

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WOMEN'S SELF-EXPOSURE: OPPORTUNITIES AND PROBLEMS IN NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES

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ABSTRACT

Social media has a game changing impact in 21st century. It provides a unique platform where women can share and interact with rest of the world. In addition, social media is playing practical role in defining and establishing the identities of women. In these modern times the role of women has been expanded to many folds and now she is participating in various aspects of life. This study tends to elaborate the opportunities and problems faced to women while exposing themselves to the social media. It also brings about the debate of women empowerment and the hindrances that she faces in defining herself. Social media provides a platform to utilize their own abilities and improve their social status in the society. Women are empowering by establishing themselves as entrepreneurs and role model through social media instead of conventional methods and setting examples for the other women. Further, social media facilitates women to express their views for their legal and social rights that were previously ignored. There are MeToo, and Timesup, campaigns that have raised the voices of women. The study argue the fact that social media is providing an avenue for the exposure of women to build their own identity as well as they face different kind of issues in developing and negotiating themselves on social media. The avenue of social spaces for women on social media should be supported to strengthening the women socially.

Keywords: Social media, women, self- exposure, opportunities, problems, identities

INTRODUCTION

This study tends to explore the role of social media in illustrating the exposure of women identities on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Study has discussed the practical role of social media in creating opportunities to empower women. It has been explored that women are facing continuous insecurities while exposing themselves on social media. The purpose research paper is to explore the role of social media in creating societal transformation particularly in Pakistan. Undoubtedly, media has become symbol to speak freely and express our feelings and identities to the society. Social media has power to reach huge numbers of people in short time span of time. The

presence of social media on an individual phone has empowered every individual currently particularly giving opportunities and voice to women in providing creative outlet Social media gradually has spread the feminism ideologies. Social media, specifically hash tags and online campaigns have given a voice to women for their rights. Women issues are being discussed that were not previously discussed. Women are using social media to increase discussion and debates on social media platform for women's right but at the down side of this cyber attraction the harassment issue is drastic (Finn, & Banch, 2000). Women are getting and learning empowerment but due threats

on social media are hindering them in exposing their identities.

Following are the core objectives of the study

Objectives

1. To understand the role of social media in illustrating the exposure of women's identity.
2. To argue the opportunities for women in their self-exposure on social media.
3. To analyzing the hindrances regarding women identity exposure on social media.

Role of women on social media

In modern times the role of woman has expanded many folds and now she is playing an important role at national and domestic level. Women are integral part of the society who play important role in the development of country. Indeed social media has opened a new frontier to organize for women's right and identities. According **Toni Bruce 2012**, women are raising their voices against the violation of basic rights, doing business, possessing different social media groups and participating in discussion boards on different social media websites. For one it encourages solidarity and emphasizes shared experience, on the other side this trend is a big cause for serious threats for women survival in the society. Social media can enhance women's life politically socially and allows them to increase their self-exposure and promote social change, and this is a strong believe has risen in the society (**Tomlin, 2012**). In Pakistan, women have multiple social media groups where they are being empowered in all aspects to raise their own social standards. Women now having buying and selling group participation and raising their self-esteem socially. Particular women social media groups which are taking part to educate Pakistani women. **According to the Global Gender Gap Report (2017)**, Pakistan ranks 136th on the attainment of education index, 140th on health and survival and 95th on the political empowerment of women, out of the 144 countries assessed in the report. In such bleak conditions, internet and social media is acting well in empowering women and helping them in raising their self-esteem. Social media has given them voice that was previously suppressed in our male-dominated society. Take the example of **Muneeba Mazari**, who is now considered a

beacon of light, she took on social media to express her thoughts and voicing her opinion regarding women power. Many women opted social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and snapchat leaving behind the old conventional ways of business and minimizing their dependency on others by becoming online entrepreneurs. Now women who cannot go out for job have shifted to social media for every purpose and enhancing her inbuilt capabilities. Ms. Jaleela Raffay, lead trainer of WDL (Women Digital Lead) shared her expertise of social media marketing. The event brought together females entrepreneurs with varied interests (**Subhani, 2006**).

Empowering Pakistani women

Social media, through its peace of dissemination, and its reach, has become a massive tool for women empowerment. Women are getting more chance in constructing their own identities on social media instead of cyber threats (**Morahan-Martin, 2000**). Women are getting establish a business where they are delivering new ideas for other women as well. Women are earning while sitting at home, many organizations have started projects to use the internet to teach other women. Women are running cyber tuition centers, having social media food corner and self-grooming programs as well (**Syed, 2010**).

Cyber feminism has become a movement, women set up profiles and generate contents regarding different issues where we can see modern institutional environment. This environment is creating awareness and empowering women at the same time. For example, Digital Right Foundation. **Nighat Dad the pioneer of first Digital Right Foundation in Pakistan** has raised voice for women on high notes against cyber women harassment. In this brief she is creating awareness that how women can protect their selves on social media (*curbing online harassment through law, The Nation 15th May, 2018*). There are numerous women pages on social media where women are entrepreneurs and running a successful business and setting example for other women to establish their own business. **Soul Sisters group** disseminating progressive information among women users for their up gradation. Kanwal Ahmad the pioneer of this group is representing women community very well. **The Me-too movement** was raised against sexual harassment

and many celebrities also took part in it. **Campaign Times up** also took on social media, Time’s Up started public conversation about women’s issue in Pakistan, highlighting the obstacles women encounter in their daily lives at workplace and at home. **Aware Girl** is also another campaign to promote equality and peace regarding women. There are too many social media groups particularly working to give opportunities to other women by creating cyber interaction zone like soul sisters Pakistan, Digital Right Foundation, and there is example of Samara Sheikh a 23 years old girl running online card business named Carolina (*social entrepreneur can play role in women’s empowerment, Mar 03,2017*). Another inspiring example Maham Sohail runs a food delivery service page on Facebook, Home Bakers. Most women have made Facebook pages to sell their homemade jewelry, food items, clothes etc.

and freelancing jobs are also advertised on social media platforms.

Threats while exposing identities on social media

Women around the world use modern technology to organize and feminist discourse. This fast growing trend also creating threats, challenges and hindrances for women on social media because of cyber women harassment. However, women face barriers in real that hinders women from participating on social media and women avoid participating in discussion boards available on cyber space. Cyber harassment is the big issue while women share their pictures and profiles (**Citron, 2009**).

Threats and description

1.Cyber defamation Where female attacked by the group	Where female attacked by the group
2.Cyber stalking	Where female posts are being watched
3.Morphing	Stealing photographs of female
4.Cloning	Fake profiles of women victims are created
5.Cyber Obscenity	Stolen photograph is used and distributed
6.Hacking	Personal information is used for evil purpose
7.Visual rape	Woman taken up by harasser and his friends
8.Cyber bullying and name calling	Harasser chose target for their sexuality
9..Blackmailing and threatening	This happens due to the easy availability of the personal information of the woman and lead to threats physically and blackmailing
10..Impersonation and cheating	The harasser may promise the victim some online monetary gain by showing his fake information and later on cheat the victim by dragging in the emotional relationship.

Despite great strides, female entrepreneurs continue to face roadblocks. There are so many cases have been registered in the current decade regarding women sexual harassment on social media (Halder. & Jaishankar2009). Social media also has been used to silence the voices of women

through online abuse. Women in power and women journalist are targeted particularly through online abuse. Most of the time women are receiving threats of deaths as well as sexual harassment in the form of cyber stalking of information are challenges that women face online

(Halder & Jaishankar, 2008). **Internet Rights group Bytes for all Pakistan** states that women harassment in Pakistan face on the Internet is triggering real world violence against them, and large social media companies, such as Facebook, Twitter are moving too slowly to stop it. Women face threats globally, but in Pakistan it have become unique risk. The murder of Qandeel Bloch at the name of honor killing raised many question regarding the set up women's profile on social media, where women set their profile and generate content (Sara, 2008). Though the internet helps to women in the betterment of their social life but it is not hazard free. The risks involve the loss of privacy, online harassment, and stalking. **Doring (2000)** points out that biggest danger is cyber-sex, Doring emphasis that all liberalization of women encourages them more to become victims of cybersex. **Ellison and Akdeniz(1998)** feel " the phenomena of cyber stalking and online harassment looks set to be the focus of the next Internet related moral panic".

Conclusion

There is a need to address that how a woman can counter with these threats As we know that most of the offenses are not recognized by any uniform law and creates problems for women victims. It is very clear on social media networks that they don't own the responsibilities for any sort of harassment; however they provide safety tips in the menu bar. Most of the women are not used to read these safety tips and face online threat issues latterly. But there is need to introduce criminal code and act as like other offenses to limit individual behavior. The lack of universal laws to regulate social networking websites and less recognition of the cyber offences is flaming the online women victimization.

There are following reasons of increasing trends of online threats

- The lack of universal laws to regulate social networking websites
- Less recognition of the cyber offences.
- Lack of awareness regarding safety modes
- There should be law for online threats. Women have getting chance to establish their business and other social identities through social media, as we can see a

progressive change in social structures of Pakistan that now women can manage work and family simultaneously from the comfort of their home. Women are not second class citizens, if country need to develop and advance then emphasis should be placed on empowering women of nation. In this brief social media is parting its role effectively, this platform must be appreciated in construction of female identities on social media.

- Social media is building capacities and enhancing the inbuilt qualities of women. So, this platform can be used to strengthen women entrepreneurs by sustaining women empowerment on social media. But besides the empowerment through social media it is very necessary to aware and to train women regarding their rights of privacy on social media. Adequate decisive implementation of the laws can provide secure environment to women.
- It is very clear on social media networks that they don't own the responsibilities for any sort of harassment; however they provide safety tips in the menu bar. Most of the women are not used to read these safety tips and face online threat issues latterly. But there is need to introduce criminal code and act as like other offenses to limit individual behavior. The lack of universal laws to regulate social networking websites and less recognition of the cyber offences is flaming the online women victimization.

The deeply rooted discriminatory socio cultural traditions must be eradicated. Self-exposure of women on social media must be appreciated by implementing legal reforms and this dream cannot be achieved without policy maker of the society.

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