

Title:

①

Social media is a Great Equalizer

Outline:

1. Introduction

Thesis statement: Social media is one of the greatest equalizers of its time. It has leveled a playing field for the masses by ensuring political empowerment, equal economic opportunities, swift delivery of justice, and the suppression of racial and religious inequalities amongst the masses.

2. Understanding social media as a catalyst for equality

3. Unrealistic expectations from social media on promoting equality (Anti-thesis)

a. ^{opens} a gateway for cyber-harassment and cyberbullying

b. Normalizes class disparities through spreading disinformation

c. Purses its monetary interests by providing ad-space to well-paid businesses

4. Social media is practically promoting equality amongst the masses (Thesis)

1. Political empowerment

(a) Online political campaigns of women politicians lacking funds

(b) Voters get information on voting rights from social platforms

2. Economic opportunities

(a) Increased reach and accessibility for the entrepreneurs

(b) Digital advertising facilitates home-based businesses

(c) Talent prevails over nepotism through inclusive policies

3. Justice and accountability

(a) Immediate reporting of the crimes committed against marginalized groups

(b) Speedy delivery of justice regardless of litigants' social status

4. Social media activism as a vehicle for social justice and equality

(a) Social and racial inequalities are bridged by social platforms

(b) Promotes religious harmony and multicultural tolerance

5. Equal access to education

(a) Educational channels and groups provide real time education

(b) Skill-based education through training programmes and courses

6. Revolutionizing healthcare facilities

(a) Effective communication between doctors and patients

(b) Facilitates medical crowdfunding to conduct medical procedures

5. Conclusion

Shake Tank Pakistan ^{has} recently invested twenty lakh rupees with ten-percent equity, in a hair oil business. Ms. Hiba Lashari, from Jacobabad Pakistan is the Chief Executive Officer of this startup, who runs the startup through social media platforms. With the help of social media channels, she

earns one lakh rupees monthly and has successfully expanded her business from one hair oil product to nine different hair oil products. It signifies the effectiveness of social media in current times. From facilitating the entrepreneurs, social media is equally empowering the women politicians and other political representatives in the world of competitive politicians. It ensures that crimes committed against marginalized communities are timely recorded and adjudicated. Meanwhile, it exposes social injustices and promotes religious harmony and multicultural tolerance. Its inclusive policies expand the way for further growth and empowerment on an equal footing. Hence, social media is one of the greatest equalizers of its times. It has levelled a playing field for the masses by ensuring political empowerment, equal economic opportunities, swift delivery of justice, and the suppression of religious and social inequalities amongst the masses.

5

Social media is a set of apps, websites, and computer softwares which promote ^{online} human interaction and allow sharing of information. Social platforms like Youtube, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are the prominent examples of social equalizers. According to Global Digital Index by October 2024, approximately 5.22 billion people have officially joined social media channels, equating to 63.7% of the total world population. Sharing of information, in fact, paves the way towards social equality. Masses from all across the world voice out their opinions on religious and social discriminations, which was previously not allowed on traditional media outlets. Historically, traditional media was ruled by the elites, however, the social media has revolutionized this concept and practice. Though, it has some shortcomings like cyber-harassment, disinformation and promoting the class disparities, still it can be addressed through regulating social media channels. It will truly help in harnessing the

the benefits of social media.

Few believe that the world has associated unrealistic expectations from social media on promoting equality. But, in reality, it opens a gateway for cyber harassment and cyber bullying. It is apparent in the case of women politicians, who have relatively more social media presence. The "Institute of Strategic Dialogue" observed U.S. Presidential Elections 2024 in context to social media's role. At the end of the elections it revealed that due to social media, women politicians attracted more bullying and harassment. Especially, TikTok and Facebook were full of comments and captions like "End the 19th Amendment and get back to kitchen." A similar comment was made by the European Parliament's Committee on "Women Empowerment and Gender Equality" that ^{use of} social media undermines gender equality by promoting cyber bullying and cyber harassment. To conclude, social media channels practically open gateway

for digital harassment and bullying.

Similarly, social media normalizes class disparities through spreading disinformation. It is becoming a new evil of its time due to the spreading of misleading information.

Knowing the wrong information is more dangerous than ^{not} knowing anything.

In October 2024, family members of forty youngsters held a press conference in Islamabad Press Club, to make a request to the authorities to acquit their children from false blasphemy charges. These children are trapped by a "Blasphemy Business Group" that shares blasphemous content with children on WhatsApp and Messenger and then urges them to reshare it. The sender makes an excuse that he has not shared anything with the victim at the very first place.

~~It~~ Then, it looks like that the victim is the actual sender of blasphemous content. Such practice of spreading disinformation, therefore, normalizes disparities amongst different social

classes.

Not only the disparity, social media's ad policies provide larger space to the well-paid businesses. It is famous for its wider audience that attracts the business community. Instead of spending millions on traditional advertisement, social platforms provide relatively a reasonable deal. However, platforms like Youtube, Facebook, and Instagram which have an audience of 2.56 bn, 1.4 bn, and 0.8 bn respectively have different advertisement costs according to the Global Digital Index. Youtube charges \$0.26-\$2.00 per action, Facebook charges \$0-\$5 per action, and Instagram charges \$0-\$4 per action on advertisement. It automatically puts the small enterprises on the backfoot of social media businesses' advertisements. To simply put, such monetary policies serve the interests of social media platforms, ^{only} benefiting the established businesses.

On the other hand, the supporters of social media's role in promoting equality claim that it provides level playing field to the politicians. It have overall revolutionized the idea of running political campaigns, which is apparent ~~in~~ during elections year 2024. Due to higher inflation rate and technological advancements political parties across the world used social media as a primary tool to run their election campaigns (Express Tribune, Social Media Dominates Elections 2024, October 2024). Political parties conducted digital jahas and sallies, organized Twitter space, and conducted meetings with party workers through google meet and zoom. Likewise, it was helpful for women politicians who lacked funds to conduct physical jahas and election campaigns. Digital sallies ensure political equalization and political empowerment of those who lack finances to promote their political ideologies.

From conducting political

campaigns, social media spreads voter's registration and vote casting information. It has become the easiest and fastest medium to approach youth of voting age and to aware them on how to cast votes. Recently, a study was conducted in Thang district of Punjab, Pakistan, in which people were asked on the role of social media in voter's awareness and casting. Out of the total targeted audience 28.8% stated that social media has highly influenced their voting right. 21% said it was not influential and 9.1% gave a neutral response (published in Humanities and Social Sciences Journal). Particularly, the Social and Gender Inclusion Wing of Election Commission of Pakistan released awareness videos on Facebook and Youtube to aware women about their fundamental right to cast vote. Hence, voters get information on voting rights from social media and get influenced by it.

Along with right to vote, social

media protects right to equal economic opportunities. One prominent benefit of social media users and especially for entrepreneurs is its wider audience.

In one year, 256 million new users joined social media. Newly established startups get a chance to tap in the right set of audience to promote their products. Forbes magazine published an article "Social media: A Friend or Foe for Businesses in 2024" and gave four reasons that why it is a friend of businesses. Firstly, it has a wider audience, secondly; it has reasonable advertisement policy, thirdly; it offers enhanced customer interaction, and lastly it provides data driven insights. As a whole, social media is a cost-effective platform for all level of business setups. These policies are cohesive and do not discriminate on the basis of demographics, business idea, and business success rate. Therefore, social media provides equal opportunities to entrepreneurs.

Along with facilitating the formal business sector, social media also facilitates the ~~big~~ non-formal business sector "home-based businesses." This sector is actually not regularized and does not enjoy the equal perks and privileges offered to the formal sector. Moreover, such businesses face a difficulty to tap the market for the promotion of their products. A study was conducted in Kuwait, titled "Adaptation of social media platforms in the non-formal business sector of Kuwait", that assess its significance for home-based setups. It revealed that internet usage has penetrated to 99.6% of the local population and most of the home-based setups use Instagram to reach the customers. They promote the products through Instagram and conduct customers review to improve the quality of the products. Indeed, social platforms facilitate home-based businesses by providing access to the customers.

In addition to this, it facilitates the job markets with the help of inclusive policies that prefer real talent over nepotism. In Asia, jobs are granted on the basis of ~~word~~ word-of-mouth or nepotism. Fortunately the practice of social media is quite the opposite. LinkedIn is ~~the~~ one of the professional platforms with 0.8bn professionals. LinkedIn Statistics 2024 highlighted that over 67 million companies from across the world are on LinkedIn. Every passing minute there are 9000 job applications with seven hirings on average. One prominent example is Shabira Iqbal, a girl from Sadeqabad, Pakistan who was hired by Google as a Data Analyst. It indicates that social platforms prefer real talent and open doorways for talented individuals to grow.

Social media provides equal opportunities to grow and simultaneously ensures that justice is being done in the society. Currently, most of the crimes against marginalized

communities are reported through social media. Posts sharing, comments, hashtags, reels, and videos on crimes help the authorities to take timely notice of the crime. Back in 2001, a woman "Mukhtaran Mai" was gang raped on tribal clashes. The FIR was lodged when the then President of Pakistan took notice of the crime. However, today, in the era of social media rape cases become a highlight and come on trending that creates a public pressure, leading to the immediate reporting of the crime. It happened in Nool Muqadam case, as well as, in Karachi Kasqz accident case. Hence, social platforms create a public pressure that ensures immediate reporting of the crimes against marginalized people and communities.

Reporting of the crime is not enough until or unless justice is not delivered timely. Justice delivery has been an issue in a country like Pakistan with multiple

factors contributing to this issue e.g., slow prosecution. Social media works as a constant force from reporting of the crime till final adjudication of the case. It was practically witnessed in Zainab Ansari rape case in which session court ordered six times life sentence for the rapist and murderer. It again happened in Noor Muqadam case in which the murderer is sentenced to death. Again, in Karachi Karsaz accident case, the murderer was denied bail due to continuous public pressure to timely adjudicate the matter. Social media's trend setting on a call for justice for the victims, makes the authorities accountable. One can ^{not} deny that justice delayed is justice denied. Therefore, social media platforms work as a taskforce for the delivery of justice.

Along with legal justice, it helps in social justice prevalence. It is also a product of social

media activism, in which social and racial inequalities are spotted and discussed in Youtube podcasts and Facebook live discussions. Back in 2013, a social media movement started on #Blacklivesmatter, as a way of resistance to racial discriminations happening in America. The agenda of this movement was to aware masses about white police atrocities against black people. Similarly, a movement #MeToo started against ^{sexual} harassment in the entertainment industry. People, who were the victims of sexual harassment started sharing their stories on Twitter and called out the offenders. It created a space for the victims to voice out their sufferings and for the authorities to not let go of the offenders. To simply state, social media gathers people on one platform to collectively address the social and racial inequalities.

From acting like a bridge, it

further promotes social harmony and multicultural tolerance. In today's world, multicultural tolerance and religious harmony are tough to achieve. Pakistan and India both are culturally rich states and often face religious and cross-culture clashes. Traditional kinetic efforts have failed to achieve the harmony. However, social media is taking a lead on this front. It provides space to indigenous people to talk about their culture openly. Simultaneously, it helps all religions to preach their teachings in a non-violent manner. In a way, it gives enough room to other religion's believers to comprehend the message and to release their stance, same goes for people who follow different cultures (Indonesian Times, The Role of Social media in Religious Harmony and Multicultural Tolerance, 2023). Thus social media bridges the gap between religious and cultural divides.

Along with promoting harmony,

social media channels provide real time education. It is one of the fundamental rights, however it is becoming a luxury over the time.

Post pandemic, education became a rare option for middle class to avail. Secondly, outdated education is an issue. Few social media channels, particularly on youtube and Facebook, are providing real time education to the students. During Covid-19, Government of Pakistan allowed online education through google classrooms, zoom, and whatsapp groups. Even today, social media channels are used by university students to clarify complex concepts e.g., platforms like Khan. Academy, Physicswala etc. To simply put, social media has made real time education accessible for all.

It further offers skill-based education through training programmes and courses. In 21st century, skill set is a key to success. Having a master's or P.h.d degree does not

matters if a person does not have a required skill-set. Social media has provided a solution for that as well. Platforms like Digiskills have trained 4.0 million youth in freelancing, graphic designing, and content creation. It provides free courses which can be accessed from anywhere around the world. Likewise, Youtube have through playlists on learning coding, entrepreneurship and freelancing. It implies that social media is a great equalizer that provides skills-based education and training to all.

Another fundamental right "Right to Health" is secured by social media. Its first objective in medical field is to strengthen the communication between doctors and patients. A study was published in Medical Review Journal, titled "Role of social media in Health sector" that pointed out two major roles of social media in health sector. Firstly, social media provides necessary

information to the patients on disease outbreaks like Covid-19. Patients have all the information in the form of videos and can use hyperlinks to know more about the protocols.

Secondly, it enhances doctor-patient engagement on and off the hospital premises. Patients can approach their physician through messaging apps to consult about the disease. It implies that social media has revolutionized the healthcare sector by digitizing its facilities.

This revolution further includes the medical crowdfunding to bear the expenses of medical procedures. Given the current economic situation of the world as a whole, the medical procedures have become quite expensive. Fortunately, with the help of social media different medical funding platforms financially assist the patients to bear ^{the} treatment cost. One such platform is in America named GoFundMe.com which accumulated \$5.2 bn till 2021. Thirty per cent

of this funding goes to corona virus patients similarly, a medical funding platform operates in China which accumulated 1.05bn during covid-19. It strongly emphasize on the role of social media in facilitating and revolutionizing the medical sector to treat all the patients equally.

To sum up the discussion, one may question the overall impact of social media on social, gender, legal, and cultural equality given its pitfalls like disinformation. Certainly, it has its own drawbacks but they are mendable by establishing proper regulations and rules. As a whole, the pros of social media platforms in terms of social, gender, cultural and legal equality weigh more than its cons. It ensures equal distribution and accessibility of education, health services, social justice, legal justice delivery, and parallel opportunities to grow business ventures. It taps ^{to} both formal sector and informal sector's needs and simult-

to ceaselessly protects talent over nepotism likewise, it has politically empowered the politicians lacking funds and spread the information on voters' rights in a bare minimum time. This is a reason that social media users' number is increasing everyday and entrepreneurs like Amy Jo Martin have acknowledged social media as an ultimate equalizer.

Social media is the ultimate equalizer. It gives a voice and a platform to anyone willing to engage.
(Amy Jo Martin)
