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A Study of Media Ethics in Relation to social media

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, transforming communication, information sharing, and public discourse. However, the rapid rise of social media has raised concerns about issues such as misinformation, cyberbullying, hate speech, and political manipulation. In response to these concerns, governments, including India, have implemented regulations to govern social media platforms.

The impact of social media regulations on the functioning of social media platforms, online discourse, and digital rights in India is also assessed. Utilizing a critical approach, the research paper draws on relevant literature, legal documents, and case studies to provide an in-depth analysis of social media regulations in India, offering insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the current regulatory framework and highlighting the need for a balanced approach that protects user rights while addressing the challenges posed by social media.

In conclusion, this research paper provides a critical evaluation of social media regulations in India, including their legal framework, effectiveness, and impact on society, along with suggestions for improvement. The findings of this research can contribute to the ongoing discourse on social media regulations in India and inform policymakers, stakeholders, and scholars in developing a robust regulatory framework that balances the protection of user rights with the need to address the challenges posed by social media in the country.

Keywords: social media regulations. social networking, media sharing.

INTRODUCTION

Social media refers to websites and online platforms allowing users to create, share content and interact with others. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, TikTok, etc.

Social media has become a crucial part of modern society, with billions worldwide using these platforms to communicate, share information, and develop connection. Social media has many benefits, such as enabling people to stay updated and connected with friends and family, allowing businesses to communicate with customers, and facilitating exchanging of ideas, thoughts and information.

However, social media also has its downsides. One major issue is the spread of misinformation and fake news, which can have serious consequences, from undermining democratic processes to endangering public health. Another issue is cyberbullying, which can lead to mental health problems and even suicide. In addition, social media can be addictive and negatively impact mental health, particularly for those who spend excessive amounts of time on these platforms.

Social media companies are responsible for addressing these issues and designing their platforms in a way that prioritizes user well-being. Some companies have taken steps to combat misinformation and cyberbullying, for example, by implementing fact-checking systems or warning labels on content deemed misleading. Other companies have changed their platforms' design to reduce addictive features. Ultimately, it is up to individuals to use social media responsibly and be aware of the risks and ethical considerations involved. By using social media thoughtfully and responsibly, we can all help to create a safer and more positive online environment.

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THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Objectivity as an idea or phenomena is derived from the concept that there could be an absolute distinction between the fact and the value. Richard Rorty states the distinction between information and interpretation dates back to Plato, Rorty (1991). Ethics in sociology is considered as the fundamental to the existence of enlightened society. It is also seen as the cornerstone of a developed and advanced civilization as it gives moral consistency to individuals and institutions. It helps us clarify the competing values essential in developing moral problems. Ethics also play the role of moral gate keeping in the social media context. Multiple organisations have laid down guidelines and ethics codes for social media activists. The Government of India mentions social media etiquettes.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
"A STUDY OF MEDIA ETHICS IN RELATION TO SOCIAL MEDIA"

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find the challenges in social media in India.
2. To analyse the regulation on social media in India.
3. To analyse social media etiquettes are sufficient to carry out social responsibility.

REVIEW OF LITTERATURE

According to Nahida Begum N (2014), Media acts as a disseminator of information and a channel of communication between people and the government. Media educates people by providing wealth of information related to socio-cultural and politico-economic aspects of the society. The rising demand for media ethics, stimulated many media organizations to frame certain code of ethics to regulate employee's performance and to protect themselves against government rules and regulation.

Matthias Rath (2003), described relationship between empiricism and ethics. Media ethics need empiricism. For him "empiricism" means methodical research striving to describe a directly or indirectly perceptible reality, which sees itself as a foundation of all models that try to explain this reality. Ethics belongs to discipline. Ethics are dependent on empirical research referring to the respective field of actions, in order to be able to utter reasonable statements which cover the legitimacy of the field of activities.

According to Oso (2012, p.271), The mass media in many countries have been liberalized, privatized and commercialized with the hope of deepening their democratic role as the main institution of the public sphere. It is now generally assumed that the mass media are essential in the process of building a democratic policy.

Voltmer (2013, pp. 129-130) noted, that "media organizations incorporate a variety of often contradictory norms, operational modes and regulatory policies that exist in parallel and are sometimes almost impossible to reconcile.

McQuail (2005) states that Media should give priority in news and information to link with other developing countries which are close geographically, culturally or politically.

Jhumur Ghosh (2014) his paper "Ethics of Indian News Media Aberrations And Future Challenges" is related with Indian news media ethics. The author explained the cases in which how traditional mass media, press and television overlooked the recognized ethical principles and journalistic norms practiced by the Indian news media.

Lasson (2009) expressed that Independence is very important for media ethics. United States and United Kingdom contributed 'objectivity' as a substantial principle in relation to professional journalism. To maintain objectivity reporter or journalists needs to depend on certain norms which are eyewitness accounts of events, confirmation of facts with multiple sources and tries to present all important aspects of a story.

Plaisance (2009), described Idealism and Relativism as important principles of ethics in media. Idealism means the feeling of search of philanthropical goals and Relativism is the trust of deciding what is right and what is wrong .It is relying on own skills and internal right .

According to Julie (2012) every media association has the indulgence to set the ethical values of its coverage. For example, one of the leading newspapers of the world (published from United States) 'The New York Times'

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continue to print on its front page the claim, 'All the News That's Fit to Print', patented in 1896. Without going much into the debate about how far the newspaper has been successful towards following its principle rather it signifies that each media organization has the authority to set their own ethical standards to guide journalists/editors in their works.

According to Ralph. E Hanson (2015) media ethics are related to values, rules, regulations, which is applicable to all types of medias. Ethics are of various kinds, media ethics is one of it which is not simple to understand as it is related to special or professional organizations.

Esan (2016, p.8) suggests that Media are influential so they abound and circulate particular knowledges and viewpoints. Whether in cities or remote villages, even when people do not actively seek them out, they are approached by different forms of communications. Media are universal, more readily retrieved via a variability of platforms. Current democratization of media means people other than professional media operatives are actively involved in content creation and distribution.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive methodology is used for this study. The secondary data is collected from books, journals, websites, research paper and articles.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media primarily includes Internet and mobile phone-based tools for sharing information and discussing. It combines technology, telecommunications and social interaction to provide a platform for communication through words, images, movies and music. Social media includes web-based mobile technologies used to transform communications into interactive conversations.

Social media can be defined as web or mobile-based platforms that enable individuals or institutions to communicate interactively and share user-generated content. Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as "a set of Internet-based applications that build on the philosophical and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and enable the creation and sharing of user-generated content." "Web 2.0" refers to Internet platforms that allow users to participate interactively. "User-generated content" is the name for all the ways people use social media. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) creates its own criteria for classifying content as "user-generated" i.e., (1) it should be available on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site that is available to a select group (2) requires minimal creative effort and (3) is created outside of professional routine or practice. Another variation of social media is mobile social media. When social media is used in conjunction with a mobile device, it is called mobile social media, because mobile social media runs on mobile devices, it differs from traditional social media because in that it takes into account new factors such as the user's current location (location-dependent) and the time delay between sending and receiving messages (time-dependent). different from the media.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS TYPES

Social Media is divided into different categories namely:

1. Social Networking: Social networking is an online service that allows users to build virtual networks with like-minded people. It offers features such as chat, instant messaging, photo sharing, video sharing, and updates. The most popular ones are Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.

2. Blogs: Blogs are descriptive content created and maintained by individual users and may include text, photographs, and links to other websites. The interactive nature of blogs is that readers can leave comments and follow their trail.

3. Micro Blogs: Microblogs are similar to blogs, with a general limit of 140 characters or less, and allow users to create and share content. Twitter is a microblogging site that allows users to send and read "tweets".

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4. Wikis: A wiki is a collaborative website where multiple users can create and update pages about a specific topic or related topics. A single page is called a "wiki page", but all content related to that topic is called a "wiki". These multiple pages are linked by hyperlinks, allowing users to interact in complex and non-linear ways.

5. Media Sharing: These services allow you to upload and share photos and videos. Interaction is through sharing and commenting on user posts. The most popular are Instagram, Facebook, etc. There may be some overlap between the types of social media mentioned above. For example, Facebook has a microblogging feature with a "status update" feature.

6. Social News: These services allow you to publish various messages and links to external articles. Interaction is done by voting and commenting on items. Voting is important because the articles with the most votes are displayed prominently. The most popular are Digg, Reddit and Propeller.

7. Vlogs and Video Sharing Sites: A video blog (vlog) is a blog site that primarily uses video as the primary form of text-supported content. YouTube is the world's largest video sharing site. YouTube is a video live casting and video sharing site where users can watch, upload, share and comment on videos. Vlogging has now become a profession for some social media influencers, they earn by doing vlogging.

8. Social Bookmarking: These services allows you to store, organize, and manage links to various websites and resources on the Internet. Interaction is done by tagging websites or browsing websites bookmarked by others. The most popular are Delicious and Stumble.

THE REGULATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

The issue of regulation of social media platforms have always been a point of contention for many in mainstream society, because social media operations are large in scale and involve cross-border communication. This is one of the reasons why this platform is difficult to regulate. Different countries have different cultures, so meaning can be subjective in relation to the culture and norms of a society. But most importantly, while electronic media is the most difficult medium to regulate, this difficulty stems from the fact that it relies solely on the use of the public property to emphasize. Therefore, there should be a perfect prototype of social media regulation.

In practice, media professionals and journalists now have a code of ethical conduct that guides their journalistic conduct. Blake therefore, suggests that social media regulation and monitoring be left in the hands of media professionals who can ensure that news that disturbs the peace of the country is avoided. Blake also suggested private governments and higher education institutions should train media personnel and pay the fees they pay to monitor social media messages to ensure the well-being of all and social peace. A well-trained staff is key to attracting the right talent to offer the various ways to regulate the platform. The ability to provide appropriate regulation is achieved when that purpose or need is met. Adjustments are easy for those who own and are comfortable with their own environment.

The majority of social media messages are spread by international organizations like the Western world rather than Africa. Cultural imperialism emerges as a result of this information imbalance, and globalization loses its effectiveness in the process. The first step is for the government to set up a regulator to control social media content flowing into Nigeria (participatory culture).

ETHICAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

1. **Privacy:** Social media platforms have access to an enormous amount of personal data, and there are concerns about how this data is collected, stored, and used. Users often need to understand the risks of sharing sensitive information fully. Privacy is a significant concern regarding social media, as these platforms often require users to share personal information to create a profile and engage with others. One of the most important privacy considerations is the sharing of personal information. Social media platforms often require users to share personal information, such as their name, email address, and location, to create a profile. The platform can use this information to personalize the user's experience and target them with advertising. However, it can also be used for more nefarious purposes, such as

identity theft or stalking. Users must be aware of the risks involved in sharing their personal information online and should take steps to protect their privacy. Another privacy consideration is the collection of data by social media platforms. These platforms collect vast amounts of user data, including browsing history, search queries, and interactions with other users. This data can be used to create detailed profiles of individuals and to target them with advertising. Users must be aware of the extent to which their data is being collected and used and should take steps to limit the data being collected about them.

A related privacy consideration is the sharing of data by social media platforms. These platforms often share user data with third-party advertisers and other companies. Users must be aware of who their data is being shared with and should be able to control how it is shared.

Finally, there is the issue of data breaches. Social media platforms store vast amounts of personal data, and this data can be vulnerable to cyberattacks. Data breaches can result in the loss or theft of personal information, seriously affecting individuals. Users must be aware of the risks involved in storing their data online and should take steps to protect their data.

Privacy is a significant concern regarding social media. Users must be aware of the risks involved in sharing their personal information online and should take steps to protect their privacy. This includes limiting the amount of shared personal information, being aware of how their data is being collected and used, and taking steps to protect their data from cyberattacks.

2. **Cyberbullying:** Social media platforms have become a breeding ground for cyberbullying, which can have devastating consequences for victims. It can also lead to social exclusion and mental health issues. Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that occurs through electronic means, such as social media platforms, messaging apps, and online forums. It is a serious issue that can significantly impact the mental health and well-being of those who experience it. In this essay, I will discuss the impact of cyberbullying on social media and some of the measures that can be taken to address it.

One of the primary impacts of cyberbullying on social media is the spread of hurtful or harmful messages. Cyberbullies can use social media platforms to post mean comments, spread rumors, or share embarrassing photos or videos of their victims. These messages can be seen by a wide audience and quickly go viral, causing significant emotional distress for the victim.

Another impact of cyberbullying on social media is the anonymity that it provides. Cyberbullies can hide behind fake usernames or profiles, making it difficult for their victims to identify them or take action against them. This anonymity can embolden cyberbullies to engage in more extreme forms of bullying, making it difficult for victims to feel safe online.

A related impact of cyberbullying on social media is the 24/7 nature of social media platforms. Victims of cyberbullying can be subjected to hurtful messages and comments at any time of the day or night, making it difficult for them to escape from the bullying. This can lead to feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety.

To address cyberbullying on social media, several measures can be taken. One approach is to educate young people about the impact of cyberbullying and the importance of treating others with respect online. Schools, parents, and other organizations can provide resources and support to help young people navigate the online world safely and respectfully.

Another approach is implementing policies and guidelines for social media platforms to prevent cyberbullying. These policies could include banning hate speech, harassment, and threats and providing tools for users to report bullying behaviour. Social media companies can also invest in technology to detect and remove bullying content before it can cause harm. It is crucial to support victims of cyberbullying and provide them with resources and tools to cope with the emotional impact of bullying. This could include counselling services, support groups, and online resources that provide information and advice on how to deal with cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is a serious issue that can significantly impact those who experience it. Social media platforms have provided a new avenue for cyberbullying, but some measures can be taken to address it. By educating young people about the impact of cyberbullying, implementing policies to prevent bullying

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on social media, and providing support and resources for victims, we can work to create a safer and more respectful online environment.

3. **Fake News:** Social media platforms have made it easy for fake news to spread rapidly, which can be dangerous and have serious consequences. Misinformation and propaganda can influence people's decisions and beliefs. Fake news refers to false or misleading information presented as factual news. Social media platforms are often used to spread fake news due to their massive reach and easy accessibility.

   Social media algorithms are designed to show users content that aligns with their interests and preferences, which can create filter bubbles and echo chambers, where users only see content that confirms their existing beliefs and biases. This can make it easier for fake news to spread rapidly and widely, as users are more likely to share and engage with content that aligns with their worldview, even if it is false.

   In addition, social media allows for the rapid spread of information without factchecking or editorial oversight, which can lead to the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories. These can have serious consequences, such as when false information about the COVID-19 vaccine leads people to avoid getting vaccinated, increasing the risk of infection and transmission.

   Social media companies have taken steps to combat the spread of fake news on their platforms, such as fact-checking and labelling false information and reducing the reach of content that violates their policies. However, the problem persists, and it is vital for individuals to critically evaluate the information they see online and seek out reliable sources.

4. **Addiction:** social media can be addictive, and people may spend excessive time on social media platforms. This can negatively impact productivity, relationships, and mental health. Social media addiction refers to the compulsive and excessive use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. People addicted to social media often spend hours a day scrolling through their feeds, checking notifications, and responding to messages, even at the expense of other important activities.

   There are several reasons why people become addicted to social media. For one, social media platforms are designed to be addictive. The platforms use algorithms and notifications to keep users engaged and coming back for more. Social media provides constant stimulation, validation, and connection with others. Social media addiction can negatively affect a person's mental health, relationships, and productivity. It can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Additionally, social media addiction can interfere with a person's ability to focus on important tasks and negatively impact their academic or professional performance. To reduce the risk of developing social media addiction, it is important to be mindful of your social media use and to set limits on your screen time. This can include scheduling social media breaks throughout the day, turning off notifications, and avoiding using social media before bed. Seeking support from friends and family, or seeking professional help, if necessary, can also be beneficial.

5. **Online Harassment:** Social media platforms can be used to harass and intimidate individuals, which can lead to significant emotional distress and even physical harm. Online harassment can take many forms, such as threats, stalking, doxing (publishing someone's private information online), spreading rumours or lies, and making derogatory or offensive comments. It can target individuals or groups based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or other characteristics.

   Social media platforms have unique features that can make online harassment more pervasive and damaging. For example, the ability to create anonymous accounts or pseudonyms can make it difficult to hold perpetrators accountable. The speed and reach of social media can also amplify the impact of harassment, with messages or comments quickly spreading to large audiences.

   Online harassment can have serious consequences for victims, including mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, social isolation, and even physical harm in some cases. It can also negatively impact a person's professional or academic life. To combat online harassment, social media platforms need to take steps to prevent and respond to abusive behaviour.

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This can include implementing policies and guidelines to prohibit harassment, providing reporting mechanisms for users to report abusive behaviour, and taking swift action to remove or block accounts that engage in harassment. It is also important for users to be aware of the risks of online harassment and to take steps to protect themselves, such as setting privacy settings and avoiding engaging in harassing comments or messages.

6. **Discrimination:** Social media platforms have been accused of facilitating discrimination, particularly gender, race, and ethnicity. This can be hated speech, trolling, and targeted attacks. Discrimination on social media refers to the unfair treatment or prejudice against individuals or groups based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or other personal characteristics. Discrimination can take many forms on social media, including hate speech, offensive comments or images, and exclusionary behaviour.

   Social media platforms have become a forum for people to express their opinions and beliefs, and unfortunately, this can sometimes result in discriminatory behaviour. Discrimination on social media can have serious consequences, such as damaging a person's mental health, creating social divisions, and contributing to a culture of hate and intolerance.

   Social media platforms have a responsibility to prevent discrimination on their platforms. This can include implementing policies and guidelines to prohibit discriminatory behaviour, educating and training users about appropriate online behaviour, and taking swift action to remove or block accounts that engage in discrimination. Social media companies must create an inclusive and safe environment for all users.

   Individual users also have a responsibility to prevent discrimination on social media. This can include speaking out against discriminatory behaviour, reporting incidents of discrimination to the platform, and promoting positive and inclusive online interactions. It is important for users to recognize the impact their online behaviour can have on others and to strive to create a positive and respectful online community.

7. **Content Moderation**: Social media platforms face the difficult task f moderating content, and there are concerns about censorship, freedom of speech, and bias. Content moderation is important for maintaining a safe and respectful environment on social media platforms. It can help prevent harmful or offensive content from being shared with a large audience, protect users from harassment and discrimination, and prevent the spread of misinformation or false information. Social media platforms use automated tools and human moderators to moderate content. Automated tools such as algorithms detect and remove content that violates community standards or policies, such as hate speech, violent or graphic content, or spam. Human moderators are responsible for reviewing content that is flagged by automated tools, as well as reviewing appeals from users whose content has been removed. Content moderation on social media platforms is a complex and challenging task. It involves balancing the need to protect users and maintain community standards while respecting users' freedom of speech and expression. Some content may be offensive or harmful but may not necessarily violate community standards or policies and, therefore, may not be removed.

   Social media platforms have been criticized for their content moderation practices, with some users feeling that their content has been unfairly removed or restricted. To address these concerns, social media platforms are continuously refining their content moderation policies and procedures and providing greater transparency and accountability around their moderation practices.

Conclusion

Social media has brought many benefits to our lives, such as increasing connectivity, access to information, and opportunities for self-expression. However, it has also brought many ethical issues and challenges that must be addressed. These issues include privacy concerns, the spread of misinformation, addiction and social media, online harassment, discrimination, and content moderation.

Addressing these ethical issues and challenges requires a collective effort from social media companies, governments, and individuals. Social media companies must prioritize the privacy and security of their users, take

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steps to prevent the spread of misinformation and hate speech, and develop effective content moderation policies and procedures. Governments can play a role in regulating social media platforms to protect the interests of their citizens, while individuals must take responsibility for their online behaviour and strive to create a positive and respectful online community. As social media continues to evolve and become an increasingly integral part of our lives, it is important that we continue to address these ethical issues and challenges to ensure that social media remains a force for good in our world.

The only thing we as a researcher can do is to give some suggestions which may or may not help improve media regulations in India:

• There should be different regulatory bodies for each medium, i.e., print, television, radio and social media because there can be no uniformity of regulation if the form itself can be distinguished.

 • The Press Council of India should be given sufficient authority and conclusions can be drawn from the Insurance Regulatory Authority of India and the Security Exchange of India, which are the standard bodies in the industry, their fields and are equally effective.

 • News channels should be required to be part of News Broadcaster Association and the right to suspend licenses and fines should be given to the same.

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