

A correlational study on social media, religious attitude and depression

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become the main source of communication today and has its impact on human behavior. This paper studies the correlates of social media on religious attitude and depression. The present study adopts an ex-post facto research design. Purposive sampling method is used for data collection. The participants for the study (N=75) range between the age group 11-19 years from urban area. The tools used to measure the variables are a Self-Constructed Questionnaire to measure social media usage, Rajamanickam's Religious Attitude scale (1988) measures the Religious Attitude and Major Depression Inventory (WHO, 2003) measures the levels of depression. Religious attitude scale consists of six dimensions-Nature of God, Prayer and worship, Formal religion, Priests, Future life and Spirits. Statistical mean and Pearson's correlation coefficient method was used to calculate the data. The group's total and dimension wise mean in the Religious Attitude Scale is interpreted as neutral, except for one dimension which is moderate. The group's mean in Major Depression Inventory is interpreted as 'No depression'. The group's mean in Self-constructed social media questionnaire is interpreted as average. A significant Positive correlation is found between the scores of Religious Attitude scale, Major Depression Inventory and Self-constructed social media questionnaire, except for one dimension (Prayer and Worship) of religious attitude scale which is negatively correlated towards the score of Major Depression Inventory.

Key Words : Social media, Religion, Depression

INTRODUCTION

Social media is the main source of communication today and individuals are exposed to all kinds of information through it. These information's may or may not influence one's behavior. The purpose behind this research is to find the impact of social media in religious attitude and depression and to also find if there is an association between religious attitude of a person and depression.

Literature analysis :

It's too early to say that social media have transformed the way people practice religion, the number of people discussing faith on Facebook has significantly increased in the last year, according to company officials. Overall, 31 per cent of Facebook users in the United States list a religion in their profile, and 24 per cent of users outside the United States do, Facebook says. More than 43

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million people on Facebook are fans of at least one page categorized as religious.^[1] Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine recently conducted a study about the effects of social media habits on the moods of users. The research determined that the more time young adults use social media, the more likely they are to be depressed.^[2] Empirical studies of many groups dealing with major life stressors such as natural disaster, illness, loss of loved ones, divorce and serious mental illness show that religion and spirituality are generally helpful to people in coping.^[3]

The study :

Aim :

To find whether social media has an impact on religious attitude and depression and does religious attitude have an impact on depression ?

Hypothesis :

H1: There is a correlation between Social Media and Religious Attitude.

H2: There is a correlation between Social Media and Depression.

H3: There is a correlation between Religious Attitude and Depression.

Definitions :

Greenstein of social media club-NYC defines social media as ‘The online technologies and practices that people use to share content, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives, and media themselves.’^[4] A religious attitude is a negative or positive response tendency to various aspects of religion, like Nature of God, Prayer and Worship, Formal religion, Priests, Future life, Spirits and Spirit world. An important function implied on an attitude is response or reaction to the value. It maybe favorable or unfavorable response involving some kind of action inherently or overtly towards God etc.^[5] Depression is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects feelings, thoughts and behavior.^[6]

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts an ex-post facto research design. Subjects were administered with three tools namely, Rajamanickam’s Religious Attitude scale (1988), Major Depression Inventory (WHO, 2003) and Self constructed social media questionnaire. Statistical mean and Pearson’s correlation coefficient method were used to calculate the data.

Sample :

Purposive sampling method was carried out. Female adolescence (11-19)^[8] of urban area were selected for this research.

Description of the tools :

Rajamanickam’s Religious Attitude scale was constructed by M. Rajamanickam. The scale consist of six dimensions-Nature of God, Prayer and Worship, Formal Religion, Priests, Future Life and Spirits. Each dimension consist of 10 statements. On total it consist of 60 statements. The tool has reliability coefficient of .89 and .86 validity.^[5] Major depression inventory was invented by World Health Organization. The tool consist of 12 questions with questions 8 and 10 with a subdivision. Sensitivity and specificity of the scale is 0.86 and 0.94 and 0.89 validity.^[7] Self Constructed social

media questionnaire consist of 10 questions.

Formulae :

$$\text{Statistical mean : } \bar{x} = \frac{\sum x_i}{n}$$

where : $\sum x_i$ is the sum of all the scores present in the sample.
 n is the total number of individuals in the sample.

Pearson’s correlation coefficient :

$$r = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2} \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \bar{y})^2}}$$

where: n is the sample size
 x_i, y_i are the single samples indexed with i
 \bar{x}, \bar{y} are the sample mean

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 Indicates a positive correlation between all the three variables. This indicates that the social media has no negative influence towards one’s religious attitude and that it also improves one’s attitude towards religion. Through social media, individuals get to know more about religion, culture and also the scientific reasons behind religious practices. This thereby inculcate a positive attitude towards Religion. The positive correlation between social media usage and depression shows that social media usage is one causal factor of depression. It’s easier to make statements on a screen that would otherwise be difficult to verbalize face to face and disjointed shorthand conversations can easily result in misunderstandings. High exposure to social media can lead individuals to crave for likes (or social acceptance), high self-expectation and can also lead to comparison between peers which may result in depression. A positive correlation is also found

Table 1 : Indicates the Mean and its interpretation of all the three variables.

Variables	Mean	Interpretation
Social Media Usage	49.8	Average
Religious Attitude	165.4	Neutral
Depression	17.04	No Depression

Table 2 : Indicates the mean and its interpretation of the dimensions of Rajamanickam’s Religious Attitude Scale

Dimensions	Mean	Interpretation
Nature of God	26	Neutral
Prayer and Worship	21.6	Moderate
Formal Religion	26	Neutral
Priests	31.5	Neutral
Future Life	31.6	Neutral
Spirits	29.3	Neutral

Table 3 : Indicates the correlation between the three variables		
Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation
Social Media usage	Religious Attitude	0.23
Social Media usage	Depression	0.15
Religious attitude	Depression	0.07

Table 4 : Indicates the correlation between the dimensions of Rajamanickam's Religious Attitude Scale and Social media usage		
Social Media usage	Dimensions	Correlation
	Nature of God	0.16
	Prayer and Worship	0.23
	Formal Religion	0.31
	Priests	0.28
	Future Life	0.06
	Spirits	0.08

Table 5 : Indicates the correlation between Depression and dimensions of Rajamanickam's Religious Attitude		
Depression	Dimensions	Correlation
	Nature of God	0.04
	Prayer and Worship	-0.02
	Formal Religion	0.06
	Priests	0.21
	Future Life	0.08
	Spirits	0.03

between religious attitude and depression. Inclination towards religion and following religious principles only for social acceptance can also cause depression. However dimension 'Prayer and Worship' is negatively correlated towards depression. This shows that prayer helps in coping up with depression.

Conclusion

- A positive correlation is found between Social Media and Religious Attitude
- A positive correlation is found between Social media and Depression
- A positive correlation is found between Depression and Religious Attitude

Appendix A :

Self-constructed social media survey. The tool consist of 10 questions and the subjects were asked to rate each question in a scale of 0-10.

1. How often do you check your social media?
2. Does social media plays a vital role in you being updated with all the news ?
3. Do you think that the information on social media are more reliable than on Books ?
4. Do you think that your behaviors are influenced by social media?
5. Do you think that the social media is the best place to exhibit your ideas ?
6. Do you prefer your leisure time with social media over spending time with people?

7. Do you procrastinate your work due to social media?
8. Can you pass a week without using social media?
9. 656
- Do you get engaged with social media when people are around you?
10. Do you get irritated when someone disturbs you when you are using social media?

Appendix B

Religious Attitude Scale (1988). The standardized scale has 60 statements relating to various aspects of religion with 5 responses to each statement namely, strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree.

1. God is supreme Being and his supremacy was always unquestionable and indisputable.
2. Prayer is solemn and humble request to God or any object of worship.
3. Temples, churches and mosques are not the real places where we can find solace and happiness.
4. Priests have played an important role in the religious life of people by making them to understand religious principles.
5. The human soul attain liberation by taking series of rebirths with continuity of the same self.
6. Spirits are supernatural being imperceptible, troublesome terrifying and hostile to mankind.
7. God is the creator and destroyer of the universe.
8. Prayer is religious observance sacredly performed in private or public places.
9. Whenever we enter scared places (temple, church, mosque) we feel inspired by some kind of faith and our pride dissolves.
10. Priests by their simple and pious living have set-up a good tradition of true religious life.
11. The soul in its journey of births and rebirths reaps the fruits of its actions of the previous birth.
12. Spirits world that is heaven and hell are all foolish imaginations.
13. Nobody has seen any God anywhere in this world, therefore there is no God.
14. Prayer and worship are waste of time and energy. There is no use of praying or worshipping.
15. The sacred books are full of ethical and moral values and people should read them everyday to be free from evil idea.
16. The priests serve as the middle men in the sacred places, misguiding and cheating the people.
17. Whatever a man sowed in the last birth will reap the fruits in this birth.
18. There is no spirits and there is no spirit world.
19. God reveals himself through incarnations (in human forms) on the earth whenever there is diabolic evils.
20. Prayer is a mean of establishing contact between God and man.
21. Sacred Books are good for nothing. They are not correcting the behavior of people.
22. Priests have made use of religion for their personal gains.
23. Rebirth, future life are all only imagination. There is no future life after death.
24. The devils, Spirits, Ghost, demons are not true.
25. God's presence in any form is not really felt by even great saints. It is only an illusion.
26. Prayer and worship never brought any tangible (real) benefits for man.
27. Sacred books are always guiding us on righteous path.
28. Priests have been interpreting and practicing religious principles with all devotion and

guide people on righteous path.

29. People who do good will enjoy their life in heaven and those who commit sins will suffer in hell.

30. Spirits can never come to earth as they do not exist anywhere.

31. God has created man of his own image

32. Prayer relieves mental unrest, resolves tensions and crises of human beings.

33. Religious festivals and processions are highly exciting and creating faith in God. People find pleasure.

34. When the religious functions are performed by priests in all ceremonious way, certainly we get some kind of mental satisfaction.

35. Nobody knows anything about heaven or hell. It is invented by religious propagandists for their own purpose.

36. It is possible to communicate with spirits of dead people.

37. God sees every good and bad deeds but wait to reward.

38. The more prayer and worship we perform the more we develop anxieties and restlessness. Therefore there is no use of praying.

39. Religious festivals, processions, congregations are only waste of time and money. They do not serve any real purpose. They must be stopped.

40. The hereditary priesthood is good for nothing. It is high time that it should be abolished.

41. There is no life after death. Our life ends once for all after death.

42. The spirits are invisible and can bring good or evil.

43. It is from the man's fear of crimes and sins, God was born. Otherwise there is no necessity to think about God.

44. Prayers are rewarded by God only in imaginary stories, but not in real life.

45. Religious discourses performed by some religious scholars are only intended to make money and improve their personal life.

46. It is priests who submit the grievances of the people to God, praying to him to redeem their sins and troubles.

47. We cannot simply reject the religious truths of future life, rebirth, heaven or hell. Our knowledge is inadequate to understand these religious truths.

48. The evil spirits which are called demons or devils may cause dangers, disturbances, sickness and death.

49. There is no evidence that God takes any interest in the affairs of man.

50. God is in heaven. The heaven is in your heart. Pray and search for him in your heart and you will find him there.

51. There are too many religions in the world with too many troubles. People can live happily without these religions which are illusions.

52. In some religions the priests pretend to be the true representative of God and enslave the people and treat them badly. They should be punished severely.

53. Let us not worry about the last and next birth. Let us be happy in this birth which is true.

54. It is true that some people control the evil spirits and perform some miracles.

55. It is man who created God of his own image.

56. It is sure than even a man's life time praying and worshiping will not bring anything good.

57. Man by nature is a religious creature and he is all the time worshiping some God and getting his problem solved.

58. People should perform the rituals by themselves as they wish. There is no need for priest in temple, church or mosque.

59. Our joys and sufferings of this birth never really make us to think that it is all the results of our actions of last birth. Therefore, there cannot be any rebirth or future life.

60. It is not possible to see the actions of the spirits in this world. All we hear about the spirits are false.

Appendix C :

The Major Depression Inventory (MDI) is a self-report mood questionnaire developed by the World Health Organization. The following questions ask how one have been feeling over the last 2 weeks. The subjects were asked to choose one among the six responses -All the time, Most of the time, Slightly more than half of the time, Slightly less than half of the time, some of the time and no time.

1. Have you felt low in spirits or sad?
2. Have you lost interest in your daily activities?
3. Have you felt lacking in energy and strength?
4. Have you felt less self-confident?
5. Have you had a bad conscience or feelings of guilt?
6. Have you felt that life wasn't worth living?
7. Have you had difficulty in concentrating, e.g. when reading the newspaper or watching television?
- 8.a. Have you felt very restless?
- 8.b. Have you felt subdued or slowed down?
9. Have you had trouble sleeping at night?
- 10.a. Have you suffered from reduced appetite?
- 10.b. Have you suffered from increased appetite?

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