

## **SOCIAL MEDIA & WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A META-ANALYSIS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Technology has a direct impact on development of individuals and it has enabled them to voice out to reach the masses and be viewed globally. The easy access to Internet and Social Media has helped in supporting the prevalence of equality, justice and peace through socio-economic opportunities. Social media is regarded as powerful tool to become the voice of people in general and of women in particular. People of all walks and fields share their views by using various social networking sites. Internet and social media has now become a new pillar of society and its use has intensively and extensively expanded over the past some years. Social media through its pace of dissemination, and its reach, has become a massive tool for Women Empowerment. The websites focus on all aspects of life of women such as education, health, knowledge, etc. The easy availability of information and frequent updates regarding Women Empowerment help the people from all over the world to participate and show their concern towards the problems faced by women. It has shed light on women's issues not highlighted by mainstream media. Through social media campaigns, women become aware about their rights and powers in the society. The positive role of Social Media has enhanced the pace of development and time. Thus, the present paper will be an attempt to explore the role of Social Media in Women Empowerment in the light of various research studies.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Internet, Awareness, Women Empowerment

## **1. Introduction**

Social media are an integral part of the modern contemporary world as it has changed the way we used to communicate, seek information and to understand the world. It is an umbrella term that defines the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction and the construction of words and pictures. "It is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an 'architecture of participation', and going beyond the page metaphor of web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences." Social media has proved to be very powerful and impactful agency to bring attention towards the rights of women and has encouraged the policy makers to work more for Gender Equality. The social media usage and technological advancements have provided better opportunities for women. It has the power to enhance women's participation in economic and political life and promoting their self-expression and social change. It has been very helpful to spread the feminism ideologies. They have been able to share their ideas, opinions and experiences to a large audience. Internet along with Social Media has come up as a new form of media which has expanded dramatically over the past decade everywhere in the world. There are various websites that exclusively focus on women empowerment, covering diverse spheres of their life such as health, knowledge, lifestyle, education and much more. Through the use of Social Media, today it is easily possible to find any information related to women empowerment. When any incident or crime happens which is derogatory to women, social media becomes a faster media that helps people from all around the world to participate and show their concern and sympathy towards such incidents. Governments had to take strict action against such incidents when people everywhere condemn such happenings. Women are now also getting more knowledge and

information about their rights, duties and powers that she holds in a society. All these positive changes are now triggered to only increase their pace with time due to Internet and Social Media. However, cybercrime is creating obstacles in the path of women empowerment and they are not able to fully utilize the benefits of IT revolution.

## **2. Research Studies**

Mackey & Petruka (2021) studied about the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in explaining the concept of women empowerment. It utilized the various research studies as evidences to prove that ICT plays an important role in empowerment of women at global level. The study found that technology helped in development of capabilities of women as it paved way to excel in all fields, like education, health, lifestyle modifications, etc. The study also provided a broader outlook in understanding the advantages of ICT in empowering women and to address the issues of gender inequalities.

Kadeshwaran, Brinda & Jayaseelan (2020) argued that social media is a double edged sword that poses threat to the society where the violation of women's rights are voiced and delivered to a globally wide audience. They highlighted the contribution of social media towards women empowerment by offering education and information that equipped the women users with the strategies for better informed decision making from anywhere and everywhere which may not be possible otherwise.

Kumari (2020) opined that social media is an important platform for the discussion of women's rights and recommended the government and policy makers to formulate policies and setup commitments for the gender equality.

Lopez (2019) stated that social media is a modern tool which has the potential to oppose gender equality and help in women empowerment. It helps to increase knowledge and enhance courage to change the world. It helps to highlight the issues that women are facing in the society and it has the power to influence the society to react and tackle the issues and make the society

more progressive. It raises awareness and provides support for women empowerment by bringing different societies together.

Powell (2018) stated that social media has the power to shed light on gender equality in all spheres of life. It has given women a platform to raise their voices against the exploitation. It encourages women to share their experiences and to adopt collective liberation approach by emphasising on individuality, self-efficacy and self-sufficiency.

Vardhan (2017) attempted to study the contribution of social media towards women empowerment. The results revealed that social media provides a big platform for women empowerment by focusing on diverse spheres of their life like health, lifestyle, knowledge and education. They are getting awareness about their rights and powers and are able to express their views and opinions freely. The paper also deliberated upon negative side of social media like cybercrime, cyber bullying etc. which are creating hindrances in the path of women empowerment.

Bala (2017) highlighted certain key aspects related to women which need to be covered through media to facilitate the process of women empowerment. The paper also discussed about the role of media in women empowerment by making people aware about various factors like gender inequality, crime against women, women health, declining sex ratio, women education etc.

Narayana & Ahmad (2016) in their study revealed that media have a great caliber to promote social empowerment which ultimately leads to economic empowerment of women. They also found that media has a great potential to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making. They suggested that the powerful and positive role that the media can play in women empowerment need to be supported and should be explored further.

Gordon & Trammel (2016) revealed that with rise in internet access in Jamaica and Brazil, social media has helped in communication strategies and policies for accomplishment of various developmental goals. Social media facilitates social

and economic development among in women folk.

Loiseau & Nowacka (2015) found that Hashtag Activism helps in mobilising the mass attention on issues regarding women and their rights. The unreported issues in mainstream media get highlighted in social media garnering enough attention for successful campaigns. It was also found that social media helps in tackling violence against women through awareness programmes. It has also helped in bringing in accountability towards Gender equality. Also, women are very active on social media and they communicate to share their experiences and they are more comfortable and expressive in online conversations. The study also asserted that social networks imply the end of gender inequality because it helps in dismantling stereotypes regarding women.

Akhter & Naheed (2014) in their study found that women having access to social media are more aware about their status as a member of the society. It highlighted that internet/ social media is the best source to promote awareness regarding women empowerment. It also suggested to organise and promote various women welfare programmes to improve their socio-economic status and train them in various fields of life to raise their position and prestige in the society.

Marmai (2014) stated that effect of media is very huge in disseminating and interpretation of knowledge, creativity, innovations and news. Media is now regarded as an important element of our life and everyone benefits from it. It is the powerful tool to express the thoughts and goals to empower women economically.

Kashyap (2014) highlighted the role of alternative media in women empowerment and concluded that social media has provided the women freedom and a platform where she feels empowered to share her feelings, emotions and her thinking. She has the choice to add new friends and communicate with them. She has the freedom to express her opinions and views without being answerable for saying anything.

Asif (2013) argued that the development of a society is possible only if women

are empowered. Role of media is important to empower women because it gives them self-reliance and there is a visible effect of media on every sphere of life.

Khan and Moin (2013) in their study reported that with increased access to internet and social media at homes, women are using these for multiple purposes. It has enabled them to participate in important daily affairs of state ranging from household work to education, health and governance.

Daher (2012) stated that women in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) have set an example of social media usage as it has helped to change the traditional context of role of women in society. The success stories of Lebanese women due to social media effect have given them opportunity to learn and practice to empower themselves. It has provided them a platform to advocate for their causes, speak up to the public and to be the active citizens of the society.

Handapangoda & Sisira Kumara (2012) in their qualitative study focused on role of mobile phones in empowering the women of Sri Lanka mainly the dependent housewives belonging to poor households. The study revealed that access to mobile phones led to their strengthening and expansion of their social relations. It facilitated their access to information and opened new avenues for choice and power. The study suggested that mobile phones can play a crucial part in women empowerment and recommended it as a source of change in the policy making.

### **3. Conclusions**

It can be concluded from the above studies that Social media has the capability for mass attention and bring accountability to rights of women to challenge the discrimination faced by them. It has helped in formulating the strategies to enhance the empowerment of women by facilitating technology access to them. The unprecedented use of social media by women provide opportunities to bring gender equality and women's rights issues to forefront for both policy making and media attention. The role of Media is very important to accelerate

Women empowerment which will lead to economic empowerment of women. Social media is a good and practical means to increase the awareness of healthy concepts of being woman, of what is the role of women in modern society, of good examples that women give us every day, of the results they have achieved in many fields of economics and beyond, the social consideration of women, giving to young women good ideas and examples for their economic empowerment. Social Media could also make a strong contribution, through the implementation of various media campaigns against the incidents which are derogatory to the image of women in the society and deliberating and discussing the concept of gender equality and other related issues. The Social Media has always unconsciously affected and influenced the thinking and behavior of society. The social media should enable projection of women in a decent and dignified way and promote respect and dignity to women avoiding negative portrayal of women.

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