

Role of Social Media in creating awareness of Sexual Violence against Women: An Analysis with Special Reference to # MeToo Movement in India

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Abstract

With the developments in Information communication technologies, people have experienced big transformations in terms of communicating and sharing information in day-to-day daily and social life. Over the years, social media has proven to be a very powerful tool in spreading information, awareness and mobilizing campaigns on a variety of issues. This instrument allows any individual to share content and opinions to the people at global level immediately. Women social activists have been quick to acknowledge this importance, which is why in recent times social media has more specifically demonstrated its potential for drawing attention to women's empowerment, rights issues and violence against women such as rape, molestation, sexual harassment etc. Today, technology directly impacts women's life and their development. It has enabled their voice to reach out and be viewed nationally as well as globally. This paper works in same context. It will examine the significance and role of social media in growing of 'Me Too Movement' in India. The study illustrates that how social media is helping the women to connect with 'Me Too Movement'? The paper also analyses the thinking and responses of male society towards Me Too Movement' and how much conscious the males are about their behavior towards female colleagues.

Keywords: Social media, 'Me Too Movement', Information communication technology, Sexual assault, Social activist, Women empowerment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings are social animals and communication is the process which helps them to connect with each other and fulfill their social and psychological needs. They always try to invent new ways of communication. With the development of society the ways of communication have also changed. With the advent of new technologies the different media of communication came into existence in the society, previously it was print and electronic media. Now the internet has already grown its feet in the society. Youngsters' love towards internet has increased drastically, now they spend almost 10 hours a day on their smart phones. The present scenario shows that the survival of youngsters (internet users) without

internet is difficult. According to a survey done by Internet World Stats in 2018 a total of 55.1% population of world is able to access internet. Internet users are using it to do almost all the daily jobs like: buying something from shop, paying school fees, booking train, and flight and bus tickets. Social Media is a website which provides users an opportunity to interact with each other. It is the most preferable and favorable mode of communication of the youngsters. Social Media term evolved from the combination of two words social and media, which explained Social Media as a media which provide social networking. These days it is a fad to share all personal and professional information on social media. It has become an intrinsic part of daily routine. Social media users even share their personal information on social media. Users frequently visit Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram to share their profiles and personal information. It is actively participating in socialization and commercial ventures. Users are using these social platforms to show their protest against any act of government or social issues. It is working as a great tool for any social change in the society. It is a medium which has brought the whole world on the same platform. It has removed distance among users. It is working as a medium to provide better digital analytics, better records and the results. Nirbhaya rape case is a great example of social media campaign which changes the youth energy into revolutionary movement on a large scale in no time. Other examples are Delhi rape in Uber Cab and Oxfam India Campaign. Social media has played a very active role in Delhi rape in Uber Cab case. People used Twitter to send angry messages. This revolution created tough time to Uber Cab. Oxfam India used social media to successfully run a campaign "India demand equality for females". Bell Bajao E campaign is also a very successful social media venture.

In present scenario, rape and sexual violence are very common issues. Few recent rape incidents in India have trembled the conscience of the nation. According to National Crime Record Bureau, around 40,000 rape cases are reported in 2016. In which, the two most burning cases Kathua (Jammu and Kashmir) and Unnao (Uttar Pradesh) where both the victims were minors and belong to middle class family. The whole nation came together and stood to help the victims and get them justice. Finally, the police arrested the accused persons and now, they are behind the bars. But there are many incidents in which the females are not able to report and discuss about the sexual assault happened with them due to the shame and fear of society. In 2006, Tarana Burke founded the 'Me Too Movement' to help survivors of sexual violence, and it started giving strong voices to those Indian females who are not able to speak about the incidents happened to them.

'Me Too' phrase was coined by Tarana Burke in 2006 to help sexual assaulted females. It took almost ten years to change it into sexual harassment moment. In the last ten years it exposed many powerful corrupted males. After successfully exposing many high profiles males of western countries now it's started growing its root in India. India is a land of goddess, Indians worship Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity and Durga for the strength. They symbolize females as the source of wealth and power in the family but the actual situation of females in India is worst. According to the census of 2011 the 943 females survives for per 1000 males. A birth of female child in the family brings lots of future plan of collecting dowry for her marriage and anxiety for her safety .

In 2018 September, first Tanushree Dutta accused Nana Patekar for his inappropriate behavior on film set. Later on a list of females came forward to discuss sexual assault incidents happened to them through 'Me Too Movement'. All of them are very famous personalities and keep a very powerful position in Indian society. Some of them are MJ Akbar (journalist and Minister of State for External Affairs (now removed from this position), Alok Nath (actor), Utsav Chakraborty (Comedian) Kanan Gill (writer and actor), Chetan Bhagat (Writer) Vinod Dua (journalist), Sajid Khan (Filmmaker). After the sexual allegations Mr. MJ Akbar has resigned from his post and Sajid Khan has to step down from

his upcoming big budget venture Housefull part 4. This study is discussing the ‘Me Too Movement’ in India and its role in helping females to get justice and reducing the sexual violence in India. Amir Khan a famous Indian Film actor has expressed his view on ‘Me Too Movement’ and said “I am glad there is a clean-up happening and women are having strength to speak about it.”

1.1 Research Problem

Sexual assault or sexual violence is a very common problem in India. Thomson Reuters Foundation published an article on June 26, 2018, which showed four females are raped in every hour of a day in India. After the brutal Nirbhaya gang rape case Indian government has passed The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 (Nirbhaya Act), but still the crime against women is increasing rapidly from 2013 to 2018. India is considered as more dangerous place for females. In current scenario, ‘Me Too Movement’ has become as path breaking social media campaign which has shaken many high profiles males’ position in the society and government in the world. Therefore it is required to study how social media is helping the women to connect with ‘Me Too Movement’? How social media is actively promoting this movement and encouraging the women victims to raise their voice against the morally corrupt people of the society? Can this technology help the women and activists to fight against the sexual violence? The paper also analyses the thinking and responses of male society towards ‘Me Too Movement’ and the role of this movement in increasing the consciousness of males about their behavior towards female colleagues.

Objectives

The aim of this paper is to discuss following objectives:

- To study the Me Too Movement in India and the role of social media in promotion of this movement.
- To analyze the role of Me Too Movement in helping females to raise their confidence against morally corrupt people and to get justice.
- To critically examine the role and significance of social media among the women activist to fight against sexual violence.
- To study the responses of male society towards Me Too Movement.

Literature Review

Deepak Singh, (2016) analyzed the role of Social Media in Social Awareness Campaign, according to him “Social media is expanding its reach in every strata of the society in India day by day and today in 2016, we have 195.16 million users of Facebook while USA, the home country is lagging behind with 191.3 million active users. Twitter is also here to stay, we have 23.2 million Indians actively twitting.” Some good examples of social awareness campaigns are started #EndAcidSale campaign #SeedTheRise and #RedRampProject., A NGO called Make Love No Scares used social media to create awareness about their social campaign #EndAcidSale campaign. The NGO and other social welfare organizations were using Facebook and Twitter pages primarily to disseminate the awareness. They made a series of short film featuring acid attack survivor Reshma Bano, with the theme of comparison rate of acid and cosmetic product in the market. This you tube channel got 3685 in the starting date of uploading. The campaign won gold at 63rd Cannes Lion Ad Festival 2016 and received prodigious public response. Mahindra and Mahindra made Twitter its weapon to promulgate awareness about #SeedTheRise campaign to motivate people to donate money for the cause of funding developmental projects in rural India to help the farmer. Other famous social media campaign is #RedRampProject in which Johnson tiles trying to sensitize physically challenged people’s issues.

Belinda Goldsmith and Meka Beresford (2016) explored as “India is the world’s most dangerous country for women due to the high risk of sexual violence and being forced into slave labour” The crime rate against women has increased at the rate of 83 percent between 2007 and 2016.

Dr. Ritu Bhattacharyya (2018) found in her research that the most of the people, they believe (including females) in the supremacy of patriarchal power in the society and misogyny is one of the biggest reasons of silence of sexual assaulted women. She stated “Me Too Movement is an opportunity for women to speak out and expose the predators. The institutions and organizations might ignore the complaint of a single woman, but they are less likely to ignore collective voices.”

Patrick Crowley (2018) stated “the #MeToo movement is changing how young people perceive gender dynamics in society. The global youth brand reported that 61 percent of the respondents said they have thought about how society enables sexist behavior among men since the initiative began, and 59 percent said the movement has made them think about how difficult the world is for women.”

Amy Kazmin (2018) stated, “#MeToo turning point suggests the burden of shame is finally being shifted away from women in India. It is likely to embolden more women to report incidents of harassment, and should prod employers to ensure their grievance committees are ready to listen. Most importantly, it should be a warning to those Indian men who have long been accustomed to a culture of privilege and impunity.”

2. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on descriptive explanation of # Me Too. In this reference, several cases have been studied and analyzed in the research study. The survey method has been used to collect relevant data and to analyze the different aspects of Me Too Movement. The samples have been collected from the different working places of Dehradun.

3. DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

Important Cases of # Me Too

The following table contains six columns. In which first is serial number, second is accused personality’s name, third is allegation and number of females accused the culprit, fourth is response of accused towards the allegation and last is immediate affect happened to them.

Graph 1 – Analysis of Some Important Cases of # Me Too

S. No.	Personality	Allegation	Profession	Response	Current Status
1	MJ Akbar	Sixteen females who worked with M.J. Akbar have accused him of sexual harassment	Journalist and Minister of State External Affairs	He has not accepted the allegations and filed a defamation case against journalist Priya Ramani	Akbar resigned from the post of Minister of State for External
2	Gautam Adhikari	Three females journalists have accused him of sexual	Editor	He has not accepted the allegations	He resigned from current position from American

		harassment			Progress
3	Vinod Dua	He was accused by Indian filmmaker Nishtha Jain, television anchor <i>Janvani</i> and documentary filmmaker Sunita Thakur of sexually harassing	Editor	He has refused the allegations	The Wire, (where Dua is a consulting editor) formed an internal Complaints Committee to investigating the matter
4	CP Surendran	Eleven women have accused him of sexual harassment	Editor	He has not accepted the allegations and named those females a “lynch mob”	No action has taken yet
5	Prashant Jha	A female who worked with him has accused him of sexual harassment	Editor	He accepted the allegation and resigned from the post of political editor in a newspaper	Internal Complaints Committee constituted to find the truth
5	Kr Sreeniwas	Eight females have accused of sexual harassment	Editor	No response from him	Sreenivas resigned on October 13
6	Satadru Ojha	Two women journalists have accused him of offering sexual advances	Editor	He has not accepted the allegations and condemned for defamation	The Times of India,(present organization) formed an inquiry to investigate the allegations
7	Mayank Jain	He got an accusation of online sexual advances by several women	Reporter	None	He resigned from his current post in Business Standard
7	Anurag Verma	Several women have accused him of sexual harassment	Reporter	He has apologized for his behavior.	Huffington Post will assured that the organization will do verification on this issue

8	Fahad Shah	Two Females have accused Fawad of molestation	Editor	He has denied the allegations	No action has yet taken against of him
9	Meghnad Bose	One woman has accused him of molestation	Reporter	He has apologized for his behavior	The Quint, Bose's present organization assured that it would find the genuineness of allegations
10	Alok Nath	Alok Nath was accused of rape offense by Writer and director Vinta Nanda, actors Navneet Nishan and Sandhya Mridul have also put sexual harassment allegation on him	Actor	Nath has not accepted the allegations and filed a defamation case against accuser Vinita Nanda	Nath got a show cause notice from Cine And TV Artistes' Association
11	Vikas Bahl	Bombay Velvet a film's crew member and actress Kangana Ranaut has accused him of sexual misconduct	Director	He denied the allegations and sent a legal notice to his former business partners Anurag Kashyap and Vikramaditya Motwane for making defamatory allegation	Phantom Films has announced its dissolution with Mr. Bahl
12	Subhash Ghai	Kate Sharma filed accused of molestation against him	Director	Ghai has not accepted the allegations and replied that some people were trying to harm his reputation	No action has been taken yet
13	Sajid Khan	A journalist put allegation on him to expose his genitals	Director	He has taken the moral responsibility and stepped	He got a showcase notice from The Indian

		while she was interviewing him		down as the director of the under-production film Housefull 4	Film and Television Directors' Association
14	Anu Malik	Shweta Pandit, a singer accused Malik of sexually harassing her during her teenage	Music Composer	Malik has not accepted the allegations	He has taken the moral responsibility and left the responsibility of being a judge on Indian idol
15	Utsav Chakraborty	Many females have alleged Chakraborty for sending unwanted obscene text messages and images	Comedian	He has apologized for his behavior	A Comedy group 'All India Bakchod' removed all his videos
16	Shahid Datawala	An art student Amaaya Dasgupta accused him of molesting her	Photographer	He has accepted and apologized for his behavior	Tarq, a contemporary art gallery situated in Mumbai has closed Datawala's show in response to the allegations.
17	Kartik Iyer, Praveen Das, Bodhisatwa Dasgupta	Accused of sexual comments and inappropriate touching	Advertising Executives	Bodhistwa Dasgupta has apologized for his behavior but other three haven't given any response to the allegations	All four have resigned from their current positions

Graph 1 is showing the accused name their profession, response and the effect of Me Too Moment on the accused. Total 19 high profile personalities' cases have been studied in which 9 cases the accused has to resign from their lucrative positions. In seven cases an internal committee has constituted to find out the truth and only in three cases no action has been taken.

Responses of Working Male Members

Graph 2 – Responses of Males Working Male Members on Me Too Movement

Sl. No.	Familiar with Me Too Movement	View about Genuineness of Allegation	Change in Behavior Towards Females at Work Place	Behavior
1.	70% Yes	60% Yes	70% Yes	65% very formal
2.	30% No	36% No	30% No	15% friendly
3.	-	4% No Idea	-	20% avoid females colleagues

The views have collected from 100 working males respondents of different age groups. In which a total of 70% males said that they are familiar with the ‘Me Too’ movement and rest 30 % of total males have no idea about the moment. A total of 60% males believed in the genuineness of allegation and rest 36% said its false allegation because everybody was accusing of incidents which happened a year or more than a year back incidents. A total of 4% males were unable to say anything about the genuineness of allegation. 70% males of total males accepted that because of fear of ‘Me Too moment’ they have changed their behavior towards their female colleagues. Now they were treating them in a very formal way.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Present scenario shows sexual assault and eve teasing as commensurate to females. Females are facing it in every part of her life, from childhood to young not even young age to the mid age. After doing a tremendous job in America and other parts of world ‘Me Too Movement’ is knocked the doors of Indian society. # Me Too is hitting the all directions of working place. The study reveals that in India sexual assault and eve teasing is very common in working places. It exists in all classes and categories of society besides the states of the group of peoples. All professions are having some sort of sexual assault and eve teasing cases. The Indian females are using ‘Me Too Movement’ as their weapon to protect them from sexual violence. The study clearly indicates that today after the cases discussed in ‘Me Too Movement’ the males are more conscious about their behavior towards female colleagues. The study also shows the requirement of complete culture and social transformation to eradicate sexual assault from Indian society. It means we must build our families differently, engage our communities and confront some of our long-held assumptions about ourselves.

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