activities that are prevalent on these platforms. Besides this, literate users can effectively distinguish legitimate communications from the phishing scams. In addition to this, phishing scams often use social media in order to trick people into revealing sensitive information and in some cases clicking malicious links. It can be noted that the present generation are trained to scrutinize the URLs, check for grammatical errors as well as verify the sender's identity, which is one of the noteworthy approaches to avoid cyberattacks (Almoussa and Anwar, 2023). Apprehending ways regarding information spread along with can be manipulated on social media assists users avoid falling victim in order to targeted disinformation campaigns that might be designed to spread malware or influence opinions.

### Aim and Objectives

#### Aim

The aim of this research is to analyse the role of social media literacy in improving the cybersecurity measures in India.

## Objectives

- To analyse the significance of social media literacy in enhancing cybersecurity measures in India
- To evaluate the role and impact of social media literacy in improving cybersecurity measures in India
- To identify the challenges prevailing in social media literacy and its influence on cybersecurity measures in India
- To access recommendations to combat challenges related to social media literacy and improving cybersecurity measures in India

## Research Questions

**Q1:** What is the significance of social media literacy in enhancing cybersecurity measures in India?

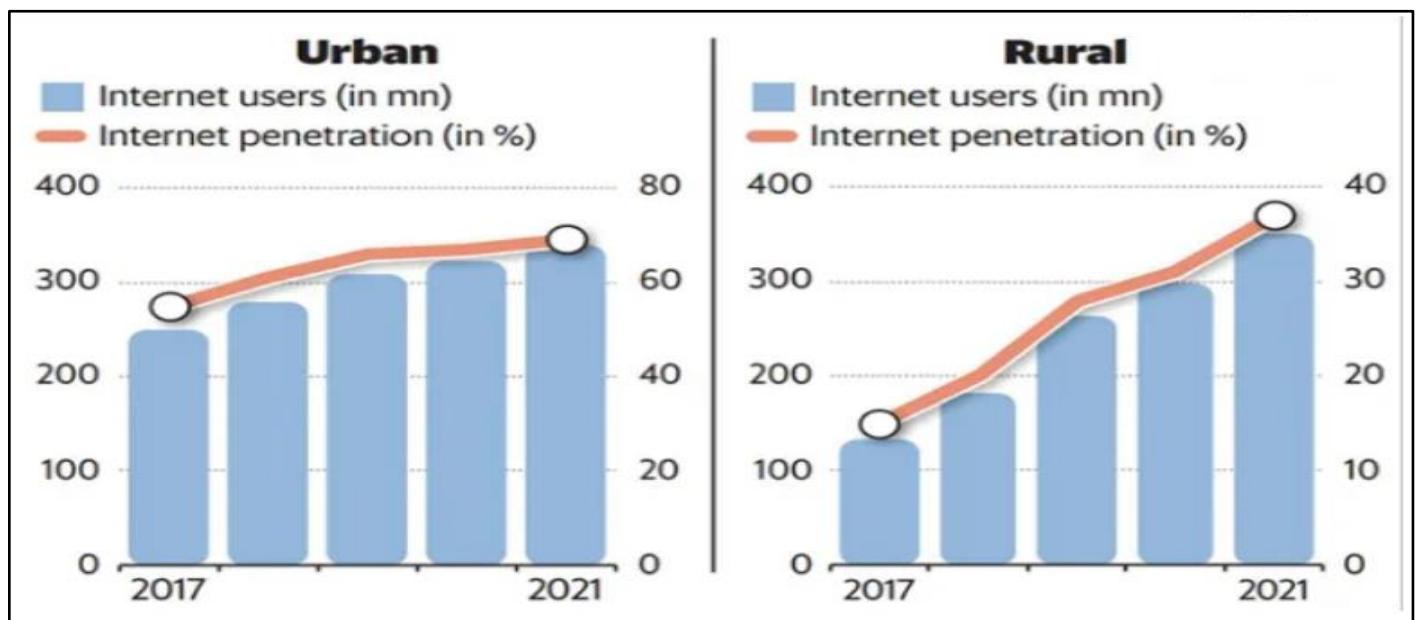
**Q2:** What is the role of social media literacy and how does it impact cybersecurity measures in India?

**Q3:** What are the challenges prevailing in social media literacy and its influence on cybersecurity measures in India?

**Q4:** What are the recommendations to overcome challenges related to social media literacy and improving cybersecurity measures in India?

## Research Rationale and Significance

Based on the reports India’s digital population has rapidly increased over the past decade, crossing “800 million active internet users in 2025” (statista.com, 2025). This reflects that the internet penetration rate in India is increasing at an extensive rate that reflects issues in the cybersecurity attributes due to lack of social media literacy among the people in India. The other reports have revealed that cybersecurity incidents have increased from “10.29 lakh in 2022 to 22.68 lakh” in India in 2024 (pib.gov.in, 2025). In this regard, increasing cybersecurity incidents in India reflect threats for its effective usage and pose multiple concerns such as spread of misinformation and others.

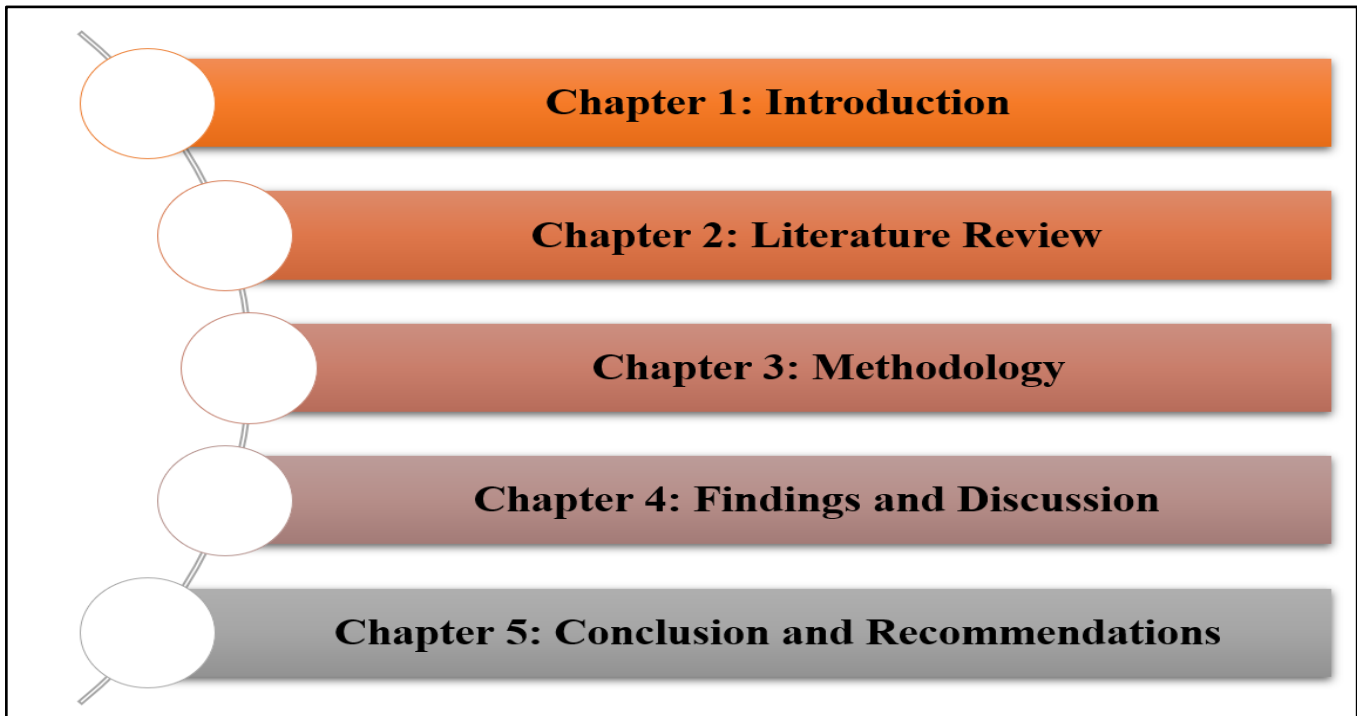


**Figure 1: Internet penetration in India in the rural and urban areas**

(Source: medium.com, 2025)

Internet penetration rate in the rural areas of India is increasing compared to urban areas (medium.com, 2025). However, only “38% of Indian households” are digitally literate along with this the situation is much worse in the rural areas that can reflect cybersecurity issues (medium.com, 2025). The respective research is significant as it assists to address the increasing gap between the rise of social media, the linked cyber threats as well as the ability of users' to protect themselves. The research can be helpful for developing practical strategies in order to protect individuals as well as organisations, improving public awareness, reducing cybersecurity incidents such as phishing, data theft and malware followed by informing curriculum and policy development.

### Dissertation Structure



**Figure 2: Structure of the dissertation**

(Source: Self-Created)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Importance of social media literacy in India

Based on the ideas of Salleh et al. (2023), social media literacy is significant in order to combat the spread of misinformation, protect citizens from online risks such as scams and cyberbullying followed by fostering responsible digital citizenship. Improvement in literacy empowers individuals to effectively evaluate online content, verify information, recognize bias and protect privacy in India. On the other hand Sugeng (2022), stated that social media literacy helps to protect users from privacy risks, cyberbullying and scams, specifically young people along with the elderly. Beside this, it fosters critical thinking skills that allows users to identify hidden agendas, question the source of information along with avoiding falling for manipulation tactics. Furthermore, social media literacy assists to encourage users to not only consume media critically yet to create as well as share content in a respectful and ethical manner.

### Advantages of social media literacy in Cyber-crime prevention

According to Agbaka (2024), stated that social media literacy assists to prevent cybercrime with the help of empowering users to identify as well as avoid scams, use privacy settings effectively and protect personal information. The noteworthy advantages include avoiding oversharing, recognizing phishing attempts, comprehending the risks of public Wi-Fi along with grasping knowledge to report cybercrimes along with

protecting legal rights online. However, Currie and Kelly (2022), mentioned that literacy can aid users to recognize and reject suspicious friend requests as well as messages on the social media platforms. Additionally, these are common tactics for initiating “social engineering attacks” such as identity and phishing theft. Apart from this, it encourages users to create strong passwords, regularly audit privacy settings in order to control the preview of information and avoid sharing personal details excessively. Collier et al. (2022), revealed that users can learn legal rights online along with ways to report cybercrimes to authorities that can be helpful to avoid future attacks. Furthermore, social media literacy is an effective method to combat cyberbullying by understanding and managing online interactions better.

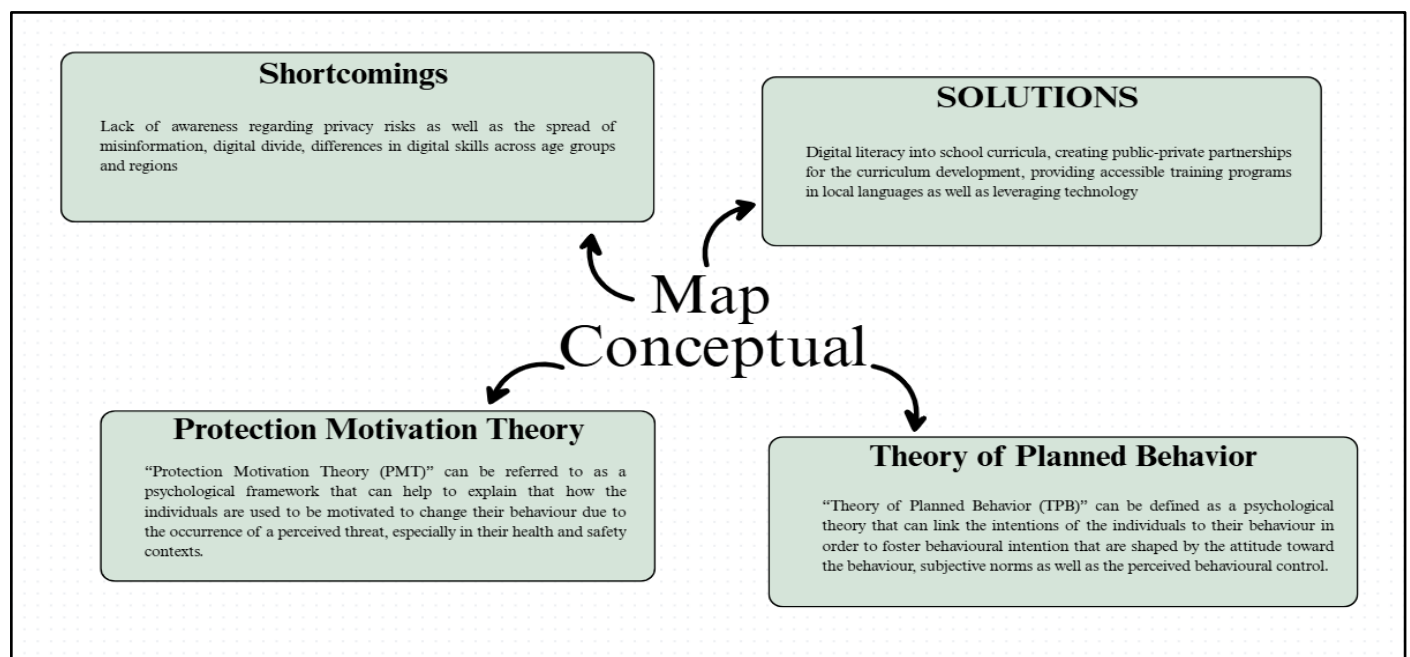
### Shortcomings in increasing social media literacy in India

Sugeng et al. (2024), revealed that lack of awareness regarding privacy risks as well as the spread of misinformation. Additionally, these are exacerbated by regional disparities along with the rapid, unregulated growth of digital space. In contrast Afzal et al. (2023), the digital divide reflects differences in digital skills across age groups as well as regions along with this limited ability of educators in order to keep pace with technological changes that can further hinder progress. Besides this, some of the users lack the skills in order to critically recognize or evaluate content regarding addictive patterns in platform design that can lead to negative consequences for productivity and mental health.

### Solutions to increase social media literacy in India

Yu et al. (2024), stated that integrating digital literacy into school curricula, creating public-private partnerships for the curriculum development, providing accessible training programs in local languages as well as leveraging technology for education and fact-checking can be helpful. In contrast, Lähdesmäki and Maunula (2023), empowering educators, involving parents and communities along with building a national media literacy mission with the integration of policy support as well as certifications can be helpful. Furthermore, expanding internet connectivity along with establishing digital learning centres, specifically in rural areas in India can be beneficial. Moreover, social media literacy in India with developing different programmes to enhance knowledge of people that can shed a positive impact in improving the cybersecurity.

### Conceptual framework



**Figure 3: Conceptual framework**

(Source: Self-Created)

## Theoretical underpinning

### Protection Motivation Theory (PMT)

As per the study of Ezati Rad et al. (2021) it has been highlighted that the “Protection Motivation Theory (PMT)” can be referred to as a psychological framework that can help to explain that how the individuals are used to be motivated to change their behaviour due to the occurrence of a perceived threat, especially in their health and safety contexts. In this context, the appraisals of PMT can ultimately help the individuals to build their motivation as well as to adopt a protective behaviour (Estebansari et al., 2023). Therefore, it can be summarised that the appraisals of PMT can help the residents of India to build social media literacy and to prevent cyber-crime activities.

### Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

As per the study of Kachkar and Djafri, (2022) it has been evaluated that the “Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)” can be defined as a psychological theory that can link the intentions of the individuals to their behaviour in order to foster behavioural intention that are shaped by the attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms as well as the perceived behavioural control. In this context, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) can be significantly applied to the social media literacy contexts along with the utilisation of 3 constructs such as attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control in order to predict the intentions toward the responsible social media use. In addition to these, the positive attitude toward being media literate, immense social support for it from their peers and family along with the belief that the individuals have the capability to use social media responsibly can potentially increase the behavioural intention and subsequent action of them to be literate online (Jiang et al., 2024). Therefore, the TPB framework can also help the individuals to inform the core interventions in order to improve their digital behaviours such as the identification of the risks and promotion of a healthier habit.

### Literature gap

In some of the literature there was lack of information regarding the social media literacy attributes specific to India. Apart from this, there was limited knowledge regarding the different challenges that are prevailing due to lack of social media literacy such as cybersecurity issues. Beside this, lack of theoretical underpinning some of the literatures reflected challenges in understanding the context effectively.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Philosophy

The researcher will conduct the research by following the “interpretivism research philosophy” in order to highlight the effect of social media literacy in India. As per the opinion of Pervin and Mokhtar, (2022) it has been highlighted that “interpretivism researcher philosophy” can be supremely facilitating for the researchers to hypothetically conduct the research based on subjective experiences. In addition to these, the study of Junjie and Yingxin, (2022) has also demonstrated that the “interpretivism research philosophy” can provide sufficient flexibility to the researcher that can be helpful for the researchers to conduct research with their own inputs.

### Research approach

The researcher will surely focus on the implication of “deductive research approach” in this present research. As per the study of Hall et al. (2023) it has been reflected that the consideration of the “deductive research approach” can be strongly facilitating for the researchers to create the initial base of the research with rational planning. Apart from these, the “deductive research approach” can be extremely facilitating secondary research as it can help the researchers to input flexibility in research outcomes (Michelen et al., 2024). In this context, the researcher will ignore the “inductive research approach” and consider the “deductive approach”.

## Research design

The researcher will shed light on the implementation of “descriptive research design” in this present research with the purpose to elaboratively conduct the data collection and analysis processes. On the other hand, as per the study of Van Quaquebeke et al. (2022) it has been determined that the consideration of “descriptive research design” can help the researchers to conduct the study with cost effectiveness and speed that can allow the researchers for quick data collection from large groups. In this context, the researcher will follow the “descriptive research design” due to the purpose of quickly accomplishing the research without investing huge amounts of resources.

## Data collection method and data type

The researcher will follow the “secondary data collection method” in order to collect a sufficient amount of “qualitative data sets”. As per the opinion of Mazhar et al. (2021) it has been highlighted that the consideration of “secondary data collection methods” can be highly beneficial for the researchers to gather an adequate amount of data within lesser time. On the other hand, the researchers are used to focusing on the gathering of “qualitative data sets” to avoid the numerical calculation for data interpretation (Chandrasekar et al., 2024). In this context, the researcher will avoid the “primary data collection” and inherently follow the “secondary qualitative data collection methods”.

## Sampling and inclusion criteria

The researcher will follow the “non-probability convenience sampling method” in this secondary qualitative study with the purpose to collect significant data sets, collected from the authentic database. As per the opinion of Alzghaibi and Hutchings, (2025) it has been reflected that the consideration of the “non-probability convenience sampling method” can be supremely facilitating for the researchers to conduct the research papers with significant secondary sources within less time. However, the researcher will follow some inclusion criteria to select the samples.

- Current sources will be collected (within last 4 years)
- Sources that are available in English language
- Sources that are relevant to the research topics
- Peer reviewed journals and authentic sources only

## Data analysis

The researcher will follow the “thematic analysis method” with the tabular format. As per the renowned study of Braun and Clarke, (2021) it has been stated that the consideration of “thematic analysis” can be extremely beneficial for the researchers to evaluate and criticise the qualitative data sets. In addition to these, the “thematic analysis method” can allow the researchers to interpret the “qualitative data sets” with their own perspectives (Braun and Clarke, 2023). In this context, the researcher will conduct a list of themes in this research that will be based on the research objectives as well as collect secondary sources to support the themes.

## Ethical considerations

The researcher will strictly follow the legal frameworks while accomplishing the research such as the consideration of “General Data Protection Regulation Act 2018 and Copyright Act 1956”. The consideration of the “General Data Protection Regulation Act 2018” can be supreme for further researchers to maintain privacy of the sources (gov.uk, 2025). On the other hand, the “Copyright Act 1956” can help the researchers to increase distinction and uniqueness of the research outcomes from other researches (legislation.gov.uk, 2025). In addition to these, the researcher will surely follow all the inclusion criteria for sampling and data collection processes. Apart from these, the research paper will be submitted with an alphabetical reference list in order to acknowledge the authors of the secondary sources in this research.

## Estimated Outcome

The researcher has conducted the entire study on the purpose of highlighting the effects of social media literacy on the cyber-crime prevention standards of India. In this regard, as per the study of Kumar et al. (2024) it can be stated that social media literacy can significantly foster the cyber-crime prevention standards in India along with empowering the social media users to recognize and avoid the online threats as well as by reducing their vulnerability to multiple crimes such as phishing, identity theft and cyberbullying. However, there are some emerging issues to prevent the cybercrime standards in India such as a significant digital literacy gap to make the citizens vulnerable to social engineering tactics such as phishing and scams.

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