

## **Social Media Platforms Usage in Expressing Personal, Public, Economical, Psychological and Gender-based Views of Women: A Primary-Source based Study to Evaluate Opinions of Women in Dehradun District of Uttarakhand**

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### **Abstract**

*Social Media has shaped the way an individual's perspectives is formed. Online has become an offline way of viewing the reality. Social media platforms have helped women in gaining and transferring issues related to them. It has helped women to frame the view related to their daily perspectives. In lieu of this, the study focuses on how women's views and opinions are framed through social media platforms. The study has highlighted the perspective from Dehradun district of Uttarakhand of various women of age group to analyze the way they perceive the online world.*

### **Keywords**

*Social media, expression of views, gender, women.*

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## **Introduction**

The expression of views has always been at the forefront of the very human rights declaration. From ages when people expressed their views through postcards, letters, and long-awaited landline calls; to the modern and easily available social media tool is where the generation has changed. In today's world the social media has become a deciding factor for empowerment, freedom, and expression of personal to public views. This generation has come far forward from bounded expression to a free-on-the-click way of letting people know how they are feeling, what they are eating and even where they are sitting. In this quest of sharing and caring digitally, there is still an invisible gender that has always struggled and made their own ways of freedom. The social gendered norms and unproductive terminology to their very existence and labor have demerited their position to express themselves freely. However, it is imperative to say that women in the post-modern world have started to shake the rules of colonists and create their own colonies which reach to higher participation in decision-making and expression of their thoughts yet the ratio is far less than their counterparts. With the increase in the digital expression because of the availability of the internet, smartphones and ICT-based technologies; women have not sharply but remarkably made their own way. Social media platforms have increasingly become a part of their daily lives. Whether it has turned out as a boon for some or a bane for other women, it has however given the lost voices a platform to engage, aware and express themselves in a better way. According to IAMAI –KantarICUBEReport, 2020 analyzed that Internet penetration both in urban and rural India was reported to be 323 million in 2020. However, the number of internet users in urban was 67% but only 31% of internet penetration was there in rural India. It is an important question, given how the number of internet users in India has reached half a billion as of November 2019 and is growing at a rate of 10 percent every year in urban areas and 15 percent in rural areas. But with the emergence of smartphones, the relationship between the internet and digital identities has taken the world into the hands. With the emergence of the Facebook community, the traditional ways of long-awaited replies have turned into short and emoticon-based expressions.

However, everything that flourishes must face the repercussions. Social media that initially started with connect to the world option turned out to be of a disadvantage as well. With the emergence of online hate, cybercrimes and online rape and eve-teasing culture, again women's voice was adhered to restrictions. They started carefully restricting themselves towards formulating views and thus became a victim of online abuse. Social media- gender neutrality became a myth even after gaining freedom to use ICT technology higher than what was a decade before although restricted in a

certain way as well. Women's movement is organized to educate them regarding ICT and its benefits for their upliftment in society. It again gave the power to men to restrict the so-called second sex in their patriarchal definitions. The boundaries pertaining to having desktop pictures or profile pictures to adding friends and sharing limited stories, the shelves were again recreated for them. All their knowledge and choices over the social media were converted to the family's opinions and choices. Women were allowed to share their pictures only after the approval of their men or families. The freedom to express political, gender-related, or even mental health-based issues were cyber confronted as a means to display the reputations of the family. Thus, the availability of relevant content, skill endowment and proper usage of applications and services skills provided to women can play a fundamental role in determining, and limiting, the digital gender divide (Broadband Commission, 2017).

### **Literature Review**

The gender Digital divide has limited the access of women to the online and social media world. Several studies evaluated that women in the developing world have lower technology participation rates than men because of pre-assumptions of sociocultural barriers about the role of women in society (Antonio A, & Tuffley D, 2014). Their education for ICT tools and their proper usage can benefit women and thus their upliftment in society (Peace Corpse, 2016) but it can only help in reducing the gender gap if there is greater involvement of women in the usage of the internet, not only in their development but in evolving their daily environment also. (Mukherjee, 2003). ICT can be neutral to women only if the social engagement process is equivalent and free from biases and trolls. (UN report –women 2000 and Beyond, 2005) women's accessibility to ICT, their education and training skills act as a barrier to their learning and expression of views (Warschauer, 2002) (Haraway, 1990). Study conducted by Hossain, et al., (2006) evaluated that very few Women in Bangladesh have to rely on males for their opinions for decision making but for about 60% of women were of the opinion that ICTs are a more important tool for women's empowerment. Narayan and Ahmad's (2016) study analyzed that media plays an important role in women's empowerment but its usage by them is very low however the expression of views through social media can increase the participation of women in decision-making.

(Hafkin and Taggart, 2001) examined that in India, the literacy gap is one of the barriers to the usage of ICTs by women. However, several studies have highlighted the usage of ICTs. Osubor & Konyeha (2015) examined that ICTs play an important role in expanding knowledge. Allison and Ricardo's (2010) in his study analyzed those ICTs and computer with the internet helps in the development of the community

and helps in bridging the gender gap. Kari (2012) interpreted that there is a relationship between women's empowerment and equality of technologies and both cannot be separated. However, usage of ICTs and especially mobile with the internet has gender biases attached to it. Modoux (2002) examines that many people are adopting ICTs but cannot escape the gender divide that lies within the deep-rooted framework of our society. Hafkin and Taggart(2001) interpret that the gender gap can be seen in many ways like very few women have a proper assessment of ICTs for development. There are limitations faced by women in using public information spaces and sometimes in private places like cybercafes. (Cockburn 1985) examined that the inherent gender bias of science and technology acts as a major barrier to women's engagement towards adopting ICTs. Subhash (2015) concluded in the study "Impact of mass media on women: A Sociological study of Gulbarga district" that social media have impacted women's empowerment on a larger scale but they were highly doubtful about their cyber protection. Tomlin (2012) concluded that because of social media, the participation of women increased in economic and political life and emphasized that there has been a growth in the society because of more participation of women in the social media platforms. Erika Schulze, 2013 examined how social media helped the women's journey into representative politics and in various decision-making platforms. Although there has been emphasis on the cons of social media usage by women as well. Adeola (2017) concluded that women had stronger perception of risk and usage while using social media compared to men. The above literature mentioned the impacts of ICT tools and equipment on the lives of women and how they have helped them to be informative and technologically aware while having repercussions of cyber-attacks and gender discrimination especially for women. This study thus attempts to find whether women of the Dehradun district can access the freedom of views related to the expression of gender-based views, economically relevant views, and mental health-based issues while using social media platforms and whether they have been able to use it without hindrances.

## **Research Objectives and Methodology**

### **Objectives**

1. To evaluate the socio-demographic profile of the women in using social media digital tools.
2. To examine the maximum usage of tools used by women for conscious or unconscious expression of their views and opinions.
3. To evaluate the importance of various institutions while framing views and expression on social media.
4. To analyze hindrances/barriers pertaining to the usage of digital tools in raising voices and participation on social media.

### Methodology

The study was conducted in different private and public colleges in the Dehradun district of Uttarakhand. The colleges were chosen according to the availability of students and for other working/non-working women respondents, the area was selected as per the corona norms.

A total of 214 respondents (sample size) were surveyed in this study, (fulfilling the criteria of completeness and accuracy of information) whose responses were recorded and analyzed accordingly. Convenient and random sampling was used for the purpose of the survey. Data was collected through primary sources using a structured questionnaire. Secondary sources were also used to review the literature available in statistical records, ministry websites, research papers, and reports of national and international importance. For data analysis software- IBM SPSS version 22 was used and EXCEL was used for graphical representation.

### Data Analysis

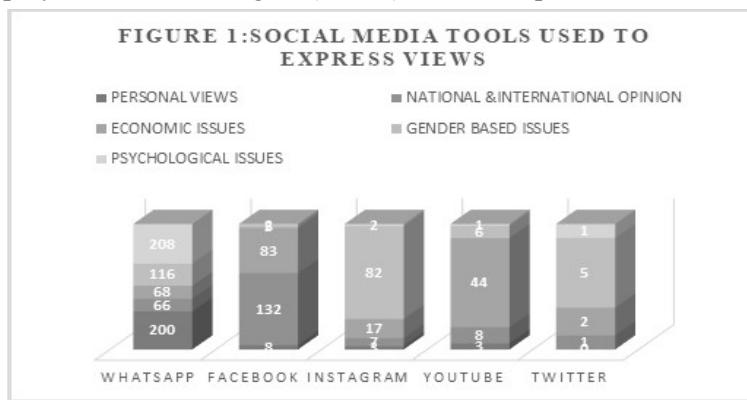
**Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents**

Demographic Categories	Description	Number of Respondents	Percent
Age categories	Less than 20 years	62	29
	21-30 years	92	43
	31-40 years	60	28
Marital Status	Married	86	40.2
	Unmarried	128	59.8
Work status	College students	92	92
	Housewives	52	52
	Self- employed	70	70
Level of Education	Undergraduate	72	33.6
	Graduate	36	16.8
	Postgraduate	85	39.7
	Diploma/certificate course	21	9.8
Employment status	Employed	69	32.2
	Unemployed	145	67.8
Residential status	Rural	143	66.8
	Urban	71	33.2

Data Interpretation: The above data interpret that in terms of the marital status of the women the larger section of the respondents are falling under the age group of 31-40 years followed by 30 women respondents who are of the age group of 21-30years and just 13 women are married and are of the age group of less than 20years.

Similarly, about the single status of the respondents, most of the single respondents i.e., 62 women fall under the age of 21-30 years followed by 49 women respondents of the age group of less than 20 years. And the least were in the age group of 31-40 years i.e., 17 women respondents.

The above data examined that most of the women respondents were college-going students i.e., 92 respondents (43%) while 70 women respondents (32.7%) were self-employed. The remaining 52 (24.3%) women respondents were housewives.

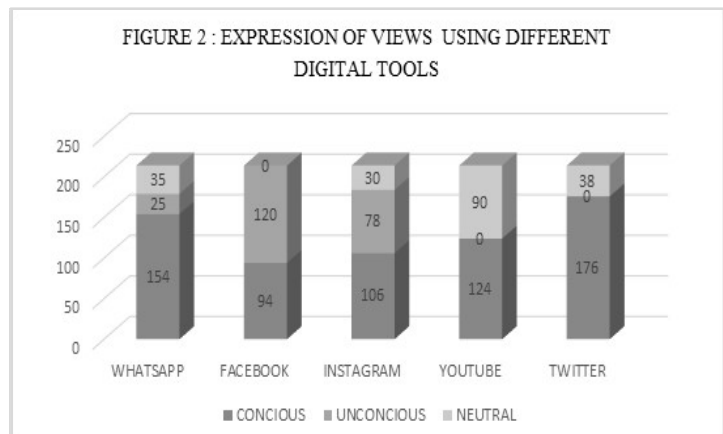


**Figure 1: Social Media Tools used To Express Views**

Source: Primarily collected data for the survey-based study

1. To express **personal views** about family and friends - 94.8% of respondents used WhatsApp while 4.7% of women used Facebook others 3.2% of respondents used Instagram and 5.4% used YouTube. Maximum respondents i.e., 200 used WhatsApp while none of the respondents used Twitter.
2. To express **public views**- 31.3% of respondents used WhatsApp while 76.7% of respondents used Facebook tool, others 7.5% used Instagram and only 14.3% of respondents used Twitter to express their public opinion about topics of national and international importance among the total respondent -maximum i.e., 132 respondents used Facebook while only 1 respondent used Twitter to express their public opinion.
3. To express **economic issues** related opinions -32.2% of total respondents used WhatsApp ,48.3% of women used Facebook while 18.3% woman used Instagram and only 28.6% of women express their opinions on YouTube, and give their views on economic
4. issues like development, infrastructure etc. amongst the total women maximum of 68 respondents used WhatsApp while the least tool used by (only 2 respondents) was Twitter.

5. While to express **gender-based issues**- 55.6% of respondents used WhatsApp ,2.9% of women used Facebook ,88.2% of the total used Instagram and 10.7% took YouTube to express their opinions. Maximum women i.e., 116 women used WhatsApp.
6. To give their views on **psychological /mental** based issues like stress, depression, etc. 98.6% used WhatsApp ,1.2% used Facebook while 1.8% used YouTube, and only 14.3% of the woman respondents .out of The Total Woman i.e., 208 respondents used WhatsApp while the least respondent was only 1 while giving her opinions on YouTube and Twitter.

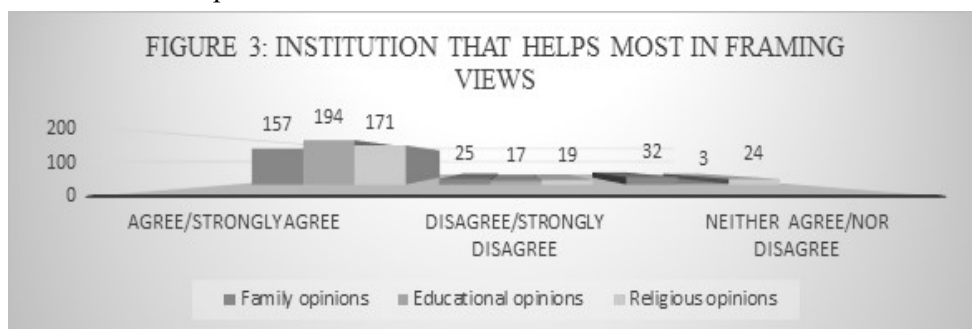


**Figure 2: Usage of digital tools for the expression of views**

1. **Conscious Expression for Digital Tool:** The above data analyzed that while using WhatsApp 154 respondents (72%), were/would be conscious before posting while 94 respondents (43.9%) were of the view that in the present as well as in the future they would be conscious while using Facebook for writing down or sharing their views. On the other hand, 106 respondents (49.5%) took the Instagram tool with utmost conscious and nervousness before/after posting their views. While, 124 women respondents (57.9%) were/ would be conscious while posting on YouTube and felt they would not share their opinions freely and 176 respondents (82.2 b%) were of the view that in the future if they use Twitter, they would be highly conscious while sharing the information as it is a public-oriented platform and it may harm their image or contribute in gaining hateful comments.
2. **Unconscious Expression for Digital Tool:** It is observed that only 25 respondents (16%) used/would use WhatsApp unconsciously as they feel it might contribute to portraying their views negatively by others and were

conscious about their data privacy. While 120 women (76.9%) used Facebook without thinking much about others opinions on their posts. There were 78 respondents (50%) who unconsciously used /would use Instagram but there were no respondents who used YouTube and Twitter unconsciously/ freely before sharing their views.

3. Some respondents were neutral while posting their views. They were neither conscious nor unconscious before expressing their views or opinions. 35 respondents (24%) were/would be neutral when they use WhatsApp as sometimes, they were conscious while posting their personal views on WhatsApp and sometimes they were unconscious before posting any kind of their opinions.



**Figure 3: Institution That Helps Most in Framing Views**

**Source: Primarily collected data for the survey-based study**

**Data Interpretation**

1. Family Opinion: The above data interpret that many of the respondents i.e., 157 (74.1%) agreed that family as an institution helps in framing their opinions and views on the social media. While 25 respondents (47.2%) disagree that views we hear from our family help in framing an opinion. The rest of the respondents 32 (57.1%) have a neutral opinion (neither agreed nor disagreed) of the fact that the environment in the family helped us in any way to frame our opinions on the social media.
2. Educational Opinion: It is thereby analyzed that 194 respondents which constitute 91.5%, agreed that the knowledge 2. gained from the educational institutions (teachers/theoretically) helped us in framing our opinions and views followed by 17 respondents (32.1%) who disagreed of the view while only 3 respondents (5.4%) neither agreed nor disagreed about the above parameter.



3. **Religious Opinion:** The data also examined that the Majority of the respondents i.e., 171 (80.7%) agreed to the indicator that religious teachings helped in framing views while writing down opinions on social media followed by only 19 respondents (35.8%) who disagreed that this parameter helps in framing opinion while 24 respondents (42.9%) had a neutral opinion on whether religion would influence their viewpoint or not.

**Table 2: Hindrances Faced While Expressing Views**

Hindrances	Agree		Disagree		Neutral	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Family restrictions	148	69.50%	31	39.20%	35	44.30%
Time availability	150	70.40%	29	36.70%	35	44.30%
Cost of equipments	179	84.00%	26	32.90%	9	11.40%
Cultural barriers based	164	77.00%	19	24.10%	31	39.20%
Economical barriers	151	70.90%	29	36.70%	34	43.00%
Self- image	176	82.60%	26	32.90%	12	15.20%
Low confidence	163	76.50%	25	31.60%	26	32.90%

#### **Data Interpretation**

The above data interpreted that the majority of the women i.e., 179 respondents (84%) agree that the cost of equipment is the major hindrance they face while expressing views while 148 women (69.50%) agree that family restrictions also create hindrances. Very few respondents disagree that cultural barriers are faced by them while expressing views on social media. Just 9 (11.40%) women respondents have neutral opinion that the cost of equipment acts as a barrier.

#### **Conclusion**

The objective of the study has been fulfilled i.e., to examine the maximum usage of the tools by women for conscious or unconscious expression of their thoughts and views and to evaluate the importance of various institutions while framing views and expression on social media. Thus, various social media platforms are being utilized to frame an individual's view in personal as well as professional lives. Expression of views based on certain factors is important to evaluate to see whether the social media platforms can freely be used or not. There has been a limitation of the usage of media platforms as too much sharing can cause a hindrance to an

individual's integrity and dignity because trolls and haters can misuse the information to address their certain goals, especially in a world where women's views are becoming centric part of societal growth. It was important to analyze whether women share their viewpoints freely or not. Hence, in the future, certain factors can contribute to making social media platforms free from prejudices and biases.

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