



## Social Media: A Challenge to Societal Harmony

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### ABSTRACT

In the digital age, social media has become an integral part of our lives, revolutionising how we communicate, interact and consume information. It has also proved useful as a business tool to help expand businesses with various techniques like search engine optimisation and content tailored to the preference of the viewers. Social media has entered the domains of politics, work, home and every other sector of modern lives. In the current scenario, everyone uses social media in the form of Meta (Facebook), WhatsApp, Instagram, X (twitter), Snapchat, etc. Social media affects individuals so much that it possesses the power of shaping public opinions in a community. Accuracy has taken second place to sensationalism, so that whatever information the masses receive through social media seems to become the only truth. Therefore, understanding the potential dangers of social media is extremely necessary because it affects our society greatly and may lead to social discord.

### Introduction

Social media is a concept familiar to everyone. Nearly everyone today uses social media. By 2026, India has reached an impressive milestone with over 1.03 billion internet users, positioning it as one of the biggest digital markets globally. In this scenario, approximately 500 million social media users are engaged, representing roughly 34.1 percent of the entire population. These platforms, expanding at a yearly rate exceeding 5%, significantly impact all areas of our personal, social, and professional existence. The influence of social media on society is substantial. It has enabled swift worldwide



connection, information exchange, and commercial promotion. Simultaneously, it has led to false information, mental health challenges.

### **Literature review**

The media functions as a channel or means for conveying messages from messengers to their targeted audiences. Multiple specialists suggest that psychology, within human interaction, the main avenues for transmitting data encompass the five human senses, comprising sight and sound. These perceptions obtain messages, which are then handled by the human brain, affecting and molding an individual's perspectives on a topic before their interpretation into activities (Bian & Ji, 2021)

Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein characterize social media. As a suite of web-based applications based on Web 2.0 principles and technology, facilitating the production and distribution of content created by users. Web 2.0 functions as the essential basis for social media platforms. Social media appears in various formats, including social media, online discussion boards, blogs, micro blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures, films, user reviews, and social bookmarking platforms (Ali et al, 2021)

The benefit of this the rate at which information is transmitted and received in an internet communication network, and likewise as a sophisticated data supplier. Due to the fact that three decades ago individuals were unable to envision that web-connected computers would transform into a global library that could be entered via a portal known as the World Wide Web (www). An additional benefit of the internet is that it serves as an interpersonal channel by transmitting messages in the format of electronic messaging (e-mail) (Dutta et al., 2020).

### **Social Integration**

Integration across various social domains is broadly characterized as a means of unification. components with varied traits and categories grounded in ideas, frameworks, and measurements. In general terms, the term integration refers to the concept of assimilation, unifying, merging, and consolidating various elements into a single cohesive entity, that transforms from its initial state into a new version. Simultaneously, regarding

In social sciences, as defined in the sociology dictionary, integration refers to one of the enduring social issues of society, how different components of society sustain unity and their integration (Fernández-Mora et al., 2022)



There are two key concepts regarding integration in social science, specifically integration grounded in "shared values" in accordance with functionalist theory integration founded on "interdependence", adhering to the division of labor theory. Nonetheless, this idea has faced significant criticism as society appears overly cohesive, and societal conflicts are overlooked (as if conflicts never existed that happened within the community). The progress of social integration and its frameworks is an initiative to further conversations regarding how components of society uphold or fail to uphold harmony. Integration also denotes the process of bringing together racial groups to foster proximity financially, socially, and politically (de et al., 2023)

### **Defining Social Harmony**

According to Sharma (2015), "Social harmony is defined as a process of valuing, expressing, and promoting love, trust, admiration, peace, harmony, respect, generosity and equity upon other people in any particular society regardless of their national origin, weight, marital status, ethnicity, colour, gender, race, age and occupation". In short, it can be said that social harmony is a situation where people side by side in peace and mutual harmony. It depends on the stable relationship among the different social groups and institutions in a multi dimensional social structure.

### **Role of Social Media in Promoting Social Disharmony**

In a democratic nation like India, social media plays a major role by giving information to the citizens and by reflecting their opinions at a large scale, thus impacting different communities. Rumours and false information travels like wildfire with the help of social media. The content available on social media is devoid of any cross checks for validity and veracity. Due to the widespread reach of falsified information, social media acts as an agent of mischief and discord.

Various threats posed by social media are

**National Integrity and Harmony** Hateful content against communities and religions harms communal harmony, and raises a wall of mistrust and intolerance among the public. The world has already witnessed violent incidents resulting from the misuse of social media, such as the 2021 US Capitol riot, the 2020 communal riots in Delhi, and the 2017 Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, among others. The ongoing Manipur conflict has also been fuelled by the inflammatory and falsified information making the rounds on social media.



- **Terrorism** Social media platforms offer terrorist organisations a global stage to disseminate propaganda, radicalise individuals and mobilise supporters. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Telegram serve as virtual recruitment grounds, allowing terrorists to reach a wide audience and exploit vulnerable individuals. Terrorist groups use social media to instil fear, intimidate adversaries and glorify acts of violence. Platforms like YouTube and Instagram are exploited to showcase graphic content, martyrdom videos and propaganda material, desensitising audiences and normalising extremist ideologies.
- **Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles** Social media algorithms often prioritise content based on users' preferences, creating echo chambers where individuals are exposed only to viewpoints that align with their beliefs. This reinforces existing biases and hampers constructive dialogue between divergent groups.
- **Sensationalism and Commercialisation** Platforms prioritise content that garner attention, often favouring sensational or provocative material over precise and accurate reporting. Furthermore, the commercial imperative underlying social media platforms promote sponsored content, influencer marketing and product placement. This blurs the boundaries between genuine expression and commercial promotion. As a result, the integrity of information is compromised and users are bombarded with content engineered to elicit immediate reactions or drive consumerism, undermining critical thinking and contributing to the commodification of attention.
- **Communalism** Social media has become a breeding ground for communalism, leading to divisions within societies. Communalism, driven by religious, ethnic or cultural identities, finds fertile ground on social media platforms where users can easily disseminate inflammatory rhetoric, hate speech and divisive narratives. These platforms often serve as echo chambers, amplifying prejudices and reinforcing group identities, thereby deepening existing communal tensions. The unchecked spread of communal narratives on social media not only undermines social cohesion but also poses a threat to peace and stability.

### **Social Media for Social Harmony**

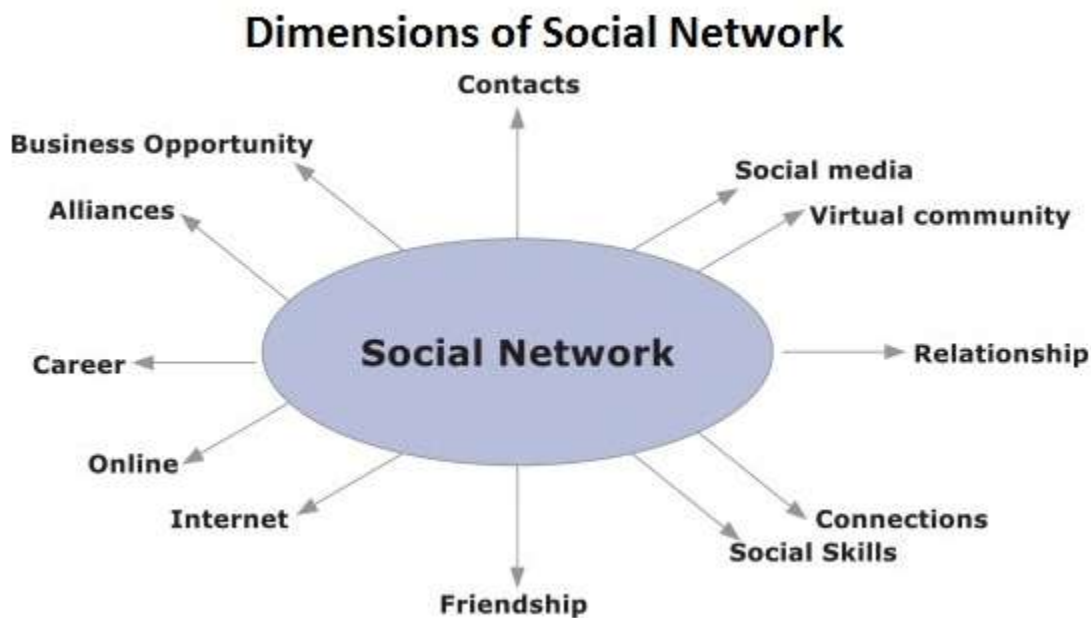
Social media is one of the most potent and effective mediums given its wide reach and effective delivery mechanism. It has the ability to mobilise public opinion by giving people a voice as a principle to lead our community. However, giving people a voice is not enough without having people dedicated to uncovering, verifying and analysing new information. The users should not distort or exaggerate any



irrelevant facts without any authentic source. They should avoid the usage of intemperate and unrestrained language that is bound to incite unrest in the society.

Despite its drawbacks, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting individuals and organisations, communities have leveraged the reach and immediacy of social media to raise awareness about pressing issues and mobilise support for charitable endeavours. Whether it's crowd-funding campaigns for humanitarian relief efforts, grassroots movements advocating for social justice, or viral challenges promoting environmental conservation, social media has democratised activism and empowered individuals to make a tangible impact on society.

Therefore, we need a movement to develop digital literacy, a movement that should grow on the basis of shared awareness of the urgency of mastery and understanding of online media. From fostering empathy and empathy-building to facilitating dialogue and civic engagement, social media has the potential to harness collective action and drive meaningful change for the betterment of humanity. As we navigate the digital landscape, it is imperative to recognize and harness the transformative potential of social media for advancing social good and building a more equitable and compassionate world.



**Conclusion**

In the era of globalization, the whole world has become a global village. The traditional concept of nation and humanity has gone through a radical transformation. Commercialization and open market policy have started economic imperialism. War and communal violence are manufactured for the feeding the



business interest of big corporate houses throughout the world. While social media presents myriad opportunities for connectivity and expression, its unchecked influence poses a significant challenge to societal harmony. The proliferation of misinformation, polarisation of discourse, and amplification of divisive narratives threatens to erode the fabric of our communities. However, by acknowledging the detrimental effects of social media on societal harmony and implementing targeted interventions, we can harness its power for positive change. Through collaborative efforts involving governments, tech companies, educators and users themselves, we can mitigate the negative impact of social media and foster a more inclusive, empathetic, and resilient society. By promoting digital literacy, encouraging civil discourse, and leveraging technology for social good, we can navigate the complexities of the digital age while upholding the values of unity, diversity, and mutual respect. As we strive towards a harmonious coexistence in the digital realm, let us harness the transformative potential of social media to build bridges, cultivate empathy, and foster solidarity across diverse communities.

#### RECOMMENDATION

- Instead of Government banning the use of social media like in the case of India with twitter, the government should find a way to work with the social media expert to make use of the trends to carry the youths along with the social development process.
- It is advisable for the youths that although everyone has a reason to be online they should find and engage in more educative trends so they can be more useful to the society instead of using it to while away precious time.
- The programmers should find a way to restrict adult content to adults' users by verifying the user's identity.

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