

# [Effect of social media on social movements](https://assignbuster.com/effect-of-social-media-on-social-movements/)

The new media platforms, such as social networking sites, have benefited from the internet that has made globalization real. Apart fromgiving the minority group an opportunity to achieve larger public acknowledgment, it also offers them a chance forself-expression. To begin with, mediaacts as a mode through which information is transferredto a large group of people. In the process, it constructs and outlines thepublic opinion on different societal matters. Minority groups, such as women, LGBT, disabled people, and immigrants, have had hardly solved challenges since their voices are unheard due tostereotypes in the society. (Castells) Statesthat one important characteristic of thenew platforms of media is that it is digital, and this avails it all parts ofthe world. New media has given the minority groups equal access to globalaffairs.

Thehistory of women’s rightsstarted in the 1960s where women fought for suffrage rights, inclusion in state positions, and other equality rights. Nonetheless, women rights have been violated across the world. Evidently, women hardly get the same platforms to express themselves as men do. Gender inequalities occur because of societal norms and stereotypes placed on a particular group of people due to their gender orientation; women in this case (Reifová and Tereza). Fortunately, through new media platforms, women from different cultures have been able to fight for their rights. In this regard, online media has proved to be an essential tool in raising awareness on several women issues in different societies. Women have used this platform to advance their fight for their rights up to international levels. Mainly, social media has been used by several groups of women to push for accountability on activities related to women rights violation. Currently, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and others have helped women to raise gender consciousness, organize equality campaigns, share ideas, and participate in policy development on gender-related issues (Chetkow-Yanoov). These women networks have brought changes to countries like India, Kenya, Brazil, Egypt and Saudi Arabia among others.

Several online campaigns have proved useful in the fightfor human rights in countries that violence against women is rampant. Forinstance, Egyptian women have had to go through sexual harassment for a long time, but this has changed ever since campaigns like #MeToo were launched through Twitter as a new media platform (Reifová and Tereza). Thiscampaign was meant to let women share their experiences and tell the worldabout their plight. The campaigns paidoff since the government introduced a law against sexual harassment and womencould take legal action against their oppressors. Another example of suchmovements in Egypt was a Facebook campaign called “ Mat3brhash”. This campaignwas started by Egyptian women to resist violence and harassment that they experiencein the country. The campaign has drawn the attention of various organizationsthroughout the world and can be consideredas an attempt to confront women harassment in Egypt.

Similarly, Saudi Arabia has been battling genderinequality due to the conservatism nature form their culture and religion. In theircase, the impact of social media on the right of women to drive in Saudi Arabiacannot be underestimated. For instance, Saudi Arabian women activists have managed to battle equality challenges byusing media to highlight their experience. For instance, in 2011, on the wave of the “ Arab Spring,” which led to politicalreforms, the Women2drive movement was formed. ActivistManal al-Sharif played a prominent role in it: she conducted propagandain Facebook, laying out videos in which she showed her skills in machinecontrol. Al-Sharif was later arrested. Inanother instance, in 2014, a human rights activist, Loujain al-Hathloul, drove a car to a territory ofSaudi Arabia in protest against the law banning women from driving vehicles inSaudi Arabia. She was arrested and detained in police custody for close tothree months. Women from the Saudi Arabia conducted several campaigns on socialnetworks demanding the right to drive cars. Previously, only men could get adriver’s license. In case a woman was seen driving in a public place, policeofficers could arrest her. Following a public outcry, such bans have been lifted. After the government allowed womento drive, to obtain the rights of womenin Saudi Arabia does not even require the permission of male relatives, whichis still necessary when getting a passport, crossing the border, and marrying.

Equally, the #BringBackOurGirls was created in Nigeria tocampaign for the release of schoolgirls who Boko Haram, a militia group in thecountry, abducted. This Nigeria’s abduction of students made the world cometogether to facilitate the release of the girls. Fortunately, some of the girlswere rescued.

LGBT groups of people have been depicted differently in media throughout history. Before the 20th century, the LGBT community has had negative representation by the media (Castells). It was portrayed as a perversion or even crime. However, this has changed significantlythrough new mediaand recently many countries like the US legalizing it. Mainly using social media, the LGBT community has made it their responsibility to make them known and define their culture. The positive representation has served to make the community acceptable within the society, and several people are giving them the necessary support (Alston and Knuckey). Recent years have seen the increase of LGBT community in TV shows, dramas, and others. This representation whether positive or mirroring the stereotypes in the society has helped impart knowledge about this minority group to the people (Castells). However, the transgender people have not had proper representation as compared to the gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Notably, the transgender group has not been in public light as long as the others, and they have to face their challenges in order to triumph. Currently, the important thing is that media coverage of events and issues related to the rights and self-esteem of homosexuals has improved the publicity of the LGBT groups. For instance, homosexuals and lesbians are treated differently than ethnic, religious, or other social minorities.

A notable example of anLGBT is Caitlyn Jenner, who formerly identified herself as a male. Caitlyn Jenner, once called Bruce Jenner, was an American television characterand a former Olympic gold medal frontrunner in decathlete. Jenner has beenusing social media to fight for the rights of the transgender people. In 2015, she came out as a trans-woman having battled gender dysphoria from her youth. Due to her moves to fight for the rights of the transgender people in thesociety, Caitlyn, as a media celebrity, has made people become more accepting of theLGBT group lately.

Another minority group that is worth analyzing is people with various disabilities, both physical and mental. Those with disabilities have not had it easy in history. They have been an easy target by people who seek to take advantage of them. Due to their disability, they are not able to carry out certain tasks and thus are vulnerable to accept help from not so trustworthy individuals. The phrase “ disability is not inability” has been going around for some time now and the phrase is meant to let the public realize that the disabled can also live a normal life and participate in activities that were thought to be impossible for them. Through media, the stereotyping is slowly dying as the disabled community are proving themselves capable to the world. The same way other people try to make life easier by innovation, the handicapped life can also be made easier through assistance using technology. At some point in history, the deaf were considered passive members of the society (Reifová and Tereza). However, this has significantly changed through media. The deaf can participate in discussions through social media without requiring interpreters and such assistance.

An example of a disability person who fights for therights of this group is Judy Heumann, who is an American activist for thedisability community. She has been a civil rights campaigner for handicapped people who use social media to foster her course. Another example is WadeBlank, an American disability activist. Using new media platforms, he has beenleading campaigns on national rights for the disabled people. Blank heads“ American Disabled Attendant Programs Today “ ADAPT” and has been lobbying makepublic places easily reached by the disabledpeople.

Digital communication provided by new media platforms hasbeen helpful in making life easier for migrants. The social media has given the migrants the opportunities theydid not have before. Migrants currently can participate in political as well associal life in both country of origin and the country they reside in(Castells). In fact, the migrants are able toget a clearer perspective of the happenings in their home countries. Themigrants can exchange information through social media with their friends andfamilies that still are in their home countries. The exchange of informationmakes it possible to bring social and political change in those countries. Websites like Kginfo. ru and Tajmigrant. com are used in Russia by new migrantsto communicate to their originalgovernments in order to provide them withstrategies of being incorporated in their new country. Overall, in the recenttimes, mass communication/the media has become one of the most importantinstruments of influence on society, especially on matters of immigration. Media portrayal of challenges that immigrants face in their lives affects theirstatus and social rights.

Overall, a vivid representativeof the ideological influence in the mass media, that disseminates variousbehavior patterns imposes standards and dictates life patterns. Which, withprolonged perception, have a significant impact on the modern society, especiallyon the minority groups, such as the women, LGBT, immigrants, and the disabledpeople. The new media platforms alone cannot solve theminority groups’ problems. However, the power it has, with regard to fueling reforms, is great. Through social media, laws have been amended, and so many more movements have been created to fight for the rights of theminority groups in various quarters. Different minority groups have differentchallenges and there use of new media can sometimes lead to uncommon results. The majority people create the notion of a minoritygroup, and so the change can be affectedwhen their perspectives change. Together with authoritative bodies, media canbe employed to impart knowledge and shape the perspectivethe majority have of minority groups in order tobring social change.

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