

The Role of Social Media in the Women Empowerment

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Abstract

Social media has quickly become a dominant mode of professional and personal communication. Education even through social media acts as a key to boost confidence, independence in thinking, doing, saying and problem solving and thus the hope for the upliftment of the value to the life for a peaceful living of a woman. The present paper thus focuses on “The role of social media in the women empowerment.” The present study is conducted with the objectives to study and assess the women social media status and its impact in all aspects and to assess the knowledge on socio- economic empowerment, equity, life skills among women. Critical analysis and implication was implemented in this study to explore the role of social media for rights opportunities, equity and dignity that women of India to secure equal concern and respect.

Keywords: *Women empowerment, women rights, social media, social empowerment, equity*

I. INTRODUCTION

“Women were the first human being that tasted bondage, women were a slave before the slave or slavery existed”. - August Bebel. Long before the word ‘empowerment’ became popular, women were speaking about gaining control over their lives, and participating in making the decisions that affect them in home and community, in government and international development policies. But women yet face discrimination based on their age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, health status, marital status, education, disability and socio-economic status, among other grounds. These intersecting forms of discrimination must be taken into account with legal provisions, rights, dignity and power when developing measures and responses to combat discrimination against women. Social Media can play a pivot role in women empowerment.

Social media is the collective of online communications channels, websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate and dedicate to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications forums, micro-blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation sites, and wikis are among the different types of social media. Users typically access social media services via web-based technologies on desktop, computers, and laptops, or download services that offer social media functionality to their mobile devices. The common features are:

1. User-generated content, such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through all online interactions, is the lifeblood of social media.
2. Users create service-specific profiles for the website or app that are designed and maintained by the social media organization.
3. Social media facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals or groups. When engaging with these services, users can create highly interactive platforms through which individuals, communities, and organizations can share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content or pre-made content posted online.

Objectives

It has been found through several surveys, a huge percentage of women and young women go online daily, some reported online almost constantly having access to a smart phone and use more than one social media network site. Facebook is the most popular though many teens are switching to other media options even in rural and lower income families. Generations from affluent homes were more likely to visit the site Instagram, Twitter, Blog and chatsites and messaging apps like WhatsApp.

Women’s state of powerlessness is a result of “a combination and interaction of environmental factors”- Ms.Lazo. Women’s empowerment, its rights, conceptual and legal provisions is thus dependent on the culture of gathering information and required knowledge, setting up social help groups and power implementation. Thus social media serves useful tool to generate the flux of empowerment in women by various ways.

Operational Definitions

Social Media: It is computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks in the click of smart phones and other devices wherever they go.

Women Empowerment: 'Women's empowerment' is the ability to exercise full control over one's actions'. It is the granting of political, social or economic power to an individual or group.

Women Social Empowerment: It is a process to change the distribution of power in interpersonal relations among different people, cultures and activities of the society of the women.

Social Life: It is a process to develop interpersonal relations among different people, cultures and activities of the women in the society.

Life Skill: Life skills are defined as psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

Critical Analysis

The present study is critically analysed on the different issues related to women empowerment and social media status and its impact in all aspects and to assess the knowledge on socio- economic empowerment, equity and life skills, among women in all aspects.

Education, empowerment and dignity

Education is considered one of the most important means to empower women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in development processes. Importance of women education can be briefly summarized as economic development and prosperity, economic empowerment, improved life, improved health, dignity and honour. Educated women are now looked upon with dignity and honour and become a source of inspiration for other women. Dignity is a sense of self-worth in women's life. It is valued by the society that one belongs to with the ability to work for a decent living. Dignity is life of women with adequate standard of living along with human right.

Types of Women empowerment Supported by Social Media

According to Makamba online, Women Empowerment can have six components:

Cognitive Empowerment would include the "women are understanding of their conditions of subordination and the causes of such conditions at both micro and macro levels of society. It involves acquiring new knowledge to create a different understanding of gender relations as well as destroying old beliefs that structure powerful gender ideologies".

Psychological Empowerment would include the "development of feelings that women can act upon to improve their condition. This means formation of the belief that they can succeed in change efforts."

Economic Empowerment "requires that women can be able to engage in a productive activity that will allow them some degree of autonomy, no matter how small and hard to obtain at the beginning".

Political Empowerment would encompass the "ability to organize and mobilize for change and democracy. Consequently, an empowerment process must involve not only individual awareness but collective awareness and collective action. The notion of collective action is fundamental to the aim of attaining social transformation" (Stromquist).

Social Empowerment is a "process to change the distribution of power in interpersonal relations among different people, cultures, activities of the society". In past awareness regarding the society is unknown to the women but present scenario reveals completely different pictures and knows they are equally participating in all activities of the society.

Legal Empowerment is legal protection needed for the women in terms of health, harassments, superstitions, cultural barriers and protection.

Make the women aware of the civil rights, exercising the legal rights necessary, preparing and canvassing the documents regarding the legal freedom for women, providing good literary programmes regarding the legal empowerment, etc.

Factors of Social Media favorable for Women Empowerment

1. Existence of women's organizations.
2. Availability of support systems for women.
3. Availability of women-specific data and other relevant information.
4. Feminist leadership.
5. Networking.
6. Knowledge of favourable policy climate.

Constraining Factors for Women Empowerment overcome by Social Media

1. Heavy work load of women.
2. Isolation of women from each other.
3. Illiteracy.
4. Traditional views that limit women's participation.
5. Disagreements/conflicts among women's groups.
6. Structural adjustment policies.
7. Discriminatory policy environment.
8. Less fund and capital.
9. Cyber bullying.
10. Harassment and exploitation by social media.
11. Images of women in advertising.
12. Negative and sensational coverage of media.

II. Findings

Role of Social Media in Women Empowerment

Empowerment through education is ideally seen as a continuous holistic process with Cognitive, Psychological, Economic, Social, Legal and Political dimensions in order to achieve emancipation. Women Empowerment exert the possible consequences –

1. Emotional connections: Social media can help to connect with more people and stay in touch with those with whom you're already close. Connecting with people has proven emotional benefits.
2. Mood enhancer: Social media can help connect with more people and stay in touch with those with whom one wants to be.
3. Cognition building through internet surfing: Can find a large amount of required and helpful empowerment related information on social media.
4. Relation and Intimacy Building: Connection improves socio-metric skills and makes people intimate and belongingness.
5. Managing money and fund: Encouraged to get an app for tracking spending and making a budget.
6. Getting new information and opportunities: Serves new probability of getting job, work or employment related news.
7. Women empowerment: It is incorporating the feminist perspective in the concept of empowerment implying a long-term re-designing of societies that will be based on democratic relationships and promotion of gender awareness.
8. Legal Protection: Make the women aware of the civil rights, exercising the legal rights and information regarding the legal empowerment are some ways social media can contribute.
9. Information and lessons on politics.
10. Information and lessons on health and hygiene.
11. Awareness of her social and political rights.
12. Integration of women in the general national development plan.
13. Existence of women's networks and publications.
14. Integration of technical, entrepreneurial, cultural and communal aspects.

Using Social Media for Women Social Life

Campaigns

1. Pushing for a dialogue between stake holders.
2. Raising gender issues within the national policy arena.
3. Pressuring to upgrade women's bureaus into ministries of women's affairs.
4. Raising issues for sex-equity and affirmative action legislation.
5. Women rural development, literacy, health and sanitization.

Networking

1. Organizing meeting of gender sensitive organizations.
2. Bringing together donor agencies, governments and NGOs.
3. Setting up a cooperation and exchange.
4. Linking women's movements all over the world.
5. Establishing alternative credit schemes, micro and mini bank system that offer women access to funds.

Media

1. Organizing mass media campaigns to raise awareness.
2. Creating a social climate friendly to women's issues.
3. Resisting the tendency to send women back to the kitchen.

Impacts of Social Media encouraging Empowerment of Women

Social Empowerment

Social media involves acquiring new knowledge to create a different understanding of gender relations as well as destroying old beliefs that structure powerful gender, the development of feelings that women can act upon to improve their condition, requires that women can be able to engage in a productive activity that will allow them some degree of autonomy, no matter how small and hard to obtain at the beginning and the ability to organize and mobilize for change.

Social Life

There's plenty of evidence that social isolation is associated with a shorter life span, not to mention a diminished quality of life. Seniors and those who are disabled, who may have limited mobility, elderly people, someone stationed overseas in the military workers, friends who live in different states can use social media for positive connections to connect and improve social life.

Mental well-being

The capacity to live a full and creative life, and the flexibility to deal with life's inevitable challenges results in having high levels of positive emotions, social well-being and psychological well-being as having the presence of psychological and social skills and abilities that contribute to optimal functioning in daily life.

Proper Self Concept

The individual's belief about himself or herself, including the person's attributes and who and what the self is, become very important. The fallout from these unrealistic standards becomes more dangerous once girls reach college, where they face higher stakes, harder work, and a largely parent-free environment. The pressure to look perfect to impress new peers, not to speak of friends and family back home is due to negative self concept.

Proper Self Esteem

The term self-esteem is used to describe a person's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. Girls who have created idealized online personas pretend to the knowledge that these images mask serious problems don't seem to alleviate the pressure they cause. They're struggling to stay on top of things or suffering from low self-esteem.

Decision Making

In psychology, decision-making is regarded as the cognitive process resulting in the selection of a belief or a course of action among several alternative possibilities. Every decision - making process produces a final choice, which may resultant to prompt action required for women empowerment.

Usage of Technology

Computer literacy involves change in education of women will be beneficial to the entire family and the society as a whole. Use of internet and social media to get a job, future world of work, interacting with those around us given us new opportunities and learn the skills to incorporate technology whenever possible.

III. CONCLUSION

“To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves.” - Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. However, important gaps remain and women's realities are constantly changing, with new manifestations of discrimination against them which emerges regularly. The study reveals the objectives and assess the women social media status and its impact in all aspects to women empowerment, equity and dignity, one of the key determinants of successful action is the extent to which one had taken the multiple roles of women into account and how they helped in alleviating the burden. For successful empowerment of women, it is needed to incorporate their love of technology, develop valuable lifelong skills; it will increase their opportunity to be successful in life. Reality in contrast, many women, even in developing countries, still does not have access to these information technologies due to economical and political reasons such as infrastructure, lack of money and oppression.

According FP magazine – ‘is an apt term to describe feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact. It gives those who participate in slacktivist campaigns an illusion of having a meaningful impact on the world without demanding anything more than joining a Facebook group’. Hope is that social media represented freedom of speech and the possibility to spark mainstream media coverage – and this is exactly where the potential of social media in general but also with respect to women's rights lies. As Pandit Jawahar

Lal Nehru said, “If you educate a man, you educate an individual however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family.”

Educational Implications

- Better empowerment and dignity of women have vital role in making a woman competent and socially empowered.
- The knowledge of the life skills and execution of decisional power will promote equality and fight gender discrimination faced by women.
- The attainment of equal status and economic-empowerment of women will uplift the community and nation at large.

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