

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS: A STUDY OF ONLINE INITIATIVE OF CRY

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Abstract:- In recent years social media emerged and established as the main platform for public communication, debate and discussions. No person, group or media can ignore the presence and influence of social media. Celebrities and politicians use social media to convey their message, unite their supporters, and mobilize the mass. The trends of social media affect the agenda of the society and headlines and lead stories of mass media also. Social networking sites provide forum for organizations to garner support on various issues of socio-political importance. In recent year's social media has been utilized to sensitize the people on various issues such as human rights violation, women equality, save girl child, cleanliness, global warming, environmental protection and many more. One such issue in our society is child rights and protection of children that has been overlooked in previous years and needs attention and support of people. This research is conducted on social networking pages of Child Rights and You (CRY) with a view to know the uses of social networking sites by non-governmental organizations and how far social networking sites awakened the today's people in expressing their views on child rights. Study was conducted on the updates of February month on the walls of cry.org, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Google+.

Key Words :- CRY, Child rights, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

'The advent of social media is transforming the way in which people connect with each other and the manner in which information is shared and distributed'. (deity.gov.in). Social media can be defined as online platform where users can create and share contents and participate in the discussions, debates and interactions. It provides unique opportunity to its users to express without any obstacle or barriers.

Connectedness, collaboration and community are three important C of social media. Social media provides 24x7 connectedness and like-minded people can connect and re-connect on domains and topics of their interest. Status updates, likes, comments, tweets, retweets are some of the examples of unending connectedness of social media. This achieved connectedness enable users to create and sustain communities. These communities have firm role in creating awareness, sensitization, and mobilization and can be used for seeking inputs in policy making,

building good relations, and seeking feedback on any issue.

With increasing use of various networking sites social media is emerged as a powerful platform to sway public opinion and to generate mass support. Social media includes different online palteforms of interaction. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) have classified social media into six different types; Collaborative projects (Wikies), Blogs and Microblogs (Twitter), Content communities (Vlogs and video sharing sites- Youtube), social networking sites (Facebook), Virtual game worlds, and Virtual social worlds.

Social media has been exponential in its growth. Radio took 38 years, TV 14 years, Internet four years, iPod three years to reach 50 million people, whereas Facebook added 100 million users in less than nine months. As on 31st March 2014 around 251.59 million people were using Internet through wired, wireless, and mobile wireless connections in our country

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(www.traai.gov.in). Out of total Internet users around 50% are using social media. An average Indian spends around five hours accessing Internet and out of total time around 40% is spent on social media. Though, only one out of five Indians is using Internet together it is a big and effective number because most of users belong to middle class and youth population; enthusiastic to participate in change and adoption of new things. 'The role of social media in the creation of what is called 'shared awareness' is immense. This awareness can be used for political mobilization as witnessed in 2001 in the impeachment trial of Philippines President Joseph Estrada, One million signature campaign to secure women's rights in Iran, Jasmine revolution of Tunisia or the Arab spring, movements in India and Bangladesh recently etc.' (Yojana editorial, 2013, p.03) 'Social media is an important new tool for promoting social and political change. Social media allows eyewitness accounts to be made widely available and expands access to information. Reporting is no longer confined to traditional sources of journalism. Through social media information has spread faster and farther, available now to local, regional and global audiences. In the context of human rights movements, this element of spreading messages and bringing attention to a cause is crucial' (Yeaza (2014), p. 644)

Defining Child and Protective Provisions

According to the front page of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) the child can be defined as any person between 0 to 18 years of age group. The census of India defines child as any person below the age of 14 years (censusindia.gov.in). This 14 years age ceiling is acknowledged by most of central and state government agencies to cover the person under children welfare schemes. The children are considered as the future of any society and in our population the 0-14 years age group children cover 33% of total population; an important number for welfare and future planners.

This age group is considered as the most

vulnerable age in the life of a person. Considering the deprived and vulnerable conditions of children they have been given privileged status in our constitution and in various laws. The Apprentices Act 1961 mentions 14 years of age as qualification for engagement as apprentice. Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006, The Juvenile Justice (care and protection of children) Act 2000 have also been implemented to safeguard and for the welfare of the children.

The constitution of India with its several provisions ensures the fulfilment of basic needs and protection of child rights as the basic human rights. Article 15 (3), Article 21 (A), 23 & 24, 39 (f), 45, 51 (k), 243 (G), are some mentioning in the constitution that impose responsibility on the shoulders of state to safeguard the interests, development and future of children.

Besides, United Nations Convention of the Rights of Child is also in very detail, with its 54 articles guide governments and agencies how to safeguard and protect children and how to secure their overall development. The convention, as declared on the UNICEF page, is considered as 'most rapidly and widely ratified international human rights treaty in the history' (www.unicef.org/crc/). Adopted in 1989 and in force since 1990 the convention gives right to live, think, live with parents, free movement across borders to meet parents, access information, express their opinion, development etc to the children all over the world. But, despite of all efforts from different stakeholders the children are facing exploitation both inside and outside the walls of the home. The sensitivity of the people and the approach of them to the children are very crucial in this regard.

Objectives and Methodology

The primary objective of the current study is to find out the density, intensity and uses of social networking sites by organizations working in the field of child rights. It has also made an attempt to get information about how people are supporting and taking responsibility towards ensuring the vision of equal rights of all children. The study also aims to study the patterns

of uses of Social Media platform by profile/organization committed for protection of Child Rights. The present study is based on the analysis of social media platforms used by select organization to communicate with the public. The study is based on social networking sites and their updates about “CRY” from the month of February'16. From the select month the posts were counted and presented in frequency and percentage. Finally contents are analyzed qualitatively.

Sample Organization- CRY

CRY is commonly abbreviated for Child Rights and You which is a non-profit organisation like any other NGOs in India aims to restore children's rights. CRY was established in 1979 (<http://www.cry.org/about-cry/history.html>) and the organisation partners with grass-roots Non-governmental organisations to uplift thousands of Indian children denied basic children's rights. CRY operates through more than 1000 volunteers and more than 30 projects across India. It has firm presence overseas also including Western Europe and North America. CRY is engaged in policy

consultancy, research, awareness campaigns, and development through projects, promotion of research on child rights and many other activities in interest of children. CRY is selected because of its reputation and strength to utilize technology for the cause. CRY has used social media platforms to garner support of the public. In the year 2013 its Election Advocacy Campaign 'Vote for Child Rights' was a massive success and students from 50+ colleges supported the campaign through online and college activities (Annual Report, p 4).

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

From this research, the researcher has found out that in the month of Feb'16, updates relating to CRY in the Tweeter page was 76, 46 posts in Instagram, 26 posts in Facebook, 2 posts in YouTube, 0 posts in Google+, Pinterest and blog.cry.org. The following are the data obtained from the research.

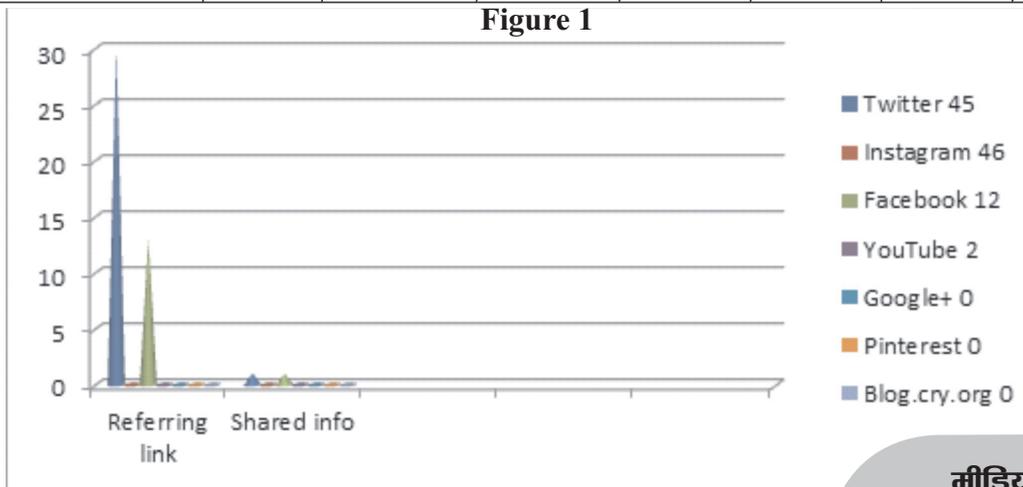
a) Type of Updates

Updates wise variety of newsfeeds were observed in all the walls. We can see that most of

Table 1

Sl. no	Subject	Twitter	Instagram	Facebook	Youtube	Google+	Pinterest	Blog.cry.Org
1.	Text only	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
2.	Video updates	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
3.	Picture updates	0	46	1	0	0	0	0
4.	Pic-cum-video updates	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5.	Text-cum-video updates	56	0	25	0	0	0	0

Figure 1



the updates in twitter are text-cum-video updates i.e. 73.4% and 26.6% of updates are text only. There are no video, picture and pic-cum-video updates in twitter. In the page of Instagram, 100% posts are picture updates.

And in the Facebook wall, 96% updates are text-cum-video updates and 3.8% updates are picture updates. There are no text, video and pic-cum-video updates in facebook page. In the Youtube page, 100% updates are video updates. And there are no post in the walls of Google+, Pinterest and blog.cry.org. As data shows we can say that CRY is using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube regularly while use of other social media sites are not so common.

b) Subject wise Profile Analysis

While studying the subject wise variety of updates in all the walls, the given data has found out that out of 76 updates in twitter, 55.2% updates are related to organizational activities, 19.65%updates are relating to the Budget 2016,

17.03% updates are about support to CRY and 7.86% updates are personal information. There are no political comments or updates in the twitter page.

In the Instagram wall, 45.57% updates are about organizational activities, 32.55% are related to support for CRY, 2.17% are related to Budget 2016, 19.53% updates are related to personal information, and no updates related to political comments.

In the Facebook wall, out of 26 updates 57.6% updates are related to the organizational activities, 23.04% updates are for support for CRY, 11.52% updates are about Budget2016 and 3.84% each about personal and political comments.

In the YouTube page, 50% of updates are about Organizational activities and 50% updates are related to support for CRY and no updates regarding Budget2016, Personal information and Political comments. In the pages of Google+,

Table 2

Sl. no.	Subject	Twitter	Instagram	Facebook	Youtube	Google+	Pinterest	Blog.cry.org
1.	Organizational activities	42	21	15	1	0	0	0
2.	Support for CRY	13	15	6	1	0	0	0
3.	Budget 2016	15	1	3	0	0	0	0
4.	Personal information	6	9	1	0	0	0	0
5.	Political comments	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Figure 2

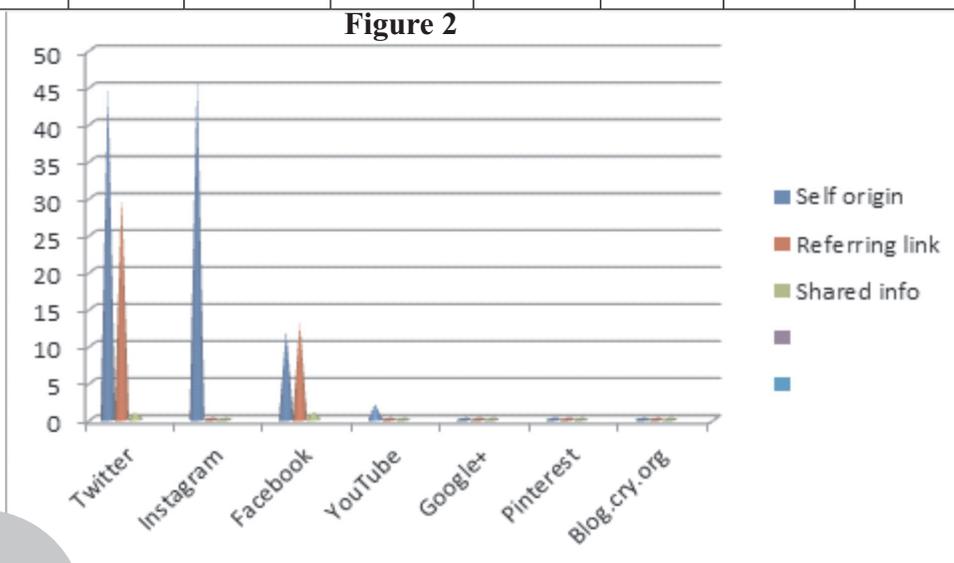
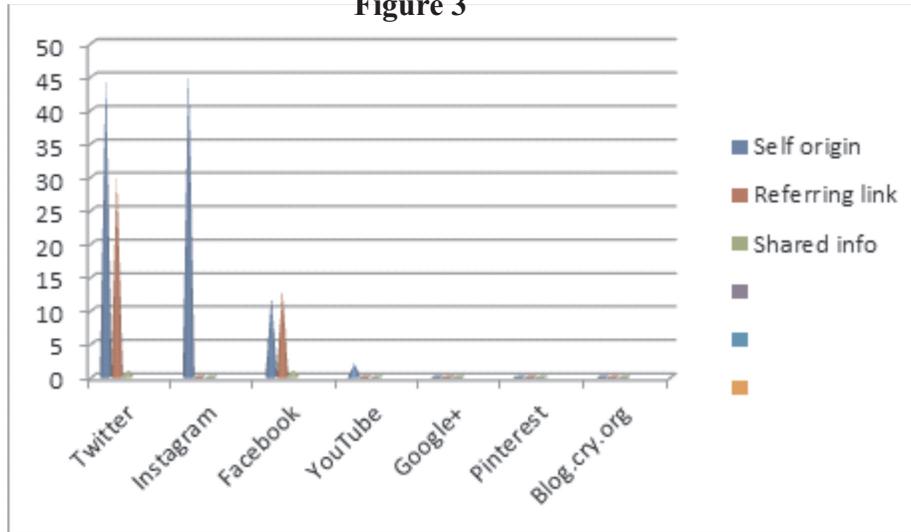


Table 3

Sl. no	Subject	Twitter	Instagram	Facebook	YouTube	Google+	Pinterest	Blog.cry.org
1.	Informative	27	10	6	0	0	0	0
2.	Inspirational	14	8	3	1	0	0	0
3.	Promotional	9	9	4	1	0	0	0
4.	Personal	5	5	2	0	0	0	0
5.	Criticism	5	4	2	0	0	0	0
6.	Mobilizing support	19	10	8	0	0	0	0

Figure 3

Pinterest and blog.cry.org we can see that there are no updates. Here, we can say that CRY uses popular social media platforms to show case its activities and to generate support from the online community.

c) Nature of Posts

While studying the nature of post in all the walls, the data was found. In the twitter page, 35.37% posts are informative, 24.89% posts are about mobilizing support, 18.34 posts are inspirational, and 11.79% posts are promotional and 6.5% each about personal and criticism posts.

In the Instagram page, 21.7% posts are about both Informative and mobilizing support. 19.53% posts are promotional, 17.36% are Inspirational, 10.85 are about personal posts and

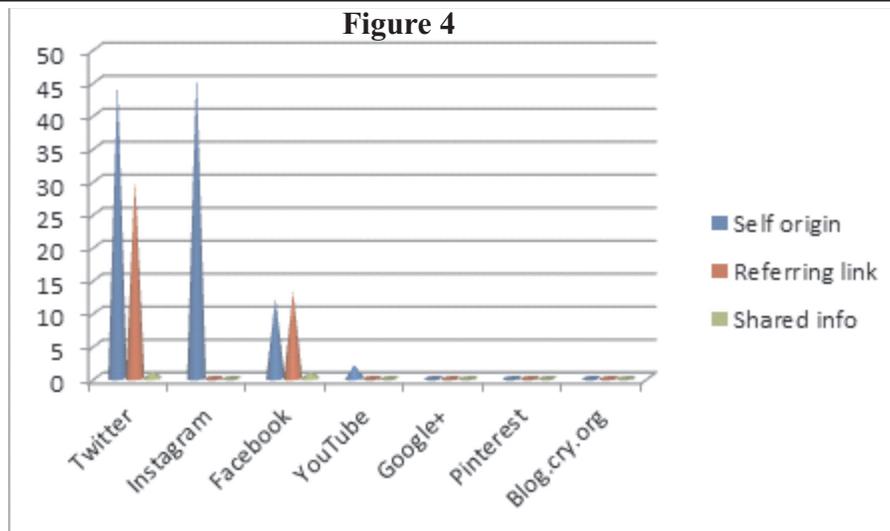
8.68 posts are about criticism. In the Facebook page, 30.72% posts are about mobilizing support, 23.04% posts are informative, 15.36% posts are promotional, 11.52% posts are inspirational, and 7.68% each about personal and criticism posts. In the Youtube page, 50% posts each relating to Inspirational and Promotional. No posts in the walls of Google+, Pinterest and blog.cry.org. was found. Therefore it can be said that CRY explores social media platforms to inform its people, mobilizing them to support initiatives of the organization and inspire them by efforts of it.

d) Origin of the Post

The table shows that 58.95% posts in the twitter wall are self origin, 39.3% posts are referred to link and 1.31% post is shared

Table 4

Sl. no	Subject	Twitter	Instagram	Facebook	YouTube	Google+	Pinterest	Blog.cry.org
1	Self origin	45	46	12	2	0	0	0
2	Referring link	30	0	13	0	0	0	0
3	Shared info	1	0	1	0	0	0	0



information. In the Instagram wall, 100% posts are self origin. In the facebook page, 49.92% posts are referred to link, 46.08% posts are self origin and 3.84% post is shared information. No post found on Google+, Pinterest and blog.cry.org. As the data show it can be said that social media all major options to generate content i.e. self generated contents, shared contents and provide link to the content are used to inform, sensitize and mobilize the people.

e) Nature of support:

From the above table it has found out that the social networking site Facebook has the highest followers of CRY and the frequency of updates on the facebook page is daily. The frequency of sharing the posts from the CRY wall on Facebook is also higher comparing with the other social networking site. The frequency of status on facebook and twitter is on daily basis and in the Instagram page, the posts is updated in the alternative days. On the Google+ and blog.cry.org, the frequency of the status id sometimes a month and in the YouTube page and the Pinterest, the status are given rarely about the

activities of the CRY. Therefore, it can be said that Twitter and Facebook sites are most popular and easy platforms to communicate comfortably and regularly with the people by organizations dedicated to social cause.

Discussion

The present analysis shows that social media is in the nucleus of the communication strategy of CRY. With the help of social media messages can be shared with online users and they can be engaged and sensitize for help, support and action. The activeness of CRY on social media shows the importance of such platforms in developing informed citizenry and motivating people for child rights protection. It is not only additional platform where one has to be present to just increase its visibility; rather CRY shows that social media can be used to develop volunteers, raise funds and encourage people for constructive action.

The media plays a significant role in forming and influencing people's attitudes and behaviour. Child Rights and You drew the essential of the media in increasing society's

Table 5

Sl no.	Nature of support	Twitter	Instagram	Facebook	YouTube	Google+	Pinterest	Blog.cry.org
1	Total likes on profile	553	377	264,654	565	136	96	No like button
2	Frequency of status	Daily	Alternative days	Daily	Rarely	Some times a month	Rarely	Sometimes a month

awareness of, and response to child abuse and neglect. Such media attention to child rights has, at times, positively influenced public, professional and political responses to the circumstances in which children find them. Understanding media influences, and how to use the media constructively, may be thus being an essential tool for those who advocate for children, young people, and their families.

Social media emerged as unique, economic and easily accessible media for organizations working for child rights. Largely it happened because of the avoidance by mainstream media to the issues of child rights and child protection. Generally mass media, in their limitations, do not give ample coverage to the child right issues unless a serious and saviour crime happens. On the other hands social organizations need huge coverage to their constructive programmes and awareness campaigns to reach maximum number of people and to gain sufficient support from the society. Regular media coverage is important for sensitization of public as well as to maintain visibility in the society.

In such situation of getting limited scope of coverage in mainstream media, to increase the visibility and communicate with people frequently and without any obstacle or restriction organizations like CRY has started using social media platforms comprehensively. Social Networking sites are extensively used to inform, sensitize and mobilize the audience.

People have recognized the information by giving them likes, making comments, and sharing the posts. Social media platforms have been used as the main platform to communicate, therefore it can be said that SNS are recognized by organization as effective vehicle to disseminate its messages.

CRY has recognised the importance of SNS and uses it for the latest images, updates, videos, status of children and to expand support and funds for its initiatives. Polls and contests are some other interactive tools used by CRY to engage its followers on SNS.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that social media profiles of the activists and organizations are attempting to sensitize the people to form the positive opinion by informing and motivating them on the critical child rights issues that are widely accessible and more people than ever are able to develop their point of view on such issues.

Social media platforms, with mainstreaming of the social media have become a cultural space for communicators and they use it to convey the expressions, feelings, anger, meaning, symbols and set of activities on child rights issues mentioning from irony to criticism and motivational stories, from cosy places to the frontline. It has been observed by the engagement patterns of the users that the culture of generating and sharing, practices of crowd sourcing, and the forms of generation of contents are contributing new forms of child rights literacy, new forms of knowledge and ultimately new forms of solidarity, social awareness and reflexivity on child rights issues. This communication corresponds successfully to the rights of members to freely participate in the creation, and sensitization of the community without pressure of gatekeeping or censorship of the mainstream media or by other agencies.

Social media also constitutes spaces for community sharing large child rights contents, and, as the analysis shows are often extensively used as platforms for information, education, distributing, and exploring public support. In this way social media also contributes to the formation of human beings as competent members of a community by mobilizing and supporting them in gaining critical intellectual capacities to participate in the political and cultural spaces of their online and offline communities for child rights support.

Freedom of expression through online social media platforms, the formation of a common culture based on humanitarian values, the possibilities of constituting associations across the boundaries, and organizing social mobilization are structural contributions

practiced by activists, organizations, and the aware people that will further form a self-aware public support for child rights in the public sphere.

Social media no more tools of entertainment and recreation only as activists and organizations have shown its potential to use as a promising space to garner public support and spread the awareness on issues like child rights protection. However, before using social media some inherent problems of the medium should also be considered. Gaining recognitions, identifying target audience, search of genuine

profiles, information overload and handling of big data are some of the challenges one can face while trying to use social media as the main platform for advocacy on child rights. But, despite of such limitations social media platforms have power to crack the rigid compositions of autocratic practices and authoritative controls. A careful use of social media as sensitizer, diffuser and multiplier of the message can be helpful in creating environment of debate, discussion and solution on the issue of child rights therefore such power of social media should be utilized.

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