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Impact of Social Media Platforms on People's Perception of Society Problems (A Meta-Analysis Approach)

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Abstract

This study analyzes foreign research on exposure to social media platforms and their impact on people's perceptions of social problems. It examines the methodological and theoretical issues raised by this research, focusing on two objectives: studying social media exposure's psychological impact on perceptions of social problems, and studying its impact on behavioral changes in these perceptions.

Using a qualitative meta-analysis approach, the study monitors research trends in this field by analyzing over 20 studies from the past 15 years, including a comprehensive analysis of available samples on studying social media impact and changing perceptions.

Based on the research, recommendations are made for the future research agenda, such as using qualitative tools to understand reasons behind changing beliefs about societal problems affected by social media, conducting large-scale research to determine the extent and type of impact on individuals through continuous monitoring of societal issues and problems via communication means, and studying the psychological impact and its relationship to forming opinions on contemporary societal issues, as well as the effect of content presentation frameworks (positive or negative).

Keywords:

 Societal issues, Social Media impact, Social Media platforms, Psychological Impact

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, information and communication technology has undergone rapid change, with the rapid growth of social media being a significant development. Change is happening faster now. For instance, social media's influence has been greatly shaped by the advancement of mobile technology. In terms of overall minutes spent online, mobile devices rule the world. They give everyone access to the ability to connect at any time, from any location, via any device.

An important study by the New York Times Consumer Insight Group revealed the motivations that participants cited for sharing information on social media. These include a desire to reveal valuable and entertaining content to others; to define themselves; to grow and nourish relationships and to get the word out about brands and causes they like or support.

While social media activism brings an increased awareness about societal issues, questions remain as to whether this awareness is translating into real change. Some argue that social sharing has encouraged people to use computers and mobile phones to express their concerns on social issues without actually

having to engage actively with campaigns in real life. Their support is limited to pressing the 'Like' button or sharing content. (Leong et al., 2019; Kemp, 2020)

A 2013 study by the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business found that when people are presented with the option of 'liking' a social cause, they use this to opt out of actually committing time and money to a charitable cause. On the other hand, when people are allowed to show support in private, they are more likely to offer meaningful support by making a financial contribution.

The researchers found that a public endorsement is meant to satisfy others' opinions, whereas people who give in private do so because the cause is aligned with their values. This peer pressure may be a factor in the recent trend of political polls in the U.S. to misread voter intentions: people who respond to the polls may be answering how they think the pollsters expect or the way they think will please their peers, but in the privacy of the voting booth (or at home with a mail-in ballot), they vote according to their true preferences. The use of social media has grown substantially in recent years (Leong et al., 2019; Kemp, 2020).

Social media refers to "the websites and online tools that facilitate interactions between users by providing them opportunities to share information, opinions, and interest" (Swar and Hameed, 2017, p. 141). Individuals use social media for many reasons, including entertainment, communication, and searching for information. Notably, adolescents and young adults are spending an increasing amount of time on online networking sites, e-games, texting, and other social media.

In fact, some authors have suggested that social media has altered the forms of group interaction and its users' individual and collective behavior around the world (e.g., Dhir et al., 2018; Tateno et al., 2019).

Consequently, there are increased concerns regarding the possible negative impacts associated with social media usage addiction (Swar and Hameed, 2017; Kircaburun et al., 2020), Smartphones sometimes distract their users from relationships and social interaction, and several authors have stressed that excessive use of social media may lead to smartphone addiction, primarily because of the fear of missing out. Social media usage has been associated with anxiety, loneliness, and depression (Dhir et al., 2018; Reer et al., 2019), social isolation, and "phubbing," which refers to the extent to which an individual use, or is distracted by, their smartphone during face-to-face communication with others (Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas, 2016; Jiao et al., 2017; Choi and Noh, 2019; Chatterjee, 2020).

However, social media use also contributes to building a sense of connectedness with relevant others, which may reduce social isolation. Indeed, social media provides several ways to interact both with close ties, such as family, friends, and relatives, and weak ties, including coworkers, acquaintances, strangers, and plays a key role among people of all ages as they exploit their sense of belonging in different communities (Roberts and David, 2020).

Consequently, despite the fears regarding the possible negative impacts of social media usage on well-being, there is also an increasing number of studies highlighting social media as a new communication channel, stressing that it can play a crucial role in developing one's presence, identity, and reputation, thus facilitating social interaction, forming and maintaining relationships, and sharing ideas (Carlson et al., 2016), which consequently may be significantly correlated to social support.

The current study includes several main dimensions that cover its requirements as follows:

- The methodological framework of the study, including its topic, importance, objectives, methodology, samples, and categories of analysis.

- An analytical view of the studies that dealt with the Impact of Social Media Platforms on People's Perception of Society Problems in terms of dimensions of interest, the theoretical frameworks that have been used, the methods and samples on which these studies relied, and their most important results.

- A critical and comparative view of the problems raised by research that dealt with the Impact of Social Media Platforms on People's Perception of Society's Problems.

- A proposed future vision for developing the Arab research ways in the field of Social Media Impact and People's Perception of Society Problems.

The Methodological Framework of the Study

Importance of the study:

The study deals with the monitoring, analysis, and evaluation of Foreign studies in the field of Exposure to Social Media Platforms and its Impact on People's Perception of Society Problems, and the methodological and theoretical problems raised by this research, dealing with the recent research studies concerned with this matter.

Objectives of the study:

This study seeks to achieve two objectives, which are:

1. Studying Social Media Exposure's Psychological Impact on People's Perceptions of Social Problems.

2. Studying Social Media Exposure Impact on Behavioral Changes with People's Perceptions about Social Problems.

The method used:

This study belongs to the type of analytical studies (Meta-analysis), of a qualitative nature, through which it is possible to monitor research trends in the field of Exposure to Social Media Platforms and its Impact on People's Perceptions of Society Problems, with the agenda and the frameworks it presents.

Also, theoretical and methodological, the results it reached, and the problems and challenges it revealed, allowing for a future vision to develop the directions of this research, its tools, methods, and theoretical frameworks.

Study sample:

A- Temporal sample:

The time frame that is used was about the last 15 years, which extends between 2008-2022, for the following reasons:

• This period is sufficient to monitor the latest trends and research methods and their development during these years.

• This period witnessed significant research interest in the field of social networks.

B- Sample studies and research:

• The study was applied using the sampling method available for Foreign studies and research during the period 2008-2022.

• The study included a comprehensive analysis of the available sample in the field of Studying Social Media Impact and People's Perceptions Changing.

Data collection tool:

The data collection tool will be a Content Analysis of a sample for available studies in the field of Studying Social Media Impact and People's Perceptions Changing, which included: the research topics of these studies, the theoretical frameworks and approaches used in them, the research methods and tools used, and the most important results presented by these researches and studies.

An analytical and critical view of the studies that dealt with the Impact of Social Media Platforms on People's Perception of Society's Problems

● **The psychological impact of social media content**

Reviewing various studies, the researchers found some differences in how the concepts of individuals are formed through the means of communication, and different theories used to explain how the content presented in mass media can affect the concepts and awareness of the individual of a societal problem. By investigating The six behavioral manifestations connected to spreading fake news were discovered through the qualitative data analysis of 58 open-ended essays. The third-person effect hypothesis and the honeycomb framework were then used to construct a study model that hypothesized the relationship between these activities. The regulating factors were age and gender. The suggested model was tested using two data sets from cross-sectional surveys of 471 and 374 social media users, respectively. According to the study's findings, spreading news quickly to raise awareness benefitted the spread of false information because of time constraints and religion. However, disseminating fake news owing to a shortage of time and religiosity did not change when content was authenticated before being shared. (Talwar et al., 2020, 7).

In addition, the third-person effect (TPE) hypothesis is applied to the context of social media, and this study investigates the differences in estimated Facebook effects on self-versus others, the relationship between perceived Facebook use and estimated Facebook effects on self-versus others, and the relationship between perceived desirable of Facebook as a social medium and estimated Facebook effects on self-versus others. Examining the perceived consumption and impact of Facebook on users themselves versus others. Age and gender also have a role in moderating the mentioned correlations. (Vogel, 2015, 7).

Moreover, examining the impact of media website content on a random sample of 9150 people, who visit media websites. Using Third-person effects, find out the number of online users on the same media website, the exact number of users having read each article on a media website as well as the number of users having shared a news article on their social networks. Also, age and website credibility affected sample thoughts about the existence of the Web Thirdperson effect (WTPE). (Antonopoulos et al., 2015, 7).

Furthermore, by focusing on the effects of online news stories on social media and the perceived message influence. Using the third-person effect as a framework, 88 undergraduates at a

Northeastern U.S. university participated in an online experiment in which they evaluated news stories posted on Facebook. Results show that for news that is more personally relevant, feelings of personal influence rise in social media situations. (Schweisberger et al., 2014, 8).

Also, by using the third-person effect theory this study examines the indirect influence of SNWs and how that indirect influence may potentially contribute to marketing research and practice. By experimenting this study links the third person effect to behavioral consequences related to word of mouth communication via SNWs. (Zhang & Daugherty, 2009, 8).

Besides surveying a group of people and an experiment, according to this study, convincing evidence of overall message inefficiency reduces the estimated effects of the messages on different others as well as the self-other perceptual gaps when the other is the most distant from the self. The self-other perceptual gaps vary in response to labels of the others that cue varying degrees of similarity with self, supporting the uncertainty reduction claim that they are related to the perceived similarity of the others. (Paek et al., 2005, 8).

Additionally, a third-person effect was investigated in this study concerning direct-to-consumer (DTC) advertising. Surveying 264 adults examined perceptions of DTC ad effects and their relationship to support for DTC ad regulation. The third-person effect perceptual component is supported by the results. It found that four factors—Negative DTC Ad Effects, Learning and Involvement, Patient/Provider Interaction, and Distrust of DTC Ad Information—operate as a multidimensional framework for the third-person effect in DTC advertising, and negative content-based third-person effects were more pronounced than positive effects. (DELORME & REID, 2004, 9).

As well as using an experimental tool, it examines two groups of people, who have been exposed to (media content-negative content, positive content, and public service campaigns) group 1, (media violence and drink-driving campaigns) and Group 2. Comparisons with others vary in two ways: closeness and confusion. Both negative and positive content had a third-person effect, but the negative effect was more noticeable in group 1. The findings supported the idea of relative immunity to negative material and showed that such beliefs are aided by comparisons with ambiguous others, particularly ambiguous distant others like "the ordinary person." in group 2. (M. Duck & Mullin, 1995,9).

In this case, two studies provided evidence of the third-person effect among children, surveying 571 seventh-grade students, and the second group of 666 students from grades 4,6, and 8. The results of children's differences from others when comparing themselves to peers were greater than when comparing themselves to their closest pals. kids thought that cigarette commercials had more of an impact on other people than on themselves.

However, anti-smoking commercials had the opposite effect. Children thought they were more affected by anti-smoking advertisements than other people (a reverse third-person perception). (Henriksen, 1999, 9).

● **Social media's role in framing society's problems**

Furthermore, a study was to understand the social identity levels of adolescents and to analyze the negative effects of social media on their social identity from the perspective of social work. The researcher used a descriptive-analytical technique in this study. The study's sample consisted of 200 adolescents (male and female) in the second stage at age group (15–18 years). The researcher designed a questionnaire based on the four main levels of James Marcia's theory of social identity. The results showed a variety of negative effects of social media on the social identity of adolescents in terms of "achievement - postponement - closure - dispersion", this requires taking serious measures from the family, the school, and other institutions to care for the family. (Elsayed, 2021).

Also, an article highlights that "Using social media Web sites is among the most common activities of today's children and adolescents". Any Web site that allows social interaction is considered a social media site, including social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter; gaming sites and virtual worlds such as Club Penguin, Second Life, and the Sims; video sites such as YouTube; and blogs. Such sites offer today's youth a portal for entertainment and communication and have grown exponentially in recent years. For this reason, parents must become aware of the nature of social media sites, given that not all of them are healthy environments for children and adolescents. Pediatricians are in a unique position to help families understand these sites and to encourage healthy use and urge parents to monitor for potential problems with cyberbullying, "Facebook depression," sexting, and exposure to inappropriate content. (O'Keeffe & Clarke, 2011)

Along with identifying middle school students' social media accounts and their motivations for using social media. A state middle school in Turkey with 211 kids enrolled makes up the study's sample. The participating students in this study were instructed to compose an authentic essay on the subject of "use of social media," and the information gathered in this way was examined using the content analysis approach. It may be inferred from the findings of the present study that the participating kids are aware of the detrimental consequences that social media use has on their social lives, academic performance, and health. Nevertheless, despite these drawbacks, many find it challenging to avoid using social media. The participating students claim that social media is a bad communication tool that makes it simple to obtain news and information and is amusing, addictive, and unsuitable for young children. (Gedik & Cosar, 2020,10).

Furthermore, this paper discusses the results of a survey on how people view social media and social networks as sources for obtaining pertinent information that was carried out in Croatia and Serbia. This quantitative study used a questionnaire to collect the respondents' socio-demographic information in the first section and then operationalized the group of dependent variables in the second section using statements and questions with closed-ended answers. Social media is extensively used by respondents in Serbia (58,6%) and Croatia (72,8%). Facebook is the most widely used and largest social network, and its influence on every aspect of society is clear, as seen by the potential exploitation of user data for a variety of objectives, including political manipulation. (Perić & Vranesevic, 2019, 11).

In this case, it investigates how engineering students see using social media. Data were gathered from the respondents via a questionnaire, and the study used a survey methodology. The study's participants are Andhra Pradesh's YSR Kadapa district's JNTUACE Pulivendula final-year engineering students. The findings showed that most respondents learned how to utilize social media via their friends. The majority of respondents (40,40%) believed that social media content was only partially reliable. (Nisha, 2019, 11).

Also, it attempts to understand the various forms of social media advertising for social causes, engineering students' attitudes toward such advertising, and the influence of demographic profiles on such perceptions. At various universities and engineering schools in the Andhra Pradesh region around Vijayawada, a study was done. 150 engineering students were interviewed using a questionnaire. Social cause advertisements on social media are effective at improving people's perceptions of students, according to 48.8% of female respondents. Students' perceptions are moderately correlated with accurate information found on social media, and they strongly suggest that disseminating social cause advertisements is beneficial. It has been discovered that when an advertisement's content is pertinent to a social concern, it aids in raising awareness and there is a strong association between these two elements. Social cause marketing on social media can alter students' perceptions, and there is a significant association between the variables. In conclusion, each person who lives in a society should show consideration for it. (Babu & P. Pavani, 2019, 12).

Moreover, this study intends to evaluate how social media has affected the social lives of female students. At the North-West University in South Africa, the study used a quantitative research approach and a questionnaire research instrument with 69 female students. The research shows, among other things, that social media influences how female students engage, communicate, fall in love, and lead social lives. There is no doubt that social media (SM) and new media (NM) have a huge impact on our educational institutions and society today. For a variety of reasons, students in both developed and developing nations are becoming more dependent on social media and its apps. These factors may cause a change in social and personal habits, both in and outside of the classroom. (Chukwuere & Chibuike, 2017, 12).

In addition to investigating how individuals view and feel about the 2012 flood coverage in the media. Data were gathered from 300 households in rural areas of the states of Delta and Anambra using a structured questionnaire, and descriptive statistics, analysis of variance, and regression analysis were utilized to analyze the data. More than 75% of the respondents said they heard or saw something on television or radio about the flood, and there were notable regional differences in how people perceived the coverage of the disaster. Additionally, the regression findings demonstrated that generally speaking, public opinion was not significantly changed by media coverage of the disaster. (D. Ajaero et al., 2016, 13).

The purpose of this study was to investigate how American college students perceive social networking. Determining the prevalence of age and gender inequalities was a secondary goal. An online survey with 128 students was conducted. Data indicated that social networking was useful for communicating and acquiring information and that it had a favorable impact on students' academic performance. Although younger individuals reported more negative effects on task completion, students also stated that social networking negatively affected their social connections, emotional well-being, and academic performance. Additionally, students claimed that social media can be distracting, addictive, and a threat to their privacy. Although there were no discernible changes in attitudes between the sexes, statistically speaking, women had a more favorable opinion of social networking. (Kitsantas et al., 2015, 13).

Apart from this research report makes an effort to categorize the different reasons people use social networking sites. The efficiency of social media sites for people's social growth is also examined in this essay. The current study is purely descriptive. A 14-statement closed-ended questionnaire is utilized to collect primary data, which is employed as a data collection method. A survey with 100 participants was conducted in the Bhopal region. According to the study's findings, gender has no discernible influence on how frequently people use social media. The majority of respondents concur that using social media sites is not simply for conversing with friends but can also be used for job networking, entertainment, and other purposes. The study also found that these websites help people become more socially stable, although respondents felt that disclosing personal information on social networking sites was dangerous. (Bhuvanesh et al., 2015, 14).

Although this article reviews a series of ideas and a framework to guide research on social media's effects on the body image concerns of young adult women. Social media's interactive nature and its unique content—which includes a strong peer presence and the sharing of a wide variety of visual images—indicate that it has a substantial impact on body image issues through peer normative processes, transportation, and negative social comparisons. By proposing a model that emphasizes the impact of predisposing individual vulnerability characteristics, social media uses, and mediating psychological processes on body dissatisfaction and eating disorders. (M. Perloff, 2014, 14).

This study examines the user's perception of six main groups of social media, towards five dimensions: participation, commonality, connectedness, conversationality, and openness. By analyzing users' profiles and investigating to assess the role of demographics and usage in such perceptions. The results of a national consumer panel survey show that different social media applications are perceived differently and social media usage patterns, gender, and age affect these perceptions. (Olmsted & Cho, 2013, 15).

● **Reality perception versus real events.**

With a general look, it concentrates on this subset of the literature on climate change, revealing parallels and divergences across diverse cultural, social, and geographic contexts. This literature provides more in-depth insights into the effectiveness of various communication tactics as well as the cognitive and psychological processes that drive public beliefs, in addition to demographic and regional variances. Large-scale opinion surveys are typically not used to gain this information. A subset of this expanding body of research investigates these beliefs in depth, usually utilizing qualitative approaches including in-person interviews, surveys with small sample sizes, focus groups, and case studies. This field of study has involved participants from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds as well as demographic groupings across various continents. (Wolf & Moser, 2011, 15).

Addressing the construct of seen reality is methodically explained in this dissertation. A six-dimensional framework of perceived reality is developed using the analysis and synthesis of previous studies. Relationships between these dimensions are theorized as an additional stage in the construct validation process. Two empirical studies are used to test this hypothesized dimensional structure. 240 American undergraduates participated in the first study, where they watched five videos and responded to questions about the veracity of the content. 230 Japanese students participate in the second study, where they watch two movies and play a video game to gauge how realistic they believe these media to be. The findings of the confirmatory factor analyses demonstrate that the proposed dimensional models of experienced reality are superior to the unidimensional and other alternative models in terms of their ability to fit the data after some modifications. (Lyudmila, 2010,16).

Also, to investigate the consequences of being demographically different from other members of the workgroup, two experiments were done. According to Study 1's findings (n = 87 coaches), real demographic differences were consistently correlated with perceived demographic differences. Study 2 looked into the implications of perceived demographic differences. Additional 175 coaches provided data, which were collected. According to structural equation modeling, reported deep-level dissimilarity was linked to perceived demographic differences (i.e., differences in personality, values, and attitudes). Perceived deep-level dissimilarity, on the other hand, had a positive correlation with organizational turnover intentions but a negative correlation with coworker satisfaction. Theoretical contributions to the relational demography approach are examined concerning the results. (Cunningham, 2007, 16).

Although it clarifies important conclusions, restrictions, and presuppositions in the literature on seen reality. The work is organized to generate a conceptual definition and to hypothesize how the components of that definition should be logically and empirically related to other pertinent concepts and their measurements after a construct validation procedure. It is important to think of seen reality as a multidimensional construct made up of magic window, utility, and identity components. But the degree to which each definitional aspect is

supported by the current research is assessed critically. (Potter, 2005, 17).

Additionally, the majority of media entertainment takes the form of stories. To create engaging entertainment, it is critical to comprehend how users perceive narrative reality. Although physical reality is a key component of what is viewed as reality, starting in middle childhood, perceptions of reality become more and more linked to hypothetical, abstract, and conceptual elements of reality.

This study presents findings from a research program that looked at how viewers of media make decisions about perceived reality. Perceived reality is influenced by typicality, pace, and attributions of the causes of character behavior. Additionally, users judge themselves and others differently based on their perceptions of reality. The creation of entertainment media is affected by these discoveries. (Shapiro, 2003, 17).

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Furthermore, this article develops a theoretical framework that applies to studies of the function of the mass media in the social production of reality from both the European and American communication research traditions. The framework is based on theories of reality production by Schutz (1967) and Berger and Luckmann (1967). It created a model with two dimensions: the nature of reality and the separation of social components from personal experience.

According to the paradigm, studies of the media and the social production of reality are categorized and discussed. According to the authors, the merging of the two schools of communication study and a holistic approach, as described in this article, is the best way to gain a deeper knowledge of how the mass media contributes to the social construction of reality. (Adoni&-Mane,1984,18).

A comparative critical view of Foreign research in the field of Exposure to Social Media Platforms and its Impact on People's Perception of Society Problems

The critical review of studies interested in the impact of exposure to social media platforms' content on people's perception of societal problems and purchasing behaviors and how the social media content or the used frames to represent social problems affects people's ideas and thoughts about it.

In this context, the studies are interested in monitoring the various aspects related to how social media frames have a huge impact on users of different ages. And how the content provided through different social media channels affects people's purchasing intentions too.

The researcher monitored, through the analytical and critical review of foreign studies in the field of Exposure to Social Media Platforms and its Impact on People's Perception of Society Problems, the agreement between the studies about social media's huge impact on having a negative point of view about social problems, and how the people think that the more the other people are exposed to social media content about society problems the more they have negative thoughts and perceptions about the society with the theoretical framework of "Third-Person Theory effect".

A Proposed Future Vision for the Development of Exposure to Social Media Platforms and its Impact on People's Perception of Society Problems Researches

According to the researcher's interests, and the research he has done in the field of Exposure to Social Media Platforms and its Impact on People's Perception of Society Problems, some features of the future research agenda can be identified by presenting some examples of research tools and methods in future studies that can be conducted in the future as follows:

- Given the general trend of digital transformation of the world, studying the impact of these changes on users has become a necessity, as most studies lack the use of qualitative tools to find out the reasons behind changing individuals' beliefs about societal problems affected by various social media.

- The researcher also noted that many studies focus on and examine purchasing behaviors and the impact of social media content on them.

- After reviewing previous studies and articles, the researcher found that it is essential to focus more on the effects of social media on the psychological aspects of the public and to monitor the way societal problems are presented in proportion to each society and culture. And knowing whether the formation of public awareness and decision-making is affected in a limited way or in a profound way.

- Expanding the use of qualitative tools in Foreign studies due to their ability to interpret and in-depth analysis of the results of research studies, which is something that other tools, such as the questionnaire, are unable to do.

-       Paying attention to the quality of the samples used, and not being limited to their size, but also addressing their quality, taking into consideration the recruitment of new samples that include some specific audiences.

-       It is also essential to focus and carefully research in large-scale research groups to determine the extent and type of impact on individuals through continuous follow-up of societal issues and problems through the means of communication.

-       The researcher recommends studying the psychological impact and its relationship to forming an opinion towards contemporary societal problems and determining the impact of the frameworks used to present the content and knowing whether they are negative or positive.

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