

Caste and Social Media: An Analysis of Shimla Town in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Inequality based on caste and the caste system presents a negative image of the nation. Castes, religions, regions, genders, and creeds are all used to categorise people. In society, everyone has a higher status than others. The higher caste, which comprises Rajputs and Brahmins, is thought to be superior to the lesser castes under the caste system. The term "social media" refers to interactions between people and groups. Wherein they produce, disseminate, or trade concepts, ideas, and data. People's lives are significantly impacted by social media. On social media, people built their own personal network of friends. Social media gives people a platform to express their views. At the level of news anchors and editors, Scheduled Castes are under-represented in the mainstream media, including print and electronic media. Most Dalit issues were not reported by mainstream media outlets. Over time, Dalits' interest in social media has increased. They use social media platforms to share their thoughts, feelings, and expressions. Social media is currently being used to discuss issues related to scheduled castes. The influence, benefits, and drawbacks of social media and the caste system are the main topics of the researcher's present study. The researcher gathered information for the current study from primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires were utilised to collect primary data. Books, articles, and websites were the sources of the secondary data.

Keywords: Caste System, Social Media, Scheduled Caste, Shimla and Himachal Pradesh.

1. Introduction

All humans are born with equal rights and dignity, as well as the right to be free of man-made civilisation. They are surrounded by reason and conscience, and they must live in unity and brotherhood. Everyone has the same rights and freedoms, regardless of race, breed, gender, language, colour, religion, or birthplace. Nobody has the right to torture or other forms of discrimination (Babu, B. L. 2016).

There is one-way communication in mainstream media, but in social media there is two-way communication. Social media have posed challenges to mainstream media. Today social media is the biggest tool of communication and mobilisation of people. It mobilises people

for various causes, like the RohithVemula and Kedar Singh Zindan murder cases in the Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh were not given any preference in mainstream media (Verma, K. 2020).

There are several applications, including WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, X, etc., where people can share text, audio and video and even make videos. People make groups of their own interest, like political, social, educational, entertainment, sports, family, and friends. Dalits in these groups support their ideology, leaders, and other problems related to Dalits (Kureel, P. 2021). These social media applications provide the platforms for the Dalit community to raise their issues before the public at large.

2. Objective

1. To find out the awareness level of Dalit issues among the students of Shimla town.
2. To find out the awareness level of Scheduled Castes issues on social media platforms.
3. To find the impact of social media on Scheduled Caste people.

3. Research Methodology

The researcher used questionnaires with the targeted population to gather primary data. To collect data, a questionnaire was prepared by the researcher, and the data was collected through the mailed questionnaire. Data were collected from students of Himachal Pradesh University Shimla and adjoining colleges. The researcher also used a structured interview method to collect the primary data. The secondary data were collected through books, articles and internet sources.

Population

There is one university, i.e., Himachal Pradesh University Shimla, and three government colleges, i.e., Rajiv Gandhi Dergee College ChauraMaidan, RKMV College, and Centre of Excellence Sanjauli College in Shimla town.

Sample Size

The researcher had targeted 150 students from Himachal Pradesh University Shimla and 150 students from colleges in Shimla town.

Research Design

This study is descriptive and empirical in nature. The population of study is Shimla city. The sample size is 300. Data were collected through the random sampling method.

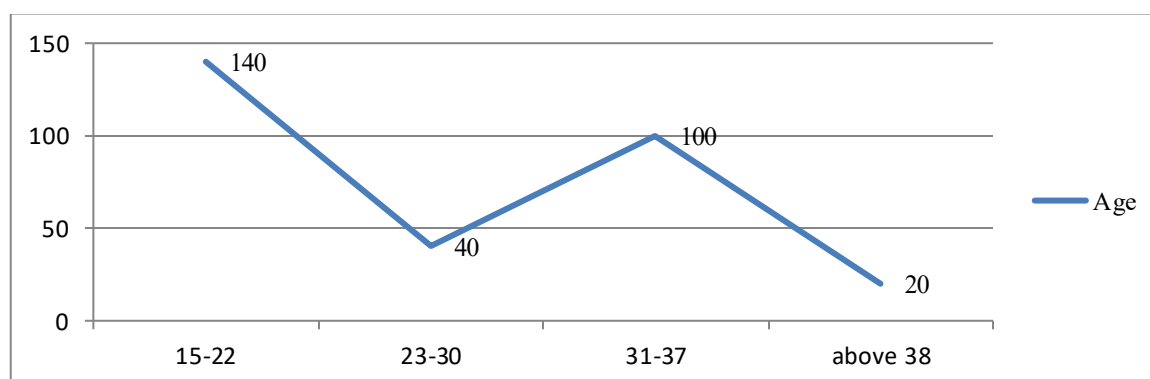
Data Analysis Technique

Frequencies were converted into percentages in the current study. The percentage denotes that the findings are calculated and discussed per 100 to better comprehend the outcome. The data was analysed using the percentage analysis technique.

4. Empirical Study regarding caste and social media

Part A: General classification of the respondents

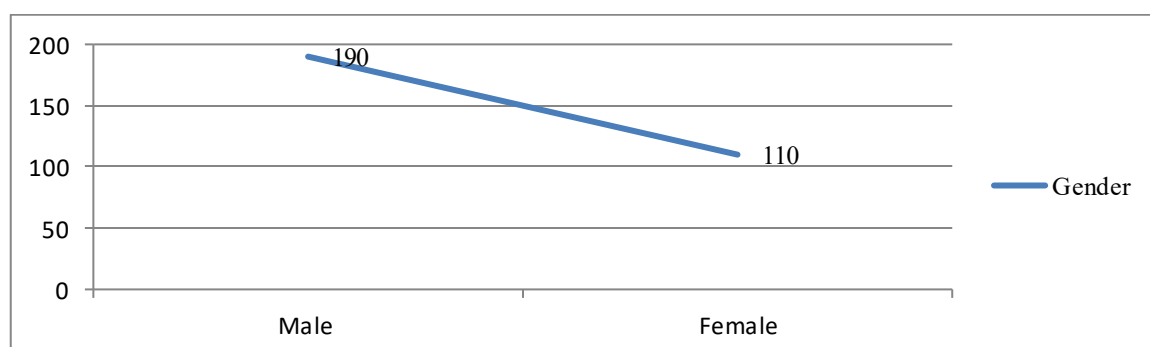
Chart 1.1 Age of the Respondents



Source: Primary Data

Chart 1.1 shows the age of the respondents. The age of the respondents was the first variable considered. There were 140 respondents in the age group of 15-22 and 40 respondents from the age group of 23-30. There were 100 respondents in the age group of 31-37 and 20 respondents above the age of 38.

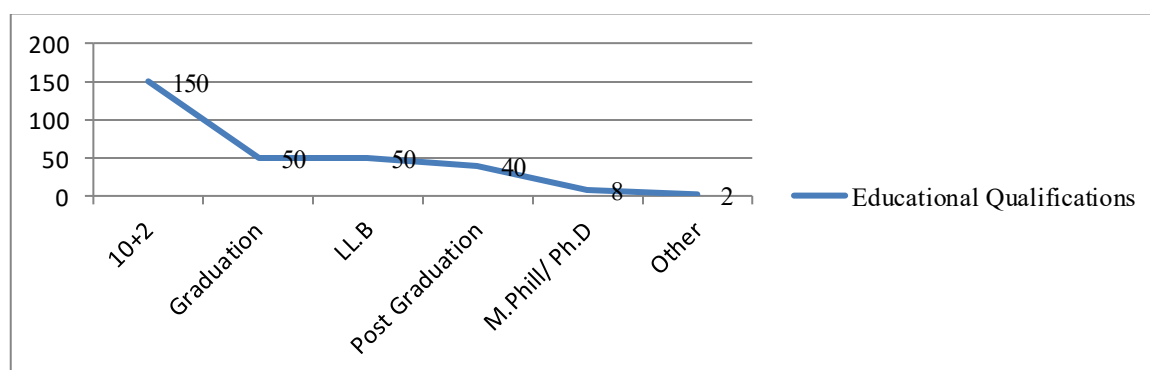
Chart 1.2 Gender of the Respondents



Source: Primary Data

Chart 1.2 described the gender of the respondents. There were 190 male and 110 female respondents.

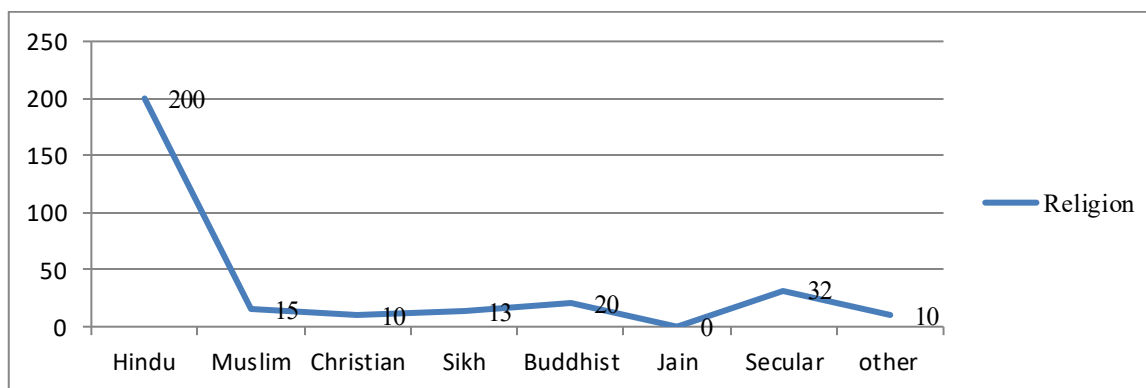
Chart 1.3 Educational Qualifications



Source: Primary Data

Chart 1.3 depicts the educational qualifications of the respondents. There were 150 respondents who passed the 10+2; 50 were graduates, 50 respondents passed LL.B., 40 were postgraduates, 8 were either M.Phil. or Ph.D., and 2 respondents passed diploma.

Chart 1.4 Religions of the Respondents

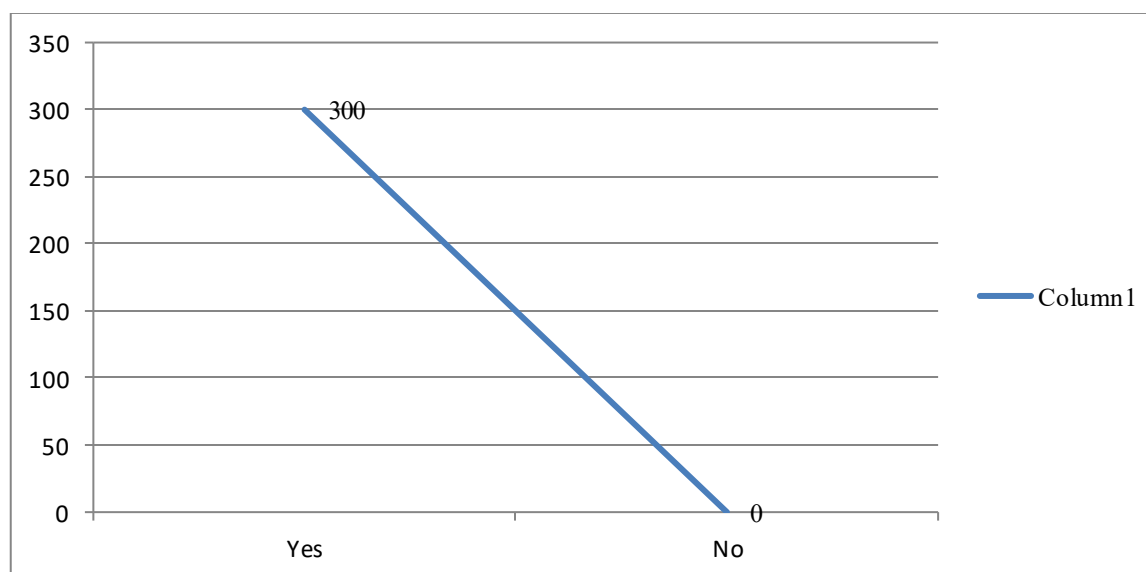


Source: Field Survey

Chart 1.4 described the religion of the respondents. There were 200 Hindu respondents; 15 were Muslim, 10 were Christian, 13 were Sikh, 20 were Buddhist, 32 were secular and 10 belonged to other religions.

Part B: Questionnaire regarding caste and social media.

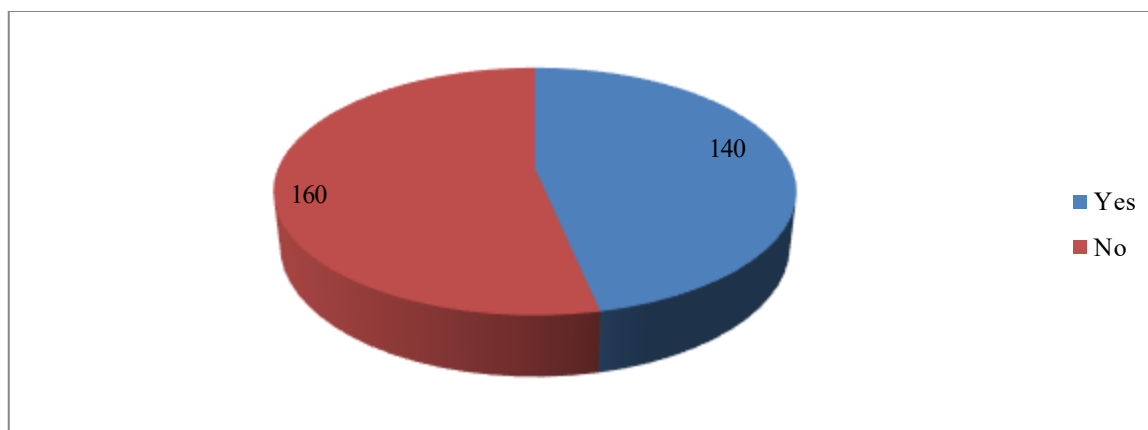
Chart 1.5: Do you use social media ?



Source: Primary Data

Chart 1.5 shows that there were 300 respondents who used social media.

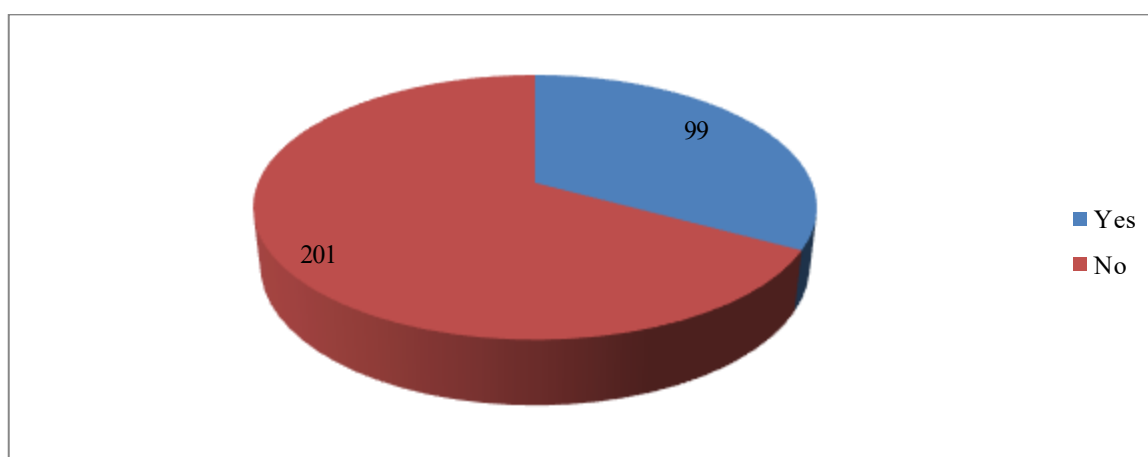
Chart 1.6: Do you know about the blogs and groups related to Dalit issues?



Source: Field Survey

Chart 1.6 shows the knowledge about blogs and groups related to Dalit issues. There were 140 respondents who agreed that they had knowledge about the blogs and groups related to Dalit issues. Apart from this, 160 respondents had no knowledge about these types of blogs and groups on social media.

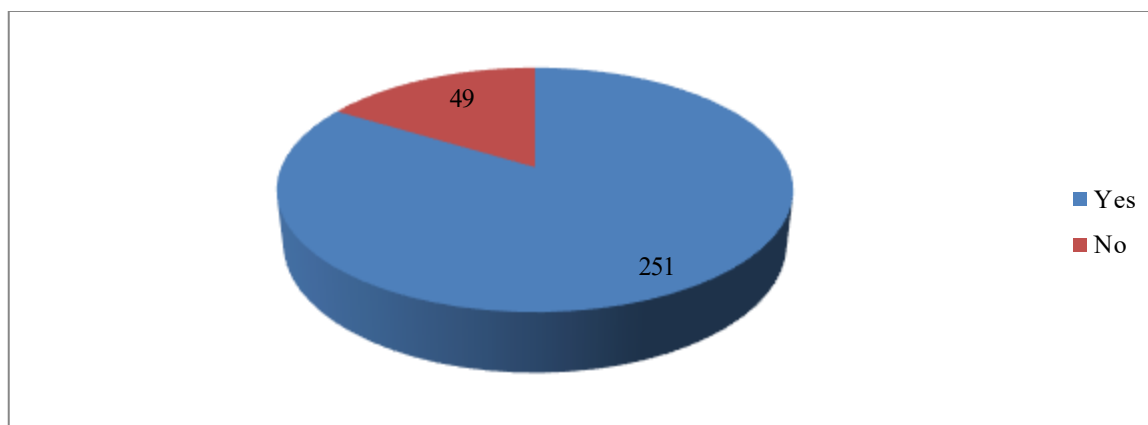
Chart 1.7: Do you share the Dalit issue and caste-based discrimination on your social media platform?



Source: Field Survey

Chart 1.7 described the propaganda about the Dalits' issues and caste-based discrimination on social media platforms. There were 99 respondents who shared the Dalit issues and caste-based discrimination on their social media platform. Apart from this, 201 respondents were denied this thing.

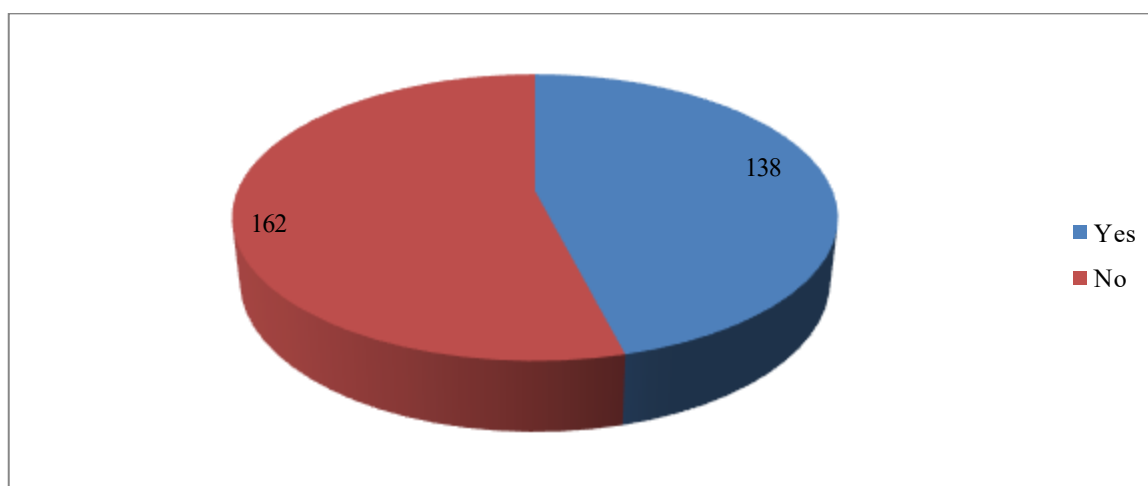
Chart 1.8: Do you agree that Dalit people face verbal threats and social isolation on social media?



Source: Field Survey

Chart 1.8 provides information about Dalit people facing verbal threats and social isolation on social media. It was discovered that 251 respondents agreed that Dalit people faced verbal threats and social isolation on social media, and 49 denied verbal threats and social isolation on social media.

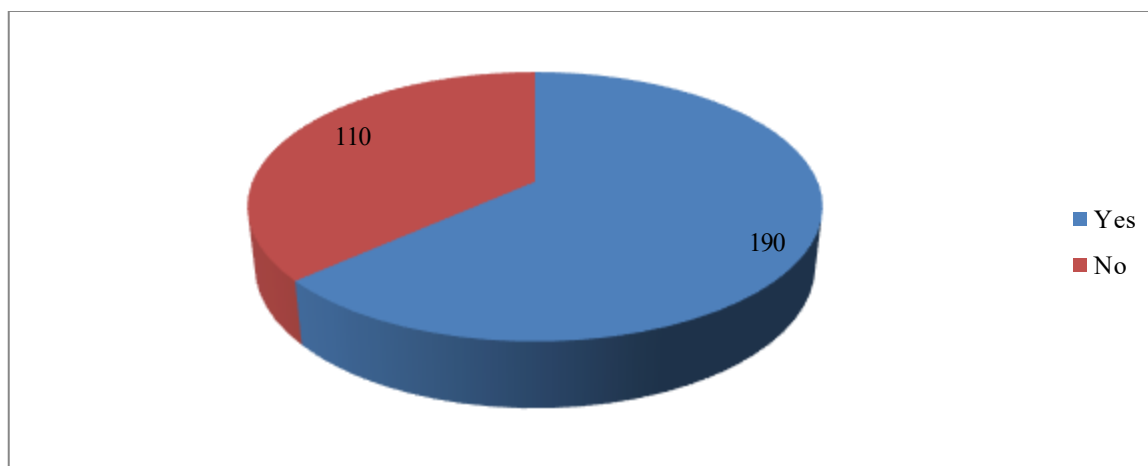
Chart 1.9: Do you know about the RohithVemula suicide case through social media?



Source: Primary Data

Chart 1.9 exposes the data regarding the knowledge about the RohithVemula suicide case through social media. It was discovered that 138 respondents were agreed that they had knowledge about the RohithVemula suicide case, while 162 respondents had no knowledge about this.

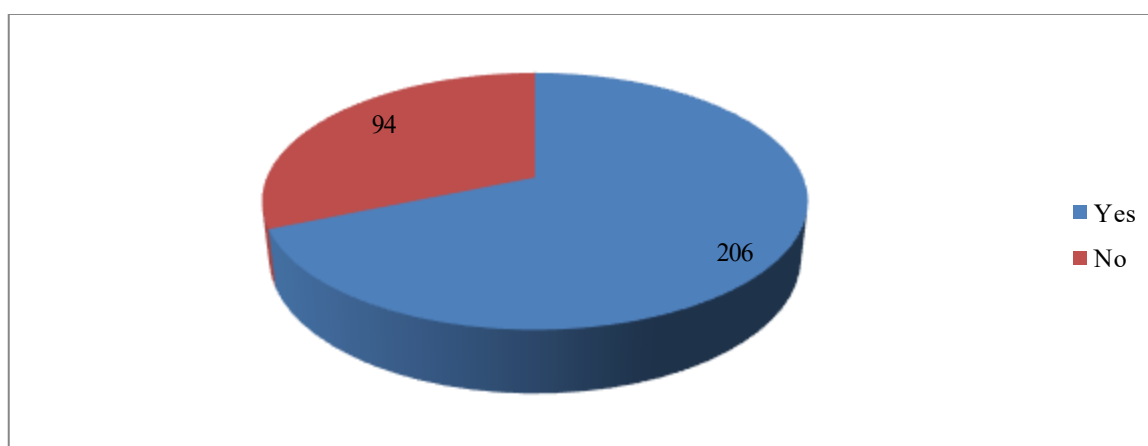
Chart 1.10: Do you know about the Kedar Singh Zindan murder case in the Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh through social media?



Source: Field Survey

Chart 1.10 depicts the knowledge of the respondents about the Kedar Singh Zindan murder case. It was found that 190 respondents had knowledge about the Kedar Singh Zindan murder case and 110 had no knowledge.

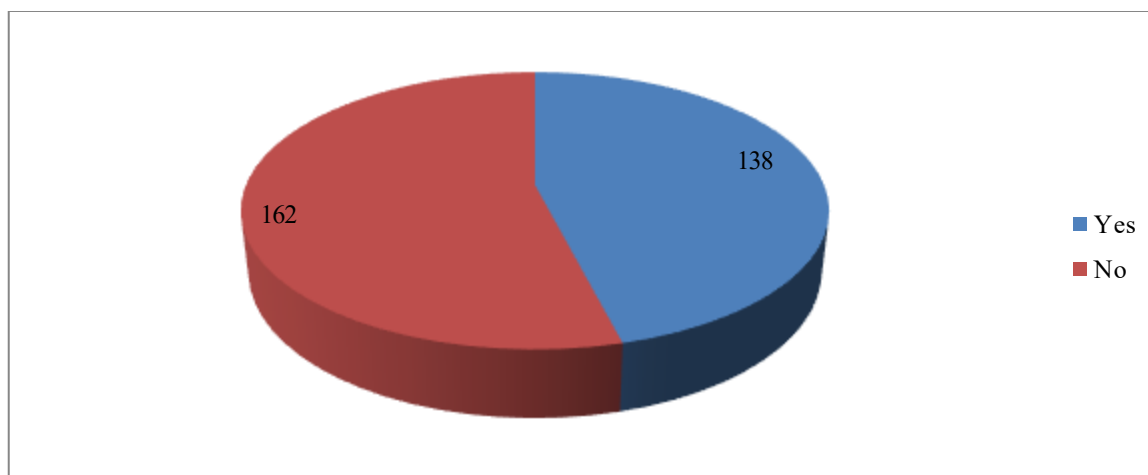
Chart 1.11: Do you agree that social media is helpful to organise Dalits?



Source: Field Survey

Chart 1.11 shows the data regarding social media being helpful to organise Dalit people. It was discovered that 206 respondents were agreed that social media is helpful to organise Dalits, and 94 were denied and said that social media is not helpful to organise Dalits.

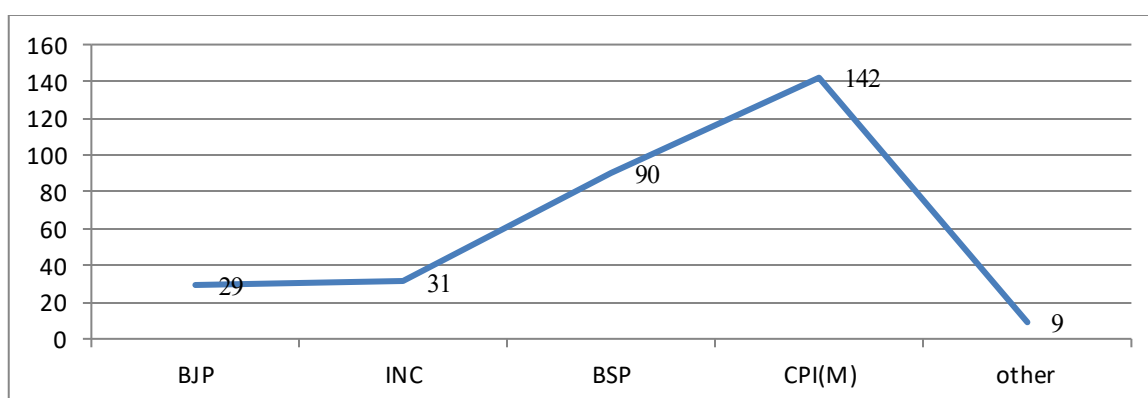
Chart 1.12: Do you write about reservation, empowerment, and caste atrocities on your social media platform?



Source: Primary Data

Chart 1.12 shows that 138 respondents wrote about reservation, empowerment, and caste atrocities on your social media platform, and 162 respondents did not write about reservation, empowerment, and caste atrocities on your social media platform.

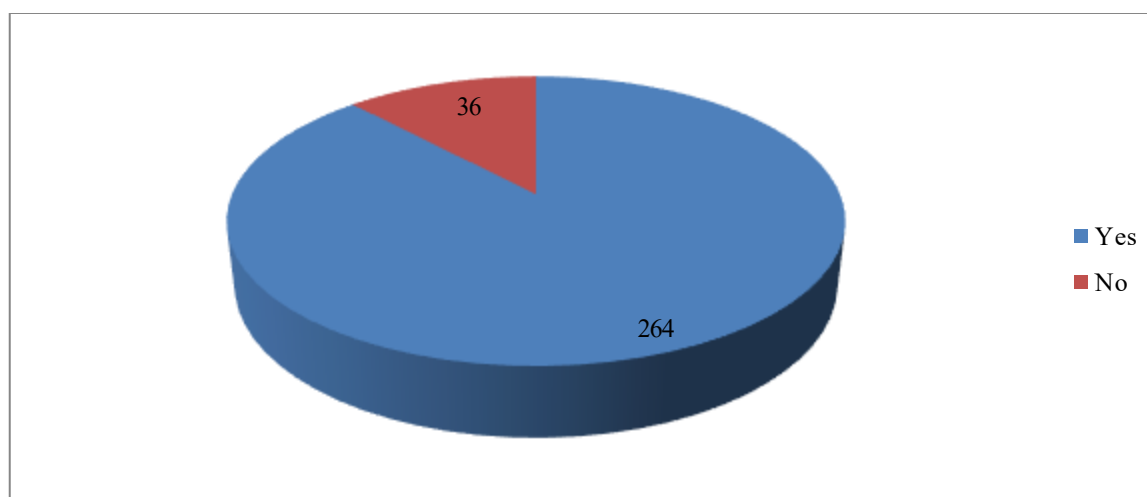
Chart 1.13: Which political party mostly raises the Dalit issue on social media?



Source: Field Survey

Chart 1.13 depicts the data regarding which political party mostly raised the issue of Dalits on social media. It was discovered that 29 respondents agreed that the BhartiyaJanta Party (BJP) mostly raises the Dalit issue on social media, and 31 respondents agreed that the Indian National Congress (INC) mostly raises the Dalit issue on social media. Apart from this, 90 respondents agreed that the BahujanSamaj Party (BSP) mostly raises the Dalit issue on social media, 142 respondents agreed that the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) mostly raises the Dalit issue on social media, and 9 respondents opined that other than the above-mentioned political party mostly raise the Dalit issue on social media.

Chart 1.14: Does social media play an important role in campaigns against the caste system?



Source: Primary Data

Chart 1.14 described how social media plays an important role in the campaign against the caste system. It was discovered that 264 respondents were agreed that social media plays an important role in the campaign against the caste system. 36 respondents denied that social media plays an important role in the campaign against the caste system.

5. Findings of the study:

The finding of the study shows that the majority of respondents belong to the age group of 15-22. After that, the age group of 31-37 is in second place. The study reveals that there were male respondents in the majority, with a total number of 190. The majority of the respondents have passed 10+2 and belong to the Hindu religion. All the respondents use social media, which includes WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, X, and Twitter. The majority of respondents know about the blogs and groups related to Dalit issues. The study reveals that the majority of respondents did not share the Dalits' issues and caste-based discrimination on their social media platform.

The majority of respondents were agreed that Dalit people face verbal threats and social isolation on social media. The study shows that most of the respondents were not aware of the RohithVemula suicide case, but they were aware of the Kedar Singh Zindan murder case district of Sirmour in Himachal Pradesh. The large numbers of respondents were agreed that social media is helpful to organise the Dalit community. Apart from this majority of the respondents did not write about reservation, Dalit empowerment and caste atrocities on their social media platform. Most of the respondents were agreed that the CPI(M) political party mostly raises the Dalit issue on social media. Lastly, the majority of the respondents were agreed that social media play an important role in campaigns against the caste system and caste-based atrocities.

6. Conclusion

This study provides the evidence of the contribution of social media in empowering and strengthening the Dalit community. Our mainstream media is not inclusive in nature; it did not give importance to issues related to marginalised communities in India. But social media provides a great platform for marginalised communities to express their feelings, issues, and problems. Social media connect and organise these communities. Many social movements are only led by social media without any leadership. Social media is such a powerful tool that governments all over the world fear it. Social media is a very powerful tool, and it is helping Indian masses to raise their voice against oppression. People have to be very careful because social media have some negative consequences.

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