



SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM: ITS IMPACT ON REAL LIFE

Manju Rani

Research Scholar (NET-JRF) Sociology , Chaudhary Charan Singh
University Meerut UP.



1.0. ABSTRACT

The social media activism is increasing day-by-day due to the advent of technology. The other reason being the continuously increasing penetration of technology in the real world. The concept of social media activism is increasing, thereby, posing positive as well as negative impact on the real life. The social media has become the most popular form of media recently, just because it is a virtual world by which the real life is getting affected. Thus, because of the improvement in technology, social media is getting popularity, whereby, social media activism is increasing. There are various social media platforms consisting of different applications and different websites. It is very well known that social media activism is employed by the grassroot activists so as to spread all the information, especially those which are not available on mainstream media and censored news. Thus, it is impacting the real life to a greater extent. This paper is a creation for those who want to understand the pros and cons of the social media activism. It will be useful for those activists who want to study how social media activism be made to reach to a larger audience.

KEYWORDS : *social media activism , of different applications and different websites.*

2.0. INTRODUCTION

Today, with the increasing popularity of social media, social media activism is gaining popularity. Talking about media activism, media activism can be defined as a part of activism that uses media as a part of communication tools. The media participating in media activism includes newspapers, video and audio media, campaigns and protests regarding media and communication policies. This part of activism is used in many forms in diverse fields, to spread that information which has not been given space in the censored news or mainstream media. The basic focus of this activism is to bring change in policies that relate to media as well as communication technologies.

Social media activism is a form of media activism which brings in a larger audience because of its interactive features towards a great mass. The information that breaks in social media becomes viral in fractions of second. The campaigns and protests related information on social media can increase the number of supporters. Thus, social media is far superior than traditional media. There are various social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, where a piece of information can become trending in no time.

Though it is true that a small percentage of social media users express their personal interest in a cause online as compared to offline mode, the social media interaction stands as the first step towards social engagement. In the words of Victor Damoso, the participant of Sao Paulo's main Paulista Avenue, "Social media has helped us organize without having leaders. Our ideas, our demands are discussed on Facebook. There are no meetings, no rules."

Today, everyone has smartphones on which various social media apps can be operated for free. There are various apps, too, which offer live streaming. All this stuff has contributed a lot to social media activism. With the improvement in communication technology, information can be widespread without any error. With the help of videos being uploaded on YouTube, information can be sent more easily as compared to publishing of that information in native language. Thus, it can be defined as the activism behind the screen.

Most of the information is intentionally changed to trending by tagging a great number of people or by using hashtags or simply through location check-ins. These are the best ways to put forth one's opinion about that particular information. Thus, the duplicity and redundancy of the information sets it in viral category. This also allows the like-minded people to come together and the unlike-minded people to share their personal opinions.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter help the users to engage with the trending causes. This is done via liking, subscribing, tagging, sharing, hashtag, videos or photos. Some of the famous trending causes include #MeToo and #HumFitToIndiaFit. This type of engagement has caused increase in social media activism.

3.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

Lovink's body of work includes articles such as 'Mapping the Limits of New Media', 'A virtual world is possible' and other contextualizing pieces. In many of his interviews with other important new media thinkers and activists, questions are raised about how much to challenge the mainstream media, or the relevance of the fact that much online organizing is centered around offline events and if this relegates new media activism to eventism. Much of his work describes the history and origin of the movement with discussion of what he believes to be its anti-globalization roots. There has also been production of glossaries to assist in understanding the complex technology and language of new media activism.

Rosalind Gill and MargarethaGeertsema might agree as while the potential and veneer exists for new medias to be more inclusive of women as producers of media, this remains an unfulfilled possibility.

In his discussion of the UK riots that took place in August of this year, Christopher Fuchs writes: "the BBC took up the social media panic discourse on August 9th and reported about the power of social media to bring together not only five, but 200 people for forming a rioting "mob". Media and politicians created the impression that the riots were orchestrated by 'Twitter mobs', 'Facebook mobs' and 'Blackberry mobs'. After one a few month ago told we had 'Twitter revolutions' and 'Facebook revolutions' in Egypt and Tunisia, one now hears about 'social media mobs' in the UK." (2011)

Gerbaudo (2012) argues that conclusions can be made only by assessing the interventions social media makes in specific acts of activism. From such an approach he has identified social media as providing a "choreography of assembly" –of the creation of symbolic occupations and physical manifestations that are then propagated across digital space. Decrying the tendency to view social media as creating a new "virtual" realm, Gerbaudo argues, drawing on his direct observations of the Arab Spring, that social media is very rarely its own activity in and of itself – that often it is utilised as part of a broader set of political activities, a direct challenge to the theories of the slacktivist and the paradigm shifter alike.

Clay Shirky (2011) is one of the early scholars to write about social media as a new social networking tool for collective action. He argues that over the years, the world communication system has gotten denser, more complex, and more participatory. People have gained greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech, and thus, an enhanced ability to undertake collective action (Shirky 2011). These increased freedoms and technology can help loosely coordinated public demand change. Traditional organizational tools used to mobilize would make use of social hubs such as universities, coffee shops, group meetings, independent news sources, etc. to spread information. However, the rise of the Internet in the 1990's marked a changing point for world communication. The networked population has grown from the low millions to the low billions (Shirky 2011). At the same time, the creation and adoption of

social media such as blogs, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter have become a fact of life. Citizens, activists, nongovernmental organizations, telecommunications firms, software providers, governments – are all actors that engage and participate in social media sites.

4.0. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The problem, hereby, to address is the relation between virtual world of social media activism and real life. This relation is needed to understand because the impact of social media activism has been moderate till now. But, the need of the hour is to enhance the positive impact of social media activism on the real life. The problem is that the virtual world is increasingly throwing different impact on different people on their life, though the need is to bring the positive out of the virtual world.

5.0. VIRTUAL WORLD VS REAL WORLD

Today, to be said there's one life of a person but there are two different views to look in his/her life, one from the lens of technology and the other, that is, real life. In real life, one can breathe, eat, sleep, play in all his/her senses and in reality. At the same time, in virtual world, everything is like an illusion, like one can go in a world where nothing is real. Though virtual world may seem interesting, its just like "All that glitters is not gold".

5.1. VIRTUAL WORLD

The virtual world came into existence because of the boom in technology, continuously updated smartphones, new and trending apps. The intention of technology was to make communication between people sitting in different parts of the world easier and quick. Though this technology has brought the people living far away closer but at the same time, the people living closer has gone far.

Smartphones may have brought families closer – but they have also left the elderly feeling isolated as millennials spend hours online and have little time for real-world conversations. Close to 80% of senior citizens say that social media has cut into the time family members have for them, which they consider disrespectful and a form of neglect.

5.2. REAL WORLD

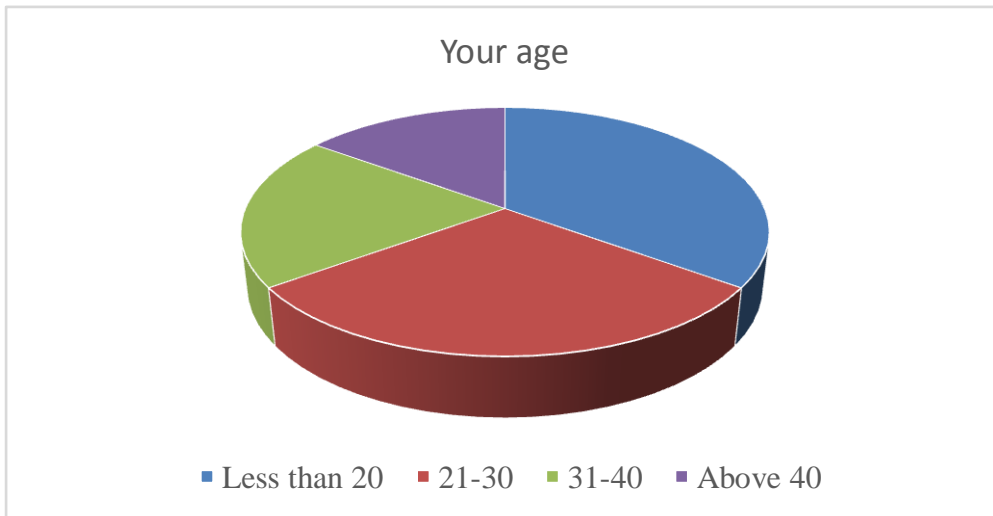
The real world is more interesting if one may learn to enjoy every moment of it. In earlier times, people actually lived their lives with real aim and real goals. They actually lived a life. The real life is one in which one can freely breathe, sleep, eat, jump, walk, drink, hear, talk and other such real life activities.

Real life provides the experiences which are open-ended. They give an opportunity to gain whatever one wants. The only limitation that exists is creativity as well as the physical parameters needed in real life. Real life is a value driven life which gives the meaning and the direction to which a life can be led. Thus, life has a personal meaning and a great importance.

6.0. DATA ANALYSIS

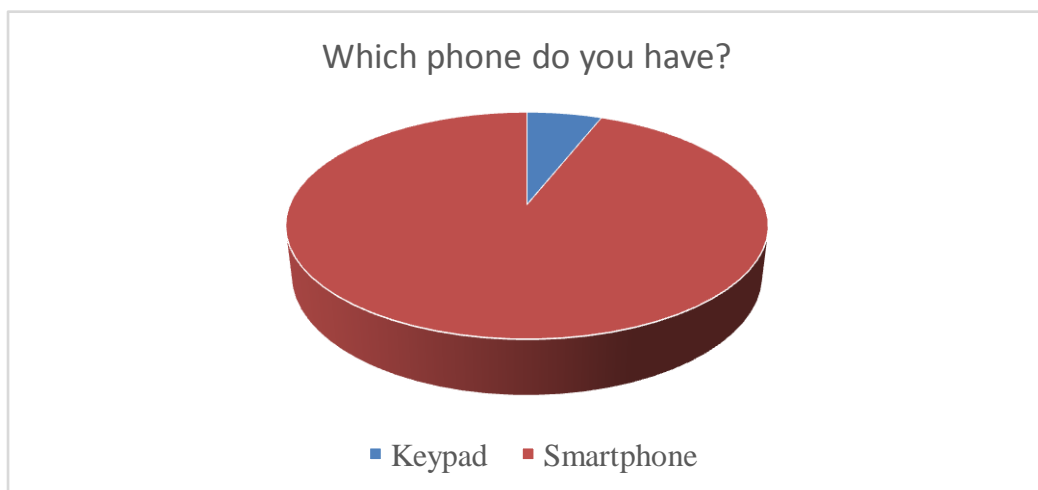
For understanding the social media activism in the real life, the data has been collected from 100 respondents, based on random sampling, belonging to Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The collected data has been analysed and drawn in the form of charts as under:

1. Your age



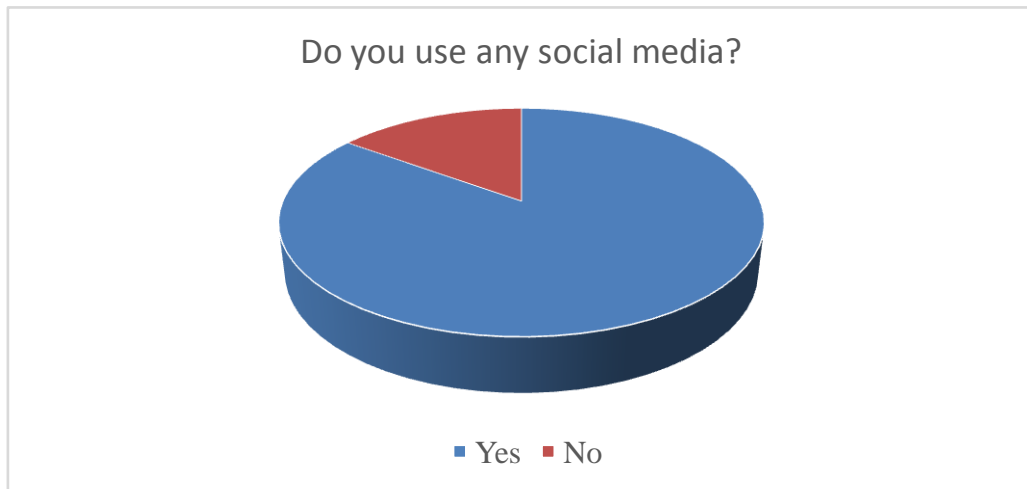
The respondents are more or less equally distributed between different age groups. 35% of the respondents are less than 20 years, 30% lying between 21-30, 20% lying between 31-40 and 15% above 40 years of age

2. Which phone do you have?



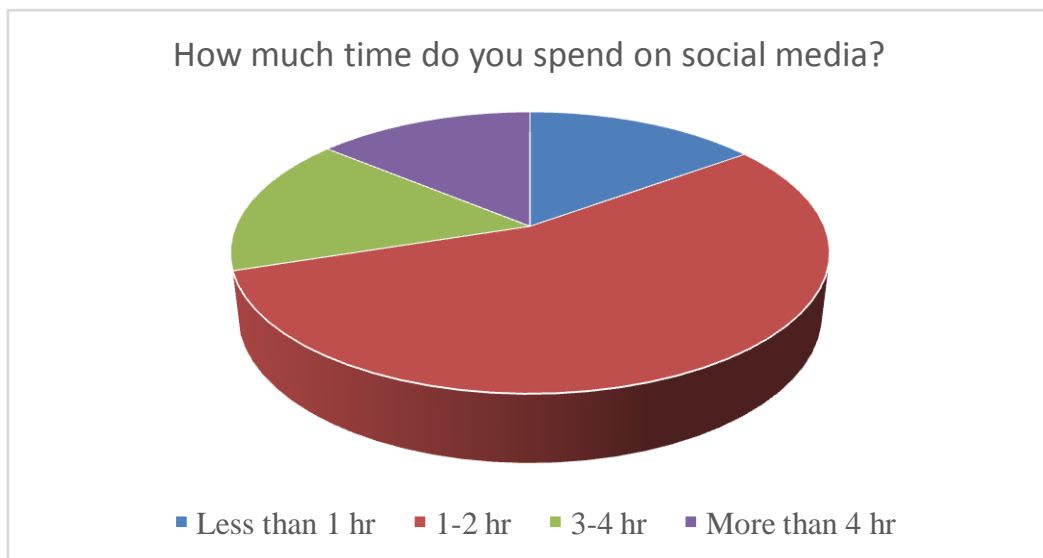
Out of 100 respondents, only 6% have keypad mobiles while 94% have smartphones. This shows how the smartphones have taken over keypad mobiles.

3. Do you use any social media?



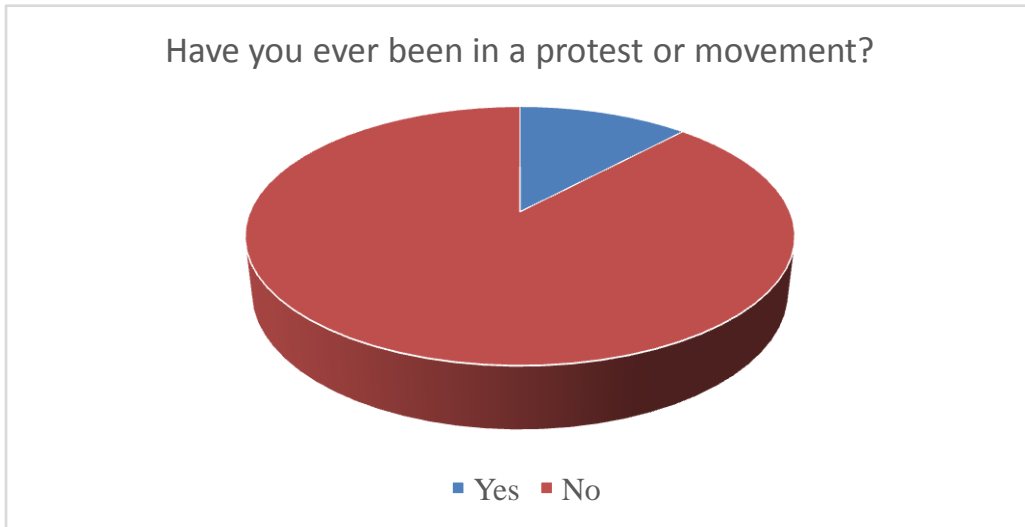
Out of 100 respondents, 85% used social media and 15% didn't use social media. This shows that majority of the people use social media in their daily lives to interact with each other.

4. How much time do you spend on social media?



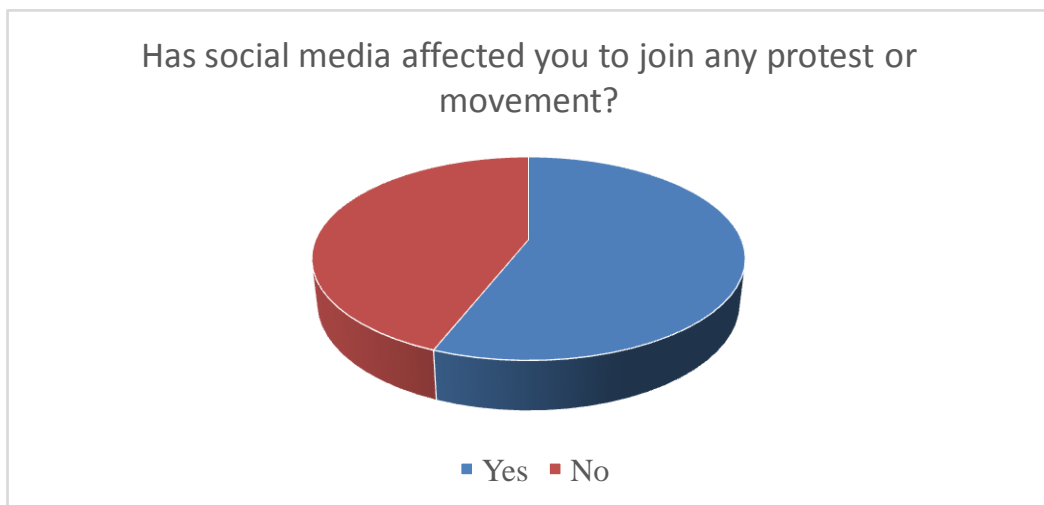
According to the data collected, 15% of the respondents spend less than 1 hour on social media while 55% spend 1-2 hour on social media. On one hand, 16% spend 3-4 hour on social media while on the other hand, 14% spend more than 4 hours. This shows that majority of the people spend 1-2 hour daily on the social media.

5. Have you ever been in a protest or movement?



88% of the respondents have never been in a protest or movement while 12% have been to protest or movement. This shows that only a minority of people do participate in a protest or movement.

6. Has social media affected you to join any protest or movement?



56% of the respondents have been affected by social media to join the protest or movement while 44% have not been affected by social media to join the protest or movement. This shows that the rate affecting to join protest or movement through social media is almost neutral.

7. How many times do you call or meet your friends?



54% of the respondents revealed that they met or called their friends once in a month while 26% said that they met or called their friends thrice in a month. At the same time, 20% responded that they met or called their friends more than thrice in a month.

7.0. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The results which came out of the data analysis are listed below:

- More than half of the population has smartphones.
- More than half of the population use social media.
- More than half of the population spend 1-2 hours daily on social media.
- More than half of the population have never been to a protest or movement.
- The affect of social media on joining the protest or movement is nearly neutral.
- More than half of the population call or meet their friends once in a month.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that in the era of smartphones, a gap is being widened between the virtual world and real life because of social media. Because of social media activism, the participation in protest or movement is nearly becoming a trend.

8.0. SUGGESTIONS

According to the results which came out of the data analysis, some of the suggestions which are the need of the hour are listed below:

- Social media activism should be a balanced one, that is, virtual world and real life should not hamper each other.
- Any protest or movement can gain popularity over social media. So, it is advised to go for the positive causes.
- Social media activism should not be mistaken as real-world activism.

9.0. SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY

The topic undertaken in the paper can act as a base for many topics. Since technology is continuously evolving, social media is gaining popularity day by day. Every next day, a new app or website

comes to limelight which makes use of social media. Since, the respondents in the paper were very less as compared to the population of the society, more respondents can shape a new conclusion at all.

10.0. REFERENCES

- ✓ Nicole Langfield, *Social media activism is no joke*, Retrieved from <https://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2017-10-27/lifestyle/social-media-activism-is-no-joke/>
- ✓ Ben Gilbert, *What do you need to know about social media activism*, Retrieved from <https://www.engadget.com/2014/07/02/social-media-activism-explainer/>
- ✓ Taylor Corrigan, *Social Media Activism: Effective or Slacktivism*, Retrieved from <http://www.branddrivendigital.com/social-media-activism-effective-slacktivism/>
- ✓ *Media Activism*, Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_activism
- ✓ Dhiraj Murthy, *Introduction to Social media, Activism, and Organizations*, Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2056305117750716>
- ✓ Sonja Hohenbild, Shahriar Khonsari, Heather McMullen, and Kalea Turner8Beckman ComDev, *Assignment 1: A Literature Review of New Media Activism*, Retrieved from <http://wpmu.mah.se/nmict11group4/files/2011/11/Group-4-New-Media-Activism-Literature-Review.pdf>
- ✓ Bradley Allsop, *Social media and activism literature review*, Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/29763585/Bradley_Allsop_social_media_and_activism_literature_review
- ✓ Amandha Rohr Lopes, *The Impact of Social Media on Social Movements: The New Opportunity and Mobilizing Structure*, Retrieved from https://www.creighton.edu/fileadmin/user/CCAS/departments/PoliticalScience/Journal_of_Political_Research_JPR/2014_JSP_papers/Lopes_JPR.pdf
- ✓ Jim Taylor, *Technology: Virtual vs. Real Life: You Choose*, Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-power-prime/201105/technology-virtual-vs-real-life-you-choose>

11.0. APPENDIX QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Your age
 - Less than 20
 - 21-30
 - 31-40
 - Above 40
2. Which phone do you have?
 - Keypad
 - Smartphone
3. Do you use any social media?
 - Yes
 - No
4. How much time do you spent on social media?
 - Less than 1 hour
 - 1-2 hour
 - 3-4 hour
 - More than 4 hours
5. Have you ever been in a protest or movement?
 - Yes
 - No

6. Has social media affected you to join any protest or movement?
- Yes
 - No
7. How many times do you call or meet your friends?
- Once in a month
 - Thrice in a month
 - More than thrice in a month