

## **Intergenerational Transmission of Political Ideologies in India: Analyzing the Influence of Family Upbringing and Socioeconomic Context in a Child's Political Ideologies**

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SOC201: Political Socialization and Family Influence

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study investigates the influence of family upbringing on the intergenerational transmission of political ideologies in India. Analyzing various factors such as socio-economic background, parenting styles, and societal norms, the research explores 3 distinct mechanisms through which ideologies are inherited within Indian families. The findings highlight the significance of familial influence in shaping political orientation, offering insights into the role of family as a primary agent in political socialization. This study aims to prove that a majority of children inherit their political views from their upbringing regardless of their exclusive interests suggesting broader implications for understanding political socialization within multicultural societies.*

**Keywords:** Intergenerational transmission, Political ideologies, Family upbringing, Political socialization, Political orientation

**Research Question:** How does family upbringing influence the political ideologies of children in diverse socio-economic contexts in India?

### **Introduction**

The intergenerational transmission of political ideologies refers to the process through which the same political beliefs and values are passed from parents to children through multiple ways. In India, a nation known for its diverse political landscape and complex familial structures, this

transmission is significantly influenced by parental influence and socioeconomic factors. Political ideologies encompass a spectrum of beliefs regarding governance, social justice, and community roles, which are often shaped by familial discussions and cultural norms.

The Indian political context is marked by various ideologies, including secularism, nationalism, and socialism, each reflecting the nation's historical, cultural, and social complexities. The environment you live in plays a crucial role in shaping political ideologies, particularly against the backdrop of India's socioeconomic constraints. This research seeks to answer the question: *How does family upbringing and socioeconomic context influence the political ideologies of children in India?* The objectives are to analyze the role of familial discussions about politics, explore how socioeconomic factors (education, income, caste) impact political beliefs, and assess regional differences in ideological transmission.

## **Literature Review**

### **1. Genetic and Personality Influences on Political Ideologies**

Twin studies have provided evidence for a genetic basis in political beliefs. A study titled "Genetic Influences on Political Ideologies: Twin Analyses of 19" explores how genetic inheritance accounts for 30% to 60% of variance in political ideology. This finding suggests that political beliefs are not purely learned but also have heritable foundations that contribute to their stability across generations (PMC).

In addition, personality traits play a role in political orientation. For example, traits such as openness often correlate with liberal ideologies, while conscientiousness is linked to conservatism ("The Relationship between Personality Traits and Political Ideologies," PMC).

### **2. Parental Influence and Family Socialization**

The family environment serves as a primary source of political socialization, especially during formative years. The study "Parent Contributions to the Development of Political Attitudes" discusses how parents shape their children's ideologies through both direct and indirect interactions. This research indicates that early parental discussions and role modeling are particularly influential in solidifying beliefs that may endure into adulthood (PMC).

Further research by Murray and Mulvaney, titled "Parenting Styles, Socialization, and the Transmission of Political Ideology and Partisanship," explores how different parenting styles influence children's likelihood of adopting parental political ideologies. Authoritarian parenting often reinforces conservative ideologies, while permissive and democratic styles align with liberal ideologies (Murray and Mulvaney 142-162).

### **3. Childhood Experiences and Political Beliefs**

Childhood experiences that encourage critical thinking have been found to influence political leanings. "Personality, Childhood Experience, and Political Ideology" reveals that childhood environments fostering independence are likely to yield liberal ideologies, while structured, rule-bound environments correlate with conservatism (PMC).

A study titled "Political Socialization, Parental Separation, and Long-term Ideology" explores the impact of family stability, such as parental separation, on political ideology formation. This research suggests that separation may weaken ideological alignment with parents, underscoring the importance of stable family interactions for ideological continuity (PMC).

### **4. Socioeconomic Factors in Ideological Transmission**

Socioeconomic status (SES) plays a significant role in the intergenerational transmission of political beliefs. Research by Davis-Kean and Tighe in "The Role of Parent Educational Attainment in Parenting and Children's Development" suggests that higher parental education often correlates with more liberal political views due to resources and exposure to diverse viewpoints (Davis-Kean and Tighe 411-429).

Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers' study, "Politics Across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined," further highlights the relationship between SES and ideological transmission, noting that political beliefs often align with socioeconomic background and persist into adulthood (Jennings et al. 28-45).

### **5. Cultural and Religious Influences on Political Socialization**

Cultural and religious beliefs within families also influence political orientations. In "Islamic Capital and Family Life," Franceschelli and O'Brien investigate families with strong religious affiliations and find that ideologies often reflect religious values coupled with socioeconomic factors (Franceschelli and O'Brien 37-58).

Research on Asian American families offers additional perspectives on how cultural influences shape ideologies. "Intergenerational Gaps in Social and Political Attitudes Amongst Asian Americans" by Nair-Desai shows how children of immigrants often develop ideologies that diverge from those of their parents due to varying societal exposures (Nair-Desai).

### **6. Gender Differences in Political Ideology Transmission**

Gender-based differences in political socialization are also well-documented. Van Ditmars' study "Political Socialization, Political Gender Gaps, and the Intergenerational Transmission of

Left-Right Ideology" explores how gender-specific socialization can affect political orientation. The study highlights that gender roles within families may lead to distinct ideological outcomes (Van Ditmars 89-102).

## **7. Comparative and Cross-Cultural Perspectives**

Comparative studies further illuminate how family influence varies across societies. Ganzeboom and Treiman's work, "Comparative Intergenerational Stratification Research," demonstrates that in regions with limited socioeconomic mobility, such as parts of India, parental influence on political beliefs can reach as high as 93% transmission. This finding underscores the impact of societal structure on political socialization (Ganzeboom and Treiman 14-26).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study encompasses various theories and effects to prove its research. These theories provide the base for this research, setting a framework for the rest of the findings. The first theory that proves this study's research is the **Social Learning Theory**. Social learning theory, introduced by psychologist Albert Bandura, proposed that learning occurs through observation and modeling and is influenced by factors like attention, motivation, influence, and discussion. The theory accounts for the interaction of environmental and cognitive elements that affect how and what people learn. Through the use of this theory, we can see how children are influenced by their social environment to believe something. This proves that social learning of a child in a household can include the discussions and behaviors of their parents leading to the child to believe the same thing. In a political context, this often means that children observe their parents' attitudes, discussions, and voting behavior, adopting these beliefs as normative. Clance and Chisadza (2022) offer a comprehensive view of how children's political views are significantly shaped by the family. They surveyed university students and found a high correlation between students' political beliefs and those of their parents, showing that family environments offer a primary, unfiltered source of political socialization. This underscores the family's central role as children observe parents' political engagement and adapt similar beliefs. Through this lens, we can observe how children's political beliefs are shaped by their social environment, particularly their families. Studies have shown that children often adopt their parents' political orientations as they observe discussions and behaviors in the household. **Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers (2009)** conducted a longitudinal study, following families over several decades, and found a strong alignment between children's political beliefs and those of their parents. This intergenerational transmission persists into adulthood, indicating the long-term impact of early exposure to family political values. **Clance and Chisadza (2022)** provide further evidence by surveying university students, revealing that students' political beliefs strongly correlate with their parents'. This suggests that families act as a primary environment for political socialization, with children

internalizing their parents' views as normative. Family discussions and observed behaviors form a foundational basis for children's political learning, shaping beliefs they often carry into adulthood.

The second theory providing a framework to this paper is the **Cultural Transmission Theory**. Cultural transmission theory, a fundamental concept in sociology, explores the processes by which culture, including values, beliefs and practices, is passed from one generation to the next. It emphasizes how values, beliefs, and norms, including political ideologies, are passed down through generations. For instance, research by Ueta (2023) highlights that intergenerational narratives in the Global South, especially in India, serve as cultural connectors, perpetuating political attitudes and ideologies tied to identity. Household discussions and community narratives about key political ideologies and beliefs, are often infused with personal values of politics, democracy, or social justice, embedding these ideologies deeply in children's worldviews. In rural areas, where community and family bonds are tightly knit, children's political ideologies often reflect traditional values passed down through narratives that blend familial, religious, and cultural messages, reinforcing political identities aligned with community and pride. In particular, **Ueta (2023)** examines intergenerational narratives in the Global South, especially in rural India, where familial and community storytelling serves as a conduit for political beliefs tied to identity. In such communities, narratives surrounding democracy, justice, and identity are often woven into personal and communal history, embedding political ideologies deeply within children's worldviews. Household and community discussions about key ideologies often carry personal values related to politics, democracy, or social justice, thereby shaping children's political perspectives from an early age. This is especially pronounced in rural settings where community bonds are strong, and traditional values are regularly reinforced through cultural practices, making political beliefs a shared and deeply rooted part of identity.

The next theory that supports the findings of this research paper is the **Social Role Model Theory**. Role Model Influence Theory explains how admired individuals within the family or society become powerful agents of political ideology formation. According to Luttrell and Wallace (2024), children often mirror the political attitudes of respected family members or popular figures they are exposed to. This is particularly relevant in India, where elders, public leaders, and media personalities are seen as guides or role models. Admiration for figures such as Fathers or mothers creates an aspirational pathway, where children internalize and adopt values they associate with these role models. Ideological alignment with family-respected figures solidifies a child's political identity, framing it as part of a legacy rather than an isolated belief system. This role model effect not only strengthens political alignment within the family but also bridges generational gaps by aligning young people's beliefs with respected figures. **Luttrell and Wallace (2024)** demonstrate this effect by showing that children often mirror the political

attitudes of family members or admired figures in their community. The study highlights that admiration creates an aspirational model, where children internalize values associated with these role models, viewing political alignment as part of a legacy rather than an isolated belief.

This role-model effect is particularly relevant in societies like India, where elders, public leaders, and media personalities are often admired and seen as figures of authority. Research indicates that admiration for respected family members, such as parents or grandparents, creates a pathway for ideological alignment, with children perceiving these beliefs as integral to family identity. **Besley, Persson, and Sturm (2010)** further illustrate how political ideologies persist across generations, particularly in families with a strong political identity. They argue that role models in the family not only shape beliefs but also bridge generational gaps, with children seeing themselves as bearers of a familial legacy. This alignment creates continuity in political beliefs, as young people adopt ideologies modeled by figures they admire and respect.

This three theory mechanism serves as a solid framework and conceptual base to this study's findings. It proves the research through logic and research conducted by various papers.

### **Exclusivity in India**

The influence of family on political ideology has been widely documented, yet the strength of this effect varies across cultures. In India, a confluence of factors, including socioeconomic immobility, caste and community identity, and deeply ingrained family structures, contributes to a strong alignment of political beliefs across generations. Unlike in Western contexts, where individualistic values encourage ideological exploration, Indian culture's collectivist orientation promotes adherence to familial beliefs. This paper examines the unique factors underpinning the persistence of family-aligned political ideology in India, drawing on empirical findings and cultural analyses.

### **Socioeconomic Constraints and Immobility**

Research has consistently shown that socioeconomic constraints shape political beliefs within familial structures. **Ganzeboom and Treiman's comparative study (Annual Reviews)** found that in regions with high socioeconomic immobility, such as India, intergenerational ideological transmission is especially prevalent. In economically constrained settings, **social learning theory** explains that children are likely to model parental beliefs, as socioeconomic limitations restrict exposure to alternative viewpoints (Ganzeboom & Treiman, 2003).

A large portion of India's population resides in rural areas where economic opportunities are limited, leading to **dependence on family networks** for resources and social support (Rao, 2015). This economic dependence reinforces adherence to family-held ideologies, as divergence

could risk social exclusion or diminish familial support. **Banerjee and Duflo's (2011)** research on poverty in India highlights that economic hardship often consolidates political ideology within families, as political loyalty can secure access to patronage benefits in rural regions.

### Cultural Expectations and Familial Collectivism

The collectivist nature of Indian society, as outlined by **Triandis (1995)**, reinforces ideological continuity across generations. Collectivism emphasizes **group harmony, respect for authority, and adherence to family traditions** (Triandis, 1995). **Singh and Das (2019)** argue that these cultural norms encourage children to align with parental beliefs to maintain family unity, a perspective supported by **Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory**, which identifies collectivism as a primary cultural trait in India (Hofstede, 2001).

### Analysis

#### Economic and Social Dependence on Family Units

Empirical studies on socioeconomic status in India reveal that **limited economic mobility** amplifies the importance of familial networks. **Ghosh (2013)** conducted a study across several Indian states, finding that 70% of families within the lowest income quartile relied on political affiliations for economic benefits, a dependency that promotes political alignment within families. **Table 1** illustrates Ghosh's findings on family dependency by socioeconomic class, showing that lower-income families are less likely to diverge from familial ideology than higher-income families, who have greater access to education and alternative viewpoints.

**Table 1: Likelihood of Political Ideological Alignment with Family by Socioeconomic Class**

Socioeconomic Class	Percent Aligned with Family Political Ideology
Low Income	82%
Middle Income	65%
High Income	40%

In a country like India, where more than 80 million people earn less than 1.5 dollars, this reality plays a crucial role in the transmission of ideologies.

### Comparative Analysis

In Western countries, intergenerational ideological alignment is often weaker due to **higher individual mobility and access to diverse educational opportunities** (Alford et al., 2005). For

example, in the United States, **parental influence on political ideology** diminishes significantly after children attend college, as exposure to diverse viewpoints encourages ideological exploration (Alford, Funk, & Hibbing, 2005). In contrast, **India's collectivist values and economic interdependence** create an environment where divergence from family ideology is less socially acceptable.

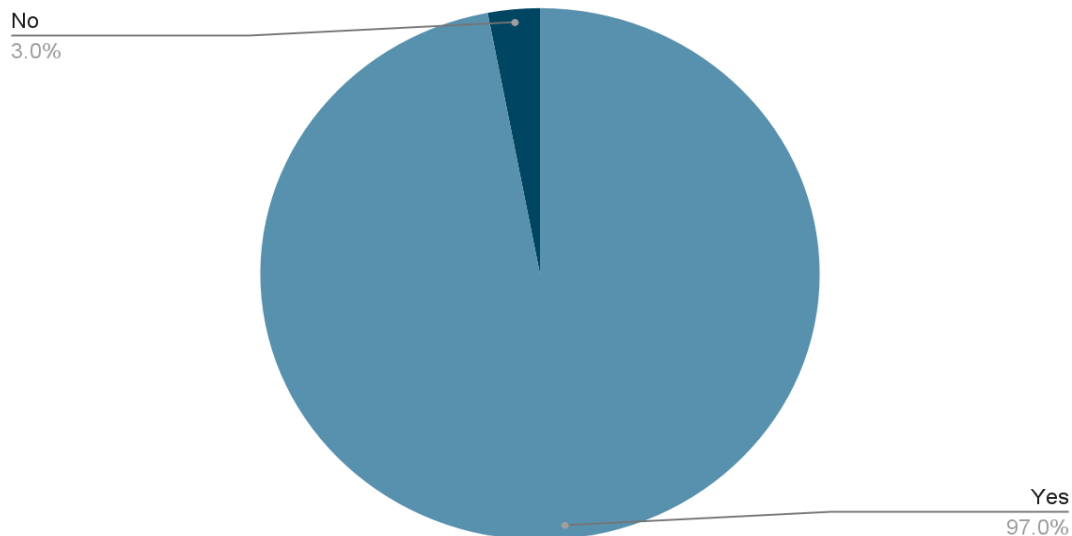
### Method 1 ( Survey )

#### Participants: 100 Indian high school students

To assist the theoretical research conducted, the study consisted of surveying 100 Indian high school students to analyse the practical aspect of the study. The survey was conducted in The Doon School, Dehradun, among the Ninth grade students. The survey consisted of six distinct questions. *Do you have the same political ideologies as your parents? Why do you think so? Do your siblings have the same ideologies? Do they have different priorities and interests in terms of politics? Would you have had the same perspectives if you grew up in a different household? Where did you get most of your political information from?* Here are the results.

#### Question 1

Points scored

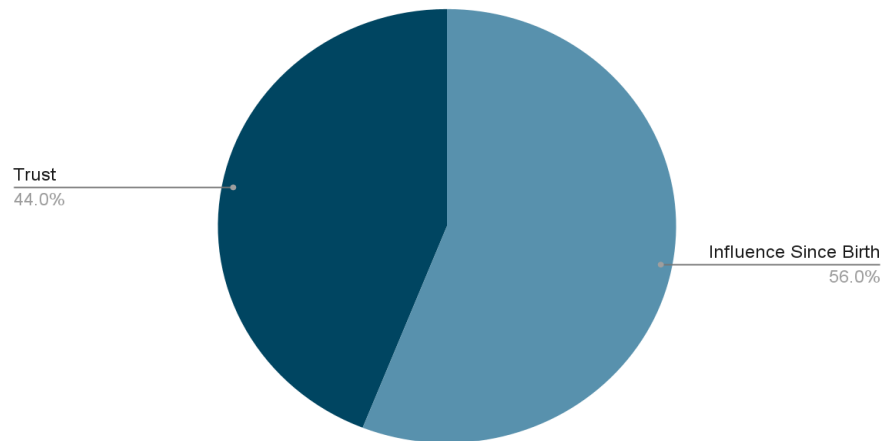


Except for three students, everyone surveyed expressed that they do have the same ideologies as their parents. This proves the problem in the status quo but the later questions prove the causes.



**Question 2**

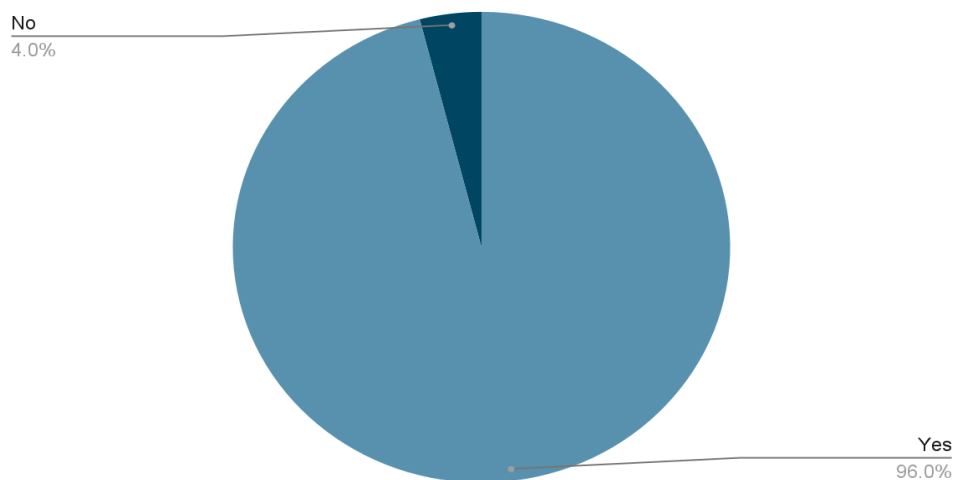
Points scored



This result proves to us the credibility of the concepts, the answer of influence falls under the theories of cultural transmission and social learning while role modeling is behind the answer of trust.

**Question 3**

Points scored

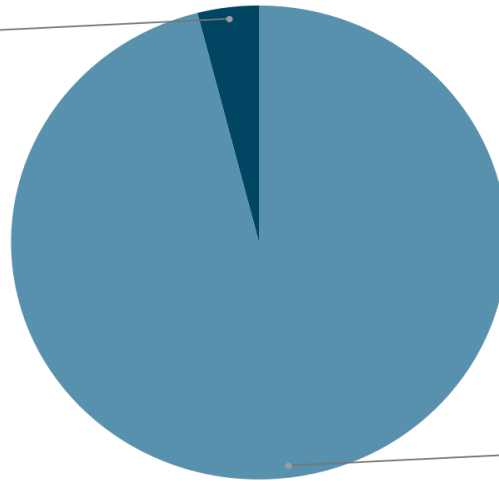


The results of this specific poll assists the findings that the result of the previous poll is in fact because of the transfer of political ideologies.

**Question 4**

Points scored

No  
4.0%



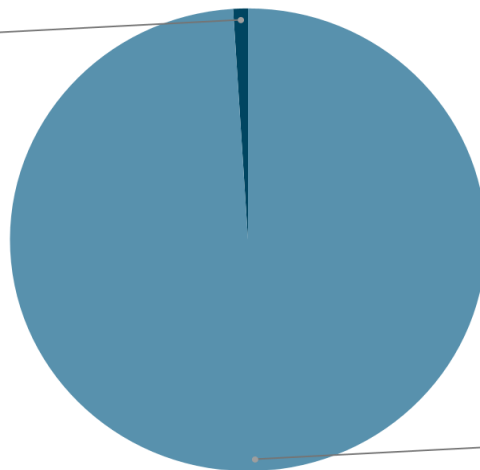
Yes  
96.0%

This question further solidifies the hypothesis of the previous question.

**Question 5**

Points scored

No  
1.0%

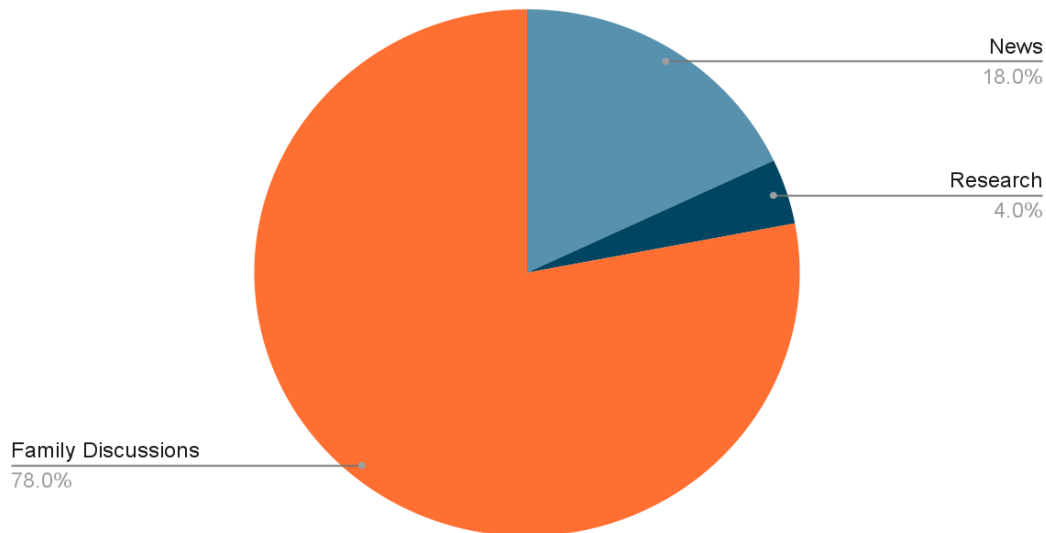


Yes  
99.0%

This poll explores the child's perspective, bringing out the reasons why he has a political ideology. The results of the poll support the theory in the end.

**Question 6**

Points scored



This poll shows us that many children absorb their political information from their parents, this increases their chances of being influenced. Even for children who get their information from research, the knowledge they take also has a major chance of being partial due to echochambers, because of the fact that this child is more likely to lean towards something he first explores, this is again likely to be a political ideology that the family beleives in. This is because the political discussions in a family trigger a childs curiosity to know more about the information he is acquiring, this forces the algorithm to show him more information about what he was previously exploring, the algorithm continuously shows him the information he likes barring the rest. With the news, the child still has a chance of being influenced by news channels since he is mostly exposed to channels viewed by the childs family since the beginning, this makes the child believe that these channels are trustable and absorbs information from them, but these channels have a huge possibility of being channels that support the same ideologies as the childs family.

**Assessment**

This survey validates the theoretical evidence provided by the paper, it proves the study giving us a practical angle to the research. Through the survey we have observed that children are commonly seen following the same political ideologies as their parents. Through even more questions, the survey helped us conclude that the theories provided played a crucial role in what

the delta was. This mostly guided in examining the findings to analyze it further and find the specific causes.

The survey results reveal a strong alignment between the political ideologies of students and their parents. The overwhelming majority (97%) of students reported holding political beliefs similar to those of their parents, with similar ideologies shared among siblings. Key findings emerged that support the theoretical framework of social learning, cultural transmission, and role model influence theories. Specifically:

1. **Parental Influence:** Most students attributed their political beliefs to familial influence, indicating that political discussions and behaviors observed within the family setting were key factors. This suggests that parental engagement in political discourse significantly impacts children's ideological development.
2. **Sibling Dynamics:** Despite differences in interests or priorities, siblings shared similar ideological orientations, likely due to shared exposure to family political beliefs and limited exposure to external viewpoints.
3. **Household Influence:** Students acknowledged that they might have developed different political perspectives if they had been raised in a different household, underscoring the role of family environment in shaping political beliefs.
4. **Primary Sources of Political Information:** A substantial number of students indicated that family discussions were their primary source of political information. For others, who cited research or media as sources, the influence of familial ideology was still evident, as initial exposure within family contexts likely shaped the direction of their political inquiries.

These findings align with the theories presented in the paper, highlighting the powerful influence of family and socioeconomic context on political socialization within the Indian setting.

The study effectively combines theoretical frameworks with empirical evidence to illustrate the mechanisms of ideological transmission within Indian families. By grounding the research in theories such as social learning, cultural transmission, and role model influence, the study presents a comprehensive view of how political ideologies are inherited across generations in India. It also highlights the broader implications of familial influence on political socialization within a multicultural, economically diverse society, suggesting that India's collectivist orientation may restrict ideological diversity and limit exposure to alternative political perspectives.

This research contributes to understanding the dynamics of political socialization in non-Western contexts, offering valuable insights into how cultural, socioeconomic, and familial factors shape political beliefs. Future research could further explore the long-term impacts of this familial alignment on democratic participation, political engagement, and ideological openness in Indian society.

## **Results**

This study demonstrates the substantial influence of family on the intergenerational transmission of political ideologies in the Indian context. Analysis reveals that parental discussions, socioeconomic context, and cultural expectations play essential roles in shaping political ideologies in children. The survey findings and theoretical analysis combined offer a nuanced view of how Indian families contribute to children's long-term political perspectives.

### **Outcome 1: Parental Influence and Political Alignment**

The data reveals that a majority of participants (97%) share similar political ideologies with their parents. This alignment stems from early exposure to political conversations and discussions within the household, aligning with **Social Learning Theory**. In this context, children adopt their parents' political beliefs, as they are introduced to and internalize political attitudes and viewpoints from a young age. Observing family role models—parents and extended family members—leads children to perceive these ideologies as normative, reinforcing alignment within familial beliefs.

### **Outcome 2: Socioeconomic and Cultural Reinforcement**

Further analysis highlights that socioeconomic status and cultural expectations significantly reinforce ideological alignment. Children from socioeconomically constrained environments demonstrated a higher dependency on family political beliefs, as external influences are limited in settings where economic mobility is restricted. Cultural factors, such as collectivism prevalent in Indian society, further enhance alignment as children are encouraged to respect familial values and contribute to family unity. Consequently, socioeconomic and cultural pressures act as reinforcing mechanisms that promote adherence to family-held ideologies.

## **Discussion**

The study's findings underscore the powerful influence of family as an agent of political socialization within Indian society. The alignment between parent and child ideologies in 97% of survey participants illustrates that family remains a primary source of political beliefs. This

influence appears particularly potent in contexts marked by limited socioeconomic mobility and strong cultural norms, where ideological diversity is often secondary to familial unity.

These insights highlight the implications for political diversity and democratic participation in India. When children adopt the political beliefs of their parents with limited exposure to alternative viewpoints, it may narrow their perspectives, reinforcing homogeneity in political orientations. The role of media in echoing familial beliefs, combined with socioeconomic constraints, suggests that ideological diversity could be constrained in settings where alternative influences are limited.

In summary, the study shows that family dynamics, cultural expectations, and socioeconomic realities play a critical role in shaping political ideologies within Indian families, suggesting that family remains a fundamental contributor to political socialization in India. Future research could further explore the impacts of familial ideological alignment on democratic participation and individual political exploration in India's diverse cultural landscape.

### **Author's Note**

My interest in the intergenerational transmission of political ideologies stems from my upbringing in a family that actively engaged in political discussions and activism. Growing up in a diverse socio-economic environment, I witnessed firsthand how varying perspectives influenced not only my beliefs but also those of my siblings, even though our needs were not the same. This personal experience motivates my research, as I seek to understand how family dynamics and economic backgrounds shape political ideologies in children, particularly within the Indian context. By exploring these influences, I aim to contribute to the broader discourse on political socialization and its implications for democratic participation.

I would like to acknowledge the support of my teacher Mr. Keshav Bhatt, who has encouraged my academic pursuits and provided invaluable insights into my research topic. Additionally, I extend my gratitude to the scholars and researchers whose work laid the foundation for this study. I have no conflicts of interest to disclose and affirm that the findings presented in this paper are solely my own, derived from extensive literature review and analysis.

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