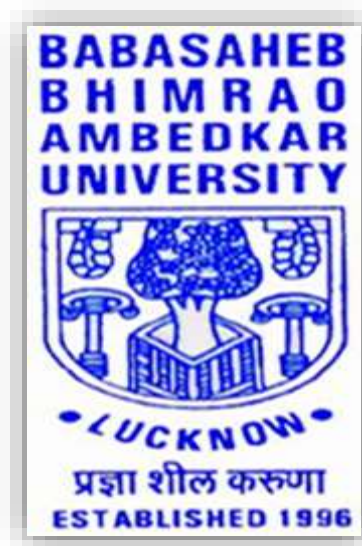


A STUDY OF NEW MEDIA AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT SOCIAL ISSUES

[Lucknow, Age Group 18-35]



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Abstract

Introduction

The Introduction contains elaborate information and explanations regarding the meaning and definitions of the three key aspects of this research, Public Opinion, New Media i.e. Online Media and Social or Societal Issues or Problems. Public Opinion can be described as collective or aggregate beliefs, mindsets, attitudes or understanding of various issues or any particular topic, that is expressed by a considerable proportion of people within the society. It can also be described as the synthesis of individual beliefs and attitudes, which can be similar or opposing to each other. It has been explained why the three, Public Opinion, Social Issues and New Media are important to this research. Social issues are those problems that concern a considerable proportion of the people in society. A Social Issue can be described as a problem that influences or affects a large number of individuals within the society. The public recognizes these situations as problems that are usually against the general values accepted by the society. A large segment of the population recognizes the problem as a valid concern. The problem can be rectified or alleviated through the joint action of citizens and/or community resources. By New Media the research refers to the various Online Media platforms, such as the Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Websites, etc. The issues this dissertation is particularly concerned with are *Problem of Domestic Violence in India, The Violence That Elderly Suffer at The Hands of Their Own Family, Violence Committed Against Children and Adolescents in Indian Society, The Horrendous Issue of Sexual Harassment in The Indian Society, Sexual Harassment at Workplace, Acid Attacks, The Problem of Marital Rape, Lying Deep Under the Societal Taboos and Cultural Folds, Illiteracy and Lack of Education in India, The Concerning Issue of Unemployment and Underemployment in India, Communal and Ethnic Tensions, Hate Crimes, Issue of Poverty, Problem of Starvation and Overpopulation, Plight of LGBTQ in India, and Social or Societal Taboos and Superstitions*. The research aimed to understand the nature of public opinion of New Media (Online Media) users regarding these issues within the society. Several news websites, NGO websites, NCRB data and relevant Television News reports have been taken into consideration to have a better understanding of the nature of these problems and public opinion among New Media (Online Media) users. It has been explained how New Media (Online Media) users perceive these issues and strive to find a solution to them. It has also been elaborated how various New Media (Online Media) platforms address social or societal problems and how affects what opinions are formed regarding those problems.

Literature Review

Following research papers and television reports citing various other governmental and non-governmental researches have been studied in detail to have a better understanding of topic at hand and nature of various social issues within the society.

- 1) Report by Journalist Ravish Kumar of NDTV India on Appu Esthos Suresh Report on Communal Violence in India since 2010.
- 2) A Report Published on Prime Time By Ravish Kumar 15th January 2019 on The Standard of Primary School Education in India.
- 3) Domestic Violence Against Women In India: A Family Menace, Dr. S.Prescila Sharon, a social worker, Pune. (Research Paper, Volume - 4 | Issue - 12 | Dec Special Issue - 2014 | ISSN No- 2249-555X, Indian Journal of Applied Research.)
- 4) Issues & Challenges Related To Marital Rape in India, by Prof. Kshitij Naikade and Dr. Garima Pal, Assistant Professors, Symbiosis Law School, Pune, Symbiosis International, India.(Research Paper in International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI) ISSN (Online): 2319 – 7722, ISSN (Print): 2319 – 7714 www.ijhssi.org ||Volume 7 Issue 04 Ver. III ||April. 2018 || PP.58-69
- 5) A Study on Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media on Society by W. Akram, R. Kumar, Department of Computer Applications, GDC Mendhar, Poonch, India.(International Journal of Computer Sciences and Engineering, Open Access. Review Paper Volume-5, Issue-10 E-ISSN: 2347-2693)
- 6) Issues and challenges of ‘LGBT’ minority people in India, ISSN Print: 2394-7500, ISSN Online: 2394-5869, Impact Factor: 5.2, IJAR 2016; 2(6): 408-410 , www.allresearchjournal.com, Received: 25-04-2016 and Accepted: 26-05-2016, written by Dr. Kalpana V Jawale, Assistant Professor, P.G. Department of Law, Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Amravati, Maharashtra, India.
- 7) Prime Time With Ravish Kumar, A Report on Significance of Section 377 Verdict to LGBTQ Community, published on Sep 06, 2018.
- 8) Youth Employment and Unemployment in India by S. Mahendra Dev and M. Venkatanarayana, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai, April 2011.(<http://www.igidr.ac.in/pdf/publication/WP-2011-009.pdf>)
- 9) The Cause of Unemployment in Current Market Scenario Rubee Singh, Department of Management (MBA), HR Institute of Technology, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, India. (Vivechan International Journal of Research, Vol. 9, Issue 1, 2018 ISSN No. 0976-8211)
- 10) Rural Health System in India: A Review By Neelmani Jaysawal, Department of Social Work, Visva-Bharati, PO-Sriniketan, Distt.-Birbhum (West Bengal), India.(Corresponding Author: neelmanijayswal@gmail.com) (International Journal of Social Work and Human Services Practice Horizon Research Publishing, Vol.3. No.1 Feb, 2015, pp. 29-37)
- 11) Impact of Social Media on Indian Society towards Women by Aditi Bhushan, Priya R. Kumar M.Ed. Student, Gurukrupa College of Education and Research, University of Mumbai (Kalyan Managing Director, Parko Technologies, New Delhi, India adipriya5@gmail.com , parko.tech@gmail.com) ISBN : 978-93-85664-67-0.
- 12) The Positive and Negative Impact of Social Media on “Education, Teenagers, Business and Society by Harshit Lad, Assistant Professor. (Laxmi Institute of Commerce and Computer Application, Sarigam, Gujarat, India.) ISSN(Online): 2319-8753, ISSN (Print): 2347-6710, International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology, Vol. 6, Issue 10, October 2017.

- 13) The Writing Is on the Wall, or Is It? Exploring Indian Activists' Beliefs About Online Social Media's Potential for Social Change by MONICA CHADHA.(Arizona State University, USA, SUMMER HARLOW, Florida State University, USA.)
- 14) ROLE OF NEW MEDIA COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES EN ROUTE INFORMATION SOCIETY – CHALLENGES AND PROSPECT.(Mukherjee Das, Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication Aliah University, West Bengal) E-mail- mou.mukherjeedas@gmail.com (Commentary -3, Global Media Journal, Indian Edition, Sponsored by the University of Calcutta www.caluniv.ac.in, ISSN 2249 – 5835, Summer Issue/June 2014/Vol. 5/No. 1)
- 15) PSYCHO-SOCIAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUPERSTITIOUS BEHAVIOR: LITERATURE REVIEW by Manasvi Shrivastav(Junior Research Fellow, Dept. of Psychology, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar, Uttarakhand) and Dr. Anuradha Kotnala (Assistant Professor, Dept. of Psychology, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar, Uttarakhand) INDIA.
- 16) A Study on Poverty and Hunger in India by Junofy Anto Rozarina. N., Department of Economics, Central University of Tamilnadu, Thiruvarur, India. (ISSN 2039-2117 (online) ISSN 2039-9340 (print), Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy, Vol 4 No 12, October 2013)
- 17) Using Participatory Media and Public Voice to Encourage Civic Engagement, Howard Rheingold, Stanford University, Communication Department.

Aims and Objectives of The Research

The study aims to reach to an understanding of the social or societal problems or issues within the Indian society and how people perceive them, specially with relation to New Media (Online Media) platforms. The key aim here was to study the public opinion of people regarding various social issues or problems persistent in the Indian society. The key aims of this research were -

- 1) To find out if New Media (Online Media) affects the public opinion about certain social or societal issues.
- 2) To explore what types of New Media (Online Media) people consume and for what purpose they do so particularly.
- 3) To find out how people, perceive the nature of New Media (Online Media) and do they find it helpful.
- 4) To understand the different social and societal problems faced by people and whether New Media (Online Media) initiates or facilitates a dialogue about it among its users.
- 5) To find out if people get affected by what is portrayed regarding social issues on New Media (Online Media) platforms.
- 6) To better understand the role of New Media (Online Media) in social or societal changes.
- 7) To find if New Media (Online Media) effectively addresses social issues.
- 8) To find out if the public opinion created by New Media (Online Media) affects the society.

Research Questions

- 1) Does New Media have any effect on public opinion, perception, and temperament of people?
- 2) Does New Media provide a platform for debates and discussions on social and societal problems?
- 3) Does this help in the creation of public opinion about a certain issue?
- 4) Is youth aware of social and social issues?
- 5) Does youth perceive new media as a medium of social change?
- 6) Are the core social issues being addressed by online media?
- 7) Does new media advocate the need for social change?
- 8) Can new media facilitate dialogue for social change and eradication of evils?

Hypothesis

- 1) New Media (Online Media) influences its users regarding social and societal issues.
- 2) New Media (Online Media) serves as a platform for addressing social or societal issues.
- 3) People are considerably informed about social issues in the society, New Media (Online Medias) serves as a facilitator.
- 4) A large number of people consume various New Media (Online Media) Outlets.
- 5) A huge number of people are opinioned about New Media (Online Media), what it serves and how it affects or influences people.
- 6) New Media (Online Media) enables people to understand the nature of social issues through dialogue among its users.

Research Methodology

Quantitative approach has been adopted to conduct the entire research. To explain the data and description of introduction and elaboration of the key social issues included in the research a descriptive and narrative method has been adopted.

Data Collection-

This entire research is based on primary data collected via close ended questionnaires containing 34 question each. The questions have been framed so to find answers to questions pertaining to Public Opinion among the New Media (Online Media) users regarding Social Issues, as described in the introduction.

Sampling Technique and Research Design -

The basic structure of the research is the Survey method via Close Ended Questionnaire to do quantitative analysis. The samples for the survey were selected through a mixture of **Random**, **Purposive** and **Convenience** Sampling methods. The respondents were selected on the basis of the age group of 18 to 35, by dividing the city into five zones of Central, East, West, North and South Lucknow and collecting responses from roughly equal number of respondents in each zone making 176 respondents in total. The ratio of men or boys to women or girls was kept roughly in the ratio of 2:1. The youth of age 18 to 35 were selected, especially because the literature review suggested that this age group is the most prolific and frequent user of New Media or Online Media. The techniques used to analyze the responses to elaborate on findings is Content Analysis of information gathered with the help of questionnaires and represented in percentage and numerical form. Descriptive and Narrative methods have been applied to explain or elaborate on the concept of key points, deductions, and the idea of the research. Different definitions and explanations aim to clear the concept of research.

Data Analysis and Representation -

Graphical representations have been pictured out to get a whole picture of the response achieved while collecting the data. The questionnaire has been used as the tool of data collection, delivered to respondents in person and collected after completion. All the questions asked in the questionnaire are objective in nature with *five* possible answers.

Collected data has been represented using graphs, specifically *Bar Graphs* and *Pie Charts*, and their interpretation have been presented in a descriptive manner. The collected data has been presented across 38 Graph sets of bar graphs and pie charts to show numerical and percentage data.

Scope of Research

There are many problems faced by individuals and society on a whole in India. There is still a long to achieve a truly just and equal society where everyone's rights and wellbeing are accounted for. A better understanding of the ground scenario of these issues can pave a way for their eradication and collective development in all aspects of life in India. India lives in its multicultural and highly diverse identity, which means equally complex nature of problems that persist here. It is necessary to address these problems separately keeping in mind the collective good that can be achieved through that. Issues related to women and children are not just important but necessary to find a solution to take India into the future. The research will help in getting the idea of whether New Media (Online Media) addresses social and societal issues. New media technologies are growing and evolving day by day and different social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Online Blogs and Websites are what people interact through and hence it is important to access if these interactions address social issues or not. Today's youth are the most active internet users and the atmosphere on online media will dictate what type of new generation India

will have. The scope of the study is to generalize how much new media outlets are involved in addressing social and societal problems, issues or conflicts. The hurdles of lack of education, crimes against women, religious and ethnic conflicts, gender violence, crimes against LGBTQ, social taboos and misconceptions, corruption, illiteracy, domestic violence, overpopulation, etc. require immediate attention to overcome their ill effects. The relationship between new media technologies, society, and problems and issues in the same society is a crucial one to eradicate to get rid of these ills and pave a way for a better and prosperous society. This dissertation is written with keeping in mind the wide scope of studying how social problems and new media technologies are both tied together with people their will to strive for a better society with the modern tools of interaction i.e. the New Media and Social Media. New media forms public opinion among its users of social problems, which further leads to the resolution of these issues. When people see a problem for exactly what it is i.e. a roadblock in the way to development, they strive to get rid of these problems.

Significance of The Study

This research establishes the relationship between New Media, Social Problems and Society, explaining how new media technologies and outlets address social shortcomings and problems. The research tries to get an idea of how youth perceive the social or societal problems, do they strive for the eradication of social evils, the nature of social evils and problems, the extent to which these issues affect the society on a whole. By doing so it becomes clear that social issues and problems are persistent in Indian society and Online Media plays an important part in finding solutions to these problems and forming public opinion, especially among youngsters. A positively formed public opinion leads to the creation of an urgent need to break free from the shackles of all those problems that prevent a society from progressing and developing. New media is extremely helpful in the creation of public opinion regarding social issues, special among the youth.

The Necessity of Such a Study

There have been many individual studies of several Social Issues, New Media and Public Opinion or Perception but an approach to explore the relationship between the three and how it affects the society on a whole is rare and much needed to get a workable picture is somewhat lacking. This dissertation is a piece of research that keeping in mind the changing nature of society, technologies of communication and interaction among people and try to effectively represent through the collected data what people think about new media and how it affects the communication in society about social problems and help in finding their possible solutions. Limitations and Boundaries of the Study

Keeping in mind the limitation and boundaries of this research issues have been limited to mentioned above. Though problems like these with certain differences can be witnessed

throughout India, due to the limited time that the research was to be conducted in the number of samples and the geographical area was limited to Lucknow District with limited demographics. This serves the purpose of effectively conducting the research on a small scale with further possibilities of replication on a larger and wider scale in the near future.

The research was designed to explore the effect of new media in addressing social or societal issues among new media users of a certain age group of 20 to 35 years. The main reason behind this was that the most prolific and active users of new (online) media seem to fall roughly in this age group. This is also the age group most active in social interactions and also affected by them. These enacted limitations prevented the research from spiraling out of control and becoming impossible to conclude and finding results in the given time frame

Theoretical Framework

The following social scientists or sociologists and their relevant works were explored to have a theoretical understanding and blueprint of this particular study.

In *Rights of Man and Common Sense* (1776), Thomas Paine addresses individual's duty to "allow the same rights to others as we allow ourselves". The failure to do so causes birth of social and societal problems.

John Locke in his "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" considered that man was subject to three laws: the divine law, the civil law and law of opinion or reputation.

William Temple in 1672, in an essay "On the Origin and Nature of Government" gave an early formulation of importance of public opinion.

Ferdinand Tonnies in 1887 argued that Public Opinion has the equivalent social function in societies which religion has in communities. Best known for his distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

Jurgen Habermas in 1962 contributed the idea of public sphere to discussion of Public Opinion.

Herbert Blumer in early 1930s proposed the concept that Public Opinion is discussed as a form of collective behavior made up of those who are discussing a given public issue at any one time.

Research Findings

After the analysis of responses collected via questionnaires the numbers suggest that New Media (Online Media) plays a crucial role in addressing and initiating or facilitating debates and discussions about social and societal issues in the society. It is clear that the New Media (Online Media) considerably influences public opinion about social issues in the Indian society and a huge number of people are aware of the problems present in the Indian society. A large number of respondents are prolific and frequent New Media (Online Media) users. A larger part of those who

use New Media platforms are those who are to a great extent aware of social problems and shortcoming on the part of people and society as a whole to overcome these problems. It is also evident that a greater number of people consume New Media than those who do not. Majority of users use New Media platforms either for entertainment purposes or to access information regarding one other topic or issue. Majority people believe that New Media (Online Media) generates and affects public opinion and provides a platform to talk about social issues with the society. New Media users talk about gender violence, communal and ethnic harmony, corruption, gender equality and social taboos in a more positive manner than the negative. It is also helpful in the victims of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and marital rape by providing them the confidence and courage to speak up. The anonymity that digital platforms provide comes handy in this matter and proves to be more of a help than a nuisance. New Media (Online Media) also provides a platform to for discussion or debate about illiteracy, poverty, starvation and overpopulation. A large part of the respondents also believed that the New Media (Online Media) platforms help in forming helpful or constructive public opinion about social issues. It is also evident that it helps in creating awareness among it's users. Most people at some point feel like news stories, features stories, advertisements, short films, etc. with the core idea of social welfare or spreading awareness influences them to think about the social problems within the society. New Media (Online Media) helps in educating the people, especially youngsters the need and importance of social harmony and despite that it is only as good or as evil as the person using it or the purpose it is being used for. Online platforms have become the most obvious choice for people to access news and information and gives the people ability to harness it's power for the ailment of many social problems. Due to the nature of telecast media many important stories are bound to be left as they provide no profit or are simply what will not attract audience's attention but in case of New Media (Online Media) it's highly individualistic and fragmented nature helps in providing the right content to the right audience. Most other forms of media, be it television, newspaper, radio, etc. are converging on a single online platform, accessible via single device, providing the much-sought efficiency and quick access to its audiences. Time is the currency of future and everyone will seek to spend it wisely, New Media (Online Media) simply works at the user's convenience. The research also establishes that social awareness among New Media users is extremely high. The issues and topics considered taboo by mainstream media are expressed openly and somewhat comfortably on Online platforms. Rural masses are still lagging behind in the race of communications advancement but they are not far behind. Analysis of collected data suggests that people express themselves more freely on digital platforms than in a face to face conversation. But the same thing can prove to be disastrous when it comes to social media trolls and cyber bullying. Most seasoned and expert digital media users can easily use digital media to blackmail someone or extort money from someone. The nature of problems arising from New Media (Online Media) platforms easily manifest themselves into a real-life problem, for example, most communal clashes or rumors can create mass hysteria and adversely affect the social harmony or peace and order in the society. Certain incidents of mob lynching in recent times have been a direct result of rumors or spreading of deliberate misinformation. New Media (Online Media) is highly pervasive in nature. New Media (Online Media) can be tool to provide quality education to those living in the rural parts of the country. Digital platforms are highly expressive and can be a great tool to impart education to those who cannot afford it due to lack of resources and necessary

infrastructures. Society will always lean on it's children to build a better future, it is a better present that is required to do so and education is the foundation of that very present and future.

Most of the findings have been presented in numerical and percentage data. Represented data gives more insight into how New Media (Online Media) influences its users in several ways. While misinformation can insight violence and fear, harnessing information using New Media (Online Media) platforms if and when used for public good can be a gift to its users.