

Student Advocacy on Social Media: Risk and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

In today's digital landscape, social media plays a transformative role in shaping student advocacy by enabling young individuals to voice opinions, mobilize support, and participate in societal change. This study investigates both the opportunities and risks associated with student advocacy on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp. Using a structured questionnaire circulated via Google Forms, data was collected from 200 student respondents through convenience and snowball sampling techniques. The findings reveal that 79.5% of students strongly believe social media enables real change in society, with responses consistent across genders. Students view social media as a platform not only for communication but also for awareness creation, leadership development, and democratic participation. However, challenges such as misinformation, cyberbullying, and privacy concerns remain evident. The study concludes that while education level does not significantly affect students' perceptions, overall optimism towards social media advocacy is strong. Responsible usage can therefore enhance its potential as a powerful enabler of student-led social change.

keywords

Student Advocacy, Social Media, Risks, Opportunities, Awareness Creation, Education

INTRODUCTION

In the modern digital era, social media has become an important part of students' daily lives. It is not only a place for communication and entertainment but also a platform where students can express their views, raise their voices, and participate in discussions on different social issues. This active involvement of students on social media, often known as student advocacy, has been growing rapidly in recent years. With the help of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp, students are able to share their ideas, promote campaigns, support social causes, and spread awareness about matters that directly or indirectly affect society. One of the strongest advantages of social media advocacy is its power to reach a large audience instantly, crossing geographical boundaries and bringing more attention to important issues. However, this practice also carries some risks that students need to be aware of. Problems such as misinformation, online harassment, privacy concerns, and overuse of social media affecting academic focus are commonly seen. Still, it cannot be ignored that social media also provides great opportunities such as creating awareness, building useful networks, developing leadership skills, and encouraging participation in democratic activities. Hence, studying the risks and opportunities of student advocacy on social media is important to understand its overall impact on students' education, personal growth, and social responsibility.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The rapid rise of social media has transformed the way students express their views, raise concerns, and advocate for social, political, and academic issues. While these platforms provide opportunities for students to amplify their voices, promote awareness, and mobilize support for positive change, they also expose them to significant risks. Challenges such as misinformation, cyberbullying, privacy violations, and potential misuse of content can negatively impact students' personal, academic, and professional lives. This dual nature of social media, offering both opportunities for advocacy and risks of misuse, creates a pressing need to examine how students can effectively and responsibly engage in advocacy while safeguarding themselves from potential harm.

OBJECTIVES

- To explore how students use social media platforms for expressing their opinions and raising awareness on social issues.
- To analyze the risks and challenges faced by students while advocating on social media, including cyberbullying, misinformation, and privacy concerns.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Duong (2020) – Social Media: A Literature Review

Duong (2020) reviewed the development and expansion of social media and highlighted how it has transformed the way people communicate, acquire, and use information. The study explained the definitions and characteristics of social media and discussed different types of platforms popular in the 21st century. The

paper emphasized that social media has become a key communication tool and provides valuable references for researchers in understanding global communication trends.

- Anderson (2019) – Challenges and Opportunities for Use of Social Media in Higher Education
Anderson (2019) explored the role of social media in higher education, identifying both opportunities and challenges. The paper pointed out educational affordances of social media such as collaborative learning, enhanced digital literacy, academic identity growth, and multimedia skill development. However, it also highlighted concerns like loss of data control and the need for responsible use. The study concluded that social media, when effectively integrated, can enhance formal and informal learning experiences in higher education.
- Willoughby (2018) reviewed 16 studies on social media risks for children and youth, identifying key concerns such as cyberbullying, online abuse, harmful content, and privacy issues. The study emphasized the need for social workers to understand these risks and adapt their practices accordingly.
- Goyal (2018) reviewed literature on social media marketing, highlighting strategies like creating an online presence, shareable content, and customer engagement. The review stressed the importance of data-driven approaches and understanding user behavior for effective marketing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research is based on a survey method, as it was considered the most suitable approach to collect primary data on the topic of student advocacy on social media. For this purpose, a structured questionnaire was designed using Google Forms, which provided an easy, quick, and cost-effective way to gather information from a large number of respondents. The questionnaire included simple and relevant questions focusing on students' social media usage, their involvement in advocacy activities, and their perceptions about both the risks and opportunities of such practices. The Google Form was first shared with the researcher's friends and classmates, who were requested to provide their responses. In order to reach a wider audience and increase the sample size, these respondents were further encouraged to share the form with their own friends and networks. This process of circulation enabled the researcher to collect data from a more diverse group of students within a short span of time. Hence, the sampling technique adopted in this study can be identified as a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling, since the researcher initially relied on easily accessible participants and later depended on those participants to expand the reach of the survey. All the responses were collected electronically through the Google platform, which automatically compiled the data in an organized manner. The collected information was then prepared for further analysis, ensuring that the data could be interpreted systematically to understand students' education, personal development, and social responsibilities in relation to advocacy on social media.

Table 1. Summary of Respondents Gender and Perception of Social Change

		Create Real Change in the Society	Respondents Gender
N	Valid	200	200
	Missing	0	0
Mean		1.21	1.48
Median		1.21 ^a	1.48 ^a
Mode		1	1
Std. Deviation		.405	.501
Minimum		1	1
Maximum		2	2
a. Calculated from grouped data.			

INTERPRETATION

- Out of 200 respondents, there were no missing responses for both variables.
- The mean value (1.21) for “Create Real Change in the Society” shows most respondents agreed positively.
- The low standard deviation (0.405) indicates high consistency in responses about social change.
- Gender distribution was almost balanced (Mean = 1.48), with a slight majority in one group.
- Overall, findings suggest that irrespective of gender, respondents strongly believe individuals can create real change in society.

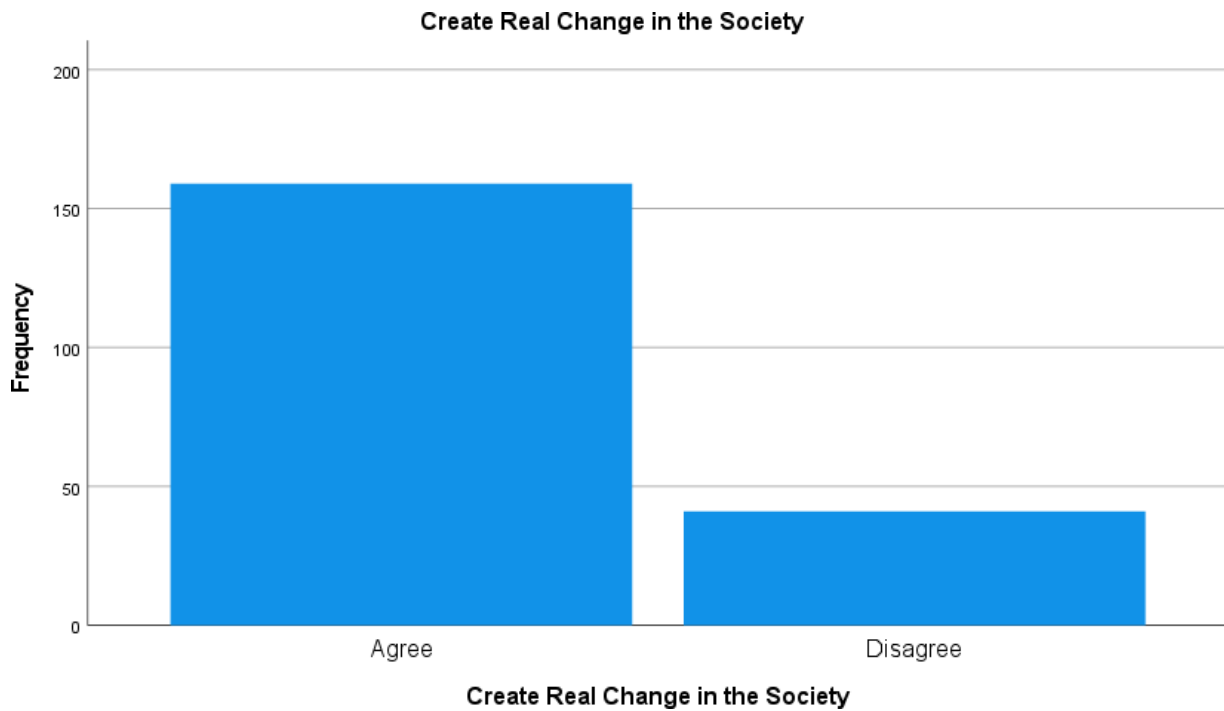
Table 2. Opinion of Creating Real Change in the Society

Create Real Change in the Society					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	159	79.5	79.5	79.5
	Disagree	41	20.5	20.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

INTERPRETATION

- Out of 200 respondents, 159 (79.5%) agreed that real change can be created in society.
- Only 41 respondents (20.5%) disagreed, which is a much smaller proportion.
- The result shows a strong majority support towards the idea of creating real change in society.
- The difference between agree and disagree responses (around 59% gap) indicates a clear positive opinion trend.
- Overall, the data highlights that respondents are highly optimistic about the possibility of creating change in society.

Figure 1. Perceptions of Societal Change



INTERPRETATION

- A majority of respondents agree that real change can be created in society.
- The frequency of agreement is much higher compared to disagreement.
- Only a smaller portion of respondents disagree with the statement.
- This indicates a generally positive perception towards societal change.
- Overall, the data suggests that most participants are optimistic and supportive of initiatives aimed at creating real change in society.

Table 3. Variables Entered// Removed in Regression Analysis

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Create Real Change in the Society ^b		Enter
a. Dependent Variable: Respondents Education Level			
b. All requested variables entered.			

INTERPRETATION

- In Model 1, the independent variable “Create Real Change in the Society” was entered into the regression equation using the Enter method.

- No variables were removed from the model, which means all requested predictors were retained.
- The dependent variable for this model is "Respondents' Education Level."
- This indicates that the model examines how the variable Create Real Change in the Society influences or predicts the respondents' education level.

Table 4. Analysis of Variance

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.211	1	.211	.766	.383 ^b
	Residual	54.664	198	.276		
	Total	54.875	199			
a. Dependent Variable: Respondents Education Level						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Create Real Change in the Society						

INTERPRETATION

- Regression (Sum of Squares = .211, df = 1, Mean Square = .211):

This shows the variation explained by the independent variable ("Create Real Change in Society") in predicting the dependent variable ("Respondents Education Level").

- Residual (Sum of Squares = 54.664, df = 198, Mean Square = .276):

This shows the unexplained variation (errors). Most of the variance remains unexplained, as the residual value is much larger than the regression value.

- F-value = 0.766, Sig. = 0.383:

The F-test checks whether the independent variable significantly predicts the dependent variable. Since the p-value (0.383) > 0.05, the result is not statistically significant. This means "Create Real Change in Society" does not significantly predict "Respondents Education Level."

Table 5. Correlation Table (Respondents Education level Vs Create Real Change in Society)

		Respondents Education Level	Create Real Change in the Society
Respondents Education Level	Pearson Correlation	1	.062
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.383
	N	200	200
Create Real Change in the Society	Pearson Correlation	.062	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.383	
	N	200	200

INTERPRETATION

- Pearson Correlation = 0.062:
- This indicates a very weak positive correlation between respondents' education level and creating real change in society. The value is close to zero, showing almost no linear relationship.
- Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.383:
- Since the significance level is greater than 0.05, the correlation is not statistically significant.
- N = 200:
- The sample size is 200 respondents, which is sufficient, but the relationship still appears weak and non-significant.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- A large majority of students (79.5%) agreed that social media enables the creation of real change in society, showing strong optimism and belief in its power for advocacy.
- 2. Responses across gender were consistent, with both male and female students sharing the view that individuals can make meaningful societal impact through social media.
- 3. The low standard deviation in responses indicates high agreement and reliability in participants' positive perception of social media as a tool for advocacy.
- 4. Students see social media not only as a platform for communication but also as a space for awareness creation, supporting causes, and building networks.
- 5. The findings highlight that students are motivated and confident about using social media as a channel for driving social awareness, democratic participation, and leadership development.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that student advocacy on social media carries significant potential for creating societal change. Most respondents expressed strong confidence in the positive role of social media, particularly in raising awareness, mobilizing support, and promoting social responsibility among young people. Although the analysis showed that education level does not significantly influence students' belief in social change, the overall perception remains highly optimistic. This reflects that irrespective of academic background, students strongly recognize the opportunities of advocacy through digital platforms. Therefore, social media can be considered a powerful enabler for youth voices, provided its risks—such as misinformation, privacy concerns, and cyberbullying—are managed responsibly.

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