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SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION: STUDY OF BUILDING SOCIAL RELATION IN DIGITAL WORLD

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Abstract- The society in which we live consists of people with different social class, race, skin color, religious affiliation, ethnic origin, educational status, citizenship, living standard, appearance, attitudes, beliefs and opinion. For the development of human society as well as for the better life of individual it is important to remove these differences and exclusion caused by these differences, which is acting as barrier in social and moral development as well. For the nation's political, economic, cultural and social development it is the moral imperative to address social exclusion. For the Sustainable Development of nation and people it is important to make efforts to free all segments of society from poverty and other social barriers and to ensure healthy lives and access to education, modern energy, technology and information. These goals and targets, when effectively translated into action and properly benchmarked, represent essential elements of social inclusion processes. In the rapid evolving digital age social media plays an important role in reducing inequalities and to foster participation of all citizens to the common goal of nation i.e. overall development of the country. Social media contributes to social inclusion to the extent that people at risk of exclusion can be empowered through various rights and information provided by information and communication technologies by connecting individuals with each other. Social media may support the enhancement of citizens' social capital as it enables interactions between offline and online sociability and the enrichment of social relations by creating and maintaining links through the use of social networks. In addition, social media can also contribute to the development of cultural capital of disadvantaged people as it broadens the access to digital content and other opportunities which facilitate learning processes. This paper focuses on the use of social media in enhancing social connection, sharing of information about various law and rights and promote inclusion.

Keywords: Social Media, Social Inclusion

INTRODUCTION

India is a diversified country where people belongs to different religion, caste, culture, tradition, ethnic group, language etc, as well as there is also some disadvantage groups like scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, other backward class, minority, person with disability and learning difficulty, person with disease. Moreover India has a constitution with fundamental rights stating that India is a sovereign, secular and democratic country. The government has special concern for the well-being of socially disadvantage groups as these disadvantage groups still continue to lag behind the rest of the society due to social and economic backwardness. An ideal society is where all people feel valued, there difference are respected, and their basic needs are met so that they can live in

dignity. A socially inclusive society where all people are recognized and accepted and have a sense of belonging.

In every country, some groups face barriers that prevent them from fully participating in the political, economic and social life of their country. These groups can be excluded not only through legal systems, land and labor markets, but also through attitudes, beliefs or perceptions. The disadvantage is often based on social identity, which can be derived from gender, age, location, occupation, race, ethnicity, religion, citizenship status, disability and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). Exclusion can't provide dignity, security and an opportunity to live a better life. There is a moral imperative to address social exclusion. Left unheard, boycotting disadvantaged groups can also be costly. And the cost - whether social, political, or economic - is likely to be substantial. At the individual level, loss of wages, lifetime earnings, poor education and employment outcomes are the most common measures of cost. Social exclusion is often reinforced through discrimination, which may have physical and mental health costs. At the national level, the economic costs of social exclusion can be forgiven by gross domestic product (GDP) and human capital wealth. The notion of exclusion or exclusion may cause some groups to be excluded from markets, services, and spaces that cost both individuals and the economy.

United Nations has committed to "leave someone behind" in an effort to promote inclusive development. Social inclusion is also important and critical to achieving the twin goals of the World Bank Group to end extreme poverty and enhance prosperous prosperity.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights. Thus, social inclusion is both a process and a goal. Education is pathway that enables people to know their rights so that they can experience equality in every respect of their lives and provide then opportunities for experiencing and enhancing quality of life. The World Bank Group defines social inclusion as:

- The process of improving conditions for individuals and groups to participate in society, and
- The process of improving the capacity, opportunity and dignity of the underprivileged based on their identity to participate in society.

Inclusion through education involves

1. Putting inclusive values into action.
2. Viewing every life as of equal worth.
3. Supporting everyone to feel that they belong.
4. Increasing participation for children and adults in learning and teaching activities, relationships and communities of local schools.
5. Reducing exclusion, discrimination, barriers to learning and participation in social activities.
6. Restructuring cultures, policies and practices to respond to diversity in ways that value everyone equally.
7. Linking education to local and global realities.
8. Learning from the reduction of barriers for some children to benefit children more widely.
9. Viewing differences between children and between adults as resources for learning.
10. Acknowledging the right of children to an education of high quality in their locality.

11. Improving schools for staff and parents/carers as well as children.
12. Emphasising the development of school communities and values, as well as achievements.
13. Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and surrounding communities.
14. Recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

The concept of social inclusion describes the works related to promote equal opportunities and resources between people with and without disabilities. Social inclusion is a process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all. The multi-dimensional process aimed at creating conditions which enable full and active participation of every member of the society in all aspects of life, including civic, social, economic, and political activities, as well as participation in decision making processes. Social inclusion may also be interpreted as the process by which societies combat poverty and social exclusion. Social inclusion aims to empower poor and marginalized people to take advantage of burgeoning global opportunities. It ensures that people have a voice in decisions which affect their lives and that they enjoy equal access to markets, services and political, social and physical spaces. Definitions of social inclusion commonly include concepts like respect, diversity, shared goals and meanings and a feeling of belonging to a community who feel marginalized. Here it is important to make policies and programs to reduce inequality, exclusion and disadvantage and accommodate people from all walks of life. It is the act of making all groups of people within a society feel valued and important. The provision of certain rights to all individuals and groups in society, such as employment, adequate housing, healthcare, education and training, etc. Social inclusion depicts a form of inclusion that helps people to take part in social activities, like for example social media or different forms of communication. Simultaneously an outcome, a process and a goal of social and political strategies. It implies social and economic participation of individuals, the neutralization of social isolation, and the visibility and recognition of citizens in the public space.

Inclusion refers to the extent that individuals, families, and communities are able to fully participate in society and control their own destinies, taking into account a variety of factors related to economic resources, employment, health, education, housing, recreation, culture, and civic engagement. It is the process to ensure that socially excluded groups of people have the necessary opportunities to be active people in society. The efforts that are exerted to close the gap between the different social segments in the society with respect to social and economic aspects. Including all persons regardless of any dividing factors to the social fabric of life. There are various types of inclusion: full, partial, and mainstreaming. It is a process that requires deliberate action, providing connectivity, access, and education to those who are without knowledge and use of technology and efforts that aim to eliminate alienation or deprivation of individuals from social life.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Technological change and ICTs in particular can serve as critical channels for social integration. They connect people with information sources and opportunities that may otherwise be inaccessible or poorly accessible, such as public services, legal rights, skills training, jobs and markets. The internet and mobile phone texting, for instance, enable individuals, including members of marginalized groups, to consult with medical professionals and receive reminders to take essential medication. Further, digital ICTs foster connection among family and friends as well as social networks that enable people to organize. They also foster public transparency and accountability. Social media are web-based and user-friendly applications that provide new possibilities when it

comes to the co-creation of content (blogs, wiki, Twitter), social networking (Facebook), the sharing of taste and relevance, connectivity.

Social media are becoming the most important tools for interaction among people, where everybody can share, exchange, comment, discuss and create information and knowledge in a collaborative way. Social media have come to pervade modern society. ‘Social media’, sometimes referred to as web 2.0 technologies, are a suite of tools and platforms which are “participatory, characterized by user-generated content and peer critiquing”. These commonly include discussion forums, blogs, wikis, microblogging, podcasting and video sharing sites. Social media offer members of society opportunities to interact with one another in new ways.

Social media can be an important facilitator for sharing educational information, entertainment content and new knowledge but it could be an important facilitator of social inclusion for people who are disadvantaged, marginalized, below poverty line, disable or excluded from the mainstream society for any of the above-mentioned reason. It provides necessary information about new laws, scheme, policies and rights which are beneficial for these people as well as helps in spreading awareness about equal rights, equality in society, gender equality etc. It provide delivery of real time services that enables individual to know, learn socialize and interact with community without being subject to physical barrier.

PROBLEM

Social media is a platform to interact and communicate with others and also share ideas, information, knowledge etc. but it can also uplift the society which bears the sting of backwardness from decades. People who are excluded from society can be added to mainstream using these platforms by providing awareness among society. Present study focuses on use and role of social media in social inclusion.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To explore awareness among university students about use of social media in the context of social inclusion.
2. To study the reaction of university students about the role of social media in social inclusion.
3. To study the usefulness of social media in social inclusion as perceived by the student participants.

METHODOLOGY

The study conducted on 240 university students including male and female students enrolled in Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of commerce course using a survey method. Close ended questionnaire is used to take the opinion of university students regarding their use of social media. Questionnaire has 25 statements, constructed to solicit information about the use of social media and what role it plays in determining social inclusion. It consisted of two categories to measure individual position in terms of the use and view of usefulness of social media as informal tool to find out the role of social media in social inclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The students respond to questionnaire which has 25 statements. The questionnaire is based on Likert scale, the answer for statements from 1 to 25 were chosen from “disagree” or “agree” positions. Statement 1 to 10 aimed to investigate the use of social media platforms by university students and their various purpose of using these platforms. Statement 11 to 25 aimed to investigate use of social media platforms in social inclusion.

Study of Awareness of university Students about use of social media for social inclusion**Table :1**

Comparison of mean awareness scores of total uses of social media of male and female university students enrolled in Bachelor of Arts

| Groups | Mean | SD | N | t- value 3.41 * |
|--------|-------------|------|----|--------------------|
| Male | 7.58(52.35) | 5.39 | 40 | |
| Female | 6.41(39.51) | 4.95 | 40 | |

From Table 2, it can be observed that the obtained 't' value is found to be 3.41, which is significant at .05 level with df 88. Hence the null hypothesis of no significant difference between awareness of male and female students towards use social media for social inclusion was rejected. The mean scores of male students (52.35%) were found higher than that of female students. Male students were more aware of social media usage for social inclusion than their female counterparts. It may be due to the male students are more active for social welfare programs at university level. The female students at university level have mentality to not included in social activity for social causes, they rather busy in their studies.

Table :2

Comparison of mean awareness scores of total uses of social media of male and female university students enrolled in Bachelor of Science

| Groups | Mean | SD | N | t- value 1.39 |
|--------|--------------|------|----|------------------|
| Male | 4.53 (35.78) | 5.72 | 40 | |
| Female | 5.80 (38.33) | 3.84 | 40 | |

From Table 1, it can be observed that the obtained 't' value is found to be 1.39, which is not significant at .05 level with df 88. Hence the null hypothesis of no significant difference between awareness of male and female students towards use social media for social inclusion was accepted. which means both male and female students enrolled in Bachelor of Science do not differ in use of social media for social inclusion. Both the male and female students have the mentality that social media is not an appropriate platform for acquiring and sharing information for social inclusion, but it rather be reliable for their studies. Interaction on social media platform are not better than face-to-face interaction. Students have opinion that they lose their precious time when social media is used for social welfare purpose.

Table :3

Comparison of mean awareness scores of total uses of social media of male and female university students enrolled in Bachelor of commerce

| Groups | Mean | SD | N | t- value 3.41 * |
|--------|-------------|------|----|--------------------|
| Male | 8.59(72.35) | 7.33 | 40 | |
| Female | 7.21(59.51) | 6.35 | 40 | |

From Table 3, it can be observed that the obtained 't' value is found to be 3.41, which is significant at .05 level with df 88. Hence the null hypothesis of no significant difference between awareness of

male and female students towards use social media for social inclusion was rejected. The mean scores of male students (72.35%) were found higher than that of female students. Male students were more aware of social media usage for social inclusion than their female counterparts. Male students are active for issues related to social and human rights on social media. Female students especially share information related to human rights on social media. Male students are in favor of social and professional group on social media, which are choice based. Both the male and female students agreed on social media affects their attitude towards society.

Further analysis of survey revealed 78 female students agreed on Social media helps in socializing. Social media helps in increasing social and professional aptitude. 79% of male and female students are active for issues related to social and human rights on social media, female students especially share information related to human rights on social media. 58% of male and female students do not share message which have negative thoughts or content related to inequality about society on social media. 64% male and female student use social media to promote mutually equitable behavior. They think social media is used to break the evil practices, myths, prejudices, orthodox traditions and perverted mindset in the society. 82% male and female students ask their friend and relatives to spread information about new laws, schemes, rights etc. more and more through social media. According to them social media is effective for spreading values like reasonableness, harmony and tolerance. 44% female students raise issues related to social equality on social media. Both male and female students attempt to develop positive attitudes towards the characteristics of Indian society such as "unity in diversity", "religiosity" etc. through social media. 62% male students present their ideas over social media to break the prevalence of conservative thoughts in society. 66% male students use social media to uplift the people of the lower strata of society.

CONCLUSION

From the present survey based study it is clear that university students uses internet, smartphones and social media platforms for educational purpose i.e. sharing new knowledge, course content, data and information related to their educational field. They also support the use of social media to uplift backward, marginalized and disadvantaged people by sharing information related to new laws, human rights, amendment in law and equality and try to spread values like harmony, tolerance, reasonableness, social equality and gender equality using various social media platforms like WhatsApp, twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc. Using these social media platform students tries to break the prevalence of conservative thoughts in society and breaks various evil practices, myths, prejudice, orthodox traditions and perverted mindset in the society. Social media provide opportunity that contribute to reducing existing social gap and support social inclusion and increase peoples' quality of life. Apart from all these, social media platforms could be used to help others in difficult situation and unite the society and its people who belongs to different religion, culture, language, class, group and race, towards the path of development as the cultural slogan of the country India is "unity in diversity".

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