

IMPACT OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ON SOCIAL MEDIA : PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

M. Jeyabrabha

Department of Political Science, Periyar Govt. Arts College, Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu

ABSTRACT

One of the six freedoms guaranteed by the right to freedom under section 19 is the freedom to speak one's mind. To read, express, and share opinions, more and more people are turning to social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. This has had a profound impact on many fields, including business, industry, the economy, education, and others, as people from all over the world are able to access and share information. It's a system for building an online community, in which users can share their own profiles alongside those of others. It's grown into a robust platform where people can make money through a variety of affiliate, promotion, and coaching arrangements. While this paper focuses on the positive ways in which widespread use of social media has opened up new opportunities, it also addresses the negative, sometimes dangerous consequences that have arisen as a result of this trend. People make unsubstantiated claims about anyone, any group, or any political party. There are times when the multitude of voices is too much to bear; when it invades someone's privacy, causing them to suffer emotional and physical harm, and when it alters their view of the world and themselves. In the final section of the paper, we offer recommendations for how people can make the most of these sites while also controlling the spread of harmful information that could damage their reputation, business, or income.

Keywords: Freedom of Expression, Democratic Nation, Constitution, Social Media, Technology, Information age.

Introduction

To share your thoughts and feelings online, you can use social media. Social media posts such as those found on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are all expressions of the individual's unique character. They help us reveal our personalities, passions, and worldviews. They allow us to express our individuality, our creativity, and our desired identities in front of an audience. There is no escaping the pervasive influence of social media in today's world. To communicate with friends in the moment, this is a useful tool. Through them, users are able to communicate, reconnect, and socialise with one another. For many purposes, such as staying abreast of news, expanding one's business, exchanging ideas and information, etc., social media serves as a convenient one-stop shop. To put it simply, social media can help strengthen the right to free expression and give an amplified voice to masses of people. On the other hand, it exists in an unchecked environment, and prolonged exposure to it can cause compulsive use and addiction. Free speech on social media can be very useful if used thoughtfully and consciously.

What is Social Media?

Social media primarily consists of online and mobile phone based platforms for

communication and sharing of information. It combines electronics, communications, and human contact to create a medium for sharing ideas via text, video, and audio. When it comes to communication, social media encompasses both web-based and mobile technologies that facilitate two-way conversations. You can think of social media as any website or mobile app that facilitates two-way communication between users and groups, as well as the sharing of user-created content. Social media, as defined by Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein, is "a set of web-based applications that expand upon the conceptual and technical tenets of Web 2.0 and make it possible to share and collaborate on original works of expression created by members of the public." Web 2.0 describes user-friendly websites that encourage participation and interaction. Everything that users create and share on social media platforms is collectively referred to as "user generated content." The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) specifies three criteria for content to be classified as "user generated:" (1) it should be available on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site that is available to a select group, (2) it entails a minimum amount of creative effort, and (3) it is "created outside of professional routines and practices." When

social media platforms are used in tandem with mobile devices, this hybrid form is known as mobile social media. Mobile social media, which is accessed through mobile devices, differs from its desktop counterpart in a number of ways, including the fact that it takes into account the user's location and the length of time it takes for messages to be sent and received (time-sensitivity).

Social Media can be broadly categories into the following:

Social media refers to a collection of digital technologies and platforms that enable individuals to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and content with other people. The following are some of the most common categories of social media:

Social networking sites: These are platforms that allow users to connect with friends, family, and other people around the world. Examples include Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Media sharing sites: These platforms allow users to share and view different types of media, including photos, videos, and audio files. Examples include Instagram, YouTube, and Flickr.

Microblogging sites: These are platforms that allow users to post short-form content, usually limited to a specific number of characters. Examples include Twitter, Tumblr, and Reddit.

Discussion forums: These are online communities where users can post messages and engage in discussions with other users. Examples include Reddit, Quora, and Stack Exchange.

Blogging platforms: These are websites or apps that allow users to create and publish content, including text, images, and videos, on a regular basis. Examples include WordPress, Medium, and Blogger.

Messaging apps: These are platforms that allow users to communicate with each other in real-time, either through text or voice messages. Examples include WhatsApp, Messenger, and Snapchat.

Dating apps: These are platforms that connect people with potential romantic partners. Examples include Tinder, Bumble, and OkCupid.

Gaming platforms: These are online communities where gamers can connect with

each other and play games together. Examples include Twitch, Steam, and Xbox Live.

Overall, social media encompasses a wide range of technologies and platforms, each with its own unique features and characteristics. The categories above provide a broad overview of the most common types of social media available today.

It's possible for the aforementioned categories of social media to overlap with one another. The status update feature on Facebook, for instance, can be used for micro-blogging. And much like a blog, users can leave comments on posts on both Flickr and YouTube. To many, the right to free expression is paramount because it serves as the foundation upon which all other rights can be upheld. Lack of freedom of expression prevents a robust democratic debate. The right to free expression is a prerequisite to both citizen participation in government and the protection of individual liberties. The Internet is now an extraordinary platform for 'democratic expression,' as it is 'free,' 'open,' and 'accessible,' in the sense that it is available to (almost) everyone. There is potential for both good and evil on the internet. Many of us complain that modern technology has shrunk the world, but the impact of social media has been even more profound. The social media platform has become the primary means by which we communicate our ideas and opinions. It's become a platform where regular people can share their news stories. With the advent of the Internet, people from all over the world now have the chance to connect with one another. It's enabled a true democratisation of access to our world by making possible the instantaneous sharing of ideas, images, and works on a scale never before seen in human history. These days, if you aren't active on at least one major social media site, people will likely not take you seriously. People of all ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, etc., use social media. When it comes to making online friends, everyone is in a pit of despair. Companies are very active online, posting updates and answering questions, and the business world has caught on. Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram are just a few of the many available options in the realm of social media. As the use of social media grows exponentially, so does

the range of opinions on how it shapes today's youth. When considering the positive effects of social media, it's clear that the world has become a much smaller place as a result. By pressing the button, users can start chatting with people located anywhere in the world. In these settings, people are able to meet new people, learn new things, and be exposed to a wide range of opportunities. As a second benefit, it provides an opening for them to connect with one another in fresh ways and reinvigorate older ties. The social network has evolved into a new marketing frontier for companies to promote their wares and services. To promote the company and its products or services online, the company may employ people. Podcasters, video bloggers, entrepreneurs, and those who sell their wares and services to their friends and acquaintances in groups can all make a comfortable living in today's digital economy. It provides an outlet for them to showcase their abilities. People feel safe enough to speak their minds openly. Naturally shy individuals feel safe enough to share their thoughts in public settings. The result is something we call "virtual teamwork," in which members of the team can be located anywhere in the world. These distributed teams are all part of the same company but work from different locations. However, they interact with one another online primarily via social media. And because they are completely free to use, these networks are perfect for any company. When you join a social media platform, you open yourself up to meeting new people and exploring new opportunities.

Freedom of Speech And Expression

When someone says they have the right to free speech, they mean they can say whatever they want, however they want, in any medium they want. One of the earliest conditions of liberty is the right to freely express oneself. The free exchange of ideas is ground zero for a democratic society. Freedom of speech is crucial to the growth of any society and, by extension, any state. A state cannot restrict or stifle this right, which makes it a fundamental freedom. When people speak to one another, they are sharing their innermost thoughts and emotions. Therefore, the right to freedom of expression is inherent in every citizen. This is a

basic human entitlement. As stated in Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution, all citizens enjoy the protection of their right to free expression. The term refers to the practise of openly sharing one's thoughts and feelings through any medium, be it verbal communication, print media, visual art, or any combination thereof. As a result, it's open to anyone's point of view, whether conveyed verbally or represented graphically. Expression freedom is the engine that drives democracy. Both in a democratic system where the people hold ultimate power, and for the sake of developing and realising one's individual potential, this is crucial. Democratic governance relies on open debate about economic, political, and social issues. There are only a handful of reasons to protect free speech: It's empowering to realise that you've finally arrived. It aids in the discovery of the truth and improves one's capacity to take part in decision making. It grants people the autonomy to think for themselves and share their ideas openly, which is essential for maintaining a healthy society and allowing for positive change.

Information Age and Internet

The era of information that started in the '70s is still very much at large. Common terms for this time period include "digital age," "computer age," and "new media age" because of the widespread availability of digital media. Many innovations, computers among them, came into being as a direct result of the advent of the information age. More than that, the internet made information a click away. Now that everything from shopping to paying bills to ordering takeout to getting an education to keeping in touch with friends and family can be done from the convenience of home, the internet has turned many people into reclusive hermits. Every aspect of society, from art to economics to science to technology to even people's ideas about the world, has been altered by the advent of the information age. The Internet is the most revolutionary idea of the Information Age because it has increased the average IQ of so many people. The proliferation of electronic communication platforms like e-mail, SMS, and social media has altered society in countless ways.

Regular Use of Social Media

The first thing you do in the morning is probably to turn on your mobile internet and check Facebook and Instagram. Social media has a profound effect on our daily lives, from the likes we give to our friends' Facebook posts to the speakers we choose to follow, and from the grins we share at viral updates to the worries we harbour over them. One of the main factors that has acted as a catalyst and has directed more and more people to become social online is digitalization. Whether for professional or personal reasons, nearly everyone in the modern world is active on at least one social media platform. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have made it possible to quickly and simply connect people all over the world. Time and again, social media have proven their remarkable ability to reach large audiences and rouse people to take meaningful action. Despite their many benefits and advantages, social networks are not without flaws and drawbacks. The potential hazards of social media use must not be disregarded. One of the biggest worries, for both kids and grownups, is the erosion of their personal space online. So, make sure your account's privacy settings are always current. It's best to hold off on posting until you've given it some thought. What you put online may not go away anytime soon. There is no restriction on who copies or distributes the content beyond the original audience. Repeatedly, many of the psychological and emotional challenges posed by social media can cause serious harm to people of any age. It's clear that many social media users feel pressured to present an idealised version of themselves online, even if that version doesn't accurately reflect reality. Envy and depression can result from the aforementioned causes, as well as from the desire to validate your existence through the number of likes and positive feedback. When used for personal purposes only, social networking sites can be a distraction. Social media use by employees during work hours costs businesses millions of dollars each year in lost productivity. Despite its usefulness, social media can also be a major contributor to difficulties in personal relationships.

Freedom of Speech And Expression Has Limit

Everyone has the right to share their thoughts and feelings on the web and various social media platforms. People can share their thoughts and opinions on current events, react to news stories, and share entertaining videos on social media. However, there isn't always a clear demarcation point between free speech and outright criminality. The right to free speech is a cornerstone of our democratic system. The Internet facilitates the participation of large audiences in public discourse. Social media have made it simpler and quicker than ever before to voice one's opinion to a wide audience. But you should exercise caution. To some extent, online freedom of expression is restricted in the same ways it is offline. It's possible that others' rights to privacy, reputation, image, and security are in conflict with your right to free speech. Internet harms are more likely due to the medium's reach, speed, and anonymity. What we say in the real world has the same weight as what we say online. When you go overboard with your language, you risk legal repercussions. For example, if you publicly ridicule someone or spread malicious rumours about them, you could be charged with defamation. Depending on the circumstances, a judge may rule that you must compensate the victim. A judge may also order the removal of the offending website or user. The same thing could happen if, for instance, you posted highly private information about another person on social media, violating their right to privacy or the right to protect their reputation. Going too far with your online expression can get you into legal trouble. Crimes can result from the following types of conduct, for instance: advocate for the destruction of a group of people because of their identity (race, sexuality, religion, etc.). Risk of physical harm or death Harassment to the point where the victim fears for his safety Intimidation to do or not do something that would anger or upset the victim share private photos of someone else without their consent A prison sentence may be imposed for such offences. If, for instance, the crime was spurred on by racial, linguistic, religious, sexual, or age-based bigotry, then the law mandates a more severe penalty. There is value in pausing

to consider your words and actions before acting on them. No matter where you are — online, in print, on the air, or in the classroom — your right to free speech is curtailed. While the right to speak freely and express one's opinion about others is highly valued in our society, there are circumstances in which this right must be restrained. Ultimately, respect for the rights of others is what puts a cap on free speech:

- The Right to Privacy
- The right of people to control their own images
- Right of people to their reputation
- The Right to Security

When a person is bullied online, it is called cyberbullying. This can happen through various online mediums like social networks, emails, forums, blogs, or text messages. It can have a life-changing effect on those who are targeted. This is why laws exist against certain actions. That is to say, while the freedom of speech is essential, it may be at odds with the rights of others. Disregard for the rights of others may result in legal action being taken against you.

Conclusion

It's abundantly clear that the use of social media is a potent expression of one's right to free speech. The rise in criminal activity's use

of the internet, however, has bolstered government efforts to censor online platforms like Facebook and Twitter. While there is widespread agreement that social media abuse necessitates legal censorship, many people also reasonably worry that such measures will lead to a violation of their civil liberties. Therefore, it is preferable to have social media platforms governed rather than censored. Sadly, India does not have any cyber laws that are adequate or even close to being appropriate. A review of the current IT laws reveals that the government holds unchecked and disproportionate power in ensuring the safety of the internet. Still, that's not enough to curb social media abuse. As a result, it would be preferable if social media were regulated by law. On social media, we can be completely honest with one another. The vast majority of us rely on it constantly and simply couldn't live without it. However, it is time that we realised that social media can be a powerful force for good. The use of social media allows us to encourage original thought and make global connections. It has tremendous potential for helping businesses communicate with their customers. Avoid potential pitfalls by using common sense and refraining from excessive use. By regulating the content you share and consume, users can have a good time while remaining secure.

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