

Women Empowerment through Social Media: A Study on Usage Patterns and Impact

¹R. Priyadarshini, ²Dr. J. Margaret Suganthi

¹Research Scholar, Holy Cross College (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.

²HOD, Dept. of Visual Communication, Bishop Heber College (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract:

Women, as an equal part of society, play a major role in building society, sharing responsibilities, contributing to the economy, and much more. In India, the number of internet users is growing rapidly every year, contributing to the increasing social media user base. Around 59.90 per cent of Indians use social media. On average, an Indian spends one and a half to two and a half hours on social media daily. Around 31.4 per cent of women and 68.6 per cent of men use social media in India. WhatsApp is the most widely used social networking platform, and 99 per cent of users access social media through smartphones. Therefore, social media has become an integral part of everyday life and plays an important role in modern society. Even many day-to-day needs are fulfilled through social media. Women create social media communities where they exchange ideas, ask questions, receive answers, spend their leisure time, and relax. They also take advantage of opportunities to improve their financial status. Women use social media for a variety of purposes. The study revealed that women use social media to find new opportunities ($p = 0.003 < 0.05$) and that their daily activities and lifestyles have changed as a result. Although social media has had a positive impact on their lives, it has also produced certain negative effects, ranging from increased spending to distraction from personal goals. This study explores the role of social media in empowering women, particularly homemakers, in India. With the rapid growth of internet penetration, social media has become a powerful tool for knowledge sharing, skill development, and social interaction. Based on a survey of women users, the study examines usage patterns, engagement levels, and their perceived impact. The findings indicate that while social media provides access to opportunities and enhances confidence, it also introduces challenges such as increased screen time and distraction. The study concludes that social media can catalyse women's empowerment when used mindfully and strategically.

Keywords: Social Media, Women, SNS, Social Networking Sites.

Introduction

After years of struggle, women gained the right to education, the right to vote, property rights, and many other rights in our patriarchal society. Today, women are empowered in many ways and stand on an equal footing with men in all sectors. Women are demonstrating their abilities in roles such as CEOs, judges, doctors, actresses, politicians, astronauts, and many more. They have proved that they are equal to men in every field.

Social media is a significant advancement in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). With smartphones, people can access social media even if they are not computer literate. This has made social media easily accessible to everyone. It is a platform where people can express their thoughts and make their voices heard. Social media provides opportunities for group discussions, sharing ideas and thoughts, and gathering information.

Empowering women is crucial for the development and transformation of society. Women create social media communities where they exchange ideas, ask questions, receive answers, spend their leisure time, and gain knowledge. They also create closed groups exclusively for women, as well as mixed groups, where they interact, share experiences, and enhance their knowledge.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to find out whether women use social media as a tool for development.

Literature Review

According to the study "Social Media as a Gateway for Accelerating Women's Empowerment" (Dr. Kadeswaran et al., 2020), social media contributes to women's empowerment by providing individuals with knowledge and education, enabling them to make wiser choices. Despite their success, women still encounter discrimination on social media. Social media is a source of knowledge and entertainment for women. It allows women to be creative and innovative, helping them become entrepreneurs and manage their personal and professional lives simultaneously. It also contributes to economic development. Social media makes it easier for business owners and consumers to connect. In addition to helping women grow, social media also helps prevent violence against women.

Social Media and Women

The term "social media" is derived from the words "social" and "media," which refer to society and a medium of communication, respectively. Society is built on connection and communication, which are the foundations of growth. Social media enables people to communicate with the public and receive feedback. Previously, print and electronic media were the primary tools of communication. These media mainly supported one-way communication with limited public participation.

However, the efficiency of digital media enables everyone to participate through two-way communication and instant feedback. It allows users to create, share, communicate, discuss, and exchange information, thoughts, ideas, experiences, insights, and perspectives in real time through various applications. This is possible through smartphones, iPhones, computers, and the internet.

Social media is an affordable communication platform. Organising people through social media is easy. Frequent internet users are more willing to participate in social activities, as identified by researchers. During times of crisis, people create groups on social media. For example, during the 2017 Jallikattu protest, people formed numerous social media groups that attracted widespread public attention. Similarly, women create various groups on social media for their personal growth.

Therefore, we wished to research the role of social media in women's empowerment.

When we collected data for this study, women responded positively. One respondent stated that social media gave confidence to introverts and homemakers. During her three years abroad with two children, social media helped her stay connected with people back home. She remarked, "You can connect with people from all parts of the world."

Another respondent explained that while focusing on household responsibilities, she came across a post in a women's social media group about a content writing opportunity. Since she was fluent in English, she applied for the position and was selected. She managed both her family responsibilities and her career simultaneously. In her late forties, social media opened new career opportunities for her. Her writing skills eventually enabled her to write children's books. She happily shared that social media had played an important role in creating these opportunities.

According to the respondents, social networking is beneficial. They believed that people can succeed by keeping pace with technological advancements because social media offers numerous opportunities for education and skill development. Respondents stated that they find solutions to their problems and draw inspiration from the experiences and achievements of others. Some respondents mentioned that they use social media primarily to promote their new businesses. On the other hand, a few respondents felt that excessive social media usage leads to health issues, disturbed sleep patterns, increased spending, shopping addiction, and reduced patience, as everything is instantly available through social media.

Research Methodology

To gather data, the researchers used simple random sampling. A total of 88 women were encountered in the rural and urban areas of Trichy. Research instruments such as the t-test, ANOVA, percentage analysis, and descriptive analysis were employed.

Comparison between the reasons for using Social Media and the demerits of social media

Ho: A significant difference exists between the reasons for using social media and the demerits of social media.

H1: There is no significant difference between the reasons for using social media and the demerits of social media.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Frequency of getting new offer/business/works through Social media	Between Groups	13.225	14	0.945	2.748	0.003
	Within Groups	25.093	73	0.344		
	Total	38.318	88			
Social media usage diverting the concentration	Between Groups	22.736	14	1.624	3.271	0.000
	Within Groups	35.747	72	0.496		
	Total	58.483	88			
Words using in daily life having been changed after using social media	Between Groups	0.635	14	0.045	1.443	0.156
	Within Groups	2.262	72	0.031		
	Total	2.897	88			
Day today activities having been changed after using social media	Between Groups	5.368	14	0.383	2.404	0.008
	Within Groups	11.482	72	0.159		
	Total	16.851	88			
Dressings changed after using social media	Between Groups	25.378	14	1.813	10.155	0.000
	Within Groups	12.852	72	0.178		
	Total	38.23	88			
Spending's increased after using social media	Between Groups	8.274	14	0.591	5.459	0.000
	Within Groups	7.795	72	0.108		
	Total	16.069	88			
Look changed after using social media	Between Groups	8.869	14	0.634	3.414	0.000
	Within Groups	13.361	72	0.186		
	Total	22.23	88			
Food habits changed after using social media	Between Groups	10.213	14	0.73	4.938	0.000
	Within Groups	10.638	72	0.148		
	Total	20.851	88			
Social media usage spoiling the relationship with the family members	Between Groups	8.305	14	0.593	0.745	0.722
	Within Groups	57.305	72	0.796		
	Total	65.609	88			
	Between Groups	35.559	14	2.54	2.701	0.003
	Within Groups	67.705	72	0.94		

Social media usage visiting places and going on trips	Total	103.264	88			
Social media usage using technology more	Between Groups	39.633	14	2.831	3.730	0.000
	Within Groups	54.643	72	0.759		
	Total	94.276	88			
Social media usage making search more things	Between Groups	72.397	14	5.171	4.145	0.000
	Within Groups	89.833	72	1.248		
	Total	162.23	88			
Using many new terms after using social media	Between Groups	64.002	14	4.572	3.941	0.000
	Within Groups	83.515	72	1.16		
	Total	147.517	88			
Social media helpful to grow	Between Groups	33.887	14	2.421	1.763	0.062
	Within Groups	98.825	72	1.373		
	Total	132.713	88			
Frequency of using social media for growth	Between Groups	27.375	14	1.955	2.070	0.024
	Within Groups	68.004	72	0.945		
	Total	95.379	88			
Earn from social media business	Between Groups	78.869	14	5.634	6.946	0.000
	Within Groups	58.395	72	0.811		
	Total	137.264	88			

Frequency of getting new offers/business/work through social media:

$p = 0.003$ (<0.05) indicates a significant difference. Social media usage significantly impacts business and work opportunities.

Social media usage diverts concentration:

$p = 0.000$ (<0.05) indicates a significant impact. Social media is shown to divert users' focus and concentration.

Words used in daily life after using social media:

$p = 0.156$ (>0.05) indicates no significant difference. The use of social media does not significantly change daily vocabulary usage.

Day-to-day activities after using social media:

$p = 0.008$ (<0.05) indicates a significant difference. Social media has altered daily routines for users.

Dressings changed after using social media:

$p = 0.000$ (<0.05) indicates a highly significant impact. Social media usage influences dressing styles.

Spending increased after using social media:

$p = 0.000$ (<0.05) indicates a significant difference. Social media usage is associated with increased expenditures.

Look changed after using social media:

$p = 0.000 (<0.05)$ indicates a significant impact. Users' appearance is influenced by social media.

Food habits changed after using social media:

$p = 0.000 (<0.05)$ indicates a significant difference. Social media usage impacts users' food habits.

Social media is spoiling relationships with family members:

$p = 0.722 (>0.05)$ indicates no significant difference. Social media does not significantly affect family relationships.

Visiting places and going on trips after social media usage:

$p = 0.003 (<0.05)$ indicates a significant difference. Social media usage influences travel behaviour.

Social media usage is leading to increased technology use:

$p = 0.000 (<0.05)$ indicates a significant impact. Social media usage encourages higher engagement with technology.

Searching for more things through social media:

$p = 0.000 (<0.05)$ indicates a significant difference. Users engage in more searches due to social media.

Using new terms after using social media:

$p = 0.000 (<0.05)$ indicates a significant difference. Social media usage leads to the adoption of new terminology.

Social media is helpful for personal growth:

$p = 0.062 (>0.05)$ indicates no significant difference. Social media does not significantly impact personal growth perceptions.

Frequency of using social media for growth:

$p = 0.024 (<0.05)$ indicates a significant difference. Frequency of social media usage correlates with perceived growth.

Earning from social media business:

$p = 0.000 (<0.05)$ indicates a highly significant difference. Social media offers notable opportunities for income generation.

FINDINGS

- The majority of respondents are aged 30-40 years (61.4%) and are predominantly married (95.5%). In terms of occupation, the majority are homemakers (55.7%), followed by salaried individuals (22.7%). Regarding educational qualifications, most participants are undergraduates (40.9%), with a significant proportion holding postgraduate degrees (36.4%) or professional qualifications (22.7%).
- The majority of respondents were introduced to social media by friends (48.9%). Most respondents prefer accessing social media via mobile phones (90.9%) and primarily use the Airtel network (58%), followed by Jio (26.1%). In terms of daily social media usage, the largest group uses it for one hour (39.8%), with a significant portion using it frequently throughout the day (31.8%). Additionally, most participants engage with three to four social media platforms (60.2%).
- The majority of respondents send 1-10 messages, audios, videos, or photos per day on social media (75%) and have 500-1000 friends or followers (50%). Most participants have been active on social media since before COVID-19 (80.7%), and recharge their data themselves (67%). The most common daily data consumption is 1 GB (38.6%), followed by 2 GB (29.5%). Regarding expectations from their status updates, the majority seek likes (58%).

- The data indicate that participants who feel comfortable sharing their personal life on social media and those who do not show no significant differences across the variables examined. Those who are comfortable reported slightly lower mean scores in platform preference (Mean = 2.60), identity for social media entry (Mean = 1.18), reasons for using social media (Mean = 2.03), and reactions received for their content (Mean = 2.55) compared to those who are not comfortable. However, none of these differences is statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that comfort in sharing personal life does not strongly influence these aspects of social media use for the majority of respondents.
- Suggesting that support from social media friends may influence identity-related factors. However, for other variables, no significant differences were observed ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that while support plays a role in shaping identity on social media, it does not significantly impact platform choice, reasons for use, or the reactions received for content.
- The majority of respondents are aged 30-40 years (54 out of 88) and exhibit a lower mean score (Mean = 2.53) for platform preference compared to those aged 41-50 years (Mean = 2.97) and above 50 years (Mean = 2.83), with the difference being statistically significant ($p = 0.011$). For identity-related factors, the mean score is highest among the 30-40 age group (Mean = 1.31), though differences across age groups are not statistically significant ($p = 0.120$). Regarding reasons for using social media, the mean scores are similar across all age groups, with no significant differences ($p = 0.548$). In terms of reactions received for content, older respondents (above 50 years) reported the highest mean score (Mean = 3.24), but this difference is only marginally significant ($p = 0.070$). This suggests that age significantly influences platform preferences but has a limited impact on other factors, except for a slight increase in reactions received among older users.
- The majority of respondents consume 1 GB of data per day (34 out of 88). This group has a slightly higher mean score for platform preference (Mean = 2.76) compared to those consuming 1.5 GB (Mean = 2.58) or 2 GB (Mean = 2.48), but lower than those with unlimited data (Mean = 2.96), though the difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0.074$). For identity-related factors, 1 GB users have the highest mean score (Mean = 1.35), but differences across groups are not significant ($p = 0.227$). In terms of reasons for using social media, 1 GB users reported a mean score of 2.37, which is similar to other groups, with no significant differences ($p = 0.496$). Regarding reactions to content, 1 GB users reported a mean score of 2.94, slightly lower than those with unlimited data (Mean = 3.06), though again, this difference is not significant ($p = 0.810$). Overall, the majority of users consume 1 GB of data daily, showing no significant differences in platform preference, identity, or social media engagement compared to other groups.
- Social media usage significantly impacts business and work opportunities, diverting users' focus and concentration. It also alters daily routines, dressing styles, spending, appearance, food habits, family relationships, travel behaviour, technology use, search behaviour, and adoption of new terms. However, it does not significantly impact personal growth perceptions. The frequency of using social media for growth correlates with perceived growth, and it offers notable opportunities for income generation. Users' appearance, food habits, and travel behaviour are significantly influenced by social media usage

Suggestions

- Develop awareness campaigns or educational programs for homemakers, as they represent the largest occupational group in the study (55.7%). These can focus on leveraging social media for personal growth, skill development, or entrepreneurial activities.
- Since the majority access social media via mobile phones (90.9%), social media platforms and applications should continue optimising mobile usability and user experience.
- Content creators and marketers should recognise the platform preference differences across age groups, particularly focusing on older users (41 years and above) who prefer certain platforms significantly more ($p = 0.011$).
- Given that comfort in sharing personal life does not significantly influence platform usage or engagement, platforms could promote guidelines on privacy and secure sharing to help users feel more comfortable online.

- Social media platforms could develop features that encourage friend and follower interactions, as support from social media friends appears to influence identity-related factors positively.
- As most users consume 1 GB daily (38.6%) and manage their own data (67%), tools that help users optimise data consumption or monitor usage trends could enhance their overall social media experience.
- Older users (above 50 years) report slightly higher reactions to content. Platforms could offer features or analytics tailored to this demographic to better understand and capitalise on their engagement patterns.
- With most respondents engaging with three to four platforms (60.2%), cross-platform integration tools or services could enhance user convenience and promote seamless content sharing.
- Since the majority of respondents seek likes on their posts (58%), platforms can encourage deeper engagement by promoting comments or shares, which foster more interactive and meaningful conversations.

Conclusion

The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the social media usage patterns among the respondents. The majority are married individuals aged 30-40 years, predominantly homemakers, with a significant portion holding undergraduate or higher educational qualifications. Most respondents were introduced to social media by friends, access it through mobile phones, and primarily use Airtel as their network provider. Social media usage is moderate, with one hour of daily activity being most common, and engagement spans across three to four platforms for the majority. In terms of content sharing, respondents generally send 1-10 messages, videos, or photos daily and have 500-1000 social media connections. A significant portion has been active on social media since before COVID-19, with most managing their own data usage, consuming 1 GB per day on average. While likes are the primary expectation from status updates, participants report moderate levels of reactions to their content. Comfort in sharing personal life and support from social media friends do not significantly impact platform preferences, reasons for usage, or the reactions received. However, support may slightly influence identity-related factors. Age significantly influences platform preferences, with older respondents showing higher preferences for certain platforms and receiving slightly more reactions to their content. Overall, the study highlights a balanced social media usage pattern, with moderate levels of engagement, self-managed data consumption, and preferences influenced more by demographics like age than by psychosocial factors such as comfort or support. This reflects a diverse yet consistent engagement with social media across the sample.

References

- [1] Abubakar, N. H., & Dasuki, S. I. (2018). Empowerment in their hands: Use of WhatsApp by women in Nigeria. *The African Journal of Information and Communication*, 22, 89–112.
- [2] Amry, A. B. (2014). The impact of WhatsApp mobile social learning on the achievement and attitudes of female students compared with face-to-face learning in the classroom. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(22), 116–136.
- [3] Anyawu-Okoro, A., Iheanacho, L. N., Onyia, C., & Ifeoma, J. (2017). Social media and women's economic empowerment in Nigeria: An assessment. *African Journal of Gender and Development*, 3(1), 28–42.
- [4] Asthana, A. (2020). Social media and the quality of life of women. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 8(6), 1511–1517.
- [5] Bostancı, M. (2019). Digital activism: Social media use of unionist women. *Global Media Journal: Turkish Edition*, 9(18), 305–322.
- [6] Chen, G. M. (2013). Don't call me that: A techno-feminist critique of the term mommy blogger. *Mass Communication and Society*, 16(4), 510–532.
- [7] Elareshi, M., & Ziani, A. (2019). Digital and interactive social media among Middle East women: Empirical TAM study. *International Journal of Information Technology and Language Studies*, 3(1), 1–9.
- [8] Gondwe, G., & Some, E. (2020). Social media and catharsis in Africa: Examining the role of WhatsApp in venting stress in women. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 21(6), 150–165.

- [9] Kocak, A. (2019). Group-based communication: Contents and practices of WhatsApp group use by generations and genders. *International Journal of Computer Science and Information Technology Research*, 7(1), 14–23.
- [10] Melissa, E., Hamidati, A., & Saraswathi, M. S. (2013). Social media empowerment: How social media helps to boost women entrepreneurship in Indonesian urban areas. In *Proceedings of the 13th International Conference on Knowledge, Culture and Change in Organisations*.
- [11] Mendes, K., Ringrose, J., & Keller, J. (2019). *Digital feminist activism: Girls and women fight back against rape culture*. Oxford University Press.
- [12] Naruka, S. (2019). WhatsApp and women entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 6(2), 496–499.
- [13] Oyesomi, K., Okorie, N., Omole, F., & Smith, A. (2014). How sociable are women on social media? An experiential study on Nigerian women. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 26, 33–42.
- [14] Senft, T. M. (2013). Microcelebrity and the branded self. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 346–365). Routledge.
- [15] Tiidenberg, K. (2018). *Selfies, sexuality, and social media*. Routledge.
- [16] Yuniarti, F. A. (2020). Using WhatsApp group to increase mothers' knowledge on TBC (tuberculosis) in Sambisari Village, Condongcatur, Depok, Sleman, Yogyakarta. Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta.