

Role of Social Networking Sites in Spreading Awareness Against Child Abuse

¹Dr. Debastuti Dasgupta, ²Ms. Ruma Saha, ³Dr. Sharmila Kayal

¹Assistant Professor, ²Assistant Professor, ³Assistant Professor

^{1,2,3}Department of Journalism and Mass Communication,
ADAMAS University, Kolkata, INDIA

Abstract : Child abuse is burning social issue which requires immediate attention from every sector. The rate of this crime against children has surprisingly increased in recent years. According to BBC news report government data has revealed that every fifteen minutes one child is getting abused in India. In USA, every 10 seconds a case of child abuse is reported. Although, improvement is done on reporting and awareness in child abuse but only a very few cases get proper attention and redressed. Children are hardly aware of these redressal procedures and there are cases of getting abused sexually by family members in many cases. Apart from this, most of the victims of child abuse are afraid of their abuser and could not talk about it to seek help. So, the prevention of child abuse automatically becomes the responsibility of the adults. To perform this responsibility, first and foremost is to be aware of the crime when it happened. Media plays an important role in any awareness program. In India media has used its various tools of mass communication to perform these awareness programs; Starting from ad campaign to movies, from regular news reporting, media plays pivotal role in creating and spreading awareness. Social media too has started taking various steps to aware against child abuse. In Facebook different pages have been created to aware people regarding cases related to child abuse and to provide platform to discuss and find redressal against this heinous crime. This paper is focusing on the study of how social networking sites like Facebook create awareness against child abuse and help in spreading the awareness against it. After thorough literature review, the researchers will take two Facebook pages dealing with child abuse and analyze it to get insight of role of social media to aware and find out redressed ways. This paper will be substantial document which will try to deal with significance of social media in dealing with important societal concerns like child abuse.

IndexTerms - Child abuse, social networking sites, Facebook, child protection service, awareness.

I. INTRODUCTION

Definition of child in Indian Law

In Indian laws the word “child” is not directly defined but this term is used in the legislation to indicate capacity as well as requirement for special protection. However, the word child is not defined clearly in the laws of India but it cannot be used as similar or identical to minor.

Child Abuse

According to World Health Organisation (WHO) a child abuse can be of various types such as sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse and neglect.

Media Management in Prevention of Child Abuse

Media is very active in exposing as well as highlighting any social issues. Media tries to construct images and prototype. They also construct victims and accused. They create a sense of profile crisis which draws public attention. They also challenge perspective and disseminate novel ideas. Media can influence on how society understand a problem. Dominant media has a strong influence on all audience with varied perspective towards a social problem. Alternate media is said to have weak influence on the audience.

Complex Challenges in Child Right Reporting in India

- India is the home for 17% of world’s child population. India has the highest child population in the world. India’s children are often seen neglected and 55% of them are facing right violation.
- India’s mediascape is largest and oldest in the world. In India three million NGOs are working. Of which a majority advocates that media has important role to play in ensuring child right. Yet media is criticised for lack of balance, adequate coverage on child related issues.
- Regional media outlets in both television and print have gained popularity in recent times.

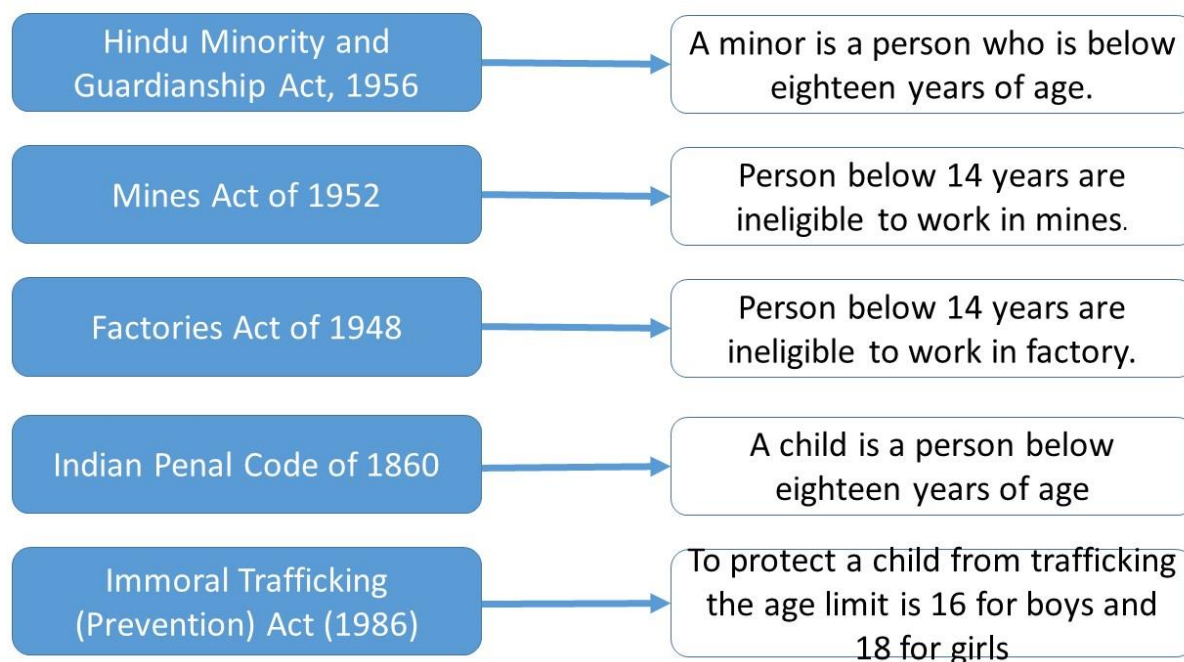


Figure 1: Definition of Child as per various Indian Laws

Review of the Related Literature

Saint-Jacques et.al in their recent research on “The role of media in reporting child abuse” has focused on the issue that media coverage of child maltreatment issue increase public awareness about this as well as helps people to understand the situation to be reported. The area of study was Quebec City region of Canada. They aimed to study the relation between number of case reported and number of published newspaper reports on this issue. They have applied quantitative methods like statistical co-relation approach and intervention time-series analysis. Findings of the research show that a strong relation exists between media coverage of child welfare issue and cases reported in child protection agencies.

Patrick Ayre in his research paper on “Child Protection and the Media: Lessons from the Last Three Decades” (2001) discussed how news media has sensationalized child abuse issue and highlighted the occurrence of the issue due to negligence of child welfare agencies in Wales and England during 1970s, 1980s, 1990s. This research paper focused on the contribution of mass media in creation of an atmosphere of mistrust, fear related to field of child protection. As a result, the local or national authorities involved in child protection become more defensive in their response to media. Findings of the research help to create a more systematic strategic approach to understand and manage media coverage of this difficult field.

In a recent research by Hazel Kemshall and Heather M. Moulden on “Communicating about child sexual abuse with the public: learning the lessons from public awareness campaigns” it is shown that despite millions of campaign on prevention of child sexual abuse throughout the world the problem persists and has affected millions of children. This research article focused on how evolving approaches in public awareness campaign on child sexual abuse has contributed to attitude and behavioural changes since 1990s. The research findings show how evolving multi-faceted campaigns along with wide range of messaging method can turn public awareness campaign into action campaign.

In recent research by Jane Long Weathered on “Child Sexual Abuse and the Media: A Literature Review” it is shown how media plays an important role in public perception of child abuse issue. Media coverage of child sexual abuse for last fifty year is segregated into five time period. This segregation is done on the basis of type of stories in the news coverage and the change in public policy accordingly. The research paper also focused how news stories are framed accordingly. Research methodology involves citation network analysis. On the basis of the research a framework model is formed.

Problem Statement

RQ1. How the Facebook users are getting influenced by posts on child abuse awareness?

RQ2. Is there any active or passive participation from the user end in respect to fight against child abuse?

RQ3. How many communities are formed in Facebook during last five years (2013-2018) for the cause of fight against child abuse?

RQ4. What is the present scenario of Governmental and NGOs presence in Facebook in combating child abuse?

Objective of the study

- Understand the role of social media in combating the child abuse.
- To find out the public participation through social media in the campaign against child abuse.

Research Methodology

The methodology applied in the present study is qualitative analysis. Content analysis is done on different Facebook pages dedicated to fight against child abuse campaign.

Findings

- **PACA (People Against Child Abuse)**
- Likes:724 likes
- PACA has only 8 posts in 2018, where likes, share and comments were almost nonexistent. However, for FACA, the Facebook page was quite active.
- **FACA: (Fight Against Child Abuse)**
- Total Likes: 68600

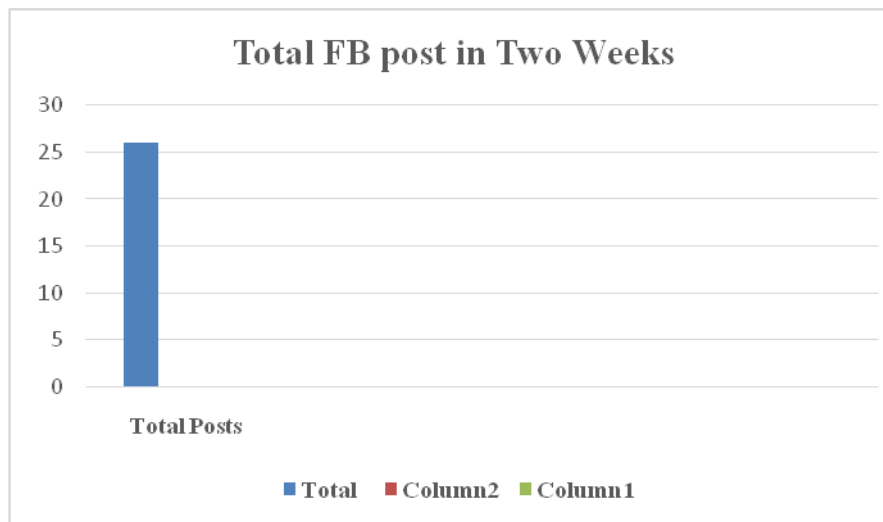


Figure 2: Total Posts

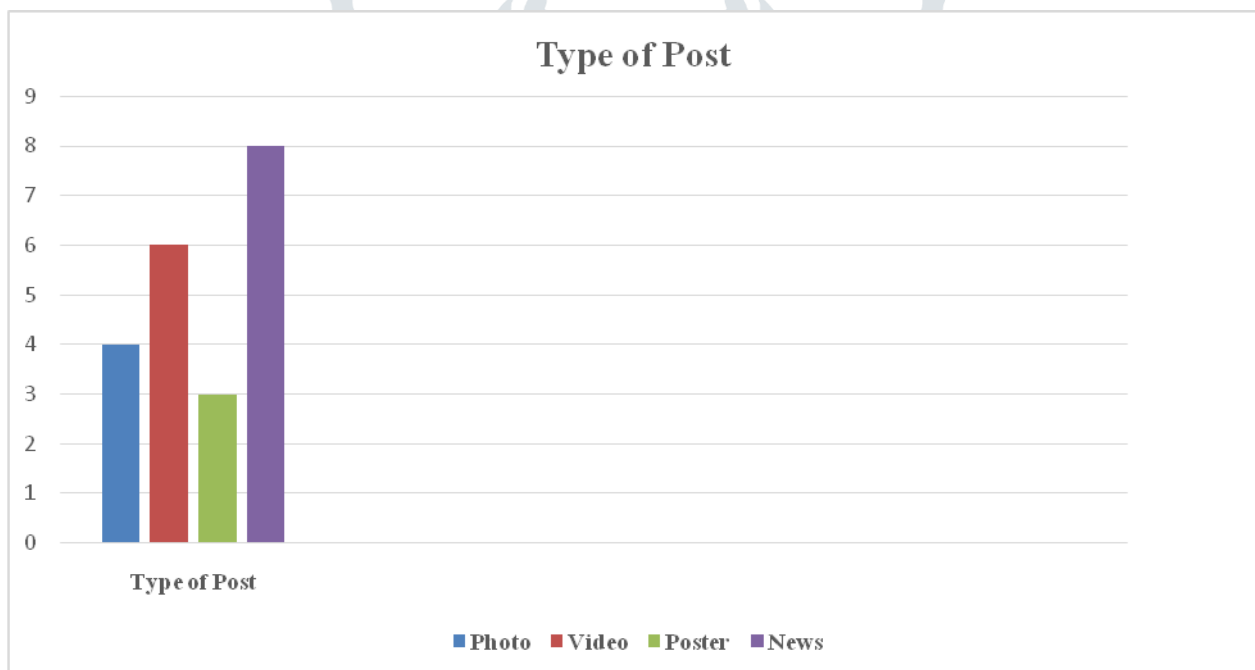


Figure 3: Type of Post

Analysis

The analysis on the nature of posts reveals that the organization posts news related to child rights and child abuse on a regular basis. As per the last two weeks (Feb 9th to Feb 23), there were 8 news link posted. Similarly, there were 6 videos, 4 photos and 3 posters in the study period.

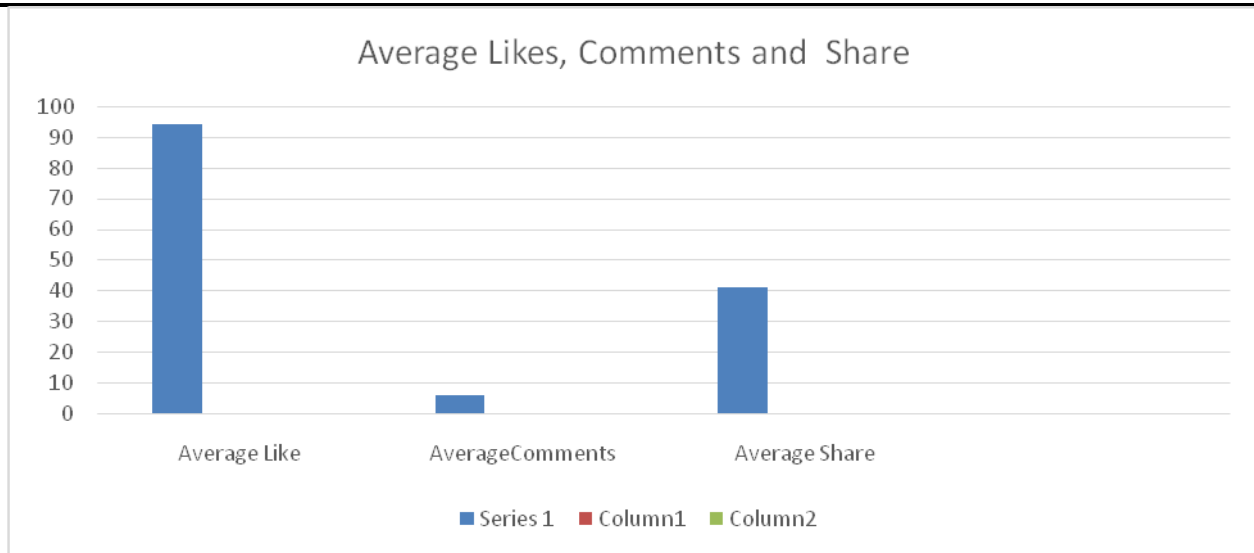


Figure 4: Average Like, Share and Comments per Posts

The analysis of each post on an average of last two weeks from Feb 9th to Feb 23rd reveals that every post on average gets 94 likes, 6 comments and 41 shares.

Discussions

Facebook as the social media tool is acting as a change catalyst against to child abuse. There are millions of people across geographical barrier, actively proactive in fight against child abuse. In this study, it's been found that the Facebook page of 'people against child abuse' is quite inactive. The overall aspects in relation to child abuse atrocities and other variables are actively assisted by Facebook which is very important in present scenario. The trends of associating with particular 'community' or homogenous 'group' is also quite high in number. It is evident that there are more than one million people are proactively join in the group of 'people against child abuse in the Catholic Church'. This is a separate page of Facebook, in where there are 9816 members who likes this page and this page is about, *"For all the decent people out there, no matter their religious or political view, who agree that child molesters and rapists are the scum of society - no matter who they are and what social status they enjoy. These priests and nuns are not above the law!"* (Source- the Facebook page of 'people against child abuse in the Catholic Church')

Conclusions

Different organisations working against child abuse and working to spread awareness related to child abuse has started using social media vehemently with traditional media. Facebook is emerging as an effective platform which gives chance for users to report cases related to child abuse and comment on the posts freely which was completely absent in traditional media. From the analysis, it is noticed that there is high disparity between post reach and post engagement. That implies users are consuming the posts but not actively participating in social media. Users should be more proactive in reporting cases in Facebook pages and opining their viewpoint to spread more awareness. Digital content in Facebook pages should be more updated and interesting to draw more people in those pages. In a nutshell, despite all these, social media is acting as a complimentary significant tool to spread awareness about child abuse.

Limitations

Content analysis of Facebook page has different limitations. Getting access to Facebook page analytics is difficult if the researcher is not in the admin list of that page. For this major constraint, researcher has to limit Facebook page analysis for only two weeks on this particular topic.

Future Directions

This research study has major implications in society. This research can be conducted on different perspectives to explore different other areas related to it. Survey of users of Facebook pages related to child abuse can be conducted to highlight user participation in social media on this very pertinent issue. Work can be done on other social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram etc. to understand the role of social media across different platforms in combating child abuse.

References

- Angle, S., Baerthlein, T., Daftari, N., Rambaud, B., & Roshani, N. (2014). Protecting the right of the children: The role of the media (lessons from Brazil, India and Kenya). *Internews Europe*, 7-73. Retrieved January/February, 2019, from https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/resources/InternewsEurope_ChildRightsMedia_Report_2014.pdf.
- Ayre, P. (2001). Child protection and the media: Lessons from the last three decades. *British journal of social work*, 31(6), 887-901.
- Kemshall, H., & Moulden, H. M. (2017). Communicating about child sexual abuse with the public: Learning the lessons from public awareness campaigns. *Journal of sexual aggression*, 23(2), 124-138.
- Saint-Jacques, M.-C., Villeneuve, P., Turcotte, D., Drapeau, S., Ivers, H. (2011). The role of media in reporting child abuse. *Journal of social service research*, 1-13
- Weatherred, J. L. (2015). Child sexual abuse and the media: A literature review. *Journal of child sexual abuse*, 24(1), 16-34.