



The effectiveness of Social Media and Political Awareness among Women of Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

Advent of social media platforms, individuals around the world have access to a wealth of information, providing opportunities for increased political participation. Jammu and Kashmir, a region with a complex socio-political landscape, presents a unique context to explore the impact of social media on political awareness, especially among women. The objective of this study is to analyze the role of social media platforms in promoting political awareness among women of Jammu and Kashmir, amplifying women of J&K voice and considering the challenges and opportunities presented by the socio-cultural and political environment of the region.

KEY WORDS

Social Media, Political Awareness, Jammu & Kashmir, Women.

INTRODUCTION

Social media, which is generally expected to give and share information, has finally changed the lifestyle, completely affecting every section of society, including women. The World Wide Web (WWW) has accelerated knowledge, and the transformation of information has become easier than ever before. Individuals from different backgrounds can now effectively share everything through social media. With the help of social media across the globe, many girl students use the media wisely for the acquisition of knowledge. Social media plays an important role in changing the lifestyles of people in society. (Nyangeni, du Rand & Van Rooyen, 2015)

Social media is permeating our society and

transforming cultural standards. (Al-Sharq, Hashim & Kutbi, 2015). Sharing content and knowledge is becoming a societal demand. (Wolf et al., 2015). People's communication and social interactions in society, particularly among women, have transformed as a result. Women and the rest of society may engage, communicate, and exchange information. Women may now take part in social conversations by submitting comments, photographs, and other media, exchanging ideas, and much more. At this time, it can be said that social media has an impact on young people's and women's everyday lives (Rajeev, 2015).

Social Media and Political Awareness

Social media creates channels for connectivity, communication, discussion, and interaction among people. The channels provide news and information based on gender. It is believed that social media affects youth and includes women. (Shabbir et al.2014).

The information age brought on by Internet change has formed a social or new media world. Social media has created an alternative world of information, communication, and interconnectivity that cannot be activated using the face-to-face method among students (Al-Sharq et al., 2015).

Political awareness has a very important place as one of the most basic necessities of life, and political awareness of the public about important events and concerns helps in the development of society, which is continuous in its demands.

Political awareness is one of the main pillars upon which the social and political system is based, and ignoring it throughout the state's development will eventually result in a foundationless structure that will fall apart instantly in the face of any crisis affecting the state or society, regardless of the scale of the political or demographic superstructure. (Fairbrother, 2003.)

Political awareness means being informed about what is going on in politics and how it affects society. Political awareness refers to the exchange of political information between an individual and various sources of publicly transmitted political messages. It also defined media exposure, political participation, etc. This shows how much people know about their leaders and parties. All these words show that political awareness is the basis of development in any society. Without political awareness, people cannot choose a good leader. (Zaller,1992)

Jammu and Kashmir and the Political Rise: Socio-Political and Media Context

Jammu and Kashmir, a region in northern India, has a complex socio-political and media context that significantly influences efforts at political regeneration. The region has been a point of contention between India and Pakistan since its partition in 1947 and has experienced periods of unrest, militancy and political instability. This context has had a profound impact on the socio-political dynamics and media landscape of Jammu and Kashmir (Ahmad, 2017).

Political Context: Jammu and Kashmir enjoy a unique political status within India. It is governed by Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which has granted the region a significant degree of autonomy. However, in August 2019, the Government of India abrogated Article 370 and bifurcated the state into two separate union territories: Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The move has brought about significant changes in the political landscape of the region.

Efforts at political uplift in Jammu and Kashmir are influenced by various factors, including: Regional and communal divisions: Jammu and Kashmir is a diverse region with distinct regional and communal identities. The predominantly Muslim Kashmir Valley often has different political aspirations and grievances than the Hindu-majority Jammu region, which has led to political divisions and challenges in achieving consensus on regeneration initiatives.

Separatist Movements: The region has seen separatist movements that demand self-determination or independence from India. These movements have played an important role in shaping political discourse and have sometimes hindered efforts at political regeneration by creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and conflict.

Security Concerns: The presence of armed insurgencies and cross-border tensions in the region has led to a heavily militarised and security-focused approach by the Indian Government. This situation often stifles political activities and limits the scope for grassroots political engagement.

Media Context: The media landscape in Jammu and Kashmir is marked by various factors that influence efforts at political regeneration.

Internet Shutdowns and Communication Restrictions: The area has experienced frequent internet shutdowns and communication restrictions as part of security measures. These restrictions have hindered the flow of information, limited access to online platforms, and affected the ability of political actors and organisations to mobilise support and advocate for their causes.

Freedom of the Press and Censorship: There are examples of restrictions on freedom of the press and censorship in Jammu and Kashmir. Journalists and media organisations face challenges reporting freely and fairly, which can affect the representation of diverse political viewpoints and hinder efforts at political regeneration.

Local and Regional Media: Jammu and Kashmir has a vibrant local and regional media sector that caters to the specific socio-political context of the region. Local newspapers, television channels, and online platforms play an important role in disseminating information and shaping public opinion. However, they also face challenges due to the unstable situation and limited resources.

Government-controlled media: The Indian Government operates several media outlets in the region, including All India Radio and Doordarshan. These outlets often play an important role in shaping the narrative and disseminating Government viewpoints, which can influence political discourse and perceptions of political upliftment efforts.

Social Media and Political Affiliation

Social media has become a powerful tool for political participation in recent years. It has changed the way people interact with politics, allowing them to connect, share information, and express their opinions on a global scale. Role of social media in creating an environment of political awareness:

Increased Access: Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have made it easier for individuals to access and engage with political information. They provide a space for people to discuss political issues, share news articles, and participate in debates without the need for traditional intermediaries.

Real-time Information Sharing: Social media platforms act as real-time news sources, enabling users to access information and updates instantly. It has reshaped the way people consume news and participate in political discussions, making them more informed and involved in current events.

Direct communication with politicians: Social media provides a direct line of communication between citizens and political figures. Politicians use platforms such as Twitter to share their views and policies and respond to constituents' concerns, allowing for more direct engagement and accountability.

Political activism and mobilisation: Social media has played an important role in facilitating political activism and mobilisation. It has been instrumental in organising protests, rallies, and campaigns, allowing activists to mobilise support, coordinate actions, and create virtual communities centred on shared political goals.

Amplifying the voice of women in Jammu and Kashmir through social media platforms

Jammu and Kashmir, a region located in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, has experienced prolonged political conflict. Social media platforms have become an important venue for political expression and participation in Jammu and Kashmir, allowing individuals, including women, to express their opinions and participate in discussions. The rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp has provided a platform for individuals to share news, opinions and experiences related to Jammu and Kashmir. These platforms have facilitated the dissemination of information and allowed for greater connectivity within the region and between people around the world.

With regard to the political participation of women in Jammu and Kashmir, social media has played an important role in amplifying their voices. Women have used these platforms to express their viewpoints on political issues, advocate for their rights, and raise awareness of women's issues in the region. Social media has also provided space for women in Jammu and Kashmir to build online communities and support networks. These platforms have allowed women to share their stories, discuss the challenges they face, and seek solidarity and empowerment. However, it is important to note that the use of social media in Jammu and Kashmir is not without challenges. The region has faced internet shutdowns and restrictions on social media access, especially in times of unrest or political tension. These restrictions have limited the ability of individuals, including women, to express themselves freely and engage in political discussions online.

The amplification of the voices of women in Jammu and Kashmir through social media platforms has provided a powerful tool for raising awareness, sharing stories and advocating for their rights and issues. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube have given women in Jammu and Kashmir the ability to express themselves, connect with others and reach a wider audience. A major way social media has amplified the voices of women in Jammu and Kashmir is by providing a platform to share personal stories and experiences. Women can use social media to share their stories, talk about their struggles and highlight issues they face in their daily lives. This gives them an opportunity to break the silence and raise awareness about the unique challenges they face. Social media platforms have facilitated the formation of online communities and support networks for women in Jammu and Kashmir. Through groups, pages, and hashtags, women can connect with like-minded individuals, share resources, and find solidarity. These virtual communities enable women to come together, organize and collaborate on various initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality, empowerment and social change.

Social media has played an important role in documenting and disseminating information about human rights violations, gender-based violence and other injustices faced by women in Jammu and Kashmir. Women can use platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to share real-time updates, photos, videos and testimonials, highlight ground realities and demand accountability. This has helped bring national and international attention to the issues facing women in the region. Social media platforms have also served as a tool for advocacy and mobilisation. Women in Jammu and Kashmir can leverage these platforms to organise campaigns, raise awareness and mobilise support for specific causes. Through online petitions, hashtags, and viral challenges, they can mobilise public opinion, exert pressure on officials, and advocate for policy changes and reforms.

CONCLUSION

Social media platforms have provided a powerful tool for the women of Jammu and Kashmir to amplify their voices, share stories, raise political awareness and advocate for their rights. By harnessing the potential of these platforms, women in the region are able to connect, organize and effect change, contributing to a more inclusive and empowered society. However, it is important to note that expanding women's voices through social media platforms is not without challenges. The region also faces internet restrictions and occasional shutdowns, limiting access to social media for many individuals. Since the last few times, the problems have been reduced a bit, especially in the case of internet availability in Jammu and Kashmir. At the same time, there are risks associated with trolling and the spread of misinformation, regional and sectarian divisions, separatist movements, security concerns, internet shutdowns, issues of press freedom and the role of local and Government-controlled media all affect the effectiveness and scope of political regeneration initiatives in the region and further marginalise women. In addressing these factors and fostering an environment conducive to political engagement and dialogue, social media has played a vital role by providing a platform where the women of J&K express their vision, desire and sentiment to the world, thereby facilitating meaningful upliftment for the women of Jammu and Kashmir.

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