

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON WOMEN

SHÈ JIĀO MÉI Tǐ DUÌ Nǚ XìNG DE YǐNG XIǎNG

Dr Ratna Rao

Assistant Professor,,ITNU, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Nirma University,
ratna.rao@nirmauni.ac.in

Dr Pratima Shah

Assistant professor, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Vanita Vishram women's
University, pratima.jay.shah@gmail.com.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON PSYCHOLOGY OF WORKING WOMEN

Abstract: The paper titled ‘Social media and its impact on Psychology of working women’ analyses the effect of media on women, on their choices and also self- perception. In recent times, especially due to Covid and the subsequent lockdown most of the people took to social media to pass their time. This led to many famous trends on social media and the online sales raised as compared to before. There were many research studies published during this time that pointed to mental trauma across the ages. The previous studies pointed to women being affected by social media and made their decisions based on them. It also caused anxiety and stress. Some women even had to take some help to cope up with this. The researchers wanted to study this trend and to find if the media affect health, perceptions, relations of working women. This study concentrates on working women especially related to teaching and training. The study was conducted using a Likert scale questionnaire sent to 100 working women. The questions were asked to find if their choice was based on different social media platforms and how many and which social media platforms do, they use. Another important objective was to find if social media affects their self- perception and self- esteem. The hypothesis was “Working Women in Teaching profession make their choices based on the social media platforms and their self- esteem is affected by it.” The result showed that the women spent considerable time on different platforms and the result analysis showed that the working women were influenced considerably by the media. Their health and perceptions were affected moderately. The moderate effect on health both physical and mental could be because women in the study were faculty who themselves counselled many students and are aware of the negative impacts of social media. They enjoyed using social media and took advantage of it in a positive way. This points to the Uses and Gratification Theory credited to Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz’s work in 1974, the media is passive, and the users are active. The users are conscious and select the media according to their own needs rather than be passive and get influenced by the media. They rely on their knowledge of their motivations to make media choices that will help them meet their specific wants and needs. The result also showed the same trend that the sample of working women were educated, and they demonstrated an awareness of the use of social media

and restricted it by not allowing it to influence facets of health, perception and relationships. But a major influence is witnessed when it comes to shopping via social media platforms.

Key Words: Social- Media, working women, self- perception, gender, influence

INTRODUCTION

Media can be anything from printed to digital that can communicate and reach people. The term media is a plural of medium and it refers to the different channels of communication through which one can disseminate information in the form of news, movies, music, sports, education and information of different types. Modern media is often digital that includes all communication that is transmitted electronically through computer networks. The most accessible and used modern media in today's times is social media that includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp and many more. The social media has revolutionized the world through its speed and its accessibility and user friendliness.

The invention of printing press became a corner stone in the history of media and another important milestone would be the invention of Digital media. Presently, print media, broadcast media, digital media and mass media are in vogue and out of which the digital media in form of social media which is also a mass media is ruling our lives. Social Media has emerged in the last decade in the form of internet which has taken over the world. With the internet gaining immense importance the online sources in the form of websites, blogs, vlogs have gained reputation and is a viable channel of communication.

The term 'social media' refers to the various internet-based networks that enable users to interact with others, verbally and visually (Carr & Hayes). On social media one can share content and participate in social networking. Social media helps develop a strong network of people socially and professionally, forming and giving opinions, making decisions based on various information shared and above all in communicating and exchanging ideas. In the last decade it has grown exponentially in India in not only the number of users but also in number of platforms. The use of social media is extensively done by the teenagers, and it would not be wrong to say that many of them have become slaves of it. Lenhart, Smith, Anderson, Duggan, and Perrin identified the 13–17 age group as particularly heavy users of social media users, with 87% having access to a computer, and 58% to a tablet device. Almost three-quarters of adolescents aged 15 to 17 use a smartphone, and 68% of those aged 13 to 14 (Pew Research Centre). The growing number of users in these sites is a proof that the media are easily accessible and user friendly. (Wang, Lo, and Fang), because of which users can talk and share about their interests, ideas and other plethora of information. The users can also share their specific relationship with other users. (Boyd and Ellison; Lange). These features make the social media very interesting yet powerful. Media is all pervasive and powerful and influences users at some point of time or the other. Due to the influence the number and availability of these social networking tools have since grown to include many additional online activities such as webcasting, blogging, instant messaging, chatting, and gaming (Boyd and Ellison). This growth means that the number of users who are linked to these platforms share their likes and dislikes which directly or indirectly influences peoples' choices in areas like food, clothes

and in decision making related to politics, society and economics. According to research in 2012, on an average we spend one forty-five minutes on social media platforms.

Media's influence is woven around our lives that penetrates deep into our psyche and leads one to make choices according to the presentations in it. This is possible because of the access to varied information on the social media. The kind of information shared, and content is created is most often dependent on the perception about the site and the kind of users the platform attracts. Hence, the kind of information is shared on a platform totally depends upon the perception of the users. According to these perceptions the social media platforms have become the major deciding factors on what kind of products and services are mentioned and by sharing information and opinions about products and services. (Cha). Social commerce is a significant product of the interests and values created on these platforms. Social commerce can be defined as *the delivery of e-commerce activities and transactions via the social media environment, mostly in social networks and by using Web 2.0 software. Thus, social commerce is a subset of e-commerce that involves using social media to assist in e-commerce transactions and activities*" (Liang and Turban). Not only the perceptions about products and services are made or broken by these e-commerce sites but, also values, stereotypes, social habits are created and strengthened here. As social media contains different people where each can interact with others the appearance and the comment on appearance becomes most important which leads to body image. This leads the users to either use filters to make their photos attractive and giving importance to appearance.

(Carey RN, Donaghue N, Broderick P). The perceptions of beautiful, attractive, hot are made in these sites with the definitions changing every now and then. The research clearly shows that the teenaged girls' perception of thinness, appearance and self-objectification comes from Face book. (Tiggemann M, Slater A: Meier EP, Gray J). The numerous photos and images uploaded on the social media provides opportunities to compare body images and often leads to negative body image. (Myers TA, Crowther JH). The same way the perception of what is right and wrong and values are learnt and followed in the social media. The stories, the brands and their advertisements and reels lead people to believe and follow certain ideas that later change into a belief system.

The influence of media extends to every sphere of life and most of the choices that we make depend on the influence of the media. The attraction of media changes to addiction and we often see people checking the social media every now and then that not only leads to distraction but also to depend totally on it for most of the decisions in life right from routine ones like the choice of clothes, make up to the most important things like choosing of a life partner, friends and political affiliations. The use of social media also depends on gender. Today, 68% of all women use social media, compared with 62% of all men. This increased use of social media by women influences their day-to-day life. Social media has an impact on our consciousness and day to day choices. The content which is uploaded on social media sites inspires many people and they end up making decisions based on it. (2019). It leads to people taking up newer hobbies and activities. (2018).

The objective of this paper is to showcase the influence of the media on women in making decisions and on self-perception.

Media Influence on Women

The wide range of the internet has crossed half a billion as of November 2019 and an increase of 10% is witnessed annually in urban and 15% in rural areas. 35% of these users are women. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) the number of internet users has multiplied from 2 billion to 4.1 billion during 2010 to 2019. The online presence of women has increased substantially as compared to men. This increase has influenced the lives of women in an unparalleled way. According to sociocultural theory (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999), girls and women become aware about the concept of beauty, the ideal shape and size and the parameters of physical beauty from social media platforms. The women also learn about different lifestyles and choices of not only food but also things like travel, dress, beauty and even on nurturing children. These things do affect the thinking as many of them spend a lot of time on these platforms. During lock down as they were stuck in their homes social media influenced them more. For example, every other woman tried her hands on making dalgona coffee and posted it on social media. The search for how to make Dalgona started during March 15 and spiked 1,800 percent around the world. Since then, it is increased to 3,000 times the usual number of weekly searches. There were groups on Facebook (Meta) who started trends like saree challenge, no makeup challenge, couple challenge which swept most of the women on their feet. Anyone who did not post felt left behind and during social interactions could not get involved as the conversations centered in and around these trends. This clearly shows how women get easily carried away by social media and get influenced by the trends.

The representations we see in the media affect our self-perception. The vast majority of media images include idealized representations of attractiveness. Though on the social media people post their photos that are original but the pain each one takes to look good and the number of apps they use to photoshop their images talk a lot about the way we want to look. There is a big gap in how one looks on an Insta, Facebook or WhatsApp and in reality, is astounding. These platforms build the perceptions, and the participants are so carried away that they spend money on clothes, makeup and shooting these photos which is mind boggling. Though both male and female follow these trends we see more women doing this. Body weight is another factor which gives sleepless nights to many, and they end up spending money on dieticians, gym and other things to look slim. Soraya Fragueiro, Connect Americas Social Media Strategist, women, and teens emotionally get affected by the social media platforms which in turn affects their purchasing behaviour. "This is why many brands and institutions have strategies that directly target women with messages using touchy pictures, warm colors, direct but kind language, and videos with catchy yet sophisticated music," indicates the specialist. According to Oliván "Women today are the pampered children of the market. They hold power in their hands to decide, or at least influence, almost anything, such as cars, technology, tourism, beauty, medicine, household, and children's items. Therefore, brands are increasingly setting their eyes on women, seeking to attract them and keep them loyal." Social Media is an

influential tool which can be used to get in touch with women clientele to spread their messages.

The 'User Gratification Theory' which was first introduced somewhere around 1940's and later on in 1970's was credited to Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz. According to this theory, unlike other theories like Magic bullet theory, the users are active participants of the media and are not totally impacted by it though they are motivated to use the media. This theory also assumes that the psychological impact of the media on behaviour depends on the social factors too. The tension free needs of the user gratification theory that says that the people use the media to ease their stress becomes true for most of the faculty, as they use the media to relax and feel stress free after the whole day's work.

The Study

The exponential rise in the use of social media has led to dissatisfaction in the women with regards to their appearance and self-perception. Witnessing this plight of many women around, it became clear that social media does a great harm to women when it comes to making choices for them / shopping / self-perception. Women try to emulate the standards set by the social media platforms and live their life in constant pressure. The research question that guided us was: "Working women in the teaching profession made their choices based on the social media platforms and their self-esteem is affected by it." The sample size consisted of working women, especially faculty and trainers in various educational institutions.

Methodology

An electronic questionnaire was circulated to different working women, the criteria of selecting the sample was random women who were working in educational institutes at different levels. The responses were based on 5 scales through which the responders rated their level of agreement to the statement in 5 points: agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. There were 30 questions and the respondent had to respond based on the responses of the 5 scales. The questions were divided into 4 categories: Health, Perception, Relationships and Influence of social media. For example, a question on mental health was "I experience anxiety while using media platforms" The researcher's perception meant how one perceives self when compared to posts on social media which contributes to self-esteem. "What I am on social media accurately depicts who I am in real life". Relationship questions tried to find the relationship with oneself and with others. "The use of social media impacts my relationships with others." Life style of social media meant after using social media did their lifestyle choices change? "Social Media conversations influence my product choices".

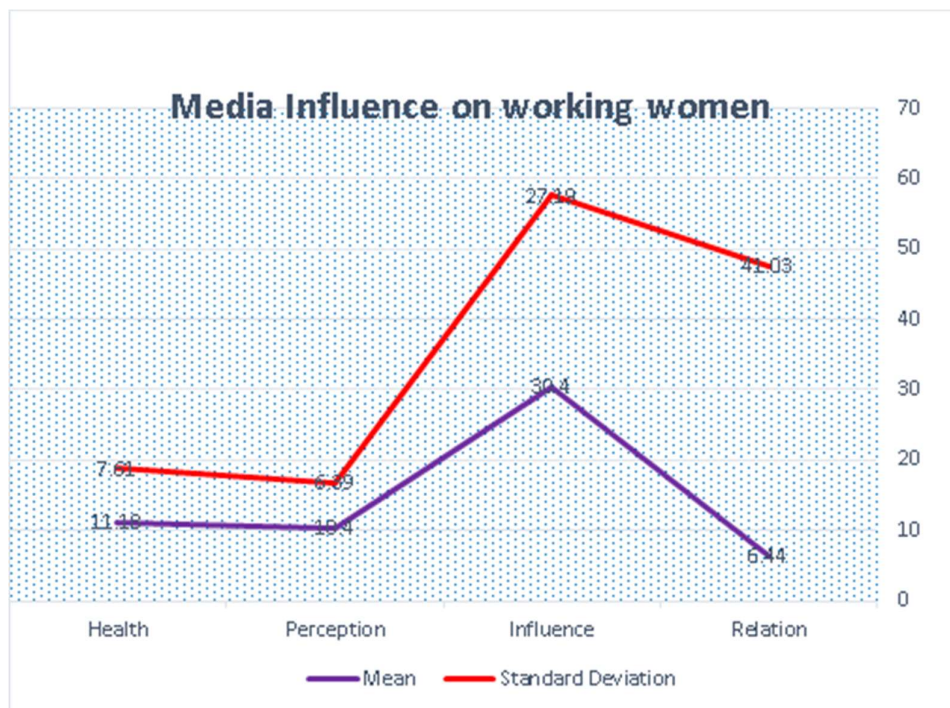
These categories were selected because in the present time there is a tremendous increase in the use of social media. This has led to people suffering from various health and relationship issues. The huge influence of social media has impacted the perception of people. There is dissatisfaction among people with their relationship with the self and relations with others

which leads to mental disorders due to which an increase in physical and mental disorders is witnessed and has a great influence over the choices / decisions / lifestyle of people.

Results

Based on the responses of the questionnaire the following results were compiled:

Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Health	11.18	7.16
Perception	10.4	6.39
Relationships	6.44	41.03
Life Style choices	30.40	27.19



The mean and standard deviation showed that the impact of media on health, perception and relationships is only moderate whereas the impact on the overall influence of media was significant. The result showed that as the sample of working women were educated, they demonstrated an awareness of the use of social media and restricted it by not allowing it to

influence other facets of health, perception and relationships. But a major influence is witnessed when it comes to shopping via social media platforms.

This research authenticates what is said in ‘User Gratification Theory’ which says that the media does not totally influence the users. There is some influence and motivation but, may be because the women are educated, they do not become deeply influenced by media. On the other side e marketing sites were a major influence. This could be because the women are busy with their work and after coming back to homes have to take care of the family needs which leaves no time for them for shopping. These E-marketing sites provide the needed respite and as everything is available and many choices and easy return policies makes them choose the shopping more.

Future Scope

The paper focuses on working women from a smaller geographical region and restricts it to only women working in educational institutes. The same research can be extended to a bigger geographical region and to women working in other professions too. The sample can also be extended to women working in different countries also.

Conclusion

The influence of social media is definitely there on working women, but it differs in certain criteria. Working women use social media and are influenced by it as far as shopping goes but do not allow it to impact their mental health or relations with themselves or with others. It clearly shows the awareness of these women in limiting the negative impact of social media and accepting and taking full advantage of the positive points of it. So, the hypothesis that working women are influenced by social media is not completely correct. Their education and awareness keep them well acquainted with the negative influences of social media and they restrict it from influencing them. With this we can strongly say that the ‘User Gratification Theory’ can also be applied on ‘working faculty’ as they are active users of the media and do not allow it to affect their psychological, health aspects.

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