

A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD FOR DISCRIMINATION

A Double-Edged Sword for Discrimination



Green River Community College

CMST 213: Communication in Social Media

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Social Media is one of the biggest advancements of the 21st century it has developed various forms of change for the world. The concept has revolutionized the way the world communicates with one another. However, such grand innovations can develop their own Achilles heel for society. That is the focus of this research study to understand how and if, social media can generate or combat items such as prejudice, discrimination, and racism. Such a research question has been previously developed and examined. However, in the words of Miller et al. (2016), “the question as to whether internet access and social media have improved the plight of the world’s most disadvantaged populations or have rather exacerbated inequalities continues and is far from resolved” (p. 128). Thus, the importance of understanding social media as a creator or destroyer of prejudice is continuously evident for the well-being and advancement of society.

Hypothesis

My hypothesis is based solely on personal experience and previous knowledge of racism and discrimination in society. With that being said I predict that results will show a somewhat even response stating that social media is both a positive outlet that helps create social change and equality and a negative outlet that produces racist/ignorant perspectives.

Methodology

In order to adequately examine and produce concise findings, I have developed a survey that was administered through digital platforms. The survey was composed of ten questions most of the quantitative relation with one qualitative question. A mix of the qualitative and quantitative evaluation was incorporated because as examined, a combination of methods produces the most substantial and accurate results (Jick, 1979). A short description section was

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added to the survey to explain the purpose and clarify that participants names would be kept anonymous. The survey contained material/questions about the level regularity for discrimination via social media and the most prominent site that shows discriminatory comments/posts, among other topics. And prior to these topics, general questions about demographics are presented.

Participants

The study consisted of 20 participants; the participants fell under the general age group of 16-18. 17-year-olds being the highest active participants with a total of 13. The largest racial demographic in the study was comprised of Asian Americans. With females being the largest gender group with a total of nine participants.

Results/Analysis

The survey results identified two major social media platforms in relation to discrimination and prejudice. TikTok was identified to be the site that shows the most discriminatory comments and posts (view figure 1).

5. From the following which social media site have you seen the most discriminatory comments or posts?

[More Details](#)

| | |
|-------------|----|
| ● Snapchat | 0 |
| ● Instagram | 2 |
| ● TikTok | 14 |
| ● Facebook | 1 |
| ● Twitter | 3 |



Figure 1

On the other hand, Snapchat was identified as showing the least (view figure 2).

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6. From the following which social media site have you seen the least discriminatory comments or posts?

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| | |
|-------------|---|
| ● Snapchat | 8 |
| ● Instagram | 4 |
| ● TikTok | 0 |
| ● Facebook | 6 |
| ● Twitter | 2 |



Figure 2

These results in truth are not that shocking seeing as how these sites function. TikTok shows used a variety of accounts and post via their “For you Page” these items are processed through an algorithm and can be random. Thus, users may see random posts that are ignorant or discriminatory. On the other hand, Snapchat is a site that only allows you to communicate only with people you approve of and are friends with, thus the level of discriminatory posts is less because these are people you are friends with instead of complete strangers. 80% of participants stated that they on average they see account types that fight against prejudice and discrimination a very revealing statistic (view figure 3).

7. Which type of accounts/groups do you see more often on social media?

[More Details](#)

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| ● Accounts/groups that contrib... | 4 |
| ● Accounts/groups that combat... | 16 |



Figure 3

As for my proposed hypothesis, the data shows that I was wrong. Largely the participants stated that social media is a positive way to combat prejudice and is more evident than its

Figure 2

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negative counter use. Through my hypothesis, I had expected a balance response but was very shocked to see how the perspective was mainly on one side.

A saddening piece of data came when the participants were asked to examine their personal experiences with racism and discrimination. Most participants state that they sometimes/often experience forms of racism and discrimination across social media (view figure 4). In reality, we as a society should aim to bring such results down to “never”. The participants through this survey truly believe that social media will be a great way to start that change.

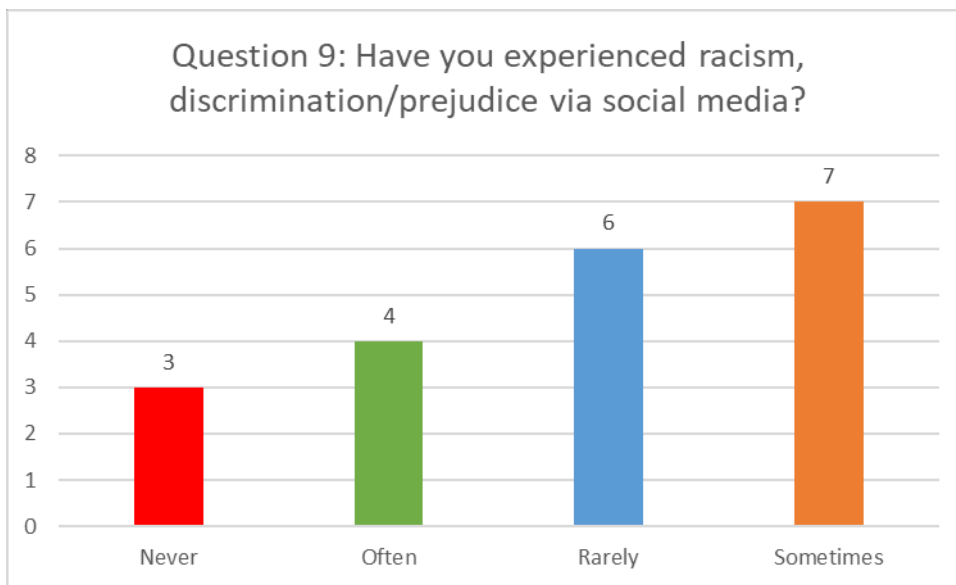


Figure 4

The most interesting and important results came from the participant's personal response to the quantitative question. When asked if they believe social media is a good form of combating prejudice/stereotypes, many answers were given. One of the most noticeable responses comes from participant number 13 they stated:

I think social media has the potential to be a good form of combating prejudice/stereotypes. Especially since social media can reach a large audience of many different people around the world. Social media can even reach people in positions with a higher power which can

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better our chances of combating prejudice/stereotypes because those people can do something about prejudice/stereotypes.

Such words give a strong indicator of the positive ways that social media can contribute to social change. In the perspective of this participant, social media is a great form of starting a movement and reaching people that may have the power to produce real and fast change and is generally agreed upon by 95% of participants.

Discussion

In a concise result, the participants mainly indicated that social media is more a source for good rather than bad. And can be a driving force against prejudice and discrimination. This result clearly answers my proposed research question. They explained that generally with their experience they view more platforms that face against discrimination and prejudice. Such results are great and truly show off the positive aspects of social media and how it should and can adequately be used. In relation to these statements, we have already seen the positive ways that social media can be used. For example, the positive use of social media is presented through its use by indigenous Australians as Petray (2015) stated, “social media activism, when done thoughtfully, can lead to real changes, and those changes add up” (p. 27). Petray and her colleagues were able to effectively use social media as a way to produce a voice for their community. Such results go hand in hand with other recent movements such as Black Lives Matter via social media this movement produced a vast amount of attention and it was all thanks to the million online supporters who shared information and generated, #BlackLivesMatter. Although it is also identified that racism, prejudice, and discrimination are still active items of social media the positives outweigh the negatives. And as identified through the survey result

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social media platforms themselves are responding a lot quicker to biased posts to establish a healthy social media experience for all.

In culmination, social media presents itself as a double-edged sword that can both contribute and diminish prejudice. Luckily in the hands of many minority groups, social media platforms become a way to start a movement and create a conversation in order to establish a change in the hopes of improving society. These topics are important and further research would help develop substantial evaluations to support minority groups and create ways to end online harassment.

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