

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q6(a)

Underline the role of social media in contemporary social movements and describe its challenges

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Politics and Society

Politics and Society: Sociological theories of power; Power elite, bureaucracy, pressure groups, and political parties; Nation, state, citizenship, democracy, civil society, ideology; Protest, agitation, social movements, collective action, revolution.

Core demand of the question

- **State the role of social media in contemporary social movements:** mobilisation, framing, visibility, transnational ties
- **Describe challenges:** misinformation, surveillance, slacktivism, exclusion and platform power
- Use Indian or global movement illustrations

Revision summary

Social movements use social media to gather people, tell a story and gain visibility.

Networked campaigns can be fast, visual and transnational.

Indian protests of the last decade show both organising power and rumour risk.

Challenges include misinformation, state and platform surveillance, and click-only support.

The digital divide and outrage algorithms shape who is heard.

Platforms are a resource, not a substitute for organisation and political opportunity.

Introduction

Social movements are organised efforts to promote or resist social change. They need communication, numbers, symbols and a sense of we. Social media now supply much of that infrastructure. Hashtags, videos and messaging groups can summon a crowd faster than a printed pamphlet. They also create new weaknesses. The role and the challenges must be stated together.

Body

Role in contemporary movements

Resource mobilisation theory, associated with Mayer Zald and others, already treated media as a resource. Digital platforms cheapen that resource. They help **mobilise** by spreading the time and place of protest. They help **frame** a grievance in a short visual story, which Snow and Benford's **framing** approach would recognise. They create **visibility** for groups that official television ignores. They link local struggles to a transnational audience, as environmental and feminist campaigns have done. Manuel Castells wrote of networked social movements in a digital age. In India, anti-corruption protests, student movements, farmers' protests and several identity campaigns have used WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and later Instagram and YouTube as organising tools. Diaspora money and attention can arrive through

the same channels.

Social media also allow leaderless or loosely led forms. This can protect a movement from the arrest of a single head. It can also scatter strategy.

Challenges

Misinformation and rumour travel on the same rails as solidarity. Communal riots and panics have been linked to forwarded messages. States and opponents **surveil** and troll activists. Platform companies can mute a page or an account without a public trial. **Slacktivism**, a term for low-cost clicking, can substitute a like for organisation on the ground. Charles Tilly's older stress on WUNC, worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment, is harder to sustain if the crowd exists only as a metric. The digital divide excludes those without phones or literacy in the campaign language. Algorithms reward outrage, which can radicalise a frame and split a coalition. Donatella della Porta and others note that digital tools do not abolish the need for organisations, allies and a **political opportunity** structure.

The sociological lesson is that social media are a new ecology for movements, not a replacement for the street, the union, the court or the party. They amplify both voice and noise.

Role and challenge on the same platform

A farmers' sit-in can use live video to keep a national audience when television cameras leave. The same video stream can be clipped by opponents to invent a different story. A women's safety campaign can find allies in another state overnight. It can also attract organised abuse that silences speakers. Leadership becomes harder to locate, which protects some activists and leaves others without a mandate to negotiate. Older movements had newspapers and cadres. New movements have metrics. The role of social media is therefore infrastructural: it is how many contemporary movements think, recruit and remember. The challenge is that this infrastructure is privately owned, easily flooded, and unevenly available. A complete answer underlines both, with the street and the organisation still in the sentence.

Flow diagram

Social media -> Mobilisation and framing
Social media -> Visibility and transnational ties
Social media -> Challenges
Challenges -> Misinformation surveillance
Challenges -> Slacktivism and exclusion

Conclusion

Social media help contemporary movements to mobilise, frame and become visible across borders. They also bring rumour, surveillance, shallow participation and corporate control of the microphone. Movements that treat platforms as tools inside a wider organisation use them well. Movements that live only online fade quickly.

Facts & figures

Framing

The work of naming a grievance and a we, which short videos and hashtags now perform at speed.

Slacktivism

Low-cost online support that may not become commitment, money, or presence in public space.

Political opportunity

The wider structure of allies, splits in elites and state response, which digital tools do not erase.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2024/underline-the-role-of-social-media-in-contemporary-social-movements-and-describe-its-challenges/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com

WRAP Exams