



FACEBOOK AND THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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ABSTRACT

India has diverse religions, races, castes, creeds, cultures, traditions, values and beliefs, yet our Constitution guarantees to its citizen's freedom of speech and expression, though not without reasonable restrictions. The preamble of the Indian Constitution says, "**WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA**, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **SOVEREIGN, SOCIALIST, SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**," and due to this, one of the fundamental rights under the Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution gives the "right to freedom of speech and expression". The Indian mass media also benefitted from it with certain reasonable restrictions. In this era of information and communications technology/technologies every individual is free to share and express his or her views and opinion through social media, especially facebook. The aim of the researcher is to know the role of facebook in freedom of expression. Many stories related to 'misuse' of facebook came into limelight and once again the debate on freedom of expression in relation to social media, especially facebook, has emerged as an important issue. This study involves higher education students among the age group 18 to 23 who actively use facebook.

KEY WORDS: Facebook, Freedom of Expression.

INTRODUCTION

"Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties" – John Milton.

Mass media plays vital role in disseminating news and information with certain reasonable restrictions. In this epoch of information and communications technologies each human being can share and express his or her views and opinion freely and independently through social media, especially facebook. It is pleasure for every individual to express the feelings about good and bad. Freedom of Expression is the power for the democratic and economic functioning of a society. Indian Constitution includes Article 19 (1) (a) i.e. the freedom of the press and having reasonable restrictions in Article 19 (2) of the constitution. These restrictions are like in the interests of the security of state, friendly relations with the foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

'Freedom' means the absence of control, obstruction or restriction. People can freely communicate by words of mouth, writing, printing, pictures or any other mode. Social media especially facebook helps people to be more open and connected with the present world. It helped us to gather information about LGBT communities and discrimination they have faced and even facing in the society. It provides a platform where people can exchange content, messages and ideas freely, keeping in mind the rights of others. They can engage in meaningful conversations and ideas with their friends, family and communities.

Researcher wants to study on facebook and freedom of expression in the context of normative theories i.e. Authoritarian Theory, Libertarian Theory, Social Responsibility Theory and Soviet Media Theory.

Normative theories have been given by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm in their book "Four Theories of the Press". These are also known as western theories of mass media. These theories have ideal way for a media system to be controlled and operated by the government, authority, leader and public. These theories are more focused in the relationship between Press and the Government than press and the audience. These theories are more concerned about the ownership of the media and who controls the press or media in the country.

(<http://communicationtheory.org/normative-theory-four-theories-of-the-press/>, 2:15am, 22/5/2017)

AUTHORITARIAN THEORY

"Authoritarian theory describe that all forms of communications are under the control of the governing elite or authorities or influential bureaucrats. The press is a tool to boost the ruler's power in the country. The authorities have all rights to permit any media and control it by providing license to the media and make certain censorship. If any media violate the government policies against license, then the authority has all right to cancel the license and revoke it."

<http://communicationtheory.org/authoritarian-theory/>, 6:17 Pm, 23/05/17

LIBERTARIAN THEORY

"The theory which is originally came from libertarian thoughts from 16th century in Europe. The libertarian theorists are against the authoritarian thoughts. Libertarianism is free from any authority or any control or censorship. The libertarianism is an idea of individualism and limited government which is not harmful to another. Libertarian theory sees people are more enough to find and judge good ideas from bad."

<http://communicationtheory.org/libertarian-theory/>, 11:45 Pm, 24/05/2017

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THEORY

"Social responsibility theory allows free press without any censorship but at the same time the content of the press should be discussed in public panel and media should accept any obligation from public interference or professional self regulations or both. The theory lies between both authoritarian theory and libertarian theory because it gives total media freedom in one hand but the external controls in other hand. Here, the press ownership is private."

<http://communicationtheory.org/social-responsibility-theory/>, 9:50 Pm, 26/05/2017

SOVIET MEDIA THEORY

"It is also known as "The Communist Media Theory". It was developed and followed by Adolf Hitler's Nazi in Germany and Benito Mussolini in Italy. Soviet media theory is imitative of Leninist principles which based on the Carl Marx and Engel's ideology. The government undertakes or controls the total media and communication to serve working classes and their interest. Theory says the state have absolute power to control any media for the benefits of people. They put end to the private ownership of the press and other media."

<http://communicationtheory.org/soviet-media-theory/>, 7:20 Pm, 27/05/2017

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Research being an endless quest for knowledge always demands a scientific approach in dealing with subjects which are of social relevance. In this era of information and communications technology/technologies every individual is free to share and express his or her views and opinion through social media, especially facebook. The aim of the researcher is to know the role of facebook in freedom of expression. It would definitely contribute to the socio economic benefit of the society.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the role of freedom of expression in relation to social media especially facebook
- To analyze freedom of expression in relation to facebook with censorship or self regulation

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is *cross sectional study* and *Survey* method is used.

Unit of Analysis: Higher education students among the age group 18 to 23 who actively use facebook.

Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling

Selected Sample: 150 respondents, out of 150 respondents 87 are male and 63 are female

Duration of study: October and November, 2016

Universe of the study: Students of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow

Primary Data: Through Interview Schedule

Secondary Data: The secondary data includes books, magazines, journals, periodicals and different websites.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

- Due to shortage of time and budget, the researcher was bound to have only one hundred and fifty sample size.
- It was not feasible for the researcher to collect data from all the colleges/universities of Lucknow, therefore, the researcher chose only Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (a central university), Lucknow

USE OF STATISTICAL TOOLS

- Table Presentation
- Pie Chart and Bar Graph
- Microsoft excel
- Word document

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1) Do you like facebook?

Figure: 1

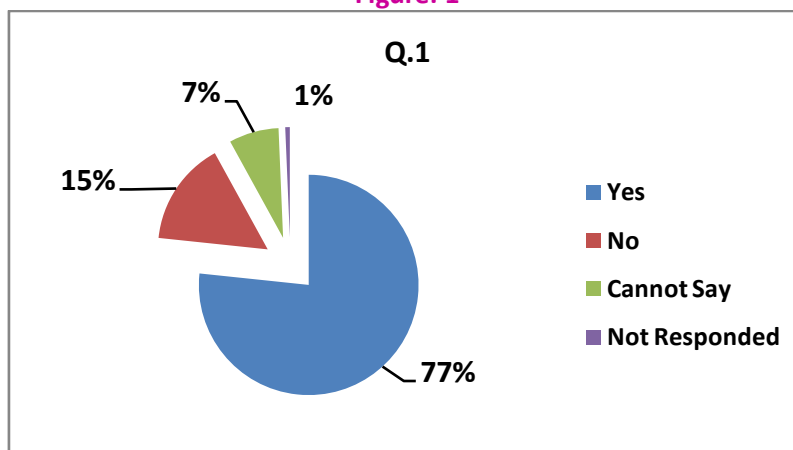


Table: 1

Q. No.	Yes	No	Cannot Say	Not Responded
1	115	23	11	1

Inference

According to the figure mentioned above it is clear that majority of the respondents (77 percent) liked facebook and a small number of the respondents (15 percent) did not like facebook and so they selected as no, and only 1 percent did not respond to the question.

2) How many days in a week you use facebook?

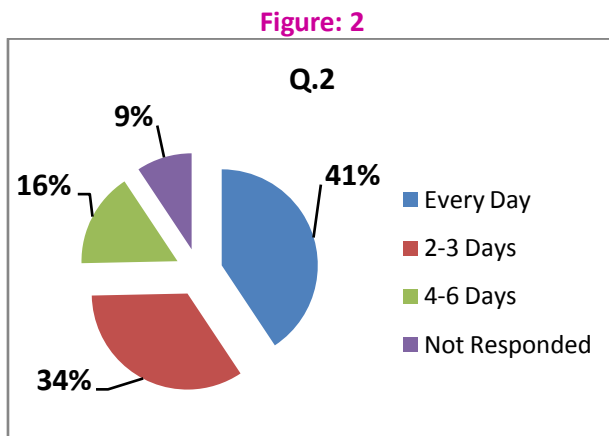


Table: 2

Q. No.	Every Day	2-3 Days	4-6 Days	Not Responded
2	61	51	24	14

Inference

Going further, the next question was related to the days in a week respondents used facebook. So, from the above figure it is depicted that majority of the respondents used it regularly, four to five days and two to three days in a week i.e. 41 percent, 24 percent and 34 percent respectively. But as compared to them 14% did not respond. Hence, it is clear that people like facebook and use it regularly.

3) How many hours in a day you use facebook?

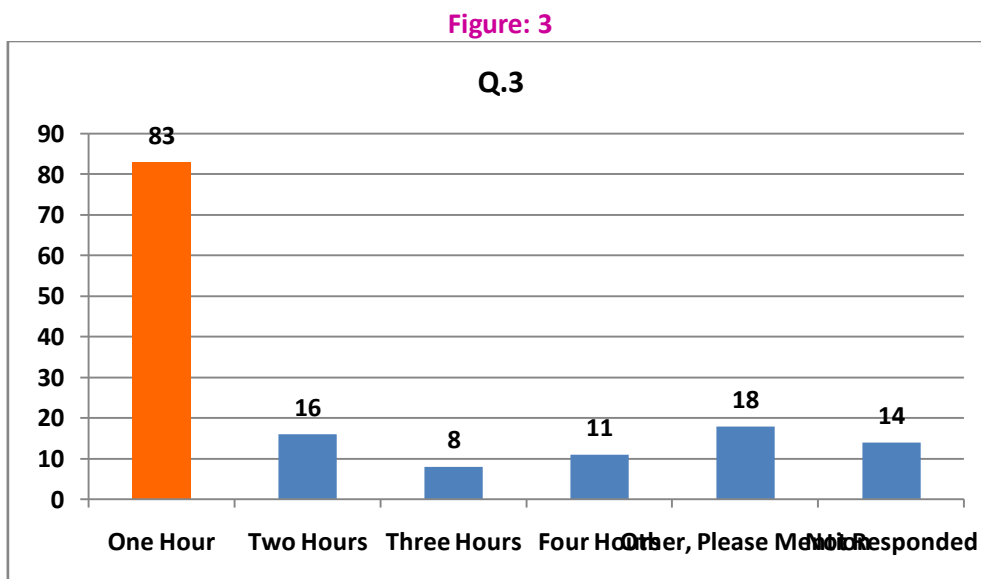


Table: 3

Q. No.	One Hour	Two Hours	Three Hours	Four Hours	Other, Please Mention	Not Responded
3	83	16	8	11	18	14

Inference

When the researcher asked the hours in a day they spent on it, majority of the respondents spent one hour in a day and less than half of the majority spent two to four hours a day. Very negligible number of the samples did not respond. It showed that most of the youngsters use social media especially facebook one hour at least every day.

4) Do you know about Article 19(1)(A)?

Figure: 4

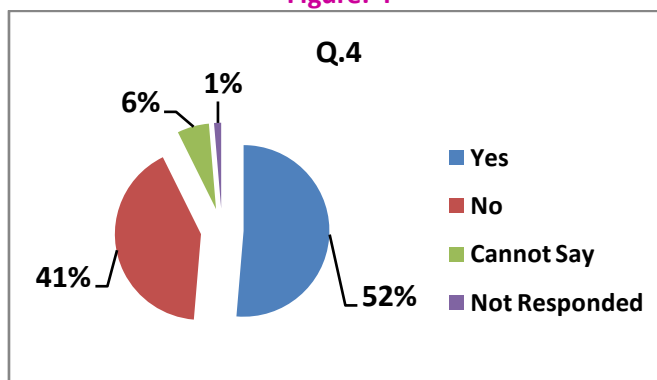


Table: 4

Q. No.	Yes	No	Cannot Say	Not Responded
4	77	62	9	2

Inference

According to the above displayed figure it comes that more than half of the respondents knew about Article 19(1)(A) of the constitution i.e. 52 percent, whereas 41 percent did not know. Very negligible of the sample said cannot say and only 1 percent did not respond.

5) Do you know about freedom of speech and expression?

Figure: 5

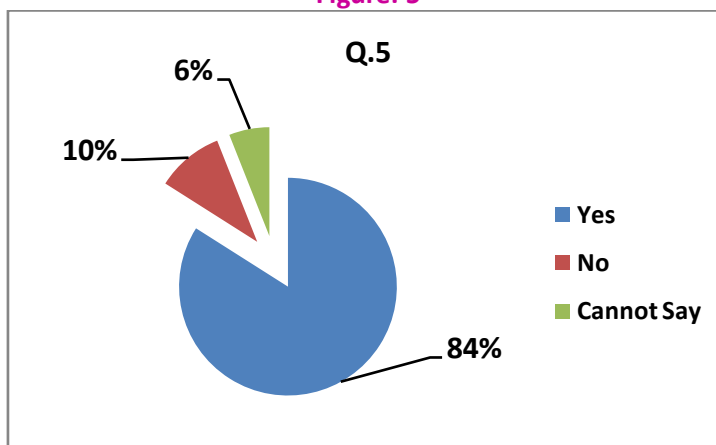


Table: 5

Q. No.	Yes	No	Cannot Say
5	126	15	9

Inference

Based on the above question 84 percent of the respondents mentioned yes, 10 percent selected no and only 6 percent ticked cannot say about freedom of speech and expression. So it can be concluded the youngsters mostly knew about the freedom of exchanging thoughts, information and ideas.

6) Do you think facebook has given freedom to express?

Figure: 6

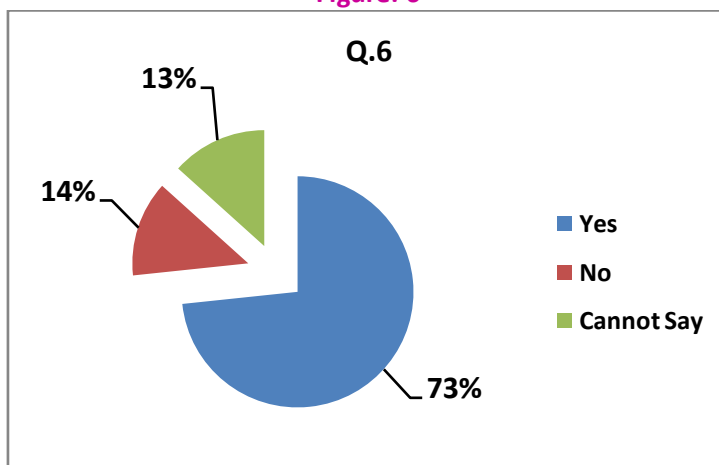


Table: 6

Q. No.	Yes	No	Cannot Say
6	110	20	20

Inference

It is clear from the above figure that majority of the respondents think facebook has given freedom to express i.e. 73 percent, 14 percent respondents indicated no and few picked cannot say.

7) Do you ever used facebook for expressing any issue which would not have been generally possible through other media?

Figure: 7

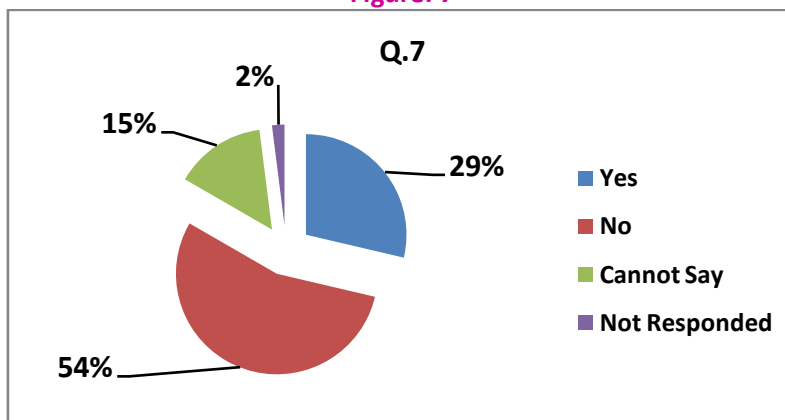


Table: 7

Q. No.	Yes	No	Cannot Say	Not Responded
7	43	82	22	3

Inference

When the researcher asked the respondents if they used facebook for expressing issue which would not have been generally possible through other media, then less than half of the respondents said yes i.e. 29 percent, 54 percent picked no, 15 percent indicated cannot say and very negligible of the respondents were not interested in responding to the question.

8) If Yes, please mention the issue/issues:-

Figure: 8

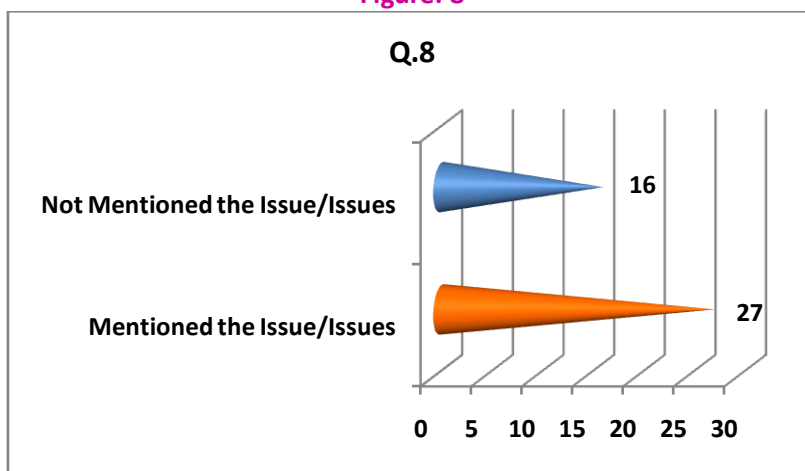


Table: 8

Q. No.	If Yes	Mentioned the Issue/Issues	Not Mentioned the Issue/Issues
8	43	27	16

Inference

In connection to the previous question, the above mentioned figure helped the researcher to know the issues which the respondents shared and exchanged the issues with the public. Before mentioning the issues, it is comprehended that among 43 respondents who said yes that they used facebook for expressing issue which would not have been generally possible through other media, only 27 of the respondents mentioned the issue/issues and rest of the respondents did not mentioned it.

The following issues were mentioned:

- Women empowerment - 3
- Rape Cases, Kidnapping, Domestic Violence - 5
- Religious Issues - 3
- Awareness about Natural Calamities - 3
- Section 377 & their Freedom - 2
- Political Issues - 4
- Social Issues - 3
- Syrian Movement - 2
- Others – 2

9) Do you think facebook should be censored by the Government authorities?

Figure: 9

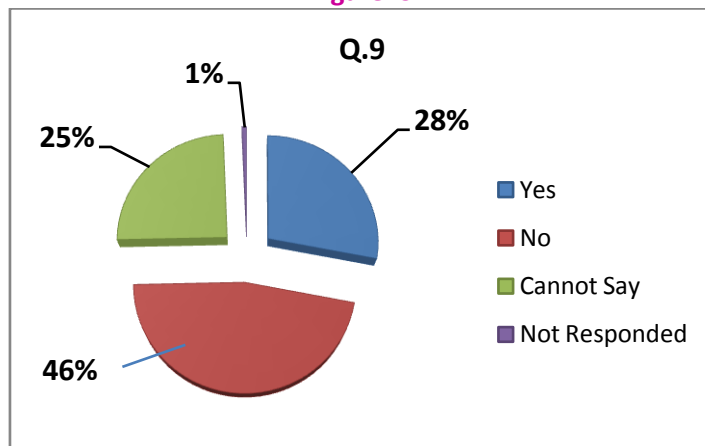


Table: 9

Q. No.	Yes	No	Cannot Say	Not Responded
9	42	70	37	1

Inference

While asking the question about censorship by the Government authorities on facebook, nearly half of the respondents said no, only 28 percent of the respondents agreed on it and the rest 25 percent picked cannot say and very negligible sample i.e. 1 percent not responded on it.

10) Do you think facebook should be fully liberal?

Figure: 10

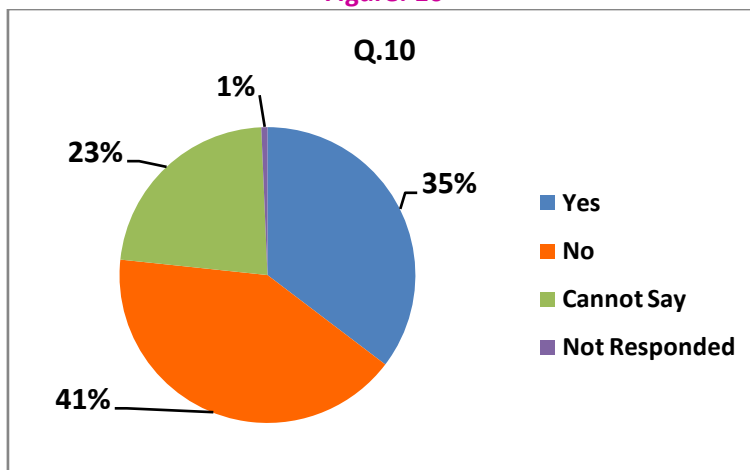


Table: 10

Q. No.	Yes	No	Cannot Say	Not Responded
10	53	62	34	1

Inference

The above figure declared that nearly half of the respondents were not agreed with the idea that facebook should be fully liberal, a lesser number of respondents agreed on it. Only 1 percent not responded and 23 percent respondents picked cannot say.

11) Do you think facebook should be self regulated with ethical values?

Figure: 11

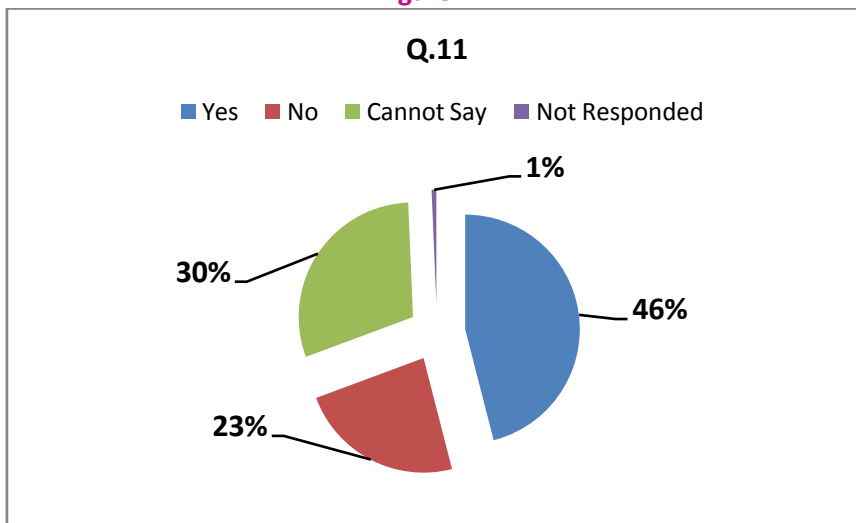


Table: 11

Q.No.	Yes	No	Cannot Say	Not Responded
11	69	35	45	1

Inference

Above mentioned figure evident for nearly half of the majority agreed on the thought of facebook should be self regulated with ethical values, 23 percent were not agreed on it, 30 percent ticked cannot say and only very few i.e. 1 percent of the sample size not responded.

12) Do you think facebook should be liberal upto some extent and also be censored some times?

Figure: 12

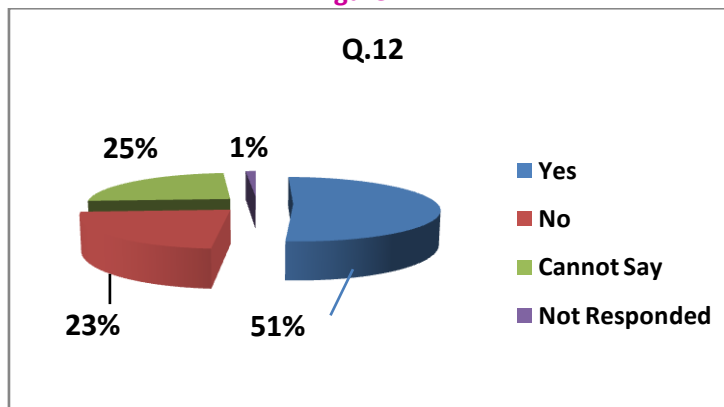


Table: 12

Q. No.	Yes	No	Cannot Say	Not Responded
12	77	34	37	2

Inference

According to the figure mentioned above it is clear that majority of the respondents agreed that facebook should be liberal upto some extent and also be censored some times, a smaller amount of respondents were not agreed on it. Rest of the respondents picked cannot say and only 1 percent did not respond.

13) Share some suggestions on facebook and freedom of expression?

Figure: 13

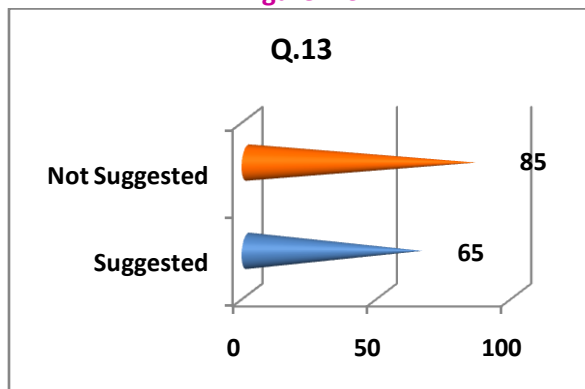


Table: 13

Q. No.	Suggested	Not Suggested
13	65	85

Inference

The above figure depicted that 65 respondents gave suggestions and rest 85 did not suggest.

The following Suggestions were proposed by the respondents. The suggestions are group thematically:

- Facebook should be promoted as the main source of news - 5
- Freedom of expression in facebook must be censored sometimes - 12
- Privacy must be maintained - 8
- Some respondents recommended that facebook should be liberal - 11
- There should be justified limit and restriction - 13
- It should be free from government authorities - 9
- Others – 7

CONCLUSION

The main aim of the study was to know role of freedom of expression in relation to social media especially facebook and was based on normative theory which explained an ideal way for a media system to be controlled and operated by the government, authority, leader and public. It is focused in the relationship between Press and the Government than press and the audience. It is concerned about the ownership of the media and who controls the press or media in the country. The study concludes with the results of the objectives:

- **Objective:** To understand the role of freedom of expression in relation to social media especially facebook
- **Result:** The study suggests that facebook is popular and majority of the students prefer it. They use it for more than one hour every day. Majority of the respondents know freedom of speech and expression but not familiar about Article 19 (1)(A) of the constitution. According to this study, it is giving platform to the students for sharing their views and opinions which are not easily possible in other media.
- **Objective:** To analyze freedom of expression in relation to facebook with censorship or self regulation
- **Result:** According to authoritarian theory, the media controlled and censored by the ministries in the country but libertarian is fully free without any intervention of any authority or government, Social responsibility theory – press freedom in one hand but on the other hand they controlled the press by raising question and Soviet media theory, the whole control of the media is under the leader of the

nation. Based on the above data and interpretation, it is comprehended that the facebook should be liberal upto some extent and also be censored some times.

FURTHER READINGS

(<http://communicationtheory.org/normative-theory-four-theories-of-the-press/>, 2:15am, 22/5/2017)

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<http://communicationtheory.org/social-responsibility-theory/>, 9:50 Pm, 26/05/2017

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