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Seeing Social Media As a Catalyst for Women Empowerment: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

Advancements in technology, along with increased internet and smartphone availability, have resulted in a substantial global increase in social media usage. Social media functions as a communication network. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of social media has increased. Women can now engage in conversations, debates, and discussions on a wide range of topics on different social media platforms. This study seeks to understand women's empowerment through social media. This study examines the impact of social media on women's lives and its potential to empower them. The researcher employed a quantitative research approach. The study involves empirical research conducted via an online survey. This study collected primary data from 100 women living in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Google Forms included a Likert scale with closed-ended questions. The data has been analysed using SPSS in the study. The study concludes that social media empowers women through chances for empowerment, awareness-raising, and connecting with others. It promotes women to exchange experiences, accomplishments, and resources and enhances audience engagement through the use of hashtags. As internet usage rises, women are becoming more informed about their rights and gaining access to novel opportunities. Social media disrupts social gender conventions and advocates for a fair and just world.

Keywords: social media, women empowerment, society.

1. Introduction

Technology has come a long way, and it has the power to alter how people see their daily lives. With the introduction of smartphones, social media usage has skyrocketed (Gálík, 2020). Not only have developed nations been affected by social media, but also other nations with sufficient infrastructure. According to Oze (Oze, 2017), social media have become an integral part of social life in recent years; this has connections to social psychology and sociology. A new way of thinking about relationships in the world has been required by social media. Nevertheless, the presence of digital technology, without the community possessing adequate digital literacy skills, might pose a dual risk to both the democratic process and national cohesion. The rapid advancement of digitalization in the last couple of years has presented both a peril and an opportunity. Due to the rapid digitalization and technological advancements, society has undergone swift evolution. The impact of this phenomenon has permeated virtually every facet of human existence and the surrounding ecosystem, encompassing routine tasks such as employment, education, and the consumption of music (Muzykant et al., 2023). Media has been considered a significant tool of society it also has the power to reach widely. Communication is also important for women's overall

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development through social media. Women's knowledge about social media and control over it is still limited in most societies. The rise of participation of women on social media gives them access to self-expression and decision-making through it. Social media is very empowering (Narayana, Ahamad, 2016).

Social media has not yet provided women with support. Women are debating, discussing, and offering their perspectives. Today, social media has evolved into a tool for social change. This social media has come in limelight for the last 1-2 decades. Social media helps in building and connecting communities for communication as well as it also plays a major role in women's empowerment. It attracts society towards women's empowerment by assembling attention of audience by prevailing the stereotypes. Gender is a societal concept that can be influenced by the media to enhance gender parity. Thanks to the utilization of social media, opportunities for disseminating information and exercising freedom of expression have significantly expanded compared to previous times. Due to its perception as a convenient and expeditious platform, social media is highly effective in disseminating information on a large scale and is experiencing a surge in popularity. The utilization of social media by women provides them with a platform to express themselves and experience a sense of validation. Social media plays a vital role in advancing democratic feminism, particularly for female users (Sayogie, 2023).

This boom and growth of social media platforms have created various opportunities for women. There are many social media stages like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, etc. These are the networks that are widely used by the people and also work to raise awareness among the audience and masses in the public sphere. Social media has given power to women, especially where they can express, and share opinions, views, and thoughts which were earlier restricted by societal norms. The women experience a sense of freedom that they had not known for centuries with just a few simple clicks.

2. Materials and methods

Women's empowerment plays a crucial role in the progress of every community, which in turn benefits the nation-building process. It involves people taking responsibility for their own lives and establishing their goals and preferences in order to provide significant contributions to society as a whole. Moreover, empowerment involves a feeling of confidence in oneself as well as acknowledging and making use of one's skills and capabilities. The process involves different aspects ranging from economics, financials, society, and political involvement, where women have complete freedom to participate in decision-making at various levels, including in electoral processes, holding superior positions at workplaces, and creating an environment that guarantees equal access to opportunities and decision-making power for women. From an economic perspective, empowerment refers to achieving financial independence and having authority over one's economic resources. Women's empowerment serves as an essential component of a nation's progress, showing their ability to exercise freedom in circumstances where options were previously limited.

Usually, social media promotes user-generated content by producing and sharing it (Tufekci, County, 2008). It has the potential for mobilizing accountability and attention to women's rights, and stereotypes as well as challenge discrimination (Nowacka, Estelle, 2015). According to Chen (Chen, 2013), women use social media blogs more than men. Both men and women use social media efficiently which strengthens social relations (Kimbrough et.al 2013). According to Burgess, Foth, and Klæbe (Burgess et al., 2006) in this social media platform, there are endless opportunities for people. Social networking websites such as Blog, Flickr, and YouTube have interconnections that open up several opportunities for the sharing and circulating the online content. People share the content and express their individuality and connect with the desired group. In this sharing content including photos, videos, reels, shorts, TikTok's, video challenges, trends, videos, etc. As Stavrositu and Sundar (Stavrositu, Sundar 2012) state that self-expressing on public platforms gives women a sense of empowerment. This empowerment influences the option for women are:

- They can decide the issues which affect them directly;
- Benefit from opportunities and resources;
- Power over the management of their bodies and lives;
- They express communal decisions which leads to a degree of empowerment (Schuler, Rottach, 2010).

As definition according to Keller and Mbewe (Keller, Mbewe, 1991), women empowerment is the procedure that facilitates their systematic endeavor to encourage and enhance their freedom, manage resources, and exercise their decision-making that will help them to confront and do with their subordination. The significance of empowering women through nurturing their ability to challenge their content, and make strong strategies in the public sphere where such options were denied in past (Kabeer, 2001). Therefore, the rise in the consumption of information through social media has also improved women's capacity to envision other options to make effective choices (Alsop, Heinsohn, 2005).

It is so simple to create an account and share content with millions of people with just a single click, social media has become such an important part of our lives. Women now have access to social media platforms as a means of self-expression. Mentally, socially, psychologically, and financially, it has empowered women. Women's participation in the social and cultural spheres has also increased as a result. It has already assisted women in capacity building, which has resulted in increased female participation. Additionally, it encourages decision-making. Women now have access to these social media platforms to learn about female ideologies. Due to this development of the internet women day to day, problems and issues have come center stage. It helps women as an information guide which helps connect to the outside world.

These popular hashtags and activism also created popularity among women to spread awareness and run different campaigns for women's well-being. There are various prominent examples such as in 2011, a video of Manal-al-Sharif driving was posted online on Facebook and YouTube. She emphasized how this primary right to drive was banned for women living in Saudi Arabia and all across the world. This directed to online campaign #Women2Drive movement in all around the globe. Because of its impact, in 2018, women were given the right to drive in Saudi. Another example of Delhi 2012 gangrape. Where many agitations on the various social networking websites by many social activists compelled the authorities to implement stringent measures and immediately amend the law. United stated in 2014, they promoted the online campaign #HeforShe movement. In this, they invite men and other genders to support women to ensure gender equality and end all kinds of gender inequality and discrimination. #knowyourLemons Additionally, a movement was launched in 2014 to educate women about breast cancer. #LahuKaLagaan drive was also a trending hashtag in 2017, it was initiated by an NGO from Mumbai. This Campaign was for the goods and services tax on sanitary pads. This campaign also goes succeeded in 2018, The government exempted sanitary napkins from taxation. Between 2017-2018, the worldwide momentum, many prominent public figures came out who was accused of harassment and sexual assault.

Various women stepped into business as entrepreneurs through social media platforms. Therefore, investment required to start a business on social media is relatively low. Many ventures and startups got popular during lockdown. Social networking websites have been encouraging and powerful for the entrepreneurial skills of the women. It makes things process earlier for women to initiate business. Through these social media platforms, they reach a large number of customers easily. Some women gained prominent recognition in society or gained popularity on social media platforms. There are some examples such as Aditi Gupta (*Menstrupedia*), Chhavi Mittal (*Shitty Ideas Trending*), Falguni nayar (*Nykaa.com*), Richa Kar (*Zivame*), Richa Singh (*YourDost*), Sabina Chopra (*Yatra.com*), Shradha Sharma (*Yourstory.com*).

In this era, where everybody has all avenues to information whether its accurate or untruthful. Circulation of information is easier due to social media. This easy flow of information to the public has some negative impacts. On one hand, social media has empowered women by creating and giving opportunities but on the other hand, it has proven dangerous aspects too. This hashtag culture has potential to empower women from all over world.

3. Discussion

The primary objective of the current research is to investigate the utilization of online social media platforms as a means of promoting women's empowerment. The purpose of the research is to investigate the phenomenon of women's empowerment through the use of social media platforms among women residing in Jaipur, Rajasthan. This research is based on women who live in Jaipur are examined, the following hypothesis has been developed:

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant correlation between women's empowerment and encouragement via social media and an increase in awareness of women's rights via social media.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant correlation between the use of social media as a tool for women's empowerment and encouragement and the rise in awareness of women's rights.

This research "Empowering Women through Social Media: A Quantitative Study of Women's Experiences in Jaipur, Rajasthan" is a quantitative study. This empirical research's main motivation is to determine the social media in empowering women. This study focuses only on women. This research is a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature concerning the impact of social media on the empowerment of women. Quantitative research has been used to collect the data via an Online survey. Google Forms has been used as a tool; it includes close-ended questions. This study is based on the target population of 100 women respondents who live in Jaipur. The google forms were circulated online. The five-point scale Likert scale has been adopted in the questionnaire. the participant's experiences provide the primary useful information for this approach. All respondents were selected purposively. This data is processed into SPSS statistics.

The Pilot survey was done with 30 respondents with Cronbach's alpha score to test the reliability of the questionnaire. An important tool for determining an instrument's stability and internal consistency is the reliability test. It is unacceptable if the Cronbach Alpha value is less than 0.60. The Cronbach Alpha value is deemed moderate and acceptable if it falls within the range of 0.60-0.80. It is a very good value if the Cronbach Alpha is above 0.80 – 1.00. The reliability value in this study is 0.717, which is regarded as acceptable and moderate (Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.717	25

In Table 2, Validity test was obtained through the Pearson correlation text in SPSS to investigate their relationship between the dependent and independent variables. To state the significant relationship between the variables. The p-values below 0.05 considered to be acceptable (Andrade, 2019).

According to Table 2, all the p-values are below 0.05. All p-value obtained for this research are 0.000. According to the results statistically significant correlations has been established between the variables.

Table 2. Social media and women rights

Social media is being used as a tool for women empowerment and encouragement [Row 1]	Pearson Correlation	.711**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	30
Social media has increased awareness about women rights [Row 1]	Pearson Correlation	.621*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	30

4. Results

Figure 1 shows the Age group of the women. 18-20 are 2 %, 20-30 are 84 %, 30-40 are 10 %, 40-50 are 3 % and below 60 are 1 %.

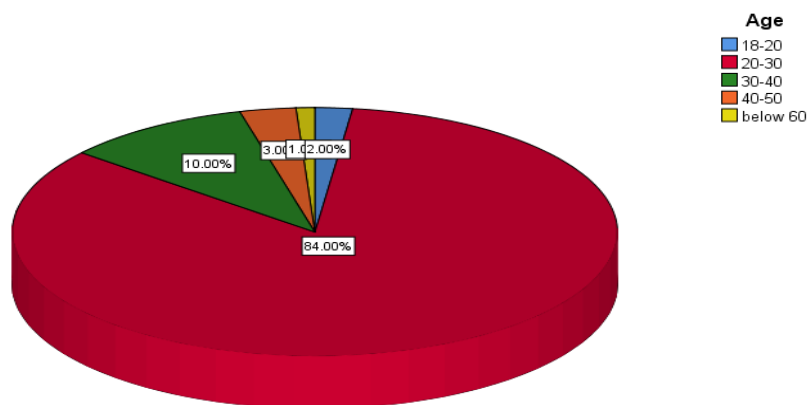


Fig. 1. Age group of the women

Figure 2 shows the Qualification of respondents are 45.45 % are Graduate, 50.51 % are Post Graduate and 4.04 % Ph.D.

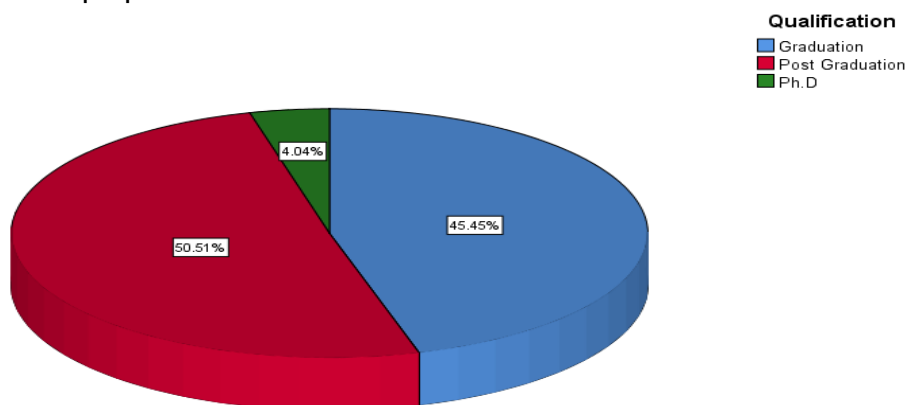


Fig. 2. The Qualification of respondents

Figure 3 shows occupation of respondents: 43 % of people are Students, 43 % are working professionals, 5 % people are doing business and 9 % people are indulged in others.

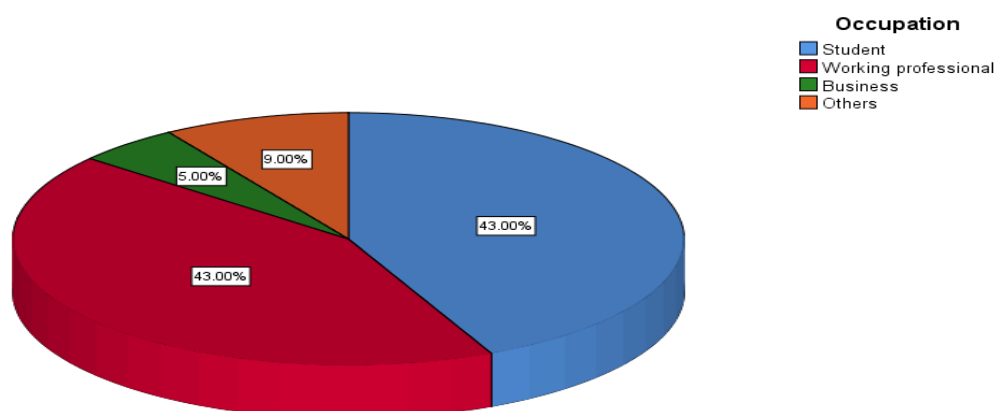


Fig. 3. The Occupation of respondents

Figure 4 shows social media activism of respondents: 25 % of respondents strongly agree that they use social media, 53 % agree, 18 % are neutral, and 4 % disagree.

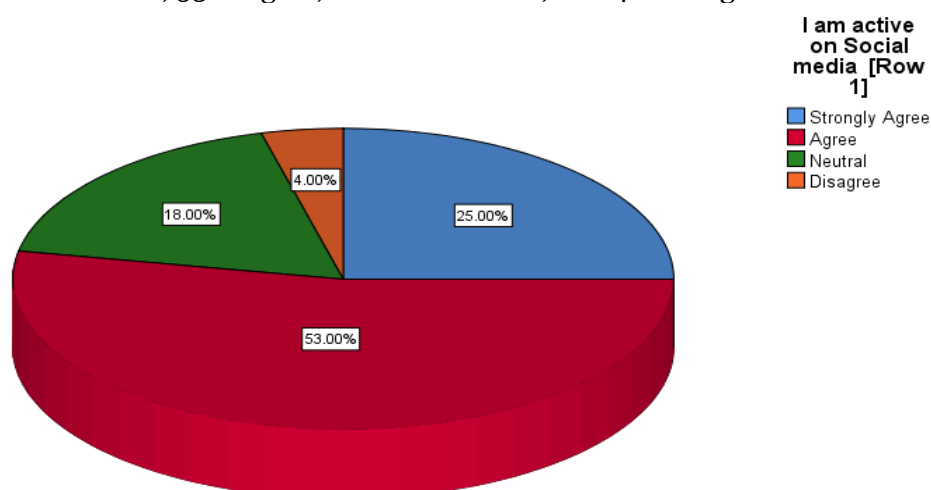


Fig. 4. Social media activism of respondents

Figure 5 shows that 14 % of respondents are available on more than 4 platforms, 43 % people are available on 3 platforms, 34 % people are available on 2 platforms, 8 % people are on 1 platform and 1 % are not available on any social media platform.

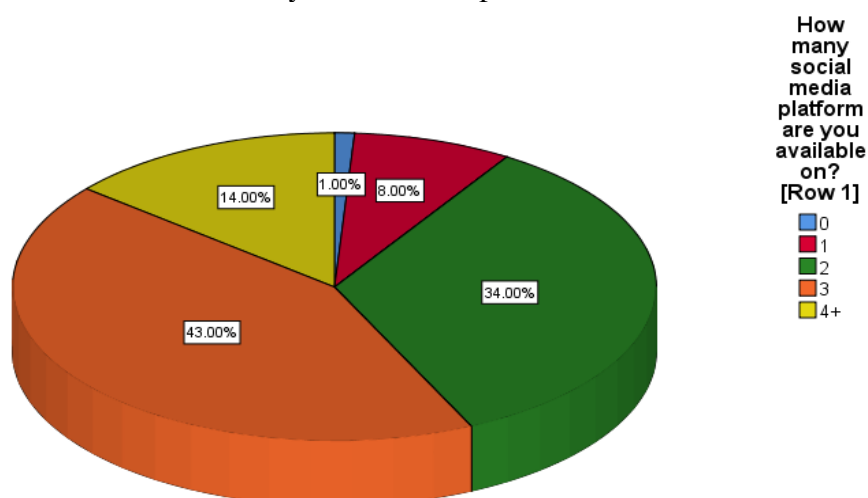


Fig. 5. Social media platform of respondents

Figure 6 shows: 16 % people spend 1 hour on social media, 27 % people spend 1-2 hours, 29 % people spend 2-3 hours and 28 % people spend more than 3 hours on social media.

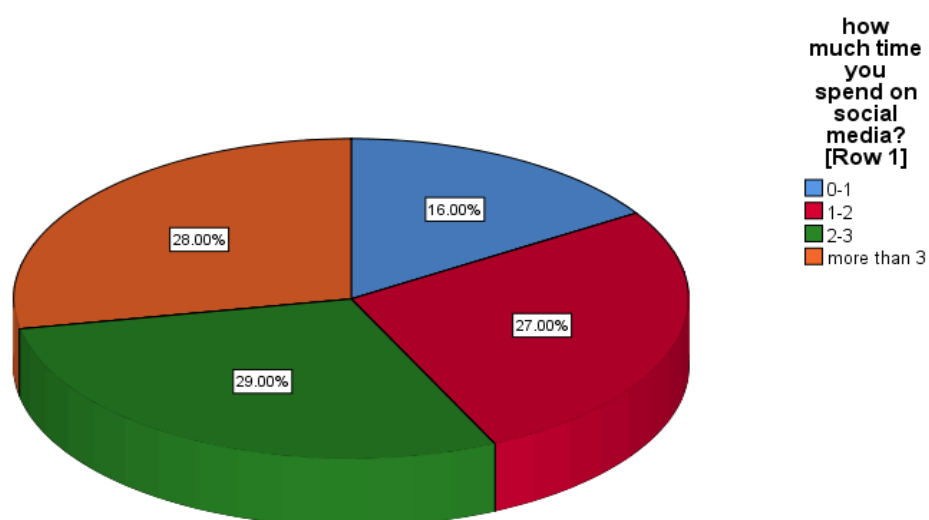


Fig. 6. Time of using social media

According to [Figure 7](#), 20 % of respondents strongly agreed that they get news and information from social media, 57 % agreed, 17 % are neutral, 5 % disagree, and 1 % strongly disagree.

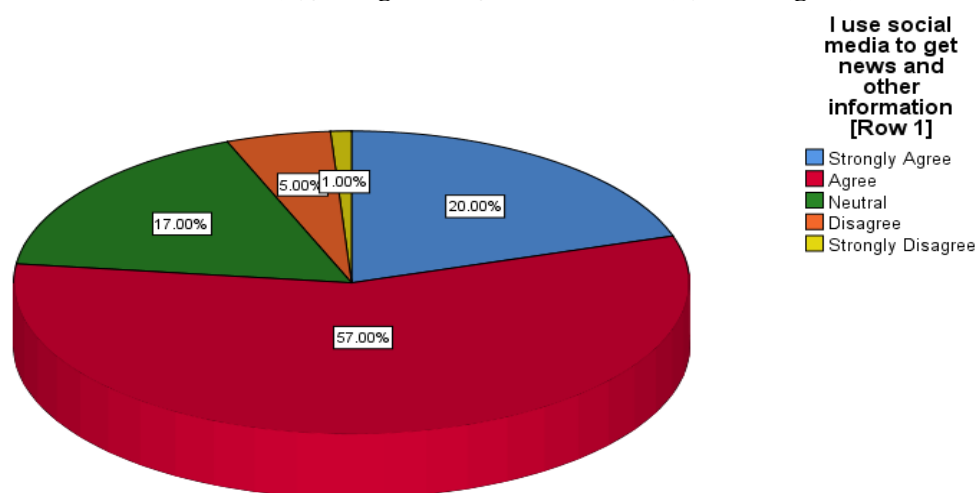


Fig. 7. Using social media to get information

[Figure 8](#) shows: 8,7 % of respondents strongly agree that they share and discuss their opinions on social media; 31 % agree, 35 % are neutral, 22 % disagree, and 5 % strongly disagree.

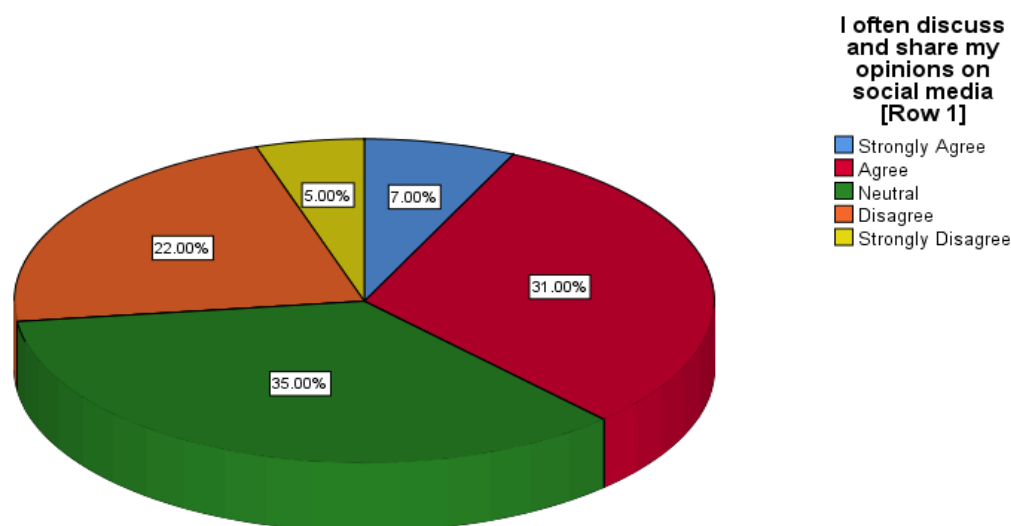


Fig. 8. Using social media for discussions and share the opinions

Figure 9 shows: 9,7 % of respondents strongly agreed that they share, 5 percent strongly agreed that social media discussions affect their personal lives, 34 % agree, 43 % are neutral, 24 % disagree, and 3 % strongly disagree. us their opinions regarding social media: 31 % agreed, 35 % were neutral, 22 % disagreed, and 5 % strongly disagreed.

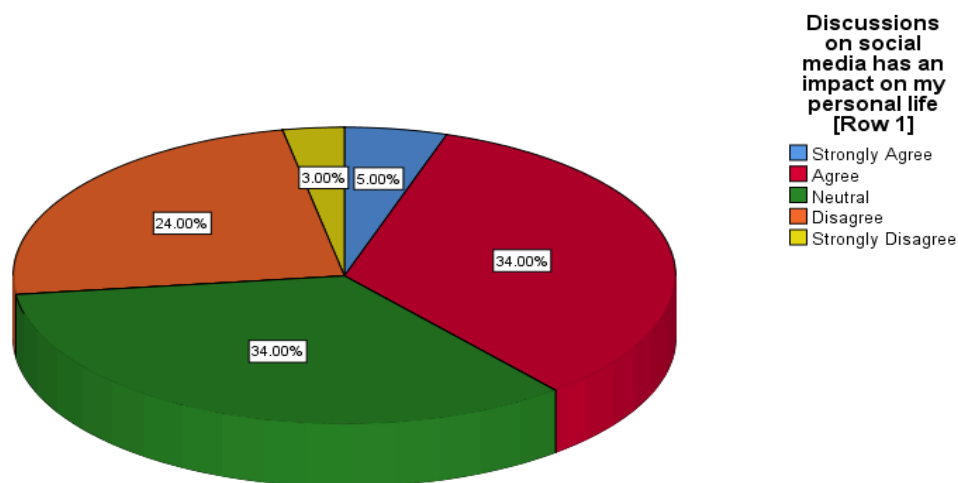


Fig. 9. Social media discussions and impact on respondent' personal life

Figure 10 shows: only 3 % of people strongly Agreed about sharing personal issues and for suggestions on social media, 9 % People are agreed about it, 12 % people are Neutral about it, 56 % Disagreed and 20 % respondents are Strongly Disagreed.

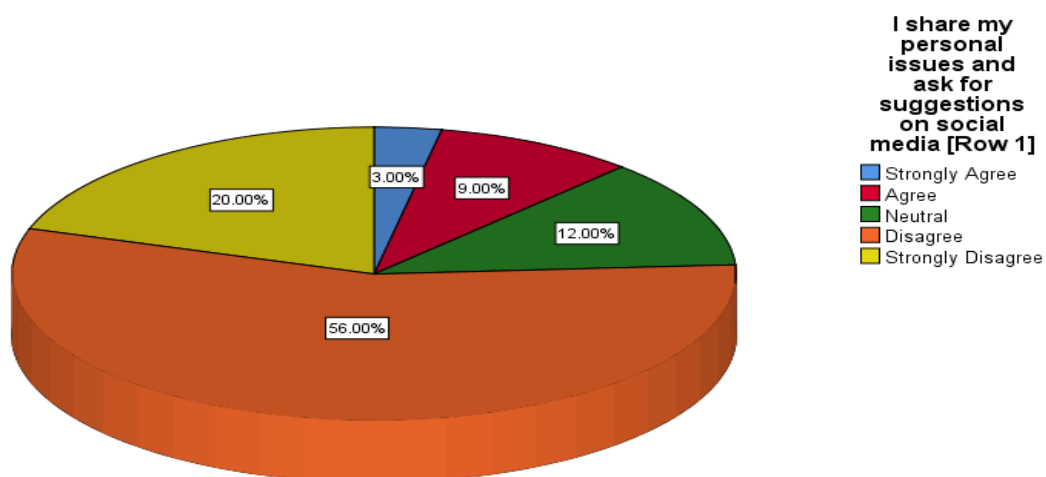


Fig. 10. The question of suggestions on social media

Figure 11 shows: 20 % of people Strongly agreed about the rise of women rights awareness through social media platforms, 43 % people are agreed, 26 % were Neutral and only 5 % people Strongly Disagreed.

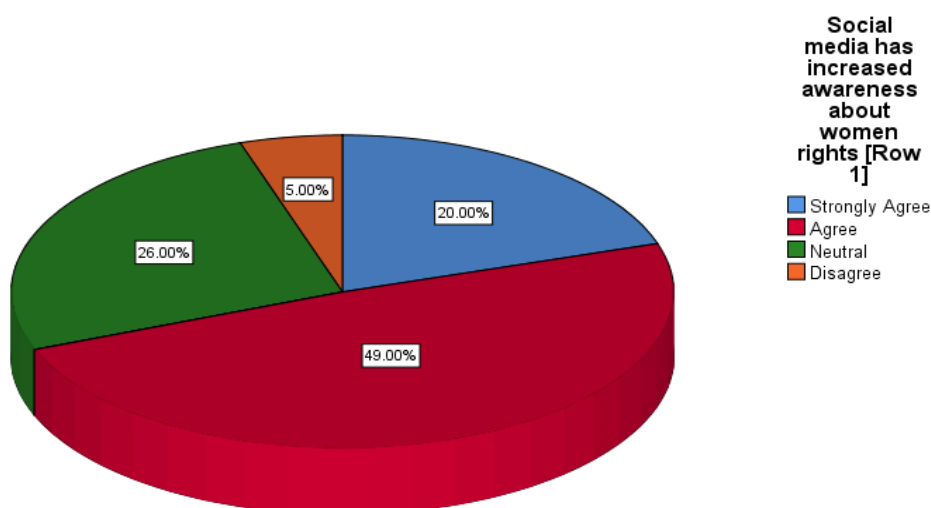


Fig. 11. Women rights awareness through social media platforms

Figure 12 shows: 12,24 % people strongly agreed about the positive portrayal of women on social media inspire them, 55 % Agreed, 13 % Neutral and 8 % Disagreed.

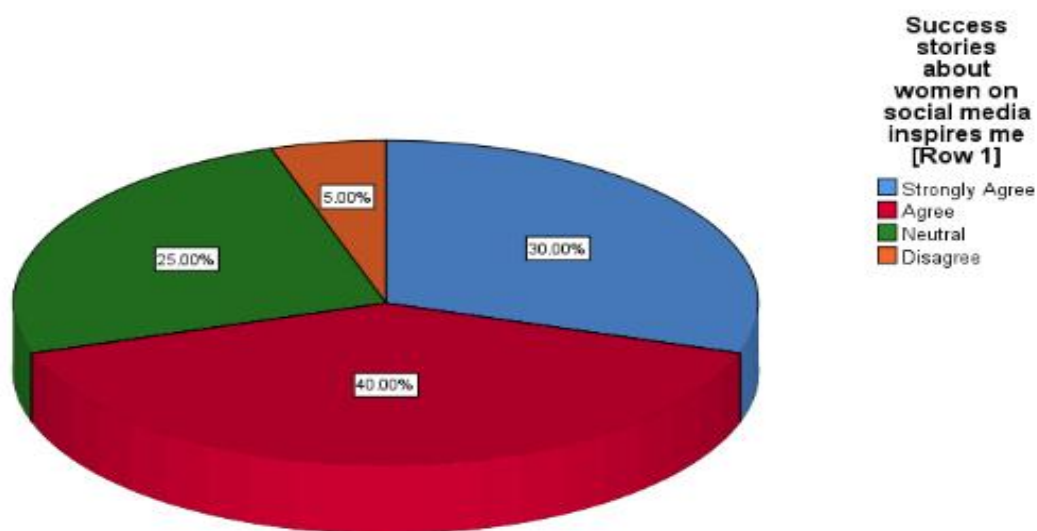


Fig. 12. Portrayal of women on social media

Figure 13 shows: 13,14 % of people strongly agreed that social media helps them in building online connections, 58 % people agreed, 23 % of respondents are neutral, 4 % disagree, and 1 % strongly disagree.

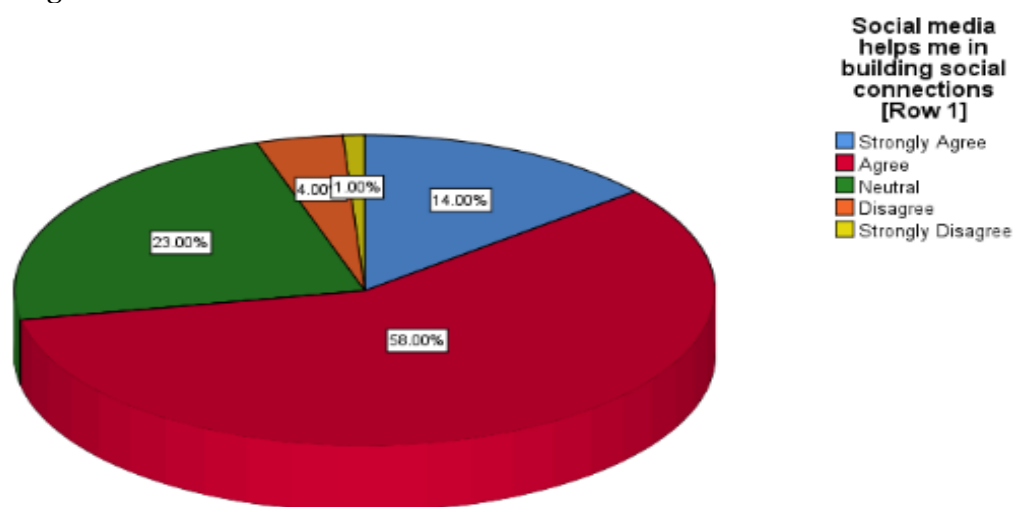


Fig. 13. Social media and online social connections

Figure 14 shows: 14,19 % of people strongly agreed that social media has created career opportunities for women, 65 % of women agreed, 13 % are Neutral about it and 3 % Disagreed.

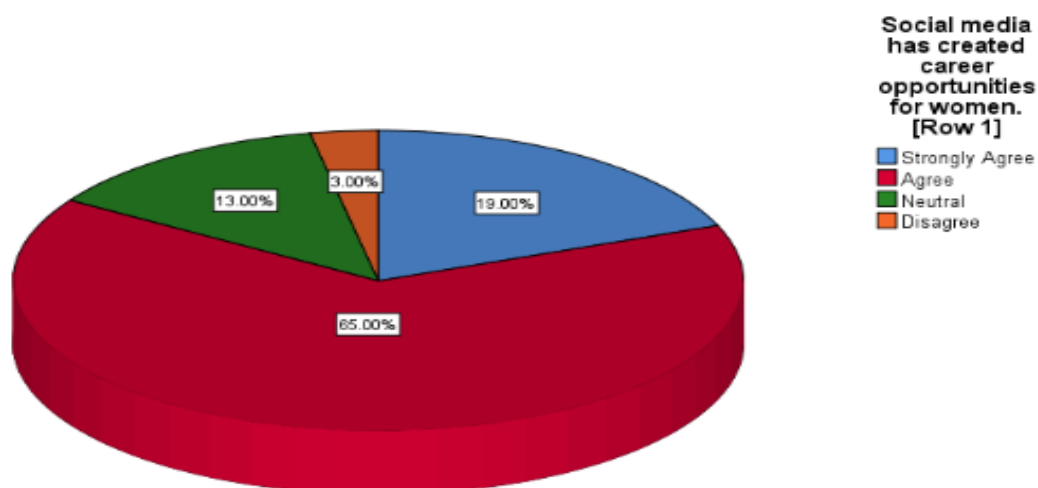


Fig. 14. Social media and career opportunities for women

Figure 15 shows: 15,7 % of women Strongly agreed that social media challenges gender norms and established values, 50 % people are agreed about it, 35 % were Neutral and 8 % people are Disagreed with it.

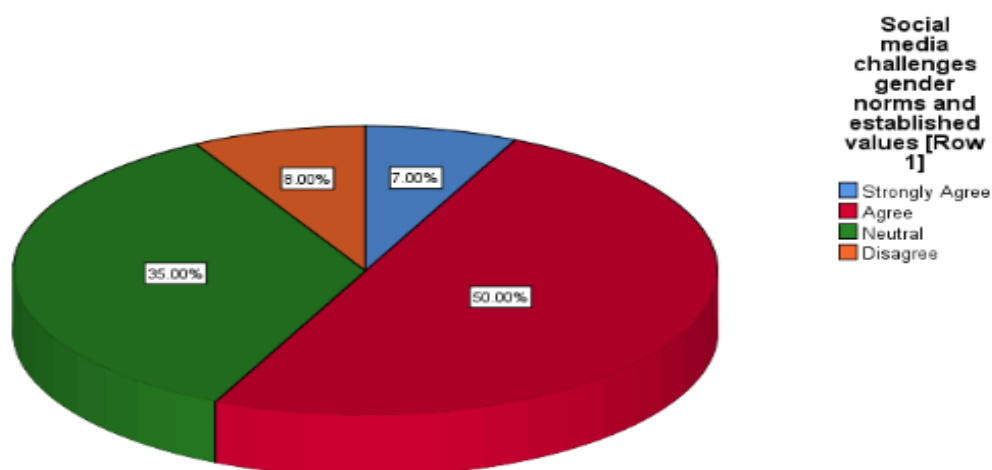


Fig. 15. Social media, gender norms and values

Figure 16 shows: 13 % of people strongly agreed that sometimes social media creates unnecessary bias against women, 51 % agreed, 25 % were neutral and 11 % people are Disagreed.

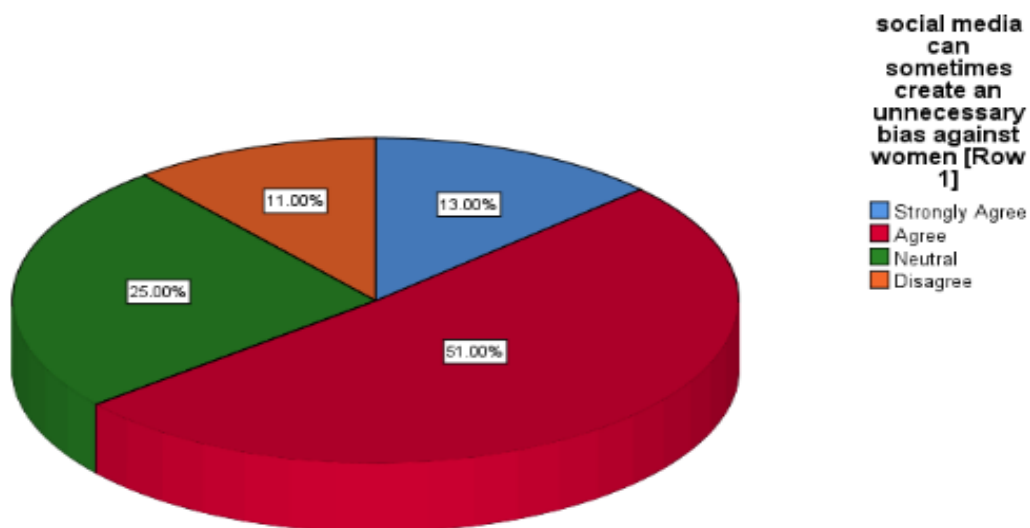


Fig. 16. Social media and bias against women

Figure 17 shows: 4 % of women strongly agreed that social media helps in abolishing gender inequality, 42 % of respondents are in agreed, 37 % are neutral, 13 % disagree, and 4 % strongly disagree.

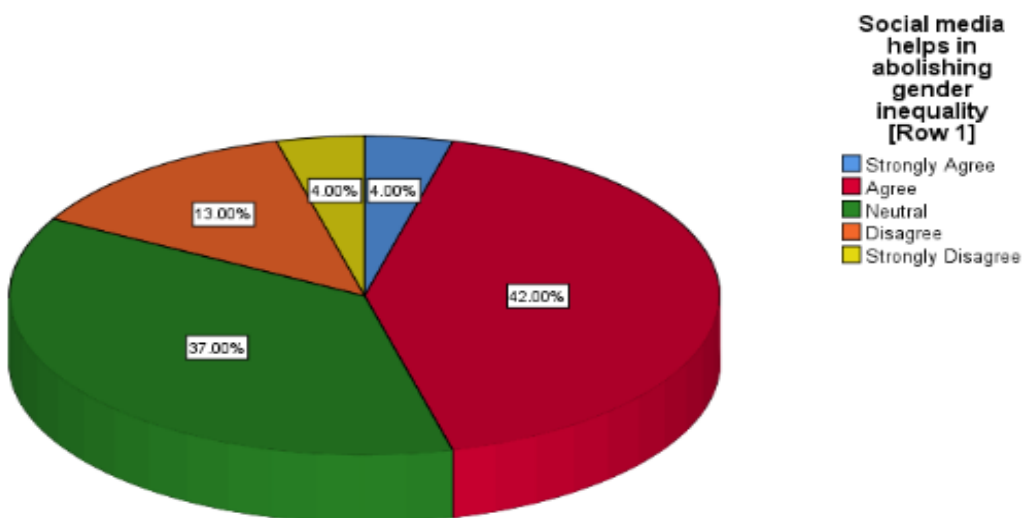


Fig. 17. Social media and gender inequality

Figure 18 shows: 8 % of people Strongly agreed about being a victim and bullying on social media, 20% people Agreed, 17 % women were neutral about it, 38 %people are Disagreed and 17 % strongly disagreed about it.

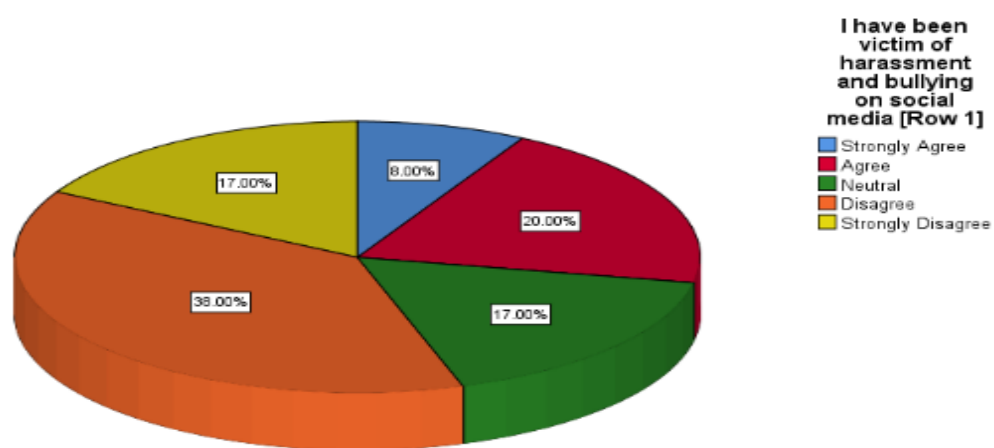


Fig. 18. Social media and bullying

Figure 19 shows: 14 % people are strongly agreed that they report offensive incidents against social media, 43 % women Agreed, 23 % respondents were neutral about it, 18 % Disagreed and 2 % strongly disagreed about it.

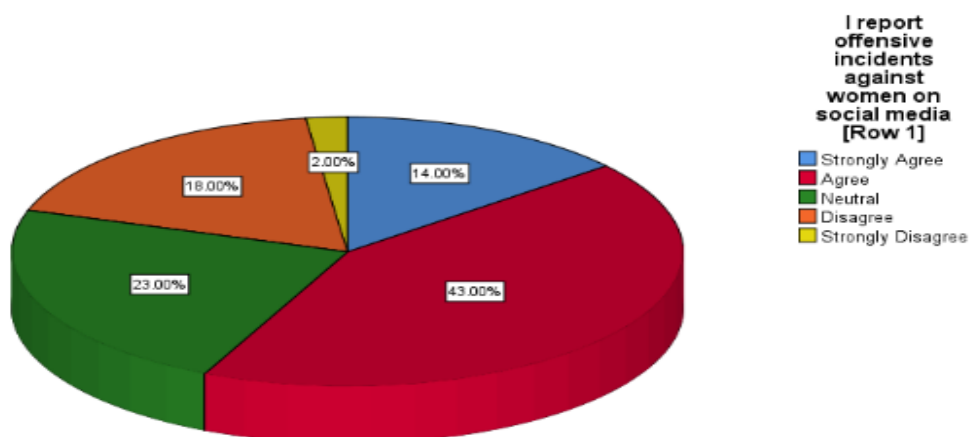


Fig. 19. Incidents against social media

Figure 20 shows: 20,13 % of people strongly agreed that they are aware of social media guidelines and regulations, 52 % people are agreed, 28 % were Neutral, 6 % Disagreed and 1 % strongly disagreed.

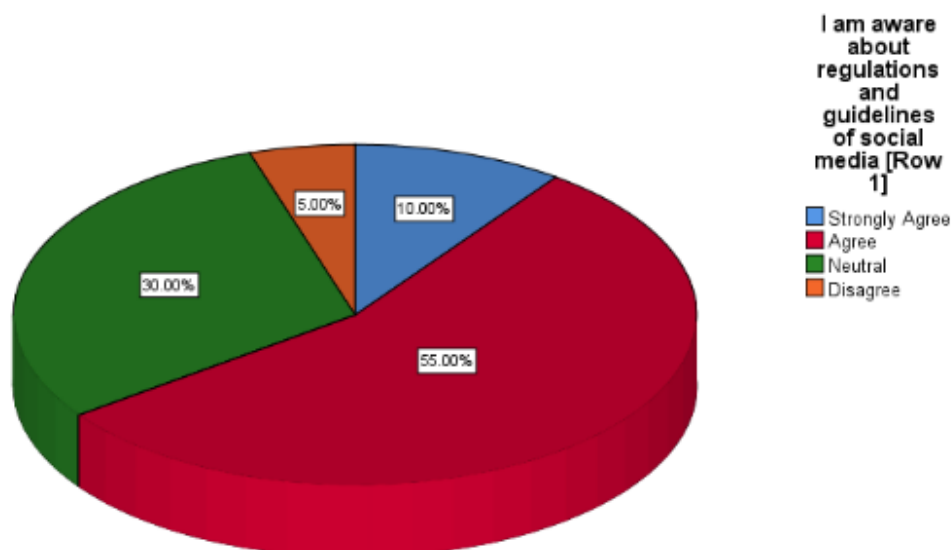


Fig. 20. Respondents' knowledge about social media guidelines and regulations

Figure 21 shows: 21,7 % of women Strongly agreed that they participate in online campaigns to support and encourage women, 26 % people are agreed, 44 % were Neutral about it, 22 % people are disagreed and 2 % people are strongly disagreed.

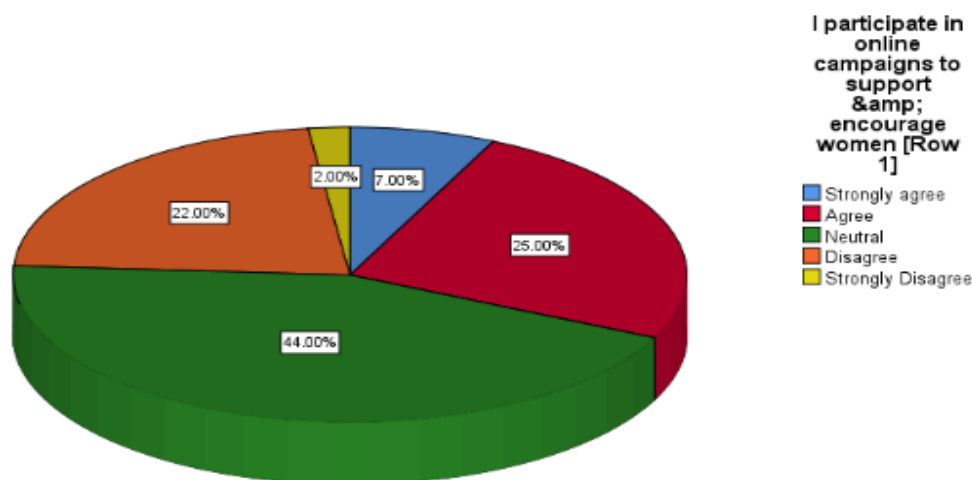


Fig. 21. Online campaigns to support and encourage women: respondents' opinions

Figure 22 shows: 12 % of people strongly agreed that social media is being used as a tool for women empowerment and encouragement, 57 % people are agreed, 26 % were neutral and 5 % people are disagreed.

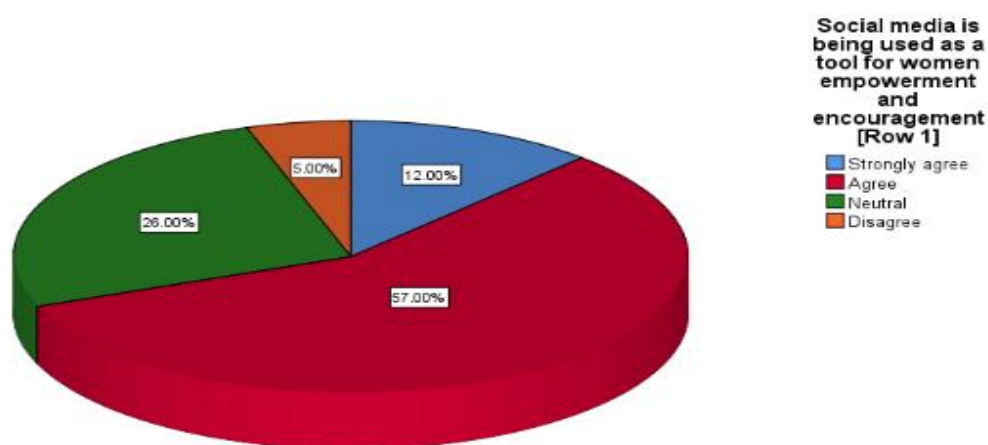


Fig. 22. Social media as a tool for women empowerment and encouragement: respondents' opinions

Figure 23 shows: 23,16 % people are strongly agreed that social media has given them more liberty and freedom to women, 59 % people are agreed, 19 % people are neutral about it, 5 % women are Disagreed and 1 % are strongly disagreed.

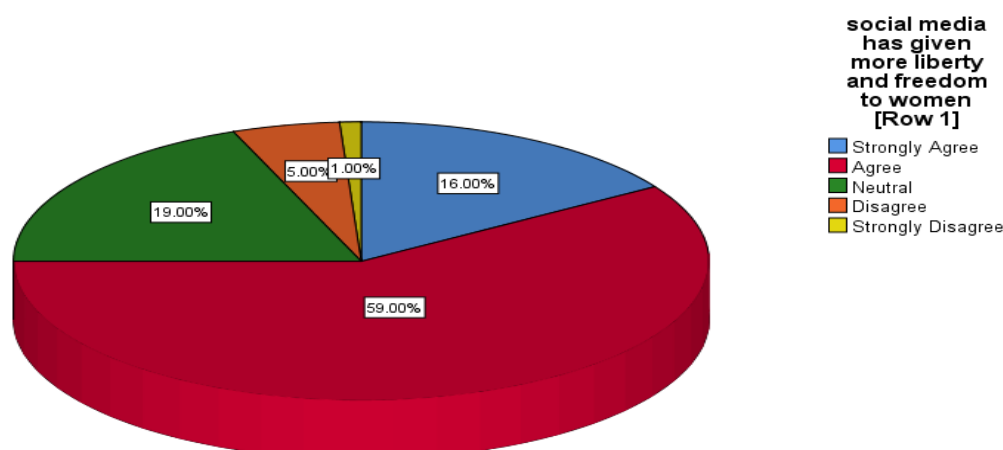


Fig. 23. Social media, liberty and freedom for women: respondents' opinions

Hypothesis Testing

In Table 3, The SPSS software was used to conduct the Chi-Square test for the analysis. The respondents' responses to this survey can be examined using this Chi-square test. The Pearson chi square value for this analysis is 0.004, which is less than 0.005. So, here statistically reject the Null hypothesis (H₀) and accept the Alternative hypothesis (H₁). According to this analysis, we can state that: There is a significant correlation between the use of social media as a tool for women's empowerment and encouragement and the rise in awareness of women's rights. Women who use social media and aware about the women rights are more empowered.

Table 3. Chi-Square test

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24.147 ^a	9	.004
Likelihood Ratio	22.939	9	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.086	1	.008
N of Valid Cases	30		

a. 14 cells (87.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .07.

Limitations

This research only examines Jaipur, Rajasthan, and women. Even though the sample was selected intentionally to consider it convenient. This sample size and diversity in sociodemographic characteristics offer additional opportunities for diversification.

5. Conclusion

Social media also helps women to create and take on new opportunities and challenges this contemporary world. The immense power of social media has provided women with numerous new avenues and opportunities for empowerment. It conducts a variety of initiatives that are supportive of women and raises awareness about issues pertaining to women through social media. Women's voices are heard on social media, which also motivates other women to take action. Women talk about their experiences, achievements, and resources on social media. Optimizing audience reach is made easier with hashtags. Additionally, they use social media to connect with other women and gain insight into their own lives. Social media is instrumental and efficient. During last few years, the usage of internet has increased as well as also used by the women for various purposes. Products, practical methods, and healthy notions of what it means to be a woman and their place in modern society are all promoted on social media.

Therefore, with the rise of social media female users, most women agreed that they got more aware of social media about the rights of women. It also gives them liberty and freedom to make decisions. Women have access to a plethora of opportunities and new freedoms, thanks to social media. There are lots of women who have started sharing content and inspiring stories on social media that inspire other women on social media. This positive portrayal of women in digital space makes a great impact. Social media also helps them in building connections and career opportunities for women. There are societal gender norms, social media also challenges them. It helps in abolishing gender inequality. Women are more aware of social media; they report offensive incidents on social media and are also well aware of the rules and guidelines. There are lots of women who encourage and support online campaigns for women and use them as a tool for women's empowerment and encouragement. Social media gave a strong online presence to women, connected them with the right people and established an equitable world.

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