USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PROMOTION OF WESTERN CULTURE IN PAKISTAN: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Dr. Mehmona Sabir
Allama Iqbal Medical College Lahore

ABSTRACT:

Social Media is an emerging concept about the awareness of media messages consumption or information evaluation on virtual communication platforms, specifically in social networking websites. With the advent of communication technologies and emergence of web 2.0, the dynamics of war are also shifting from traditional warfare to information warfare having no geographical as well as content related boundaries. Therefore, the role of modern information and communication technologies is very important to study in the context of Social Media effects fare where social media is being used as a tool of Social Media effects fare. This study aims to assess the problems and need of information literacy among the social media users of Pakistan. Conceptually, it takes roots from Social Media effects literature and Social Media literacy. Methodologically, we conducted survey of social media users of Pakistan. Data was collected from purposively selected 300 respondents (150 males and 150 females) having different age groups. For this purpose, we developed Social Media effects Awareness and Social Media Literacy Scales to understand, detect and respond to the hybrid threats. The study found the trends of social media usage, exposure to propaganda messages and reaction of social media users in Pakistan. It recommends that Social Media and information literacyis better for planning against Social Media effects which may be a threat to national interest instead of introducing strict laws.

Keywords: *Social Media effects, Online Propaganda, Social Media Literacy, Social Media*

INTRODUCTION:

Media is considered as fourth pillar of society. It is often credited to unite, build national integrity and harmony in any society. However, media commercialization and privatization has changed media into an industry. New media technologies have changed the landscape of media environment from nationally regulated media landscape to a more internationally (or inter-regionally) oriented, from public-oriented media to private owned media, from a supply-oriented media landscape into a more demand-oriented market, from mass media technologies to interpersonal media technologies (Scientific Council for Government Policy, 2005). Today's convergence of traditional and new media offers promising opportunities for inclusion, participation, and transparency; which are, however, paralleled by challenges such as uneven access, misinformation, and exposure to harmful content. Consequently, access to accurate and objective information is more important than ever for a healthy democracy to flourish(Martinsson, 2009). Pakistani society is also facing the challenges of information explosion and social media revolution.

With the emergence of new media technologies and web 2.0,the individuals are not engaged passively at the receiving and consuming yet are also creating, developing, sharing and criticizing Social Media contents. Being new media literate, they also need to know socio-

cultural and emotional aspects of new media beyond its technical characteristics(Koc & Barut, 2016). Availability of a medium that can be exploited to pursue individuals and organization's vested interest and motives caused to build information environment where accuracy got highly compromised (Shao, Ciampaglia, Varol, Flammini, & Menczer, 2017). With the changing landscape of communication, the concepts related to information sharing and information security also got changed. Now the information security emerged as an important concept aimed at securing people from information overload and propaganda against distort and pervert public opinion due to enhanced communication technologies(Hornik, 2016). Utilization of social media by the terrorist groups like ISIS for recruiting citizen even in advanced countries of Europe and America proved its effectiveness as well as sensitivity(Awan, 2017). The emergence of social media changed the nature of conflicts by changing the very nature of winning and losing of a battle and making it more complex. It has been observed that state as well as non-state actors utilize tools of social media for propaganda and information dissemination along with other tools(Svetoka, 2016). Military and political aims are fulfilled by utilization of different strategies of skillful combination of military operations with economic pressures, cyber-attacks and propaganda etc. The virtual platforms or social media are now become the major part of warfare.

SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Technological and human development has influenced the arena of wars and conflicts, as the machine guns and tanks are now replaced by the arms which cannot be seen(Karolewski, 2018). Information environment witnessed dramatic changes in recent times hence the nature of mass communication has also changed from being a 'single authority speaking and many listening' to a 'many speak to many listeners'. Now the Governments and traditional media are no more the sole and important players in the information space rather they have to compete and get their own place(Svetoka, 2016).

Social media has the power disseminate content in high volume with rapid speed and in short time hence used as an effective tool of Social Media effects fare to influence and change the attitudes, opinion and behavior of public to fulfill certain political or military objectives. Being anonymous, the user can freely express opinion with fearing any responsibility and without any geographical or content related boundaries. The concept of unconventional or Social Media effectsfare is often used to describe "the complexity and characteristics of modern conflicts in which both state and non-state actors combine conventional methods with methods that lie outside of our traditional understanding of military operation in their war fighting strategies"(Rácz, 2015).

Social media's ability to replicate information at high speeds with low costs, as well as difficult to authenticate accuracy and sources of this information, social media become most effective propaganda tool for achieving specific military objectives in specific conflicts(Duggan, 2015). According to Nissen (2015, p. 72) there are six ways that social media can be used to support military operations i.e. Intelligence Collection, Targeting, Inform and Influence (Psychological Warfare), Cyber Operations, Defense, and Command and Control. All of these activities, regard less of their effects, can be conducted through

social networking media. These activities are mutually supportive and often can be conducted in coordination with physical activities on the ground.

Similarly, social media can be used by the militant and terrorist groups to fulfill their own specific objectives which should be countered through the effectively educate the users regarding new media and to make them equip with skill to identify propaganda from real information as well as authenticity of the sources of information. Traditional responses to propaganda such as refuting it or creating counter-narratives have proven thus far to be ineffective. This shows that now the arena of war and propaganda got expanded to the Social Media world hence now there is a strong need to educate people to differentiate among information, misinformation and disinformation by equipping them with the skill of new media literacy.

SOCIAL MEDIA LEARNIG METHODS (Online)

In the age of information, media literacy can be a useful way to protect society from harmful effects of media. Livingstone (2004) defines the media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts". "Media literacy provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms – from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy"(Thoman & Jolls, 2004). Media literacy principles should not detract from your enjoyment of programs, but rather enhance your appreciation of media content(Silverblatt, Miller, Smith, & Brown, 2014). It provides understanding about the role of media in democratic society. Its major elements are; (i) the symbolic and material representation of knowledge, culture and values; (ii) the diffusion of interpretative skills and abilities across a (stratified) population; and (iii) the institutional, especially, the state management of the power that access to and skilled use of knowledge brings to those who are 'literate'(Grizzle et al., 2014).

The information and communication technologies empowered users having access to a computer or a smartphone to create and disseminate information globally over the internet and social media platforms. Albeit is considered as a great development towards information and knowledge sharing yet it also challenged the modern civil societies. The first challenged now being faced is the information overload i.e. the amount of information that floods over users of modern communication platforms makes it difficult rather impossible to differentiate and evaluate reliable and fabricated information. The second challenge is that new technologies enable users to create and share information that seems authoritative and which can be spread virally. The third challenge being faced by the modern information dissemination platforms is the conflict between speed and accuracy. The desire to quickly share and access information results in compromising accuracy of the information. The fourth challenge that is being faced by the users of the modern communication platforms is the selection of preferred information that seem in congruence of the user's existing beliefs and ideas (Hornik, 2016).

With the advent of web 2.0 and new social media platforms the demand has risen towards a new kind of literacy, which is called "new media literacy" (NML) .New media literacy (NML) involves a series of crucial skills needed for living and working in the mediated and participatory society of 21st century. The user of social media are not considered as passive receivers like traditional media consumers rather empowered to create and share media content over social media hence must be able to critically evaluate the information received and shared over the cyberspace. New media literacy involves a set of skills that are required for participating in the mediated and participatory online society(Koc & Barut, 2016).According to Eshet (2012)"Social Media literacy is a multidimensional concept that comprised technical, cognitive, motoric, sociological, and emotional aspects and a Social Medialy-literate person should have the ability to understanding graphical or visual messages, creating expressive media content, construction of knowledge from complex and flexible hypermedia domains, ability to judge the accuracy and quality of content, socio-emotional skills to communicate and work with with others in the cyberspace) as well as real-time thinking i.e. to processing multiple kinds of multimedia stimuli or multitasking".

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

Followings are the major objectives of this study.
- To study the use of social media among university students and its effects on Pakistani society.

METHODOLOGY:

We used quantitative survey method in this study to explore the relationship between Social Media media literacy factors and promoting counter narrative of social effects on Pakistani society. Population of the study is the university students of BSC Islamic Studies University of the Punjab

Instrument
Online questionnaire with What's app groups

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Media has become the family member of our society. In this Social Media age of social media and information technology, we cannot avoid the media use in our life. Media is bringing education, economic, political, and socio-cultural benefits to society, but on the other side, it is disrupting social values and norms of society. Moreover, social media has brought and information explosion and revolution in modern societies.
Therefore, Social Media media literacy is the need of time in current age of fake information and Social Media effects fare.

CONCLUSION

Finally it is concluded that university students of Punjab are mostly social media users and they are equipped with basic Social Media media literacy skills. They are active in functional

and critical use of social media messages about the security forces. They don't accept or share information against the security forces of Pakistan.

REFERENCES

Koc, M., & Barut, E. (2016). Development and validation of New Media Literacy Scale (NMLS) for university students. *Computers in human behavior, 63*, 834-843.

Livingstone, S. (2004). Media literacy and the challenge of new information and communication technologies. *The Communication Review, 7*(1), 3-14.

Martinsson, J. (2009). The role of media literacy in the governance reform agenda. *CommGap Discussion Papers. World Bank.*

Nissen, T. E. (2015). ⌗# *TheWeaponizationOfSocialMedia:@ Characteristics_of_ Contemporary_Conflicts*: Royal Danish Defence College.

Rácz, A. (2015). Russia's Social Media effects in Ukraine. Breaking the enemy's ability to resist', FIIA Report 43, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 16 June 2015.

Shao, C., Ciampaglia, G. L., Varol, O., Flammini, A., & Menczer, F. (2017). The spread of fake news by social bots. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1707.07592*, 96-104.

Silverblatt, A., Miller, D. C., Smith, J., & Brown, N. (2014). *Media Literacy: Keys to Interpreting Media Messages: Keys to Interpreting Media Messages*: ABC-CLIO.

Svetoka, S. (2016). *Social Media as a Tool of Social Media effectsfare*: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.

Thoman, E., & Jolls, T. (2004). Media literacy—A national priority for a changing world. *American Behavioral Scientist, 48*(1), 18-29.