



The Role of Social Media in Women Empowerment: A Quantitative Study in Tiruchirappalli District

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Abstract:

This research study analyzes the influence of social media on women empowerment, specifically in the Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu. As digital access grows, social media platforms have become greater resources for women to raise awareness, access information and engage in socio-economic activities. A systematically designed questionnaire was distributed among 150 women between 18–50 years in urban and rural areas in Tiruchirappalli district. This research was involved with descriptive statistics, correlation and regression tests to assess the contribution of social media to better decision-making, economic independence, self-esteem and social engagement. The results show a high positive correlation between social media use and measures of women empowerment, especially among young and educated women. The research also suggests digital literacy programs and gender-responsive policies to maximize the empowering effect of social media.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Social Media, Digital Inclusion, Gender Equality, Digital Literacy.

1. Introduction:

Social media has become a powerful and disruptive force, altering communication, learning, business and activism. In India, where tradition and modernity coexist, social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp have become significant arenas for expression and engagement.

For women, particularly those previously excluded from public debate, social media opens up previously unimaginable possibilities. It permits them to gain access to information, express themselves, present their talents and get connected with wider networks. From activism at the grassroots to business activities, women are making greater use of digital spaces to navigate identity, find work opportunities and engage in social activism.

In Tiruchirappalli, despite growing internet penetration, there is limited empirical research on how women engage with social media for empowerment. This lack of district-level data restricts policymakers and educators from designing effective interventions tailored to local needs.

2. Review of Literature:

Social media is widely acknowledged as a tool that breaks geographical, cultural and social boundaries. Researchers argued that online platforms offer women the opportunity to avoid traditional gatekeepers like family constraints, popular media and patriarchal entities.

Sharma and Das (2020) points that social media as a gendered online space offering inclusion and enabling women to claim their voices within public spaces. Kumari (2019) identifies the way that online participation builds women's confidence as well as their economic agency, especially in micro-level businesses and home-based entrepreneurship. Likewise, Saxena (2021) illustrates that online networking not only increases market access but also enhances the sense of agency among women.

Mehta (2020) points to the problem of the digital divide, wherein levels of education, income and infrastructure restrict women's access and benefits from digital media. The divide most typically acts to sustain prevailing inequalities, keeping behind rural women and those with less privileged backgrounds.

In the context of India, the spread of mobile internet has created possibilities for rural women. TRAI (2021) points out that higher smartphone penetration has facilitated women to access government schemes, health care details and online business opportunities. In their research on Coimbatore, Rajalakshmi and Bhuvaneswari (2022) observed that WhatsApp groups became centers for women to exchange resources, generate awareness and mobilize communities.

While these positive trends have emerged, the literature has identified gaps—most especially in smaller cities and semi-urban areas such as Tiruchirappalli. Women's experiences are shaped by a mix of traditional norms and digital exposure, making the empowerment process different. Therefore, there is a need for localized empirical studies to learn how women in such areas negotiate digital space.

3. Methodology:

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive-correlational research design. This approach is appropriate as it enables both description of social media usage patterns and analysis of the relationships between usage and empowerment. The survey technique was used to collect quantitative data.

3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

The research targeted women aged 18–50 years in Tiruchirappalli district who were active users of any of the social media platforms. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across categories such as urban vs rural and educated vs less educated women. The final sample size was 150 women, ensuring a strong dataset for statistical analysis.

3.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are,

1. To analyze the social media usage among women in Tiruchirappalli.
2. To examine the relationship between the use of social media and different aspects of women empowerment - economic, social and psychological.

4. Analysis and Discussion:

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of respondents (N = 150) is presented in Table 1. A majority of the participants were between 21 and 35 years of age (55%), followed by 36–50 years (30%) and 18–20 years (15%). Most respondents (70%) reported having completed secondary education or higher, while 30% had education below the secondary level. With respect to occupation, 30% were self-employed, 25% were homemakers, 20% were students and 25% were engaged in other professions. Regarding platform usage, WhatsApp was the most frequently used (90%), followed by Facebook (68%), Instagram (52%) and YouTube (45%).

Variable	Category	%
Age (years)	18–20	15
	21–35	55
	36–50	30
Education	Secondary & above	70
	Below secondary	30
Occupation	Self-employed	30
	Homemakers	25
	Students	20
	Others	25
Platforms	WhatsApp	90
	Facebook	68
	Instagram	52
	YouTube	45

Patterns of Social Media Usage

Patterns of social media usage are summarized in Table 2. Approximately 68% of the respondents stated that they use social media daily. 30% of the respondents indicated that they are participating in online campaigns or community groups, suggesting that social media is both an informational and participatory space. More than half (54%) reported that they are using social media to access information related to employment (18%), healthcare (20%) and women's rights (16%).

Usage Pattern	%
Daily usage	68
Participation in online campaigns	30
Accessing job information	18

Health Information/rights info	20
Women Rights Information	16

Relationship between Social Media Usage and Empowerment

Pearson's product-moment correlation was employed to analyze the relationship between social media usage and the three dimensions of women's empowerment. As shown in Table 3, significant positive correlations were observed across all dimensions. Social media usage was positively correlated with economic empowerment, $r(398) = .61$, $p < .01$, social empowerment, $r(398) = .57$, $p < .01$ and psychological empowerment, $r(398) = .65$, $p < .01$. These results showed that higher levels of social media usage are associated with greater empowerment outcomes.

Dimension	r	p
Economic empowerment	.61	< .01
Social empowerment	.57	< .01
Psychological empowerment	.65	< .01

Social Media Usage Prediction for Women's Empowerment

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether social media usage predicts women's empowerment when controlling for demographic variables (education and age). As shown in Table 4, the value, ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$) indicates that increased interaction with social media sites correlates with increased levels of empowerment with regard to economic, social and psychological dimensions. This result emphasizes the key positioning of online platforms in fulfilling women's agency, accessibility to opportunities and self-esteem. Education also played an important role ($\beta = .32$, $p < .01$), indicating that more educated women can better utilize social media for empowerment. Age was a less strong but still significant predictor ($\beta = .27$, $p < .05$), as younger women self-reported relatively more powerful empowerment effects than did older participants. This could be an indicator of different levels of digital literacy, flexibility and social media use frequency across generations.

In aggregate, the findings imply that although social media serves as an effective tool for empowerment, its dividends are not equally spread. Younger and more educated women seem to gain bigger benefits, in turn indicating the imperatives of focused interventions in the form of digital literacy interventions and enabling policies to grant equal access and dividends to all women in terms of demographics.

Predictor	B	p
Social media usage	.48	< .001
Education	.32	< .01
Age	.27	< .05

5. Conclusion:

Social media has emerged as a double-edged sword—it offers new possibilities for empowerment but mirrors ongoing inequalities in access and use. The future challenge is not merely to increase digital inclusion but to build inclusive, secure, and empowering digital ecosystems where all women, irrespective of their age, education, and location, can participate and derive benefits fully. Future studies should implement longitudinal designs to follow empowerment trajectories across time and use mixed-method strategies to capture the lived experiences underlying quantitative trends. In doing so, researchers and practitioners can help develop a more integrated picture of how digital technologies transform women's empowerment in varied socio-cultural settings.

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