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# Aggression Influenced By Social Media

## Aggression And Discrimination Via Social Media

This aspect of the review revolves around the analysis and references of discrimination and hatred portrayed towards outgroups, mainly Muslim majorities, and looks at a common variable of social media platforms used to exhibit such aggression. Social media can be inferred as one of the aspects behind such discriminatory behaviour which was proven by two similar studies. One study was done to assess how media, specifically news channels could influence other peoples' perceptions their narrations. One of the key findings proved how painting the assailant in an overly negative manner by targeting personal details rather than relevant information pertaining to the incident, increased generalized aggression towards Muslim majorities which was further proven from the anti-immigration online polls online. This effectively concluded that viewers often shape their opinions from external sources. The study highlights. "The subliminal messaging from the network decisions created mental shortcuts for their viewers that generalized Muslims as terrorists." (Poudret, 2017). The latter study was done in a similar fashion, assessing how number of hours spent watching news coverage on anti-Muslim content is correlated to aggression and warmth felt towards those targeted people. The findings yielded the same conclusion over how increased exposure, leads to significantly higher hatred and less warmth indicating a positive and inverse correlation, which was assessed through a feelings thermometer. (Shaver, Sibley, Osberone and Bulbuia, 2016). Both studies reflect upon a common analogy explaining islamophobia which stems from social media influences. The latter study can be deemed as high in validity as one of the extraneous variables, (participant variables), was addressed as the study was conducted in a neutral environment, (New Zealand), which didn't have any prior altercations with Muslims. Hence, by assessing subjects' opinions it could be reasonably inferred that such opinions were mainly caused by media's primary influence which was indeed, the variable that was looked upon. Moreover, population validity was extremely high due to the sample size used as the participants consisted of 16,584. Hence it could've been generalized to the rest of the population who were not originally part of the study.

Another experiment was conducted on the basis of evaluating the excessive hatred posed towards Muslims by analyzing various groups and discriminatory posts on Facebook. The study revolved around analyzing the specific kinds of hatred towards Muslim majorities by dividing it into various categories. It also looked at the offender behaviours and how various social media users exhibit aggression through different means. A range of quantitative and qualitative data revealed how online pages created to vilify such out groups tends to lead to a rampant spread of online hate which was shown by the 'ban Islam in Australia' page. The page was considered the prime platform for expression of discrimination as it consisted of 3246 supporters. The page was designed to share racial content to fuel further resentment which could've further carried out into the three-dimensional world as there were campaigns on restricting the number of mosques. Hence, it was inferred that the power of social media influence was massive as it led to certain forms of ostracizing of Muslims in the society and how such aggression could manifest itself in the real world and lead to offline violence. People exploited their privilege of freedom of speech and instead, used that as an excuse to cultivate an intolerable society. (Awan,2016). This study was similar to that of Poudrett's, as it analyzed opinions of people

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regarding Muslim majorities but the sole difference was based on the kind of variable influencing such aggression. Poudrett claimed that political factors such as negative campaigns and hate speeches trumped the media's role (all while still being important). Whereas Awan asserts that social media is primarily to be blamed. The results of Awan tend to be considerably more valid as it catered to both quantitative and qualitative data which not only illuminated experimenter bias, it also provided in-depth analysis on the kinds of data gathered. Also, the online polls were established from various sites, such as Pew research and Gallup. Hence, this leaves room for falsified responses due to demand characteristics

## **Perceived Aggression Via Social Media**

Two studies conducted in similar fashions explored the effects of being exposed to negativity social media, which is the second variable upon exploring negative effects of media. The primary link between the two indicates that increased time online inevitably leads to higher aggression levels. The first study evaluated the direct impact of reading online rants on specific websites. The results proved the hypothesis that majority of the people who were exposed to a screen shot of the rant site, experienced less happiness and increased sadness. Participants were also given the opportunity to write their own rants which fueled their aggression as well. (Martin, Coyier, M.VanSistine, and Lschroeder, Bs, 2013). The second experiment was specifically targeted towards African Americans' perceived aggression and stress levels experienced in their everyday lives due to exposure to race related topics online. 50% of participants chose Facebook as their most commonly used application and revealed how they experienced that particular emotion more as compared to stress. The study states, "The use of social media among African American adults-which likely involves sharing or discussing negative race related events-would generate anger." (Maxwell, 2016). Martin, et. all, did not explore outgroup discrimination, but rather looked at the impact of social media on a broader spectrum. A limitation was the small sample which consisted of mainly females. Hence, generalizability is low from the population perspective and how it is not a valid representative. However, it did target a population which statistically spends a greater amount of time online and hence, could be applicable. Moreover, this was one of the first studies conducted which addressed the anger phenomenon experienced and hence, set up a basis for further research. Maxwell's experiment on the other hand, had high validity and appealed more specifically to the current study as it will be specifically targeted towards outgroup discrimination and its impact. The methodology used to recruit participants and questions surveyed could be replicable due to the State-Trait-Anger Expression inventory which is commonly used to document specific kinds of behaviour and a potential means of data gathering. Moreover, it constitutes a high validity as the sample size was significantly larger than the former study as participants were chosen from all over the US.

One other study interestingly looked at the long-term and short-term impacts of media violence on both adults and children. The experimenter gathered all relevant material, ranging from television programs, music, music videos, radio or any other popular social media platform, that contained similar acts of violence and negative content. Both groups were exposed to such content and their respective perceived aggression levels and physiological arousal (heart rate, blood pressure etc) were documented. Results proved their hypothesis of how there was a positive correlation with the amount of social media content exposure and aggression exhibited. Also, adults displayed more aggression in the short-term than in the long-term on account of cognitive development. This is because children develop behaviourism over their life span and

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hence, perceive things negatively as comprehensively as adults later on. (J. Bushman, Huesman. 2006).

This study not only portrays the impact media has on different age groups, but also highlights the consequences that could carry over in the long-run and shape certain cognitive behaviours.

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