



Digital Revolution and its Impact on Working Women of Pakistan

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Abstract: *In this era of advancement and digitalization, active use of social media and online services has become an integral part of life. Today, educated working women of Pakistan use Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, Uber, Daraz, Foodpanda, Tinder and many other applications and online services without any social hurdle. Online socialization has opened up some new financial and social opportunities for working women in Pakistan, making them more confident and independent than in the past. This study is an effort to examine the changes brought by the digital revolution in the lives of working women of Pakistan and to highlight its impact. Under the umbrella of uses and gratification theory and using in-depth interview method, findings indicate that using different digital platforms has become the personal and professional need of working women in Pakistan, and this digitalization has entirely changed their everyday routine.*

Key Words: Cultural Change, Digital revolution, Everyday life, Online Services, Pakistani Women, Social Media, Working Women

Introduction

We are living in a technologically advanced world, where modern digital facilities and services are deeply embedded in everyone's life. The 21st century is noted as the digital age, with the internet as a major source of information. (Mitchell & Kan, 2019). Internet is providing information on various subjects as well as services in different fields. This powerful and modern facility enables us to use social media, which has now become a new tool of communication worldwide and changed the nature of the interaction (Nasir et al., 2012). While online services

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are producing ease in life and bringing modernization the in living styles of people. Social networking applications like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp have created their hegemony in the digital world ([Mitchell & Kan, 2019](#)). These applications are now working as a bridge that connects the groups of people with the same interests, where their point of view and thinking are shared or expressed. Today, men and women from any country and culture belonging to any demographic category are addicted to the use of social networking applications. ([Idemudia, Raishangani et al, 2017](#)).

Working women got new opportunities with the acceleration of the recent digital revolution (World Economic Forum). At present, people like to socialize with independent, educated and modern women through social networking websites ([Halder & Jaishankar, 2009](#)). Even in a country like Pakistan, where women are supposed to be restricted is using digital gadgets, mobile phones or social media, and there is a lack of social freedom for women, the situation has changed. In recent years of advancement and digitalization, Pakistani women are now actively using all social platforms and online services in their daily life ([Nasir et al.2012](#)).

Social Networking Applications and Pakistani Women

According to a survey conducted in 2018, 27.7 % of the total 55% labour force of Punjab, Pakistan, was comprised of women. In the Pakistan of 2020, women are now employed everywhere; they are bureaucrats, doctors, teachers, journalists etc. Generally, women are more likely to get attached to social networking applications as compared to men ([Avasthi et al., 2016](#)). Just like other parts of the world, social media platforms have opened up countless opportunities for Pakistani women to represent themselves in culture. Social media forums have helped Pakistani women to share their feelings with the same minded friends. They can discuss their needs and personal problems and get helped ([Halder & Jaishankar 2009](#)). In Pakistan, women are choosing different online platforms to minimize their dependency on others, particularly males. Pakistani women have seized this opportunity to make their worth by their own talent. Today, they are TikTok stars, or running their own online health or beauty blogs or selling their homemade food items online. So online platforms have made women and other week communities in Pakistan realize how powerful and independent they are. Social media has created a strong environment for women to do what they want; the growing digital approach gears the cultural capacity to be changed in Pakistan ([Alam, Yew & Loo, 2018](#)).

[Walker et al. \(2019\)](#), while addressing the question that why males and females are using social media, found that women are utilizing online platforms, especially social media, to share any important or casual information with others. One of the reasons for their social media use is to get updates of current trends in fashion and clothing and comparison with other women. While males are using social media to find their old friends by searching their profiles. In the same context, in the case of picture sharing or any representation of the body, women become shy and choose cropped or blurred photos, while males chose shots of full body ([Barker, 2009](#)).

Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) argued that most of the working and non-working women spent a major part of their whole day using social websites, and the purpose behind doing so is to gratify their desire to make new friends and connect with old friends, While both male and female of the same age are also connecting themselves through Myspace and Facebook.

[Nasir et al.\(2012\)](#) explored that Pakistani woman is more inclined towards online shopping for ready-made garments, mobile accessories, food delivery and purchasing cosmetic stuff.

[Moreira et al. \(2006\)](#) argued that females are risk avoiders and males are risk seekers. But the impact of social media is not always positive, it is necessary to live with these technologies, but the consumers have to be very careful and attentive because there could be many negative effects. [Boyd and Ellison \(2007\)](#) conducted a study and explored that there is a large number of issues related to the privacy of women, especially the working women who are connected to social networking websites because their personal information is being misused by immoral users existing in the online world.

In a study about the impact of same age fellows and peers on online purchasing through different networks, it was found that there has been a fast growth in online shopping through social networking websites, especially Facebook and Myspace, which have a growing number of online consumers and members. These websites have developed an advertising-based model which is influential for women ([Iyengar, Han & Gupta 2009](#)).

[Fischer and Reuber \(2011\)](#) have explored in their study that Twitter has a great influence on females' way of interactions; with the sample size of 100 working women in the UK, they indicated that most of the working women interact with their colleagues by tagging them on Twitter in a casual way, about any official meeting or task.

[Senecal and Nante \(2004\)](#) explored that the clicks on recommended links which are embedded in different websites, and most of them were women, with the sample size of 500 women, researchers examined that women are more likely to purchase things online through different online stores, rather than going physically to the shops.

As the previous literature discussed that using social media and online service has become the compulsory component in women's life. So, in the context of Pakistan, this study intends to examine the impact of the digital revolution on the working women of Pakistan. As women are users of social and digital media platforms, so it is useful to know the basic reasons behind their usage, the importance of social networking applications and how it affects their everyday life? This study is significant to understand the implications of digitalization on working women in Pakistan. It depicts the real picture and reasons for the usage of digital services by women generally in the world and particularly in Pakistan.

Objectives

The main purpose or objectives of this piece of research are given below.

- To find out the common reasons behind using social media applications and online services by working women in Pakistan.

- To highlight the impact of digitalization on the personal and professional life of working women in Pakistan.
- To point out the notable changes brought by digitalization in women's life /routine.

Research Questions

RQ1: Why working women of Pakistan are becoming part of the digital world?

RQ2: How the digital world is affecting the everyday routine of a working woman in Pakistan?

RQ3: Which digital media platforms are mostly used by working women in Pakistan?

This study is purposive for all Pakistani women by making them familiar with the digital needs of the present time.

Rationale for Selecting Working Women

This study is confined to measure the effects of various social media apps on working women. The reason behind it that in the context of Pakistani culture, a professional female can be a regular user of social media and online services as compared to the women who are limited to the household.

Theoretical Foundation

The theory explains the way of study and holds it firmly in theoretical constructs; the objective of the theory is to strengthen the research and gives the surety that research is on the right track. Theory and research are related to each other (Neuman, 1997).

Uses and gratification theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratification theory discusses the consumption of media by the audience. It explains how people use particular media for their own need and get satisfied when their needs are fulfilled ([Ruggiero, 2010](#)).

UGT explains the reasons why people use specific media. This theory gives an active position to the users instead of media, which tells that users themselves decide which medium should be used for what purpose? UGT speaks that users deliberately seek to use a specific type of media to complete their needs and their desires like entertainment, education and relaxation ([Nasir et al.2012](#)). Postulates of UGT theory are employed in this study because today, there is the rise of social networking sites like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter which enables people to interact with each other, including women. Uses and Gratification theory was considered relevant to understand the motives of working women to use different social applications and online facilities. The theoretical foundation helped to identify the gratifications received from the use of the particular social medium.

Methodology

The in-depth Interview method is used in this study; it is a qualitative research method (descriptive in nature) in which the researcher may get subjective thought, opinion, point of view and exposure about any particular issue by speaking to the population at the individual level (Myers, 2009).

Interviews are always goal-oriented; this method offers the collection of some rich, descriptive data about how people think and behave on one specific subject? The interview may be conducted at any convenient place like office, school, home etc. and now, with the advent of modern technology; it is not mandatory to do an interview in a physical meeting; it can be conducted on any social networking messenger

Sample and Population

The study was restricted to Lahore. Keeping in mind the objective of the study, it was restricted to the women who were pursuing a profession and regular user of social networking sites. The sample was 25 working women of Lahore; all women belonged to different professions in the city, which are selected by **the** Purposive sampling technique. The reason behind choosing Lahore city was that Lahore is an important city of Pakistan, with a population of 11.13 million people, the city is also one of the main industrial and technological hubs of Pakistan, and hundreds of public and private organization are providing thousands of job for both male and females (Statistics Bureau of Pakistan).

Ethical Consideration

Full consent of the participants was obtained for interviews. They were informed about the purpose of the research. They were asked to provide data related to research questions only; no personal information was collected from the participants.

Data Analysis Strategy

Interviews were conducted with the participants, and the responses of the participants were recorded using a tape recorder. Recordings were transcribed. After collecting the data, the next step was to analyze this data in a descriptive way and extract different themes from it. Thematic analysis is considered as the comprehensive analysis within qualitative research, which depicts different angles related to the research problem, in which the researcher emphasizes identifying, analyzing and interpreting patterns of meaning related to the research problem (Gavin, 2008). Answers to the questions which were asked by the selected 25 working women were decoded; the answers built a strong and vast umbrella of themes through which results were derived. The themes were categorized as Social Media; An informational tool, Social Media; An interactive tool, virtual friendship, Social Media and woman Appearances, Addiction and negative effects, Picture Sharing, Eating and travelling facility, own business/ online job, Social Media and Women Rights, Harassment through Social platforms.

Research Findings and Discussion

Participants

Interviews were conducted with 25 women who were serving in various professions holding masters or higher degrees in different a field, which brings variety in the sample. The sample was constituted of married as well as unmarried participants. The age of the participants varied from twenty-five years to fifty years. Each of the participants was asked the same questions, and their responses were recorded.

A number of sub-questions were formulated to find the answer to the research questions and to fulfill the objective of the study. This study is based on the themes which were extracted from the responses of the participants.

Social Media as a Source of Information

The data gathered from interviews showed that most of the respondents see social media as an important medium of information. They use Twitter and Facebook regularly to check out what is going on in Pakistan and around the world? Through Facebook, they come to know about the latest political and showbiz news, and through twitter, they get the latest international updates. Some women use Twitter regularly to become part of the latest trends, while LinkedIn is also familiar with working women in Pakistan for official use. Most of the women read online newspapers on a daily basis, while a participant stated that she gets her education through online platforms like Islamic education or virtual lectures. According to her, AIOU (Allama Iqbal International Open University) and Virtual University are two reputable institutions in Pakistan, providing distant education.

Social Media: A Medium of Communication and Interaction

According to the findings, working women of Pakistan use social media for personal and official interaction, just like the women in other parts of the world. They regularly use WhatsApp and LinkedIn for an official purpose; Facebook Messenger, IMO and skype are also used for official interactions. Besides that, women are using the same platforms to interact with their family and friends. But, interestingly, many of the respondents are not satisfied with the interaction through social apps. One respondent stated that she spends a significant amount of time on the web, but it could not become a substitute for interpersonal interactions.

Social Media as a Source of Entertainment

When asked about the entertainment aspect of social media, almost all the respondents agreed that despite the busy schedule of the day, they try to find out some spare time to use Social networking sites for their entertainment when they want to enjoy some comics and mimics they use Facebook, One respondent told that she prefers YouTube to watch interesting and funny videos. According to another respondent, "I like to engage myself into the online world and

search for some pleasurable stuff” (Ms.M). One respondent stated that there was a time when watching songs and other adult stuff was strictly prohibited in Pakistani families, but now the women belonging to the elite class and somehow the middle class are using social media openly for entrainment purpose.

Making Virtual Friends

The respondents revealed that one of the changes which social media brought in their life is making virtual friends- the ones who have never met in real and have close relationships. Social media is applauded as it has increased the social circle of working women. But one respondent stated that “interacting with unfamiliar and new people may lead to serious consequences. Misuse of social media apps can do harm and create hurdles for women because the cybercrime laws are not functional in Pakistan” (Ms. A). There was a mixed response regarding virtual friendships, as some respondents found it quite annoying that their personal information is being shared with unknown people through social media apps.

Social Media and Woman Appearances

Looking better is the heartiest desire of every woman. Women come to know about new beauty products and trends through social media. One of the respondents stated she uses social media to find ways to improve her looks. Another respondent told me that “she is always looking for makeup and cosmetic stuff through the internet” (Ms.J). While others said that they visit beauty and health websites to maintain their appearances as they have to interact with people due to the nature of their job.

Negative Effects of Using Social Media Apps

While asked about the adverse effects of social media, the respondents stated that tremendous use of social media sometimes disturbed their job hours; they feel like getting addicted to social media, which may cause depression, anxiety and other medical issues. One respondent stated, “she feels compelled to use social media during her working hours” (Ms A). One response was that excessive use of social networking site leads to health issues.

Picture Sharing

The majority of the respondents considered Instagram their favorite site, where they can easily share their pictures and get likes and comments. They do share their pictures on Instagram during working hours or while attending any official party. One participant responded; they used Facebook and Whatsapp to share their pictures with friends on an almost daily basis.

Food Delivery and Traveling Facility

Uber, Careem, Shahi Sawari and other online taxi services turned out to be providing ease in travelling for working women- as the majority of the respondents stated that they are using these

online services for pick and drop to their offices. One response was, “Uber and cream have brought a revolution in life because I do not have to find a rickshaw to go to my work-place” (Ms. L). Besides that, Food panda, Cheetay, Eat Mubarak and other online food delivery services are also rapidly making their place in the daily lives of working women. One participant stated that online food delivery service had created ease for working women and more services should be introduced. While pointing out the side effect of the same service, a participant revealed that due to the emergence of food delivery services, eating disorders are increasing.

Social Media and Women Rights

The majority of the respondents were of the view that Social Media has given a voice to women rights that were previously suppressed in our male-dominated society. One of the respondents stated that when an eight-year-old girl was raped and murdered in Kasur, Social media users, especially females, demanded justice under the hashtag #Justice for Zainab. Another respondent gave the example of the #MeeToo campaign on social media. One response was that “women are aware of their rights due to the various platforms on social media which highlight the marginalization of women” (Ms. A). So digital development has created awareness about women issues in society.

Harassment through Social Media

When asked about the harassment created by social media apps, the respondents replied that the use of social media sometimes turns out to be a cause of harassment, particularly for working women. One respondent expressed her concern and confessed that one of her office mates often sends some inappropriate content and sexual material through different sources and Facebook accounts. But she is afraid to tell her boss about this situation.

Conclusion

No doubt, the digital revolution in recent years has changed the Pakistani culture in the same way as any other culture in the world. In 2020 Pakistanis are on the way towards the digital future; they have adopted all the modern and digital techniques with an open heart and fluently using them in their everyday life. But exposure matters in this regard, the professional working women of today are more acquainted with these digital platforms that are why they are openly using them, but millions of Pakistani women still have a lack of exposure to this digitalization, so the big steps are awaited to be taken.

It is an obvious reality that social media apps, online services and platforms have made interaction and networking convenient in Pakistan as compared to the past, online services provide a lot of facilities to working women. This study was an attempt to explore all possible changes brought by the digital revolution in Pakistani working women’s life. According to the findings obtained, working women in Pakistan mostly use social media for interaction, for getting information, education and entertainment, and they equally use online facilities like

shopping, banking and travelling etc. It could be inferred that Pakistani working women are now moving from the traditional mode to the modern mode of life because of this digital revolution. Digital facilities have become the personal and professional need of all Pakistanis in general and Pakistani working women in particular. They seek social media as an easy, accessible and convenient medium to communicate than any other medium. Another finding of the study revealed that there might be some negative outcomes of social media use, but at present, Pakistani working women cannot imagine their life without these digital platforms.

Suggestions for Future Expanding of the Study

- a. The study could be expanded by including working women from different cities of Pakistan.
- b. This study could be done by including the women who are not professional but users of social media apps.
- c. It could be conducted on the women who are home-makers.
- d. The themes extracted from this study could be explored individually.

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