

Effect of social media on social movements



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The new media platforms, such as social networking sites, have benefited from the internet that has made globalization real. Apart from giving the minority group an opportunity to achieve larger public acknowledgment, it also offers them a chance for self-expression. To begin with, media acts as a mode through which information is transferred to a large group of people. In the process, it constructs and outlines the public 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 to stereotypes in the society. (Castells) States that one important characteristic of the new platforms of media is that it is digital, and this avails it all parts of the world. New media has given the minority groups equal access to global affairs.

The history of women's rights started 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 fight for human rights in countries that violence against women is rampant. For instance, 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). This campaign was meant to let women share their experiences and tell the world about their plight. The campaign paid off since the government introduced a law against sexual harassment and women could take legal action against their oppressors. Another example of such movements in Egypt was a Facebook campaign called “ Mat3brhash”. This campaign was started by Egyptian women to resist violence and harassment that they experience in the country. The campaign has drawn the attention of various organizations throughout the world and can be considered as an attempt to confront women harassment in Egypt.

Similarly, Saudi Arabia has been battling gender inequality due to the conservatism nature from their culture and religion. In their case, the impact of social media on the right of women to drive in Saudi Arabia cannot be underestimated. For instance, Saudi Arabian women activists have managed to battle equality challenges by using media to highlight their experience. For <https://assignbuster.com/effect-of-social-media-on-social-movements/>

instance, in 2011, on the wave of the “ Arab Spring,” which led to political reforms, the Women2drive movement was formed. Activist Manal al-Sharif played a prominent role in it: she conducted propaganda in Facebook, laying out videos in which she showed her skills in machine control. Al-Sharif was later arrested. In another instance, in 2014, a human rights activist, Loujain al-Hathloul, drove a car to a territory of Saudi Arabia in protest against the law banning women from driving vehicles in Saudi Arabia. She was arrested and detained in police custody for close to three months. Women from the Saudi Arabia conducted several campaigns on social networks demanding the right to drive cars. Previously, only men could get a driver’s license. In case a woman was seen driving in a public place, police officers could arrest her. Following a public outcry, such bans have been lifted. After the government allowed women to drive, to obtain the rights of women in Saudi Arabia does not even require the permission of male relatives, which is still necessary when getting a passport, crossing the border, and marrying.

Equally, the #BringBackOurGirls was created in Nigeria to campaign for the release of schoolgirls who Boko Haram, a militia group in the country, abducted. This Nigeria’s abduction of students made the world come together to facilitate the release of the girls. Fortunately, some of the girls were 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 significantly through new media and <https://assignbuster.com/effect-of-social-media-on-social-movements/>

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 an LGBT is Caitlyn Jenner, who formerly identified herself as a male. Caitlyn Jenner, once called Bruce Jenner, was an American television character and a former Olympic gold medal frontrunner in decathlete. Jenner has been using 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 the society, Caitlyn, as a media celebrity, has made people become more accepting of the LGBT 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 the rights of this group is Judy Heumann, who is an American activist for the disability community. She has been a civil rights campaigner for handicapped people who use social media to foster her cause. Another example is Wade Blank, an American disability activist. Using new media platforms, he has been leading campaigns on national rights for the disabled people. Blank heads “American Disabled Attendant Programs Today “ADAPT” and has been lobbying to make public places easily reached by the disabled people.

Digital communication provided by new media platforms has been helpful in making life easier for migrants. The social media has given the migrants the opportunities they did not have before. Migrants currently can participate in political as well as social life in both country of origin and the country they reside in (Castells). In fact, the migrants are able to get a clearer perspective of the happenings in their home countries. The migrants can exchange information through social media with their friends and families that still are in their home countries. The exchange of information makes it possible to bring social and political change in those countries. Websites like Kginfo.ru and Tajmigrant.com are used in Russia by new migrants to communicate to their original governments in order to provide them with strategies of being incorporated in their new country. Overall, in the recent times, mass communication/the media has become one of the most important instruments of influence on society, especially on matters of immigration. Media portrayal of challenges that immigrants face in their lives affects their status and social rights.

Overall, a vivid representative of the ideological influence in the mass media, that disseminates various behavior patterns imposes standards and dictates life patterns. Which, with prolonged perception, have a significant impact on the modern society, especially on the minority groups, such as the women, LGBT, immigrants, and the disabled people. The new media platforms alone cannot solve the minority 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 the minority groups in various quarters. Different minority groups

have different challenges and their use of new media can sometimes lead to uncommon results. The majority of people create the notion of a minority group, and so the change can be affected when their perspectives change. Together with authoritative bodies, media can be employed to impart knowledge and shape the perspective the majority have of minority groups in order to bring social change.

Works Cited

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